

How Should a Man Live?

Christian Manhood in America Today

By Dr. David H. Stone

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Self-Published by

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Originally printed in 2011 by Blurb printing company, San Francisco, USA

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Preface

I'm going to be very direct about where I'm coming from. Everyone has a worldview – a philosophical system for interpreting what he experiences in the world and a basis for making decisions and living life. I've talked to thousands of individuals and have found that basically everyone in America, rich or poor, educated or not, successful or destitute, sees himself as a philosopher who has essentially figured out what life is all about.

Admitting that I don't have one ounce of postmodernism in me, I'll point out that everyone simply can't be right. There are truths that are absolute. The most ardent postmodernist will check the traffic before crossing the street, certain that both he and the bus cannot happily inhabit the same space. The most fervent cosmic humanist (new-ager), who is convinced that his beliefs transform the universe, will not leap out of an airplane without a parachute. Moral truths are also absolute. Lying is wrong – nobody likes being lied to. Stealing is wrong – nobody enjoys having his wallet lifted. Rape is wrong – would any alleged postmodernist assert that a culture that tolerates rape is of equal worth?

My worldview is that of a Bible-believing Christian. That's where I'm coming from. If you're an atheist, or a Muslim, or a Roman Catholic, or anything other than a Bible-believing Christian, you won't agree with everything in this book. I challenge you to THINK about the principles, however. Consider whether the principles espoused have the "ring of truth" about them. Even if you won't become a Christian, you'll learn some valuable perspectives from the chapters to follow. But consider whether these perspectives, which you will doubtless validate from your own experience, are endemic to your belief system. In short, if you just pick up some useful tips, but reject the core of Biblical truth – salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ – you have missed it all. Give yourself a chance!

Regarding my personal qualifications to write such a book: I'm very much a "student" – a youngster in life and the Christian faith, with much to learn. As I write this, I'm 59 years old and have been a born again Christian for 43 years. I'm married and have three adult children, who have also started families. I've been retired for six years now, and engaged in the most exciting work of my life, which I'll reference on occasion throughout the book. In my career I enjoyed twenty years as an officer in the United States Air Force, "retiring" as a Lieutenant Colonel. I then managed an R&D division within a major aerospace company, before becoming a tenured professor at a major state university. I have five academic degrees, including a PhD in laser physics and an MBA. I spent too much of my youth on baseball and perhaps too much of my discretionary time as an adult as a serious amateur tennis player. I've made tons of mistakes in both professional and personal life, but I continue to be determined to do right and make my days count – not based on my personal inclinations / opinions / druthers, but based as best as I know on a proven absolute standard – according to God's word, the Bible.

Am I writing from the perspective of consistent godly living, exemplary performance as a husband, a wise and loving dad to each of my children, a joyful servant of the Lord from the time I became a Christian? Oh my. Would that were so. Things I've learned even in the last couple of years

should have been in my toolbox 30 years ago. The principles I profess in this book are those which are right, which work, and which come from heavenly sources, whether I have learned them the hard way or the easy way. (It's easy to learn from Scripture, if you believe what God has written down for us. A (big) level below that is to learn from others' mistakes. It's hardest of all to learn from experience – that's painful.)

Whether you're a Christian or not, I implore you to give me a hearing. This world is approaching its darkest days and, even if you haven't noticed that, you'll certainly agree that life is short and days are precious. If you're already thirty years old and have a life expectancy of 75, you have only 2340 weekends left. Of course, your next weekend isn't guaranteed. You may enter eternity tonight. Tick tock, tick tock. Make your days count. It's only possible if you think through the priorities, based on TRUE principles, and act on them.

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Dr. David Stone

Chapter 1

How to be admired, envied, and respected . . . and waste your entire life!

This book is written with one overriding goal: to help men make their lives count. Will it be useful for a woman to read? Yes, in that it can help her to pick the right man for a husband or, if already married, to gain insight on how to build up her man and make the marriage joyful and successful. Should it be read by a teenage boy? Yes, indeed, because the big decisions in life are still ahead and it's never too early to start thinking about what's important. So if this book got into your hands and you are not an adult male, read it and learn what you can, but then give it to a man who needs it!

From this point forward, I'll assume that you, reader, are a man, and man enough to hear some hard things. Learning is never easy, but the hardest thing in life is to admit when you're wrong, change your mind, and then set out in a different direction. But it's also the most exhilarating thing to do. Freedom comes in living in accordance with TRUTH, universal principles as pervasive and consequential as the laws of aerodynamics are to an aircraft designer.

Let's think about the type of man revered in American culture, admired by his peers, envied by those he has surpassed, and respected – perhaps even rewarded openly – by professional organizations, with media attention, and with income and perks.

The man that dies with the most money wins! Right? Certainly, it seems that many live as though this is the rule of life. How much of your life do you trade for money? Certainly, to live comfortably and have freedom to live, travel, acquire, learn, etc., you need to earn a living. But there are few ambitious men who are merely satisfied to earn a living. “Ambitious men” – you know who you are. If you're not a hard driver, a “Type A”, a goal-oriented high achiever, then I'm not going after you in this section. Be patient, I'll get to you later.

I spend a good bit of time in downtown Chicago. I see a lot of “suits” striding hurriedly and purposefully among the government buildings, the banks, and the various corporate headquarters. I note the deference paid by the younger suits to the older suits when in their presence. Ambition permeates suit culture. Young suits are spending their lives in order to become old suits. Old suits are still driving for the next bonus, the next promotion, the next bit of power or prestige.

What is the end of their ambition? Many of those skyscrapers have been there for decades. Does anyone even know the names of the bank presidents, senior law partners, district attorneys, police chiefs, or corporate CEOs, CFOs, or board chairmen that walked these streets in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, or even 1980s? If this world persists another few decades, what remembrance will be left by today's suits?

I'm certain that many of the older suits have far more net worth than I do. Yet I was blessed to “retire” from the paycheck six years ago, *at my earliest opportunity*, so I could prioritize my time to

make the days count. Why don't they retire? Whether it's the next deal, the next promotion, a bigger yacht, or just more bucks, why can't they see it's all vanity?

Consider the wealthiest, smartest, most successful man in the history of the world: King Solomon of Israel, who reigned over the world's richest kingdom about 3,000 years ago. The book of Ecclesiastes is Solomon's own confession about the end of ambition. I encourage you to read the entire, albeit short, book, but for now, let's excerpt a bit of Chapter 2:

¹I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. ²I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doeth it? ³I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life. ⁴I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: ⁵I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: ⁶I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: ⁷I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: ⁸I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. ⁹So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. ¹⁰And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. ¹¹Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun. ¹²And I turned myself to behold wisdom, and madness, and folly: for what can the man do that cometh after the king? even that which hath been already done. Ecclesiastes 2:1-12

You're not going to outdo Solomon. Read the historical record in the books of Kings and Chronicles. He had the resources to acquire and experience EVERYTHING his little heart desired. Today's suits are pikers in comparison. Solomon literally had 1000 women to choose from at bedtime. Seven hundred official wives weren't enough. So he added 300 concubines to the harem.

He started out well, praying for, receiving, and exercising great wisdom. His kingdom prospered. His (first) marriage was one of the greatest love stories in history, memorialized in the book entitled "Song of Solomon." But he got ambitious and arrogant, forgetting the God who had given him everything. At the end of life, Solomon got it right. His final confession is recorded in the last two verses of Ecclesiastes:

¹³Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

Solomon finally came back to where he started: understanding his accountability to God in everything he did, everything he spoke, and everything he thought. But it was too late for his marriage, too late for his family, and too late for his nation. The kingdom was divided in the next generation and never regained its former glory. *An aside . . .* Note that Biblical prophecy (from 2000 – 3500 years ago) is clear that Israel would be scattered across the world, would eventually be regathered to the land, would

suffer great tribulation, and finally will turn back to their Lord – as a nation recognizing that their Messiah is Jesus Christ – and be established as the center of God’s kingdom in this world. Eerie, isn’t it? Events are heading in that direction, aren’t they . . . but that’s the subject of a different book. I recommend Dave Hunt’s book on prophecy and the end times, *Judgment Day! Islam, Israel, and the Nations*.

The closest I’ve personally met with respect to “having it all” in America is a near-billionaire with whom I had some professional interaction over a period of a few years. We’ll call him “Mr. Pyramid,” (not his real name) because he climbed to the top of several corporate and financial pyramids. When I knew him he was in his mid-sixties, divorced but with a new, young, augmented trophy wife. Mr. P was still good looking and athletic, and still looking to make a difference. He had been raised the son of a preacher, but had rejected the person of Jesus Christ (yes, the rejection is personal, not philosophical) when he got conned by the anti-scientific fantasy of evolution in college.

Despite being an atheist, Mr. Pyramid was driven to establish a charitable foundation to help various disadvantaged groups. I find it interesting that rich atheists, despite their materialistic worldview – physics and chemistry supposedly explain everything – feel the need to find meaning by charitable giving. Where is the impulse for charity and the satisfaction thereof in the DNA molecule, or in nuclear or electromagnetic forces? Mr. Pyramid was also actively and financially involved in trying to rebuild the reputation of his alma mater.

I was part of a cadre that spent a couple of days with him at an “off-site” conference which he graciously paid for, at a mountain resort. (I still have the monogrammed jacket!) At the opening dinner, he had a video loop playing that showed some of the activities in his life, notably auto racing, skiing, hang gliding, sailing . . . and my memory fails to recall the rest. I had the clear impression that he felt that life was desperately short and he had to squeeze as much excitement, experience, and meaning as he could into the remaining days of his life. How frustrating it must be to be ridiculously wealthy by earthly standards and have so few days to take pleasure. Without the hope established by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, how pitiful to believe that life ends in oblivion. It’s worse than that, of course, for the unbeliever. Life ends in perfect judgment. Oblivion would be an upgrade.

The Lord Jesus spoke to this scenario in a parable found in the Gospel of Luke:

¹⁵And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. ¹⁶And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: ¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? ¹⁸And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. ²⁰But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? ²¹So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Luke 12:15-21

What does Mr. Pyramid really want to do? He wants to live forever, of course! And he clearly wants life to have meaning. Atheistic materialism doesn't actually work for him on a day-to-day basis. What is the physics of meaning? What are the equations for joy? Where in the DNA molecule do you find kindness, or charity, or love, or justice, or truth, or beauty? The vitally essential aspects of life are *non-material*. The concept of hope is wired into us and yet hope is entirely *immaterial*, along with the rest of the list above. Concepts, thoughts, purposes, meanings . . . we understand such things because we are made in the image of God, who also is immaterial, a spirit. God created the universe – a lot of stuff – but most importantly He created image bearers, you and me, to walk with Him and make our days count.

Face it: everything you own, even your body itself is made out of dirt! We can spend many hard-working hours in exchange for money in order to buy nicely shaped dirt in the form of bigger TVs, cars, houses, jewelry – but it's still dirt! Get some perspective.

Economically, I have always lived a very middle class life. I retired from the paycheck at the earliest opportunity in order to spend more of my time doing important things. But even at the material level (admittedly, the standard is far different in America than in tribal Africa – but I'm writing for Americans, here), I find that the richest guys don't have much more than I do. They spend lots of money for expensive, professionally prepared dinners at 5-star restaurants. But my wife and I know this little Mexican restaurant that's as tasty as my taste buds can handle. Whenever we want we can grill cheeseburgers and load on the onions, relish, etc. Is there really anything that tastes better? My Pepsi is just as good as Mr. Pyramid's Pepsi. His TV screen may be bigger, but I can sit a little closer to mine if I want. My big, soft couch is already as comfortable (probably more) than ones that cost ten times more. And so on.

The tragic irony is that Mr. Pyramid could truly *have it all*. He could make his days count with meaning that survives into eternity. He could truly live forever, ever learning, ever contributing, ever building relationships, ever growing in love, goodness, and wisdom, but only if he found the ultimate source of all that is good, namely God. This Earth is going to get cleaned up – not by the UN or the green movement, but by the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm going to get to be part of that. Because I'm such a great guy? No – I'm just a sinner, who repented and trusted the Lord Jesus for my salvation. Which I received as a gift. For which I'm forever grateful and want to serve Him. How about you?

I recall attending a technical conference many years ago. One of the featured events was a "lifetime achievement" award given to one of the stars in the field. I quite respected this fellow's work through his technical papers and the books he had authored which graced my shelves. There were perhaps 100 people in the room at the time of the ceremony: engineers, scientists, and R&D executives in government and industry. The recipient was fairly old at this time and I watched him walk forward to receive the recognition.

I'm sure he enjoyed the applause and the kind words and the plaque, etc. Of course, a round of applause from about 100 dignified professionals isn't very raucous. He couldn't have known more than a fraction of the folks in attendance. He certainly didn't know me personally. I recall thinking that such a lifetime of intense, brilliant work that produced so many accomplishments ought to enjoy more glory than what I was seeing. After all, much of his work would have been done in either solitary labor or as part of small teams. Such public acclaim is rare indeed. How many people in that small crowd really

cared about the fellow? The dominant emotion for some might even have been envy. For many I would guess that the appreciation was merely respectful, without any real care. How many people really take joy in the success of someone else, especially if they don't know him personally?

This all seemed to me such a perfect example of vanity. I wouldn't have traded my situation for his under any circumstances. Let me ask you. Would you trade your life for that of the top NBA or NFL star? If tennis is your sport (it's mine) would you trade your situation, your life for that of the #1-ranked player in the world? How about swapping places with a rock star or a CEO or the President of the United States? I wouldn't.

At that conference nobody knew me. In my career I was conducting research that both challenged me and contributed, I felt, to significant national defense programs. But more importantly, I was teaching "junior church" and driving a Sunday School bus route to bring children to hear the word of God preached each week. Those kids knew me, even if some nationally recognized scientists didn't. Most importantly, I believe that my Lord Jesus was pleased with the work I was doing for Him. Whatever "award" I might receive from my Lord for that work after my resurrection, my greatest desire and joy will be to find that I've pleased my Creator and my Savior.

You might not be a billionaire, or a nationally recognized scientist, or even a "suit." You might be a union worker, or a civil servant, or a mechanic, or whatever. And still be afflicted with the plague of covetousness. You might remember that "coveting" is one of the "Top 10" – the 10 commandments, that is. Here's how God gave it to Moses on the mountaintop:

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbour's. Exodus 20:17

The operative word is "anything." I meet multitudes of people in the left-half of the economic bell curve who are just as greedy and addicted to acquiring dirt as the Forbes 100 billionaire who wants to make it into the top 50. Men work extra jobs or continually volunteer for overtime hours and pay at the expense of building a life. They already have a big-screen TV, but want the ginormous-screen TV ASAP. Once they get that they need to find the bucks for 3-D. Or a newer car, a bigger house, a hot tub, a pool, a motorcycle, a jeweled wristwatch, etc. It's just dirt! There's nothing intrinsically wrong with enjoying the fruits of your labor and enjoying good things in this life. Solomon spoke truthfully when he wrote:

Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Ecclesiastes 5:18

Enjoy the dirt if you've earned it. But remember that there are far bigger things in life. Solomon also wrote:

¹⁰*He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.* ¹¹*When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?* ¹²*The sleep of a labouring man is sweet,*

whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. Ecclesiastes 5:10-12

The lustful are never satisfied. Is Solomon qualified to write on this subject? Note the wisdom: once you have increased your goods, more people come out of the woodwork that want a piece of the action and, besides, most acquired "dirt" just sits there to look at. Furthermore, the more you get, the less you sleep. Rich guys are always analyzing insurance options and working to balance their portfolios, continually checking the prices of gold, oil, T-bills, marks, yen, and yuan.

All of this discussion leads us to the next topic: balance. If it's not about money, then what? Read on.

Chapter 2

Balance – Find it!

This chapter is aimed at the mature, serious Christian man who truly wants to make his life count. Are good intentions enough? Of course not: Consider the following Scriptural passages:

¹⁴Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. ¹⁵See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, ¹⁶Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ²⁰Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:14-20

²Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, ³According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ⁴Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. ⁵And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; ⁶And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; ⁷And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. ⁸For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ¹⁰Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: ¹¹For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:2-11

The first passage admonishes the Christian to wake up and pay attention to what the Lord is saying. Walk circumspectly, carefully, through life. If you're not, you're a fool. Redeem the moments of time in your life. Time is precious. Treat your hours and days as if you have to pay dearly for them. Don't engage in such utterly stupid behavior as drunkenness. The extreme opposite is to be led, moment by moment, by the Holy Spirit. Fill your life with spiritual music. Have an attitude of thankfulness to God.

The second passage gives us a prescription to obtain grace and peace in our lives by knowing God through His word, and by obeying it. He has given us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," namely every tool that we need to be successful in this life (in God's eyes) He has made available to us. We have the Holy Spirit indwelling us and we have the word of God. We have the promises of God throughout Scripture that enable us to call on Him to empower us to live a life of glory

and virtue. The virtues in which we should be growing are not unattainable, but are normal for the child of God.

The passage points out that these are assured promises so that we can be “partakers of the divine nature,” namely become more and more like the image bearers God made us to be. And more and more leaving the lusts of this world behind, which only serve to corrupt us. Our responsibility is given by the list of characteristics to add to our life, our character, namely with all diligence we should work to add faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. Add them and abound in them and our lives will be fruitful and we won’t fall into destructive traps. The accomplishments (fruit) and satisfaction in this life will then transition into our resurrected life with the Lord into eternity – in a new Earth and a new Heaven.

Sound easy? It’s not easy, but it’s also not complicated. Just keep after it and God promises to keep His part of the bargain. We have His word on it.

Is all of the above alien thinking to you? If you’re not a Christian, then repent from your sins, foolishness, selfishness, insanity, etc., and get started! If you claim to be a Christian and you have no motivation to follow the prescriptions above, then you should examine yourself – whether you really have a new heart, a new spirit – whether you really have been born again. Look up 2 Corinthians 5:17, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Romans 8:1-10, John 3:16-21 . . . I could go on. True repentance produces a new birth, a changed mind, and “sync” with the Lord and His word. If you act worldly, it’s because you are worldly and have no part with the Lord. See John 8:47, 12:48, 1 John 2:15-17, and James 4:3-4. If you find yourself on the wrong side of these Scriptural warnings, you are one heartbeat away from Hell. DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

So, back to my main readership for this chapter – the mature, committed Christian. I’m worried about you. Many of the “best” in this country have been driven completely out of balance by the church culture that surrounds them.

So you’ve been a Christian for a number of years. How are you doing? If you’re past your mid-twenties, you’re likely married with kids. You’re working hard in your career, trying to please your wife day to day, and feel the weight of raising your children to know and serve the Lord in a desperately wicked world. You have obligations to your relatives, to your neighbors, and to your nation. You want to please the Lord and you are mindful that you will give an account at the Judgment Seat of Christ. You struggle with temptations that you thought you would have put behind you long ago. Life is racing by. How is it going?

I’ve been a member of many conservative Bible-preaching churches over the years, as my career has moved my family around the country. It took me quite a few years to realize that there was one huge subject that was never taught. Over a short period of time I suddenly noticed that I had heard hard-hitting sermons with the following admonitions:

“Are you spending enough time in prayer every day? Do you spend even ten minutes a day in prayer for your wife? For each of your children? Do you pray for this church? For the lost? How can you be right with God if you’re not in prayer!?!”

“Are you raising your children to know and honor the Lord? Do you spend even an hour a day with them? Are you teaching them? Loving them? Do they come to you with their problems?”

“Husband, are you loving your wife as Christ loved the church? A woman has needs different from a man, which include the following . . . (long list here). Does she respect you because you’ve earned it? Are you guarding your marriage?”

“Why did Jesus come to this earth? It was to call sinners to repentance – to preach the Gospel. How can you follow Jesus if you are not sharing the Gospel with lost sinners? Were you at our weekly ‘visitation’ meeting last week?”

“If you’re not here at the church every time the doors are open, then you’re forsaking the assembling of the brethren. How can you miss a church meeting and be right with God?”

“Are you taking care of the financial needs of your family? Are you working hard for your employer, showing a good testimony, and taking care of business? Are you a good steward, staying out of debt and saving for your family’s future needs?”

“Are you tithing, giving above that to missions, and helping out those that you know have financial needs? What about last week’s ‘special offering’? Did you give sacrificially for that?”

. . . and others

Each message, standing on its own, was perfectly reasonable. But each message was a pulpit-thumping call to maximize effort in that particular area. What if I were to embrace each call with all my heart? For example, why not give “sacrificially” to that special offering my pastor announced . . . and it was definitely a worthy project! Typically, though, a pastor won’t mention that over the next twelve months, there will be about fifteen more equally worthy special offerings.

Wouldn’t it be nice if you could plan ahead and budget for these? Woe unto you if you do work hard, build a savings / investment account, and then get hit with the weighty plea to give sacrificially for the next building project / missions trip / choir robes / new carpet / hymn book purchase / outreach event / etc. / etc. / etc. There goes the savings account. Then perhaps you get hit with unforeseen medical bills and go into debt. Now you can’t give much at all and you’re therefore out of the will of God. Tough . . . maybe God is chastising you . . .

Woe to such pastors that “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders . . . that devour widows’ houses . . . but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” (Matthew 23:4, 14) What a frightening prospect when such teachers stand before the Lord themselves.

The issue is BALANCE. How do you get right with God and stay right with God, considering all of your responsibilities and pressures from church, family, business, and society?

More importantly, how do you prepare yourself for the Judgment Seat of Christ? In your career, for example, you plan and work hard to prepare presentations to senior management. You want to look your best. Additionally, you're continually mindful of your annual performance review. Bonuses and promotions are at stake!

How much more is at stake for you at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Yet most Christians make only passing mention of this awesome event. You had better be ready for that performance review! At that meeting you won't be able to call on your pastor, your wife, your boss, or anyone else to represent you. Everything in your life will be "naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." (Hebrews 4:13) Are you working in preparation for that meeting? Are you "building the file" for that review?

Let's get practical. Forget the unbalanced preaching you may have heard in your life. Scripture is balanced in its content and delivery. The heaviness of Jeremiah's message was just right for his people in their time (and relevant for ours). The encouragement of Paul's messages to the churches in Thessalonica and Philippi was just right for churches struggling under Jewish and Roman persecution. The messages to the seven churches in Revelation were just right for them.

Let the word of God speak to you. Don't build your doctrine and life on the whims of the preachers and teaching under which you sit. And please, please, please, don't get caught up with TV preachers or "national Christian leaders" or famous authors. If your church is building you up, that's a blessing. But your pastor is preaching to a mixed crowd. The crowd won't be standing with you when you stand before the Lord. Study the word, pray for wisdom, and settle your conscience in how to balance your life.

Shouldn't we be in prayer for the lost, for our families, and for our church? Shouldn't we be working hard on the job with a good testimony? Shouldn't we be giving generously for truly worthy needs? Yes, of course – but it's your responsibility to determine how to balance your resources and time before the Lord. Just say "no" sometimes.

Let me offer an extremely controversial example. The New Testament does not teach that the Christian owes a tithe of his income to the Lord by giving such money to his local church. Now I know I just crossed swords with 99% of the fundamentalist preachers in America. After all, how are you going to pay for the buildings, electricity, heating, pews, carpets, hymnbooks, insurance, pastoral salaries, etc? If you really want to spend your money on all those things, then do it by free will offerings. Don't lay on the Christian the responsibility that God laid on the other eleven tribes of Israel to support the Levites. The temple is no more. Priests are no more. The presence of God resides as the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the believers. Each believer is a "priest," in that he has direct access to God. (This is basic Christian doctrine.)

Don't get me wrong. I'm FOR generous giving. My wife and I typically spend 25% of our annual income on ministry, including Gospel tracts, street ministry expenses, support for missions projects, and food for fellowship meetings. Through Scripture, God demands not just 10% of my resources, but 100%! Consider the following passage written by Paul to the Christians at Rome, in chapter 12:

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Present your entire body as a living sacrifice for the Lord's service. When you're born again, God renews your mind, transforming your entire life. From that point you learn, grow, and work to know God's perfect will in your life and DO IT! You'll be held accountable for everything you do, including how you spend all your resources. My concern is more for the 75% that I spend on myself – whether my choices are prudent or not.

I'm not going to do the exhaustive Bible study in this book to prove the case against "mandatory tithing," which is the culture of many churches. Search it out yourself. If someone is laying that burden on you, make him prove it to you through Scripture – in context, recognizing the real differences between the Jewish temple system and the New Testament church. Indeed we have liberty to spend money on buildings, salaries, etc. Typically, we find in the book of Acts and the New Testament epistles that believers met in homes and were led by a *cooperative group* of elders (as opposed to a single "super" pastor), who were the mature believers in the fellowship. The Gospel spread much more by their methods than by the modern American practice of building bigger and bigger temples, proliferating programs to fill the temples at the expense of spreading the Gospel and multiplying churches. If you're interested, you will find more info on this subject in the Discipleship section of my website, <http://truthreallymatters.com>.

If you're the type who is going crazy trying to meet all of the external pressures on you – each of which seems reasonable at the time – then you're on the road to falling from usefulness, as Peter states in verse 2 Peter 1:10, and as Paul fears for himself in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. If you fall, it's your fault. God will give you the strength and the wisdom if you ask Him (James 1:5).

If you're the type that doesn't know what I'm talking about, because you're just going through the motions spiritually, attending a "church service" but doing little else, then you've got a lot of repenting to do. If you're truly a born again Christian, then devotion to the Lord and His work will be of utmost importance to you. Everything you do with respect to your family, your work, your spare time, your church, and your personal relationship with the Lord will be built on Biblical truth. If you don't see this, then you're likely a false convert, along with millions of other American churchgoers, headed for Hell. If that's you, please read the appendix, "Your Biggest Problem & Your Greatest Need – a short tract."

Let's simplify a bit. Recall that the Lord Jesus, in Matthew 22:34-40, summarized the entire law with the two greatest commandments -- to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself. As a Christian, if you work thoughtfully to accomplish each of these commandments daily and weekly, you'll be in good shape.

You'll find an interesting way to look at life in a New Testament church in my article, "Three Pillars for a New Testament Church – A Simple Model," on my web site at <http://truthreallymatters.com>. The three pillars are truth, love, and zeal. On a weekly basis are you adding truth to your life by studying and memorizing the word of God? Are you reading good books? Are you redeeming the time in these evil days, or do your evenings, weekends, and lunch hours slip by without any growth?

Is there room for recreation in your life? Of course, but you can't let recreation addict you. Perhaps you've seen the commercial that features a fellow that has attended every Super Bowl. He brags about it: "I have missed weddings. I have missed babies being born. But I have no intention of ever missing a Super Bowl." Wow, what a legacy to leave for his children and grandchildren. If he happens to be a Christian, will he be so eager to discuss his record at the Judgment Seat of Christ? Recreation fits in the gaps between our priorities. It can't be the priority. Look, I like to eat an occasional candy bar. But if I make the candy bars the priority, I'll simply die younger – with no teeth.

Are you guiding your family in love on a weekly basis? Consider how many tasks you schedule on the job. Go ahead and schedule time with your wife and your kids. Give each one individual attention. Balance these needs along with everything else so that your conscience is clear before God. If you pray and work at this, you'll do a great job and won't burn out.

How about Christian fellowship? Are you loving the Christian brothers and sisters who are part of your church (John 13:35)? When you get together with them, are you passive, or do you plan and work to encourage and strengthen them at least a little bit each time you meet? I am really disgusted at the passivity of most Christians when they attend a church meeting. What is the purpose of getting together at church? Scripture explains:

²³Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) ²⁴And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

We are always to be ready to profess our faith to those outside and inside the church. Inside the church we are to provoke *one another* unto love and good works. Don't miss assembling together! But use the time to exhort one another, and even more as we get closer to the Lord's return. Get it? We get together to exhort, provoke *one another* to love more and to work more for the Lord. How can you help *one another* when you're all sitting in the pews and just one fellow is doing all the exhorting? It seems to me that modern American churches are flagrantly disobedient to the word of God.

When there is time for people to fellowship, is the time used constructively? Are you looking to find a brother or sister to lift up? Or are you more concerned about how the Bears are going to play that afternoon? Are you passive, just waiting to see whether others are going to act friendly? Shame on you. One proof of the pitiful state of modern churches is the existence of an official position named “greeter.” This is a job appointed to just a few?!? These problems exist because there is no care, no love in most churches. Recall that Jesus said in John 13:

³⁴A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. ³⁵By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Love was also an Old Testament standard, but Jesus sets a whole new standard for His church by teaching that our mutual love within the local fellowship will be so clear that “all men” will know that we belong to Jesus. Are you even making an attempt in this area?

Regarding prayer for yourself, your family, your Christian brethren, and the lost folks around you, of course this must be a priority. The Lord Himself, the Son of God, prayed often to His Father. If He spent much time praying, is it reasonable that we should? We need strength for ourselves and we desire protection and blessing on the lives of our wife and children. But there is no competition to set time limits on prayer. Do make sure that you communicate with a pure and fervent heart to the Lord. Scripture has much instruction on prayer. For a guide, I recommend John R. Rice’s book, “Prayer: Asking & Receiving.”

Let’s consider this item in the beginning of the Lord’s ministry, in Mark 1:

³⁵And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed. ³⁶And Simon and they that were with him followed after him. ³⁷And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. ³⁸And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

Wow – “a great while before day.” He needed strength from His heavenly Father and prioritized the time to get it. Simon Peter and the others seem to be complaining that people were clamoring for His attention so that there was no time for such a thing as praying. Why was he praying? For strength for the work of preaching the Gospel. If preaching is to have any effect that lasts, it must penetrate the hearts of men. That’s God’s job through the Holy Spirit (See John 16:7-8) so we had better be sure that we enlist the Lord’s help.

Are you involved in that great ministry and praying accordingly? Namely, are you actually following the Lord Jesus by zealously reaching out to the lost with a Scriptural Gospel? If you have nobody around you to team up with, then find a better church, or start one yourself (see my articles in the Discipleship section of <http://truthreallymatters.com>). If your pastor doesn’t do personal evangelism himself – each week – then what is he getting paid for? And how can he be qualified to teach you the Bible? If you have a wife and kids, you need to be training them to do evangelism. Schedule some time every week for this wonderful, privileged task. If your children are involved with you in evangelism, they will get saved at a young age and will get much experience in analyzing the

stupid and Satanic philosophies of the world. (See my many web articles on the subject of how very practically to share the Gospel.)

If you diligently build your life up under the admonitions of God's word, those temptations you struggle with will diminish. They will look more and more stupid to you. You won't have time for them! The Lord may or may not bless you with a complete removal of a particular temptation, but victory will be yours if your life is simply filled with right things – that's called practical righteousness.

The balance in your life is CERTAINLY going to be different from the balance in the life of your pastor, your friend at church, and everyone else. God has gifted you uniquely and you are placed in a particular part of this world for His service. The Christian life isn't complicated. Love God and love your neighbor – according to Scriptural truths. Don't quit.

Chapter 3

Foundations

Although most Americans profess to be Christians, there is not much Bible knowledge out there. A Pew Forum survey in 2010 showed that only about 1/3 of Americans read their Bible at least once a week. Only about 30% of “evangelicals” say that they do any reading at all (outside of the Bible) with regard to their faith, whether through books or the internet. Less than half of Americans can name the four New Testament Gospel accounts in order. Perhaps worst of all, only one 1/4 of white evangelicals know that Protestants teach that salvation is through faith alone. (I’m not a Protestant – I don’t trace my spiritual heritage through the Protestants and back through the apostate Roman Catholic Church. There have been independent, local-church, Bible-believing Christians throughout the last two millennia.)

Does Bible knowledge matter in our chosen topic of manhood? Since God created man from the dust of the earth, we should consult the owner’s manual. Now let me devote the next page or so to my more skeptical reader. Is there proof that the Bible is the word of God? Indeed. For a longer treatment I encourage you to read my article “How Do I Know the Bible is True?,” on <http://truthreallymatters.com>. But here’s a short outline:

1. Logic: Everything in your life screams “Purpose!” Your desires for love, meaning in life, comfort, pleasure, etc., are matched perfectly with what the Bible says about life – about what works and what doesn’t work to produce satisfaction, joy, fulfillment, and hope that there is more for us than these few years of trouble and pain. Your appreciation of ethics, justice, morality, beauty, etc., reflect the Bible’s assertion that we are made in God’s image. We expect God to be perfect in these areas even when we are not. Your conscience convicts you of your sins, and logic demands judgment. Doesn’t your heart cry out for justice when you hear of child abuse, or rape, or murder? There is a God who also holds you accountable for every dirty thought, every unkind word, and every selfish deed, not to mention your ingratitude toward your Creator. Only the Bible offers the good news of forgiveness by substitutionary atonement (someone – the Son of God – took the rap for you), and salvation as a free gift. Our desire to live forever is matched by God’s gift of eternal life – in a resurrection body that won’t fall apart.

2. History: The Bible was written down by over 50 men over a period of 4000 years, yet with perfect self-consistency. (Yes, you’ll have to do some real study to understand this.) Hundreds of independent cultural / historical accounts from all over the world affirm the Genesis accounts of creation and the worldwide flood of Noah’s time. Ancient royal genealogies trace the ancestry of kings back to the three sons of Noah. Hundreds of specific (yes, really specific) prophecies accurately predicted the fall of kingdoms and cities, the rise of rulers, and the coming of the Messiah – including His birthplace and lineage. Christ’s entry into Jerusalem during crucifixion week was predicted *to the day* by Daniel

hundreds of years before the event. Also, and most importantly, the most documented event in ancient history is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Notable skeptics have been converted to follow Christ in the process of trying to discredit the resurrection.

3. Science: Everything we observe in creation is consistent with the Biblical account and contrary to evolutionary speculations. Naturalism has no explanation for the appearance of energy and mass in the universe. The first law of thermodynamics dictates conservation of energy. If energy / mass has always existed, the second law of thermodynamics assures that all usable energy would have been used up, and the universe would be cold and dead. Big bang theology has no explanation for the universe's expansion, and – amazingly – there are no viable theories to account for the formation of galaxies or even stars. Regarding the nanotechnology of life, observational biology shows life coming only from life, and kinds reproducing kinds. No spontaneous generation and no evolution. The fossil record also shows separate kinds buried in sedimentary layers that could only have been caused by a worldwide flood. Everything we know about true science matches a Biblical worldview.

4. Experience: You can test whether the Bible is true by simply obeying it. When I was an atheist I couldn't even imagine how I could ever believe in God, even if I wanted to. When I finally humbled myself, repented from my sins, and trusted Christ, He gave me all the proof I ever needed. My mind changed and my actions followed. The Gospel of John was written to help men believe. It has the "ring of truth" throughout. Salvation is simple. Scripture likens its simplicity to that of eating bread, drinking water, or walking through a door way. Test it. Humble yourself and you will experience all the proof you need as God gives you a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit, and a new life.

Once you're a Christian, find out how God wants a man to live. Let's start with Paul's letters to Timothy, a young convert of Paul's who was in training to become an evangelist / missionary / pastor himself. We'll begin with the first few verses of 2 Timothy:

¹Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. ³Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. ⁴No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. ⁵And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

A man's strength starts as a gift from God, only obtainable by salvation through coming to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Just what is grace? A common acrostic is "God's Riches At Christ's Expense." Given the gift of salvation and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian – the Spirit of Christ Himself – strength is not only possible, but a promise from God. The Lord promised to be with His people right until the end of the world. That's a good thing. Our adversary, the Devil – a real and powerful fallen angel – is to us as a "roaring lion, (who) walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8) But he is no match for the Lord, so our confidence must be in Him.

Paul gives Timothy one of the purposes for his existence: to pass on the truths he has learned to others. Paul is more than a mentor to Timothy. He's an apostle who was given the privilege of writing much of the New Testament as a scribe for the Holy Spirit. Watch out whom you choose for a mentor. Your primary teacher must be the Holy Spirit through the teachings of the word of God. The Psalmist cries out in Psalm 119:

⁹Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. ¹⁰With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. ¹¹Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. ¹²Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes."

Paul warns that tough times are coming and Timothy's endurance will be tested. Paul's ministry was characterized by persecution. He was flogged with 39 stripes on five occasions, stoned (apparently) to death, and attempts on his life are too numerous to mention. All for preaching the good news that God will forgive your sins if you humble yourself, repent, and trust Jesus as your Savior.

Most men get angry at the implications of such a simple message, once they understand it. Forgiveness is needed because our sins are willful and wicked and deserving of Hell. Repentance means that we change our minds about what's right and wrong. Nobody wants to admit they are wrong. Trusting Christ means we can't save ourselves or invent a religion that is merely comfortable. Christianity is exclusive and narrow. The bulls-eye is easy to miss if one willfully aims in another direction. But there is only one truth that saves. Timothy was embarking on a life's journey where he would certainly suffer in trying to help people.

The metaphor of "soldier" is appropriate because the real battles in this world are spiritual. Behind corrupt politicians and rulers, behind the Hollywood and internet and music industries' sludge of immorality, and behind phony TV preachers and megachurch super-pastors are the principalities and powers – demons / fallen angels – that Paul warns of in Ephesians chapter 6. The Christian man will only be successful as a spiritual soldier if he isn't distracted by the inconsequential affairs of life. We have always got to battle for balance, as discussed in the previous chapter. One principal test is whether we are getting the important things done, based on Biblical priorities. The rest of this book will discuss in detail such priorities.

Finally, Paul warns that to receive God's blessing, you can't cheat! If you're going to be an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), you must represent him lawfully. No deceit, no cutting corners, no manipulation. In Paul's first letter to Timothy, we see a list of qualifications for leadership in a local church. Clearly, this list is appropriate for any man that wants to set an example, especially in leading his family. In chapter 3:

²A bishop [that's just a leader within a local church, not some robed guy holding a scepter who loves to be called, "Your eminence"] then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good

behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; ³Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; ⁴One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; ⁵(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) ⁶Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Note especially these words: *blameless, sober, good behaviour, not covetous, good report, lest he fall into reproach.* Don't lie. Don't cheat. Don't steal. (Those are commandments found in Scripture, by the way.) In this context, the point is that our usefulness in this life is dependent on walking with the Lord and maintaining a "good report" with men. One lie can destroy your reputation.

Paul gets specific in mentoring Timothy as shown in chapter 4:

¹²Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. ¹⁵Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. ¹⁶Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.

The implication of "let no man" is to call someone out if he acts disrespectfully. Do so respectfully! Especially, live to be an example. This starts with the mouth. Scripture has a lot of instruction on speaking gracefully and profitably. Be alert for opportunities for charity. America has destroyed much of the privilege of being charitable to the needy. Government has taken over what used to be charitable programs, and has established a system that provokes no gratitude in recipients. Plus, government "charity" programs foster much corruption. Nevertheless, there are opportunities to be helpful to those that have legitimate needs. We'll discuss this further in a later chapter.

How about "in spirit, in faith, in purity"? If we are diligently in the Bible, mindful of walking in the Lord's presence in our family, our church, our business, and all our activities, then trouble never has the chance to arise – spiritually. Purity? Think clean thoughts, speak clean words, behave cleanly. Not complicated. Just do it.

Paul wants Timothy to read. So many American males are addicted to the TV, internet, and computer gaming that they grow dumber as they grow older. Turn off the garbage and read some good books! I'll suggest a reading list at the end of this chapter. "Neglect not the gift . . ." Timothy was gifted by God to teach, preach, and pastor. Whatever your gifts, use them! God gifted you to make your life count. It's not hard to figure out what you're good at and what you like to do. Spend some time thinking – meditating. It takes some quiet in your life to think properly. You might actually get to enjoy turning off the electronic noise. Whatever your God-given gifts, "Give thyself wholly to them."

Finally, in this passage, Paul warns Timothy – and us, by extension – watch out for yourself. You can't be any help to others if you are a train wreck. Especially, pay attention to doctrine. Know the

Bible. Know the truths that God has graciously preserved in His word. God's word is "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)

Let's move on to critical instruction on *how to help* others in counsel and exhortation. In 2 Timothy chapter 2, we find:

¹⁹Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. ²⁰But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. ²¹If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work. ²²Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. ²³But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. ²⁴And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, ²⁵In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; ²⁶And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

The believer is kept safe in the hands of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and God the Father so that "no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." See John 10:27-30. Ephesians 1:13 and 4:30 show that we are sealed up by the Holy Spirit until our salvation is completed through acquiring our own resurrection bodies. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." What a wonderful assurance. Once you're in the family, you can't get kicked out. Given that foundation, of course you'll live a life which has departed from iniquity.

Then Paul offers a metaphor illustrating the "diversity" of individuals in a church or a community. Some live a life valued like gold or silver, but some of wood and earth. The Christian purges himself from the latter by *separating* from them. Associate with determinedly corrupt people and you will be corrupted yourself. Consider the blunt instruction that Paul offers in Romans 16:

¹⁷Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. ¹⁸For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

Don't team up or fellowship with professing Christians who defy Biblical doctrine. The Christian man has the courage to be *intolerant* of those who follow doctrines of devils rather than Scriptural truth. Paul judges such false teachers harshly and appropriately, that they generate divisions and offenses for their own gain and work deliberately to deceive.

But if someone is in error, shouldn't we try to help? Surely we shouldn't just disappear at the first sign of disagreement, should we? Paul touches this point in his letter to another young preacher, Titus, in Titus chapter 3:

¹⁰A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; ¹¹Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

Yes, indeed, admonish him once and even twice. But don't offend the Lord and waste your life by hanging out with him after he shows his determination to stand on error.

What disagreements or errors are big enough to separate over? When should you leave a church or break a friendship or even be bold enough to admonish someone? This is ultimately a judgment call, but easy to make most of the time. It's also a huge subject. One place to start is an article I've provided on my web site entitled "The Ten Most Deadly Heresies Affecting American Churches in these Last Days," found in the Discipleship section of <http://truthreallymatters.com>.

I'll just give a couple of examples for now. The core of the Calvinist heresy is the un-Biblical claim that God has foreordained specific "elect" people from before the foundation of the world to have everlasting life. Therefore, it is obvious that the remainder of the human race – perhaps 99% -- has been foreordained to be damned, with no recourse. Calvinists claim that through "irresistible grace" God will regenerate one of the elect, enabling him to repent and believe. The non-elect are "totally depraved" which means in the Calvinist's construct that they are completely *unable* to choose to repent and believe. Yet the Bible is clear from beginning to end that God desires all men to be saved and the Lord repeatedly and continually implores men to choose to repent and believe.

What are the implications for separation? How can I do personal evangelism in partnership with a Calvinist? I am imploring a lost person I meet on the street to repent from his willful sins and voluntarily trust in Christ. In my (Biblical) view, he literally can choose to do so today! The Calvinist cannot honestly tell the sinner that Christ died for him, because in his false doctrine of "limited atonement," Christ supposedly died only for the elect. He also can't tell the sinner that he could be saved today if he chooses to repent today.

The Calvinist confesses that you can't tell by looking at someone whether he is "elect" and so you should preach to everyone. That's a lot different from seeing everybody as a lost sinner that could be saved today. The Biblical message of repent and believe so that God will regenerate you and you will be born again is very different from the message that you may or may not be one of the elect, but if God regenerates you irresistibly, you will believe. That's a false "gospel," and I want no part of it.

Another example: I cannot join in a church body with a Pentecostal who believes that he occasionally receives new, extra-Biblical revelation. If a new convert comes into the fellowship, I want to disciple that individual with a focus on the Bible. He needs to know the mind of God through the word of God. The trap of supposedly new revelation will lead the young Christian astray. I've seen this effect in Pentecostal churches. Why labor in Bible study when you or your pastor believe you're going to get a personal revelation for this week? Worse, looking for revelations opens one up to nefarious spiritual influence. Yes, there are fallen angels, devils, who work hard to corrupt truth and destroy churches.

In the book of Acts we see the young, vibrant church in Jerusalem characterized by the phrase "one accord." They were lined up because they were in sync with the teachings of Jesus Christ and led by the Holy Spirit. Modern churches in America strive for unity on a false basis – by avoiding doctrinal disagreement. The apostle John writes to believers in his third letter, 3 John: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." In the Lord's prayer to His Father in John 17, Jesus prays,

“Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth.” In the same prayer, he implores for the sake of His disciples:

²⁰Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. ²²And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: ²³I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

What is the Scriptural pattern for unity? Line up with the Lord! When all the Christians in a fellowship are lined up with the Lord, they will be lined up with each other. Simple, huh? But most in American “Christendom” care more about lining up with each other apart from sound Biblical doctrine. Watch out – lining up with the Lord is going to put you in the minority among men. The choice was put starkly by Moses (among many others among the prophets and apostles) in Deuteronomy 30:19. *“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”* The source of all life, physical and spiritual is Jesus Christ. The choice really is simple after all, isn’t it?

Back to 2nd Timothy. Only in purging corrupt relationships can we find honor with the Lord, be sanctified – set apart – and be prepared for work that God has for us. The next bit of guidance is fairly basic – flee youthful lusts and follow righteousness, faith, charity, and peace. That’s the path to purity. Are you still engaged in watching lust-drenched TV shows or movies? Do you “wander” into internet cesspools? Are you easily angered or impatient with others? I shouldn’t have to belabor this point. Search your conscience.

Next: What are foolish and unlearned questions? Some people are argumentative and love to push your buttons. Do you really want to relate to people through arguments on college basketball rankings, or who should win on “American Idol,” or which political candidate made a bigger phony promise in his last speech?

More importantly, when you share the Gospel with someone, it is foolish to get distracted by irrelevancies. The atheist wants to focus on evolution. The Jehovah’s Witness wants to camp on soul sleep. The Roman Catholic wants to discuss who has the oldest church. The modernist wants to contend for the social gospel – helping the poor here and now! Now, if any of these are real stumbling blocks that keep someone from believing the truth, I’m prepared to help them over their misunderstandings. But the usual case is argument and distraction. Don’t fall for it. If your life is going to count, focus on the big issues.

Paul commands us to avoid strive, but to be gentle, pleading, in teaching people the truth. I have found that I can say some very difficult things to people when I share the Gospel if they can see that I care. They must hear compassion in my voice and see genuine concern on my face. Paul points out that the lost “oppose themselves”: they are not acting in their own best interest. Addiction to sin is stupid and if you persist, you wind up in Hell. I would say that’s a life not lived in one’s own best interest.

The passage also reveals that God will help someone to repent who starts in that direction. When you're trying to teach / help someone, it takes patience and insight regarding whether he wants to be helped. If they change directions and start trying to find the Lord and His will, God will draw them further and change the heart. Where you're leading them is "to the acknowledging of the truth," so while you're compassionate, do be bold. Don't equivocate!

19th century pastor / author Charles Spurgeon wrote, "A vigorous temper is not altogether an evil. Men who are easy as an old shoe are generally of little worth." We ought to get stirred up when we see God's word maligned and when sin destroys the lives of people around us. When the arrogant spew out evolutionary fantasies or proclaim their immoral "rights" or attack the person of the Lord Jesus Christ by using His name as a cuss word, it's right to get stirred up. In Ephesians 5, Paul writes:

¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. ¹²For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. ¹³But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. ¹⁴Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

To reprove means to speak up about it and call it sin! Putting the issue on the table is the way to bring it into the light. Make it manifest – opened up for all to see how stupid, how evil, and how destructive sin is. Christ is always the source of life and in this 21st century it's time to wake up and speak up!

Consider the impromptu sermon that Jesus laid on the Pharisees in Matthew 23. They challenged Him and He responded. Did Stephen equivocate in Acts 7? He spoke the truth boldly and it cost him his life. Was he right to wax so bold? The proof that He was is revealed by the approval shown him by the Lord at the end of the chapter. Also, this was the turning point for conviction in the heart of Saul, the world-record (at that time) persecutor / murderer of Christians before he was humbled and became the apostle of his age.

Look at Peter's sermon in Acts 2 at the Jewish feast of Pentecost. He was so bold as to call them out on how they had dealt with the Son of God: "ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." In his next recorded sermon in Acts 3, Peter hammers again, "¹⁴But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; ¹⁵And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." Why didn't he preach against drunkenness or idolatry or foul language? He knew that he had to camp on the BIG SIN in order to bring conviction that leads to repentance that leads to salvation. If you want to actually help someone out of the pit he is in, you have to name the sin. Be compassionate, but don't avoid the issue or sugarcoat it. A man helps another man by being direct.

Finally, to wrap up our exposition of 2 Timothy 2:19-26, we see that the battle is not just with flesh and blood. Satan's greatest trick in western nations is to convince people that he doesn't exist. Imagery of a funny man in a red suit makes him as mythological a character as Santa Claus. In tribal lands from South America to Africa to Polynesia there is no mythology about Satan, however. He (through his hench-devils) manifests quite openly, provoking fear, intimidation, and especially worship wherever he can get away with it. Getting away with it is much easier when the Gospel has little or no presence. If you walked with me doing street evangelism in Chicago, you would see plenty of evidence

of demonic activity. Get in the habit of sharing the Gospel and you'll appear on Satan's radar screen. He'll make evident his displeasure for you. Thank God that "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

In this wimpy and selectively "tolerant" age, we do well to guard our manhood by observing the admonition of the Lord's half-brother, Jude, in his short but punchy letter. I'm going to reproduce the entire passage below because I don't trust you to look it up! Please read it thoughtfully in the context of manning up as a Christian in America. (We'll talk again in a couple of pages.)

¹Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: ²Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. ³Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. ⁴For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. ⁶And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. ⁷Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

⁸Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. ⁹Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. ¹⁰But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. ¹¹Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. ¹²These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; ¹³Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

¹⁴And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, ¹⁵To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. ¹⁶These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

¹⁷But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁸How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. ¹⁹These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. ²⁰But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, ²¹Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. ²²And of some have compassion, making a difference: ²³And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even

the garment spotted by the flesh. ²⁴Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, ²⁵To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Are you a Christian? Then this letter is for you. Jude exhorts you to “earnestly contend for the faith.” That necessitates boldness, courage, work. If I’m in a group in which someone espouses some heresy, I could respond like this, perhaps: “Well, you know, that’s interesting, but maybe there’s another way to look at it. So here’s my opinion, I’m not pushing it on you, just thought you might like to consider it . . .” Just shoot me now! I’d rather die than lose every last molecule of testosterone that God has given me.

Look at the specificity of the warnings Jude gives about false teachers creeping into the churches. Does he equivocate? His word choice includes “condemnation,” “ungodly,” “lasciviousness.” He brings up the histories of Egypt, Sodom, and confrontations with Satan himself, showing that this battle rages throughout history and will not end until the Lord’s return. How about his preaching later in the chapter? “Woe unto them!” He calls them greedy, spots, water-less clouds, dead trees, etc., and pronounces that their judgment is the “blackness of darkness for ever.” How many times does Jude use the word “ungodly” in verse 15?

Finally, Jude ends where he begins. He started with the grace and love of God among the brethren. He ends with a plea to the Christian to be mindful of his responsibility and gratitude for the love of God (verses 20-21), and the point of all this: to reach the lost, whether by showing compassion or by provoking fear of the coming judgment of God (verses 22-23).

In the chapters to follow, we’ll cover specific applications of Biblical manhood. The overarching message of this present chapter is to stir you up to speak up about righteousness, holiness, abhorrence of sin, and show compassion by being honest and open about what destroys lives and damns souls to Hell. What was Jude’s salutation in chapter 1? Does he cite his familial relationship with the Lord Jesus? No, he simply calls himself a servant. Jesus taught His disciples the focus of life when He said:

²⁵He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. ²⁶If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. John 12:25-26

The Christian man is a servant of the King, the most high God. If we get that straight, unimaginable honor is in store. Don’t you want to follow the One who knows the future and loves you with an everlasting love? It’s guaranteed to be difficult, because a real man goes against the flow. Jesus also said to His inner circle:

¹⁹If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. ²⁰Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. ²¹But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me. John 15:19-21

To be a help to those who do not know the Lord, we must stand with Him. Trouble will come. Paul experienced that repeatedly in his life and warned:

¹²Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:12-13

If you're a Christian and you're not getting some grief, even in America, then you're not standing up and speaking out. It's time to man up. Jesus called His disciples to follow Him. Paul wrote the Corinthian believers that they should follow him (Paul) even as Paul followed Christ. What Paul went through to fulfill his mission was extraordinary in suffering, in dedication, in faithfulness, in compassion. Paul was a real man.

Moses was called the meekest man on earth, but what a leader! Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets took the hard roads, and also serve as wonderful specimens of manhood. Daniel's courage, honesty, and devotion to God was blessed in His promotion to the leadership of the world's largest empire. The same was true of Jacob's son Joseph. These are men whose patterns of life we do well to follow.

The ultimate example of manhood was the Lord Jesus: incarnate as a man He was 100% man. He was also 100% God in the flesh, of course. As a man He is our perfect example. Study His words, actions, wisdom, and devotion to His Father, as recorded in the four Gospel accounts. Your life can't go wrong if your manhood is founded on the life of the One who invented manhood.

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Let me close this chapter with a recommended introductory reading list. Study and read much. Your first priority is the Bible itself. You also need to get wise on several relevant subjects including the history of Christianity, creation vs. evolution, evangelism, and Biblical vs. non-Biblical worldviews. Accordingly, acquire and read the following books . . . to just get started:

History of the Churches, by David Cloud

The New Answers Book, volumes 1,2, and 3 by Ken Ham

The Way of the Master, by Ray Comfort

Grave Influence – 21 Radicals and Their Worldviews that Rule America from the Grave, by Brannon Howse

Understanding the Times – the Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews, by David Noebel

Prayer: Asking & Receiving, by John Rice

Heaven, by Randy Alcorn

Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret, by Dr. & Mrs. Howard Taylor

Keeping the Kids – How to Keep Our Children from Falling Prey to the World, by David Cloud

Judgment Day – Islam, Israel, and the Nations, by Dave Hunt

The Bible Version Issue, by David Cloud

America in Crimson Red, by James Beller

A Woman Rides the Beast, by Dave Hunt

Safely Home, a novel by Randy Alcorn

You might say, “But I don’t like to read much.” Then *repent* from being ignorant and ask God to give you a desire for good books and to acquire knowledge and wisdom. Build a good library. When you find a book you love, buy an extra copy to give away. It’s a great blessing to do so.

Get acquainted with the websites below and their archived articles. If they offer an email newsletter, sign up so you can get a good inflow of Scriptural thinking each week.

- <http://www.AnswersInGenesis.org>
- <http://wayoflife.org>
- <http://www.thebereancall.org>
- <http://biblefortoday.org>
- <http://wayofthemaster.com>
- <http://www.chick.com>
- <http://icr.org>
- <http://creation.com>

I pray that you find some help from the recommendations above. If I don’t hear from you in this life, then we can swap stories around a campfire after the Lord’s return.

Chapter 4

Courtship & Marriage

The objective of courtship is to find yourself a wife. The objective of dating is to have fun regardless of any intent to marry or evaluate whether marriage is likely. The end of dating is likely fornication – that’s sex outside of marriage for you readers that only use dumbed-down modern translations of the Bible. (Sorry – couldn’t resist that. If you use anything in English besides the “King James Version” of the Bible, see Section 8 of my “10 Most Deadly Heresies Article” on <http://truthreallymatters.com>.)

Finding a good wife is a good thing! In proverbs 18:22 we find, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” A man is incomplete without one. Our Creator designed us that way. In Genesis 2:

¹⁸And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. ¹⁹And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. ²⁰And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. ²¹And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; ²²And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. ²³And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. ²⁴Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. ²⁵And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

“An help meet for him”: The right woman is indeed a suitable helper for a lifetime of work, service, and joy. A wise, but unknown author once penned, “Woman was taken out of man; not out of his head to top him, nor out of his feet to be trampled underfoot; but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.” A husband and wife are to be partners for life, teammates, friends, and lovers. My best friend has always been my wife. We love to go out to dinner together, not just to enjoy restaurant food, but to talk at length about everything under the sun. I sometimes feel like I should bring a sign along for the table to assure the waiter that he doesn’t need to keep checking on us – we’re just two friends spending time together.

There are rare men who may have the gift to go through this life without a wife. The apostle Paul alluded to this in 1st Corinthians 7:

⁷For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. ⁸I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. ⁹But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.

Paul apparently conducted his ministry as an unmarried man, which was evidently the Lord's intent for him. We don't know what happened to his wife. As a member of the Sanhedrin before his conversion, it is very likely that he was married. Perhaps he was widowed; perhaps she left him after his conversion. We do know that Peter was married and God's plan for the leadership of local churches is for the elders to be married.

Regarding Christian men who plan to go single through life, I don't have much to say to you. I understand the "theory" of that, but cannot grasp it practically or emotionally. Note the bluntness of Paul when he says "it is better to marry than to burn." That is, burn with lust. For a man to go through life without sex, he would indeed have to be gifted from God. As a single man, if he engages in fornication, he will be useless to the Lord, of course. Yes, indeed, a man can theoretically work harder if he does not have a wife to care for, but how can a typical man stand to come home night after night, with no one to talk to, share joys and burdens with, and go to bed alone?

So I'm assuming you're like me. You're built to need a wife. Face up to the enormous responsibility of loving your wife for the rest of your life. Consider the standard Paul lays out in Ephesians 5 for wives and husbands:

²²Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body. ²⁴Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

The standard required for the man is *higher* than that for the woman. The wife is commanded to submit herself to the authority of her husband. That is really offensive to modern American women, which will make it harder for you to find a *good* wife. Especially in America, the culture screams temptations at the husband to yield authority to his wife for the sake of peace. The culture also screams temptations at the wife to assert her "rights" and take control. Typical TV sitcoms display clever, but bossy wives, rebellious kids, and hapless husbands who don't have a clue and are just desperate for some peace. Respect is out of the question.

If the husband and wife yield to their temptations, they both will be miserable. When God's order is followed, both husband and wife will experience maximum satisfaction, joy, and especially blessings from God in ministering to other people. How are marriages doing in this "liberated" culture? Miserable marriages abound and divorce is more likely than not. Children suffer. Much physical abuse and even murder result from husbands and wives doing that which seems right in their own eyes.

Recall that I asserted that the standard for the husband is higher. He is commanded to love his wife even as Christ loves the church. Jesus died for His church and so a man who loves his wife would willingly give up his life to protect her. More than that, he lives each day to be a loving blessing to his wife. When she experiences that, she is much more likely to respect the leadership of her husband.

God wants to lead a family toward increased service and blessings. He won't do it when His authority and direction are defied. Consider two consecutive psalms on this topic:

Psalm 127: ¹Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. ²It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. ³Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. ⁴As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. ⁵Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Psalm 128: ¹Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. ²For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. ³Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. ⁴Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. ⁵The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. ⁶Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

I can't say it better than the Lord does in Proverbs 1:7 . . . "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." If you have any sense at all, fear the almighty power and judgment of God and do what He says. If you're even smarter than that, you will *agree* with Him, following instructions that make life work. In Psalm 127 we see that God wants to bless His people, even materially. This will certainly happen in the fullness of prophecy when the Lord returns and establishes His kingdom. These two psalms certainly include the prophetic application. But we can often have a measure of such temporal blessings in this life. The picture of blessed family life in these two psalms, even unto your grandchildren and beyond, is certainly worth working for.

Not all Christians even have the opportunity for such blessings, of course. If you follow the Lord in North Korea, or China, or Pakistan, or Iran, for example, you may not even survive alive after professing Christ. Not to worry: The Lord will reward His martyrs beyond our comprehension. Jesus refers to this principle:

²⁹And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, ³⁰But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. ³¹But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

In America, however, for the time being, we have freedom to speak up, to pray, to preach, to work, to marry, and even to teach our children that God is their Creator . . . they are not descended from primordial goo. There is no excuse whatsoever for not building family life completely in accordance with Scripture.

How does love and submission work practically in a Christian marriage? In my experience my wife and I make decisions by discussion and in agreement more than 99% of the time. If there is a battle over issues every day in a marriage, one or both spouses are completely out of the will of God. Most issues in life are really simple. Pay the electricity bill on time. Do the laundry before you have to buy

new clothes. Don't play hooky from work. Don't go out drinking with the guys. Don't let your wife do the same with the girls. (If you share the Gospel with your lost friends you won't get invited anyway.) Find a solid church or start one if you can't.

The real issue is how to deal with the fraction of the remaining 1%. Sometimes you just can't find agreement. In those cases the husband makes the call. And the wife supports it. I was in the United States Air Force for 20 years. When I was a junior officer I took part in a number of spirited arguments with my peers about resources, schedules, objectives, etc. At some point our colonel made the decision. That's what he got paid for. And we all worked to support that decision from that point. Not complicated. It works.

I'll give you a tough personal example. My wife won't enjoy the recollection either. We had just moved into a new community and she wanted to start a quilting business. We had the money to buy a first-class machine for \$17,000. She went to check it out at a quilting show and came back with all her hormones on fire about a state-of-the-art computer-controlled version with all kinds of features that cost a mere \$32,000. She really wanted it.

Now, we actually had the money to go for the "Cadillac" version, but my heart was crushed by the bite it would take out of the rest of our savings. We were finally *ahead* for the first time in our lives. And I wanted to stay ahead. In discussing the issue with her from a business point of view (I have an MBA), I believed that she should demonstrate getting the business off the ground and get some cash flow before upgrading to the high-production-level machine. The counter was that if we upgraded immediately we would "save" \$2,000. Such a pitch for "Look how much you can save by acting now!" normally doesn't fool my wife, but this was personal. And she *knows* quilting. But I know business.

She eventually yielded to my judgment and things worked out just fine. I felt all the darts of temptation to yield for the sake of peace. If she hadn't recognized quickly (within a day) the overriding principle of husband-leadership, I'm not sure whether or not I would have caved. Thankfully for both financial and marital peace, she doused the hormones and got perspective.

My wife has been extraordinarily devoted to the family leadership principle over the years. The Air Force moved us around quite regularly. When I got the next assignment I would come home and pull out a U.S. map and ask her to guess where we were going next. When she "got warm" as her finger moved over the map, she would quickly figure out which Air Force base was next for us. Her attitude was always, "It doesn't matter where we go as long as we'll be together." That was always a terrific encouragement to me. That freed me up to make the best possible career and family decisions, while seeking God's guidance.

When you're looking for a wife, just what type of woman are we talking about? The classic passage is the last 22 verses of Proverbs chapter 31. We'll get there later, but let's first look at the beginning of the chapter:

¹*The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him.* ²*What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows?* ³*Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.* ⁴*It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink:* ⁵*Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.*

It is commonly understood that the counsel in this chapter is conveyed by Bathsheba to her son, Solomon. The irony is both large and encouraging. Bathsheba, who committed adultery with King David, and then married him after the king murdered her husband, is now given the privilege by God to counsel both Solomon and believers through the ages on the standard for godly women. In the passage above she warns him against wasting his life chasing women. It is clearly the scourge of all history that powerful men often destroy themselves and others because it is so easy to entice women to share their bed. What was true in ancient times frequents today's headlines as well. Bathsheba also warns her son against liquor with an obvious application: a king cannot dispense justice when drunk.

The encouraging thing about God's choice of Bathsheba as the messenger is that if she can be used to provide instruction in an area in which she failed so miserably, then there is hope for us. God offers forgiveness to anyone for any vile sin if he repents and forsakes the sin. What is repentance? It's simply a change of mind that leads to a change of action. Consider the following encouragements from Scripture:

¹³*He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Proverbs 28:13-14*

¹*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. Psalm 32:1-2*

⁹*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9*

¹*My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: ²And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2*

If these ideas are unfamiliar to you, PLEASE READ and meditate on Psalm 51. It expresses King David's repentance toward God for his sins of adultery and murder – in fact, you can argue that David broke every one of the ten commandments in the days after he yielded to his lust for another man's wife. The joyful result was that God forgave David. It's clear from Proverbs 31 that God also forgave a repentant Bathsheba. We also see in the Biblical record that God forgave Moses for murder, Jonah for disobedience, Peter for denial, Paul for the torture and persecution of Christians, and multitudes of others for every sin under the sun.

More importantly for you and me, we know because God does not change that God will forgive us for our vile sins, if we humble ourselves and repent. That's good news! Most chicken-hearted men – who don't know the Lord as Savior – spend their lifetime in self-justification, arrogance, and defiance of God and His laws.

This passage in Proverbs – in fact, the entire book of Proverbs – is cautionary. No man on the Earth was wiser than Solomon. Throughout Proverbs is much instruction about watching out for women and avoiding trouble. Yet Solomon, the human author of Proverbs and teacher of wisdom, fell as hard in this area as anyone in history. The cautionary note? No matter how smart, how wise, or how experienced you are, you must guard yourself against immorality. No man is "safe" when it comes to

women. Before you're married, seek a wife according to God's rules and stay clean. After you're married, keep your distance from other women.

Now I'm going to show you how narrow-minded I am. After you're married, you simply cannot have a "friendship" with another woman. As a couple you can have a friendship with another couple. You can have male friends. But you simply cannot have a one-to-one friendship with another woman. Are you going to trust your wife to have a male friend, who might like to go out to dinner with her or take her to a ball game . . . or camping? Of course not. Not in a million years. Do you want to avoid adultery? It's not hard, just stay several steps away. Consider this passage from James 1:

¹²Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. ¹³Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

We would all agree that the big thing to avoid in this life is . . . drum roll . . . "DEATH." What leads to death? Sin, of course. "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death." (Proverbs 11:19) The end of a pattern of sin leads to physical death. Drunkenness, smoking, fornication – each generates diseases that kill you young. How can you avoid sin? Avoid enticement by noticing when your lust is stirred up. How can you avoid having your lust stirred up? Recognize temptation and resist it. That's what James is talking about. You can stay several steps away from death.

If you don't want to fall off of a cliff, don't lean over the edge. In fact, stay behind the fence. If you don't want to fall into fornication or adultery, then keep your distance in the first place. My career moved me around the country and I worked in quite a number of organizations. One of the first things I would do in meeting my co-workers was to brag on my wife – how happy we were and what a wonderful woman she was. I don't know if I would have been in any danger from temptation from any of the women I ever worked with, but I placed myself so many steps away that I never needed to find out. James also writes in chapter 4:

⁶But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. ⁹Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

Don't get cocky (proud) about your morality, your faithfulness to your wife, or your disdain for sexual sin. Submit to God and His rules. He is smarter than we are about temptation. He wrote the book! When tempted, you can assume that it's from one of Satan's forces – even if it's not, he produced the culture that drives it. Resist the Devil and he will flee from you. Elsewhere Paul writes, "Flee fornication . . . flee also youthful lusts." Don't dabble and play to see how close you can come. Danger! Danger, Will Robinson! (If that historical reference doesn't compute, ignore it.) God wants to draw nigh to us. He gives us the responsibility to seek Him, in seriousness and in humility.

I'm going to print below the famous portion of Proverbs 31, trusting you to read it through. The Lord sets this passage apart in the Hebrew language by starting each verse with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. As you read, recognize that this is God's picture for the type of woman you want to marry, a real "keeper," and / or the type of woman you want to help your wife to become.

¹⁰Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. ¹¹The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. ¹²She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. ¹³She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. ¹⁴She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar.

¹⁵She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. ¹⁶She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. ¹⁷She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. ¹⁸She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. ¹⁹She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.

²⁰She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. ²¹She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. ²²She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.

²³Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. ²⁴She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. ²⁵Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. ²⁶She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. ²⁷She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

²⁸Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. ²⁹Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. ³⁰Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. ³¹Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

What kind of woman is this? She is apparently as rare and as precious as rubies. She is trustworthy, no small matter to any husband who is regularly on the road. She works hard and is willing to do any honorable task to support her family. She is wise in finances and business. She speaks with kindness and wisdom. Let me repeat that. She speaks with kindness and wisdom. If you find a woman like that, lay aside every other task if necessary to win her for your wife, that is, if you measure up to be the man that she needs.

She doesn't praise herself, but is praised by her husband and children. How many "successful" women are there in America who are not praised by husband and children? Which do you suppose is more satisfying to a woman? To be praised by husband and children or to receive the simply envious accolades of her professional peers? The answer is obvious because God designed the woman to receive maximum satisfaction and joy in fulfilling her role.

Can a woman work professionally? This is a big topic and more suitable to another book, but the short answer is, "Of course." As long as the purpose is to provide for the family, go ahead and find a job or start a business in which you can make as much money in as short a work week as possible. But

that's not usually the perspective, is it? The feminist in the work force wants fulfillment and glory in her career. The family becomes a hindrance.

Note in the passage that this admired woman has a husband who "is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land." A godly woman enables her husband to be successful in public life, whether in government, business, professions, or trades. It is clear from the sense of Scripture that a woman is built to provide stability and emotional strength in a family. If she does so, the man can build great structures of accomplishment upon this foundation. Without the foundation, the structures crumble. A woman who builds up her man will be blessed indeed and receive love from him that "pegs the joy-meter."

Why does God establish the Biblical order of such roles in the family? He also does so in the local church. (See 1 Timothy 2:11-12, and 3:2, for example.) Satan definitely had it figured out. When he decided to attack God's image-bearers, he went after the woman. See Genesis 3. She decided on her own recognizance to evaluate Satan's philosophy without consulting her husband. Adam wouldn't have been so easily fooled. But when she was deceived, Adam crumbled willfully because he couldn't stand the possibility of losing his woman. He chose her over God. Both Adam and Eve and everyone since have suffered immensely. The same conflict rages today.

So find a woman who is at least aimed toward the Scriptural target! Does she understand these principles? Is she educable? Are you grounded so that you know your responsibility to love and teach her? If not, don't get married yet. If you're not in good shape, stay away from women entirely.

Let's talk about courtship. (There are a lot of sub-topics I'm not going to cover. I'm assuming my reader can figure out most of the details for himself once he starts in the right direction.) When you find a serious Christian woman whom you consider to be a candidate for marriage, don't hide your intentions. Early on, explain that you're looking for someone to build a life together that honors God. If that scares her off, that's clarity! Clarity saves you time, money, and heartbreak.

Here's a big point. Keep your hands off of her! Regarding the premarital state, Paul simply writes to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor 7:1, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." Look, this is pretty basic stuff. Once you start down the startlingly steep slippery slope of physical affection, where are the logical turn-around points? From necking to caressing, to fondling, to intercourse – there is no easy stopping or turn-around point. Hey, I'm talking to a man here. You know what I mean. Momentum builds and your powers of reason emulate those of a hound dog.

It's essential that you and your young lady be in agreement on this. Yes, indeed, talk about it early on. You may need to explain such realities to her, that is, if she has been so careful as to avoid sex to this point in her life. Most carefully brought-up women do not understand how weak a man is when confronted with opportunity. The typical young Christian woman who has been raised in a solid Christian family has at best a weak theoretical understanding of the power and danger of sex before marriage.

The Lord Jesus affirms in the Gospel accounts (Mark 10, for example) what God explained to Adam at the beginning, that in marriage a man and a woman become one flesh. "One flesh" is achieved literally in the sex act. It's clear from experience that sex generates strong emotional bonds between

husband and wife. When sex occurs outside of marriage, such bonds also begin to form. Rending those bonds by hook-up and break-up causes much emotional and spiritual damage.

One of the reasons that God hates fornication, adultery, and divorce is that they break the beautiful *type* that marriage represents. The redeemed souls of the saints comprise the “bride of Christ.” We’re going to rejoice some day at the “marriage supper of the lamb.” The Lord Jesus promises us that we will have a wonderfully intimate spiritual relationship with Him. Marriage on this earth is a picture of that. We destroy the picture by leaping into physical intimacy without the bonds and commitments of marriage. On the spiritual side, our salvation is eternal. Our adopted bond with the Lord is eternal. It can’t be broken. Breaking the marriage relationship or defiling its beauty by illicit pleasures is a great offense.

How much heartbreak, abuse, legal trouble, and even murder are caused by illicit sexual relationships? Unlawful sex is dangerous. And it always hurts. Although King David and Bathsheba were forgiven by God when they confessed their sins, much damage resulted. As a result of their sins, David’s family suffered such disasters as incest, rape, murder, open rebellion, the death of a beloved son, and even the temporary loss of his kingdom – along with much death and destruction in a civil war.

If you just want to do the selfish thing, then reserve sex for marriage only. Numerous studies have demonstrated that sex in marriage is far more satisfying than “casual” sex. The Hollywood culture promotes much lying to the contrary. If you and your wife can come to the marriage bed without any sexual memories from other partners, your sexual relationship will truly be happy. If it’s too late for that, ask God for forgiveness and be sin-free from this point.

As everyone knows, sex is addictive, but so is any sin. I’ve shared the Gospel with many young men who have made it clear that they are hooked on fornication and so are not willing to repent and be born again. So they live in addiction, risk STDs, age prematurely, eventually become impotent, die, and go to Hell. Sounds like a really good deal.

What type of activities should you choose while courting a prospective wife? I heartily recommend that you find *inexpensive* activities. That is, unless you are so wealthy as to make expensive restaurants and events your normal habit. You had better let her discover your tastes and your budget early on. If she expects lobster and box seats while you live on a modest hourly wage, then she is not a keeper.

A spiritual woman is not addicted to dirt. (Recall that every *thing* on this earth, from autos to diamonds, is made out of the dust of the Earth.) In fact, she ought to be willing to treat you by picking up the tab occasionally. If she has an income comparable to yours, does she have the sense of responsibility to contribute her share? Recall the Proverbs 31 woman. She’s not a taker, but a worker and a giver. You had better find out before you marry her.

Some of your time together in courtship must include prayer and Bible study. If she doesn’t like that, flee! Marriage is a life-long commitment. Your service for the Lord, for which you are accountable to Him and will be rewarded for in eternity, depends in large part on your choice of woman.

Above all, keep your spirit, soul, and mind engaged. Don't get emotionally attached before you find out whether she has the spiritual qualities that are important to you. Here is another reason why you must keep your hands off of each other. If you yield to sexual temptation you will lose much of your ability to discern between good and bad qualities in her. Sex is addictive. Addicts don't think straight.

Are you qualified for the woman you want in God's eyes? Pray continually to find the wife that God wants for you. Do you want a really wonderful woman? Then you had better be a wonderful man. If you are making sub-standard grades in spiritual manhood, then bring those grades up before you seek a wife. If you become an "A" student, then God may just entrust you with an "A"-quality wife. If you're presently a slug, then you likely will only qualify for a slug-wife in the near future. Don't inflict a slug-husband on a spiritual woman!

In 1937 God was greatly using a young Scot evangelist, James Stewart (not the actor!), to stir up revivals across Europe. While he was in Budapest for an evangelistic campaign, a Baptist seminary sent two young ladies on their staff to ask him to speak at a chapel service. One of the pair, Ruth, was a young American recently sent by her church in America to help organize a Bible Training Institute for girls at the seminary. Ruth and her co-worker waited after an evening service to convey the request. James responded with the suggestion to spend the next afternoon, a Saturday and his day off, visiting with them. They volunteered to show him the city.

During their sight-seeing, the two young ladies opened up with him about issues they were facing in ministry and in life. Ruth writes (in her biography of James): "He counseled us with amazing wisdom – that same wisdom on which I came to lean more and more as the years went by." She was clearly impressed with his spiritual maturity.

The next time they saw each other was after the Tuesday morning chapel service. Once they were alone after lunch, James came out with this: "Ruth, I believe – I can't be one hundred percent sure, but I believe the Lord has assured me that you are to be my wife." She nearly fainted. What she didn't know was that James knew at age 27 that he needed a wife, a help-meet, a partner with which to build the ministry that God was already blessing, and had been praying fervently for God to open that door. He was also lonely and he knew it. On the plane from Bulgaria to Budapest, he felt that God had impressed on him the assurance that he would meet his wife-to-be in Budapest. When he met Ruth, he was sure that she was the answer to his prayer.

Of course, they got married once Ruth gave the proposal due consideration, with much prayer on her own part. The accounts of their family life in the book *James Stewart, Missionary*, are wonderful encouragements of how God can bless a marriage and family through difficult circumstances. (You can order a copy through <http://revivallit.org>.) James Stewart's approach to courtship may not suit you perfectly, but consider how easy it is to get something when God wants you to have it. If you are in sync with the Lord, He delights to show you His will and give you, one of His children, just what you need.

Let's talk just a bit about in-laws. You marry her, not her family. But you have to learn to deal with her family. And she with yours. Scripture teaches that we leave our own father and mother and cleave to our wife. Don't let either your parents or her parents meddle. Just what constitutes meddling? You'll know. You'll notice it as quickly as you would notice an angry rattlesnake in your living room. Be in unity with your wife on in-law matters. Stand up for her and help her to understand how to

stand up for you. Sometimes you may just have to tell the folks to shut up and butt out. Don't let them jerk you around.

On the other hand, you should work to make in-law relationships a blessing. If all involved are born again Christians, this is possible. If the folks are not believers, then that has to be your priority. Many yield to the temptation to keep peace with the unbelieving or heretical in-laws, while letting the days slip away until they wind up in Hell. You have to care enough about them to share the Gospel clearly, which includes making them understand that they are *lost*. We'll talk more about sharing the Gospel with relatives in the chapter on "Ministry."

If all are believers, then build the extended relationships so that everyone works to encourage everyone else. Establish this pattern before you have children so that the folks understand how you want to raise your children. They can be a big help there, or not. More in the next chapter.

Some additional points: Your wife should be involved in your ministry, your career, and every aspect of your life. And you in hers. Most importantly, both together. Share everything. If you love to spend some (non-ridiculous amount of) time watching sports, she should learn to do that with you. If she loves some activity that you have never previously paid attention to, then learn to participate or at least appreciate what she's doing. Love is expressed in countless little attentions.

One of the challenges in our early marriage was my natural inclination to focus wholeheartedly on whatever I was doing. As a scientist and an Air Force officer, this was a useful quality. But my wife would get offended when I simply did not hear her speaking to me. She began to try to remember to get my attention first. More importantly, I worked hard to allow her voice to instantly penetrate my single-minded attention. I succeeded. The downside is that in our later years she often thinks out loud, talking to herself. This happens in the house and at the grocery store. When she does this my attention is instantly wrenched from whatever I was doing or thinking to what she is saying. Only to find out she is thinking out loud. Drives me nuts. So now she is working at speaking only when she wants me to hear her. Such a little thing, but in a marriage you keep working at it.

Your marriage should grow in kindness, grace, knowledge, and love as the years go by. This doesn't happen by accident. You want your marriage to be a blessing to others, too. Make your relationship a testimony of the love of God. If you don't, how can you possibly be an example or a help to others? Some practical points for day-to-day and year-to-year life together follow:

1. Get yourselves each a copy of a good study Bible, in the King James version, of course. You can't trust the new, corrupted English versions. Which Bible version you should use is a huge and controversial topic. For an introduction to the topic, see Section 8 of my "10 Most Deadly Heresies" article on <http://truthreallymatters.com>. The best "study" Bible I've found is the *New Defender's Study Bible* with notes and commentary by Henry Morris. I like 98% of Morris' comments. If you want my cautionary thoughts on the other 2%, then contact me after you acquire it. Also, especially: *Read at least several chapters each day!* If you have a habit of eating food each day, then count God's word of as much importance for your spiritual growth. And start memorizing verses or passages that grab your attention. Really . . . I'm serious. What you have in your head is what you can use as life smacks you upside the head. You have got to memorize Scripture! In all these things, encourage and strengthen each other. It's great to have a teammate.

2. Find a serious Bible-believing church that has at least some of the characteristics in the article [Three Pillars for a New Testament Church – A Simple Model](http://truthreallymatters.com) found on <http://truthreallymatters.com>. Join this church, get baptized by immersion if you have never done that, and love the brethren you find there.

3. Spend time every day with God in prayer and praise. Thank Him for his blessings on your life and ask Him for help regarding the burdens on your hearts. Pray for each other. You can't stay mad at someone you're praying for. Scripture teaches (Ephesians 4) that you must not let the sun go down on a dispute between you. Obey! Communicate, forgive, love.

4. Immediately start sharing the Gospel message to the lost people you know, including relatives, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances, and also start sharing the Gospel with complete strangers. See my web site articles listed in the "Evangelism" section for help. If you know how you've been saved, then you know enough to tell someone else to do the same. If you have been truly forgiven of your sins, saved from Hell, and rejoice in your membership in almighty God's family, then you simply MUST be conscious of the lost or saved condition of those around you. And do something about it. You both must be involved in the Great Commission. If you can't find any other teammates, at least you have your wife!

Consider the following Scriptures which apply to the Christian life and, therefore, to the spiritual condition of a marriage:

⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; ¹⁰That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. ¹¹Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Phil 1:9-11

¹⁸But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. 2 Peter 3:18

⁷Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered. 1 Peter 3:7

¹⁸Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. ¹⁹Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. Prov 5:18-19

The Christian should grow in love as he matures. Growth in love should be especially evident in marriage. If you can't love your own wife, how can you credibly show love to anyone else? Our growth in grace and love comes through knowing the Lord Jesus better and better. If our focus is on Him, our marriage will grow stronger with time. The husband must honor his wife, allowing her weaknesses -- which result from God designing the particular strengths in her to make her a suitable partner. Regarding prayers: Don't expect to be on the outs with your wife and be in sync with God. Finally, enjoy and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. God designed the physical, emotional, and spiritual intimacy of marriage to be a blessing to us. Go for it!

Adoniram Judson was a missionary to Burma in the early 19th century. I highly recommend the Courtney Anderson biography, *To the Golden Shore*. His life story is a testament to the power and grace of God equipping a man to do the greatest work that man can do. And that woman can do. His wife Ann, who died on the mission field, was a dedicated and faithful wife whose heart was as committed to the work as was Adoniram's. When the young missionary candidate sought her hand for marriage, he wrote to Ann's father the following (1987 ed., p.83):

"I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean, to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home, and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing, immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Savior from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair?"

No sugar-coating there. The young man knew what he was getting into and what his wife might suffer. The trials they went through will shame any American Christian who thinks he has a rough time in this world. But Adoniram and Ann Judson had their eyes on a heavenly country. They loved God with all their hearts and loved the people of Burma more than their own lives. Having a God-given purpose in life grants perspective. You and your wife must determine to *accomplish* something that lasts – and lasts for eternity. It's not about you.

Chapter 5

Raising Your Children

Dad, you have the ultimate responsibility for how your kids turn out. Yes, they will spend more time with mom and they will probably show a lot more love to her than they ever do to you. They won't even know how much they owe you, assuming you do a great job. Your great privilege and calling for your family is to turn your children into mature young adults who know and serve the Lord.

Let me illustrate just a bit from my background as a university professor. I had the satisfaction of helping to create an academic program for engineering students in which they formed "virtual companies," ran the companies themselves, secured contracts with industry and government, invented patentable technology, and paid themselves cash bonuses for projects that were financially profitable. My job as academic advisor was to create the environment in which they could "do their thing," advise the company presidents and project leaders when they ran into apparently insurmountable problems, and hold the students accountable to academic standards. I succeeded best when the students noticed me the least, when they were inventing, marketing, managing, building, testing, briefing, reporting, and negotiating. Was my job big and challenging? Indeed. But only a handful of the students really had any sense of how much their "enterprise" experience was my doing. That's life.

Once your children are grown, assuming they turn out right, they will understand more and more what dad (and being a dad) is all about. In the meantime, your love for your children is well-characterized by some of the descriptors of Scriptural love (charity) in 1 Corinthians 13:

⁴Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ⁵Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; ⁶Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; ⁷Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

It's not about you. It's about them. Once you bring them into the world, you do whatever it takes "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26:18) This verse is an expression of the life mission that the resurrected Jesus Christ gave to Paul to preach the Gospel for the salvation of everyone who had the sense to hear it. This mission is also for you with respect to your children. There are only two teams in this world. If your kids live and die on Satan's team, they have missed everything – for eternity. Dad, you've got to reach them so that they know the Lord and live soberly, righteously, godly, lovingly, selflessly.

When do you start? Should you just "let kids be kids"? Nope. From infancy, you are trying to help them learn to become Christian adults. Most people know the admonition from Proverbs 22:6:

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

What a wonderful truth! It's not an ironclad promise. It's a proverb which means that a likely outcome often proceeds from appropriate action. There are many absolute promises in Scripture: for

example, if you repent and trust Christ, He will give you everlasting life. No exceptions and everyone is eligible. If you train up a child according to Biblical truth, he is very likely to embrace the reality that works, because God made the universe and humanity with rules. Your child does have his own will, however. He may choose stupidity, destruction, and death over wisdom, construction, and life. But he might not. It's your job to convince him.

Start young. An infant learns to lie very quickly. At first it's hard to tell the difference among cries for food, cries to change diapers, cries for comfort, and cries to just complain and jerk you around. You'll have to discipline yourself within the first few months of infancy to let your child just bawl away, if you're content that he is fed, burped, dry, and otherwise suffering no apparent harm. He will work hard to dominate your life, because in his mind, "It's all about me!"

That's natural. It's part of the fall of mankind. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were kicked out of the garden and out of intimate, personal fellowship day-to-day with the Lord, who previously would walk with them in their garden. When God kicked them out of Eden, He also withdrew his sustaining power to prevent disease and death. Fellowship became something we must seek through the new birth. We can't become a child of the King unless we come by humility to the cross. We also have the assured hope that we will walk with the Lord again in the garden of the new Earth someday.

A newborn child cannot understand these issues. He cannot be taught about spiritual things for a while, including God's law, sin, judgment, etc. He also doesn't have God's presence with him day to day. So he's doing his own thing with no concern for others, including mom and dad. It's their job to start teaching him that others count, too. That's the road to instruct him on spiritual truths.

The child must understand early that the most important relationship in the household is that between dad and mom. If the marriage suffers, the child will be miserable. I shouldn't have to elaborate on the destruction caused in young lives by unhappy marriages or divorce. In practice, the infant and certainly the toddler can be instructed that their every whim is not a command. Many times during each day the youngster has to learn to entertain himself. Dad and/or mom have things to do!

Selfishness is the heart of sin. You will spend the next 18 years (or more) working to drive the selfishness out of your adorable, precious little baby. Within the first year of life, your child will be able to understand that you want him to do or not do something. When you're confident he can understand, you'll have to start discipline, because rebellion is a certainty. Discipline is principally verbal instruction coupled with a swat to the place God designed to absorb discipline – the rear end.

You absolutely, positively must succeed in administering discipline without anger. You have to be able to "measure" the words and swats (number plus intensity) to get the job done. Remember, it's not about you. Discipline is to correct behavior, not to vent your frustration. But it must include the physical discomfort of a swat. This is Biblical, whether you like it or not, depending on how much liberal insanity on child-rearing you have absorbed from modern American culture. For example:

¹³Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. ¹⁴Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. Proverbs 23:13-14

¹⁵*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Proverbs 29:15*

You say you don't believe in spanking? The prisons are filled with young men whose parents agree with you. It is no coincidence that the depravity of modern youth and the destruction of family life track the rise of anti-Biblical instruction on parenting. Also, consider that the threat of physical discipline is the only real deterrent you have with a rebellious child. The 10-year-old that has been rebellious for years is unswayed by your logic or your grief. If you don't have Biblical standards and Biblical discipline, but use such vapid pleas with him as "You need to make a 'good' choice here," on what *basis* is he going to decide what a good choice is? In his mind "good" is whatever he feels like.

The more you invest in proper instruction and discipline early, the less grief you will have later. Your child had better have some solid values and character by the time he's 15. Do you really think that you can control a persistently rebellious 15-year-old with reason? The juvenile courts are filled because of parents like you.

Here's what's going on. Physical discipline is the absolute lowest motivation for behavior. This is important, so pay attention for the next few minutes. There are parallels between the way God deals with us and how parents deal with their children. The lowest level – we'll call it Level 1 -- of motivation from the Lord is represented in Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

If we can't think of a better reason, we should obey God out of respect and fear for His power. Ultimate rebellion leads you to Hell. That should motivate you to figure out what God expects! A born again child of God has in his present possession everlasting life: he can't lose it. But the Christian is promised chastisement (spanking) by his heavenly Father if he gets too far off track. See Proverbs 3:

¹¹*My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: ¹²For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*

God doesn't want His children "playing in the streets" of lust, greed, anger, alcohol, etc. It's dangerous out there. The parent doesn't want his child in danger either. The loving parent is like the loving heavenly Father in that correction is given, with chastening to assure that the message is received loud and clear by the child.

The next level up is Level 2: Duty. The child should obey because it's the right thing to do. Just as we should obey God because "He said so," whether we feel like it or not, or whether we understand or agree with Him. Consider the following:

¹*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. ²Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; ³That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. ⁴And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. ⁵Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; ⁶Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷With good will doing*

service, as to the Lord, and not to men: ⁸ Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. ⁹ And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. Ephesians 6:1-9

God says to children to obey their parents and for servants to obey their masters . . . because it's right. Yet God is also gracious to provide the motivations of consequences. Fathers have responsibilities and masters had better watch out because God is watching. Both carrots and sticks are offered, yet the principal theme is duty . . . just do it! Life is filled with duty. Children must get used to that early. It doesn't end.

There is a higher level: Level 3, we'll call it. Jesus taught it to His disciples on several occasions. For example: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15) Also . . .

¹Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John 5:1-3

¹⁷He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. John 20:17

Pretty basic principle, isn't it? Better than fearing the Lord to produce obedience is to follow out of love. God loved us and wants us to love Him. He didn't make robots, but image-bearers with wills to love, or not. How about parents? Wouldn't you prefer that your child obey you out of love? If you are expressing your love to your child consistently in word and action he will know what love is and can choose to return it in kind.

Shouldn't Level 3 be the highest? I'll claim that there is a Level 4: when the child *agrees* with you. He sees things the same way you do and so understands that treating his siblings kindly is *right*, speaking respectfully *makes sense*, and obeying dad is *smart* because dad is smarter than he is! Level 4 is what dad really wants for his kids. He wants to turn them into adults that do right because they believe in it! Dad isn't going to be there once they grow up and move out. You must work to reproduce (the best of) yourself in your children, or more importantly, teach them to follow Christ as their ultimate model. In Scripture we see this principle in the following passages:

¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. ²And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. ³For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Romans 12:1-3

The Christian has a renewed mind, which transforms his life to follow the One who knows everything, including the future. Verse 3 teaches that wisdom doesn't come from within, but via the grace of God.

⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; Philippians 1:9

The Christian life isn't about feelings or mysticism. Love is coupled to knowledge and judgment which permeates every part of your life. In knowledge you come to agree with God in everything. Furthermore, we love God not just because of gratitude for life, salvation, and blessings, but also for WHO HE IS. God is good, righteous, and holy. We want God to be like that. We don't want a capricious, selfish, unholy God. The universe would be hopelessly insane in that case. Being glad for the holy character of God, we agree that His qualities should be reflected in us. We want to be like Jesus, because we *agree* that's the ideal.

¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; ¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus 2:11-14

The grace that saves *teaches* how to live. Teaching implies learning and agreement, keeping always in mind that the Lord is coming back to this Earth to establish His kingdom. He will want to use believers as princes, governors, mayors, etc., who have best learned in this life how God works.

¹⁷Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17

When you and your child come to Christ, the old "stupid you" is dead and you have a new life. Living right is impossible unless it all makes sense to you.

¹⁴But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. ¹⁶For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16

Again, see the startling difference between the man (or child) who is doing his own thing and the man who has the mind of Christ.

¹³Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. ¹⁴For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. ¹⁵She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. ¹⁶Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. ¹⁷Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. ¹⁸She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

Wisdom is precious. You don't have wisdom unless you agree with God, because He is never wrong. Every principle derived from God's word works. Build that into your life and the life of your child. The quicker your child gets ahold of what you and God expect out of her, the happier, healthier, and richer she will be – in everything that counts under God's Heaven.

Let's talk practically about how to teach a young child how to know God. Teach him the Bible. As an infant in the womb, he should be hearing you read the word of God out loud and practicing it by speaking kindly and affectionately to his mother. As an infant in his first year outside the womb he should observe that there is a time of day where dad and mom set everything else aside and read and discuss the Bible. At some point he will start to understand what you are saying. Build godly habits into his life and you won't have so many battles later on. Teach him the truths proclaimed throughout Psalm 119. For example:

¹⁰⁵Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

If she comes to really believe that Scripture, you have done a great job, dad.

Be creative as he grows up. Act out some of the events in the Bible. Treat Biblical history as reality. Discuss the foolish philosophies of men, especially atheism, evolution, secular humanism, and false religions and their fallacies. By the time your child is three he'll be able to go with you when you find a street corner or knock on doors to share the Gospel with people. I recall that some of my best days for getting a Gospel hearing was when I brought my 5-year-old son along to knock doors with me. People were much less likely to give me a hard time when I had my cute kid as my partner.

That son grew up and now brings his 4 year-old son along with him to knock doors or pass out tracts on a local campus. My grandson gets a big kick out of handing tracts out. Most passersby are too polite to reject his offer. More importantly, he gets to hear his dad share the Gospel with atheists, Muslims, Roman Catholics, lost evangelical churchgoers, etc. This provokes him to ask questions about what his dad is saying and why people respond the way they do. He is developing a concern both for his own spiritual condition and the destiny of other people.

Personal evangelism is a wonderful training ground for your child. Many children in apparently solid Christian families grow up in a Bible-preaching church and attend a private Christian school. When they finally get out into the world, whether to a university or a job site, they are suddenly shocked with new ideas about evolution, socialism, pop culture, skeptical scholarship, sexual preference, etc., which challenge the foundation of their faith. Many fall. Many were never really saved in the first place because they were never tested or properly taught, never understanding what the real choices are. When you come to Christ, you reject Satan and his teachings, lifestyles, phony religions, and immorality.

You can train up your child to understand these issues when he is quite young. By the time he reaches chronological adulthood, he should be a truly mature Christian. The biology professor who tries to blow evolutionary smoke in his face will face a firestorm of scientific data and reasoning in response. The atheist with an attitude will discover a calm Christian who challenges him on the pointlessness of his materialistic life and the hopelessness of his certain death. The young socialists on campus will find that your son understands truths that they don't: for example, that man was created freely by God to earn his own living, to lead his own family, and that joy comes from serving God rather than oppressing

others. The licentious crowd will be confronted with a young man that can quote statistics on the disease and death that await them and will hear of an assured hope found only through the Gospel of Christ.

How do you want your son or daughter to turn out? Do you think that the world is going to be more civilized, more genteel, more moral than it is today? Haven't you noticed the trends? They are all in the same direction and accelerating. So develop a picture, a vision in your mind of your girl or your boy when they leave the nest. OK, that's the goal, so how are you going to get them there? You had better start right away. The years of your child's youth fly away fast. If your child is already half-grown and you have neglected these truths, then ask for God's forgiveness and get working on it, twice as hard. Don't sit around lamenting failure. Start working at it and don't quit. There isn't any alternative.

Let's talk about how much "fun" a child should have growing up. Everybody needs some recreation in his life. Many parents make gods out of organized sports and activities, however. Family life becomes focused on team sports, special classes and lessons, and clubs available to kids throughout America. A child needs to develop physical skills and ought to find some athletic activities to enjoy as she grows older. But not as the central focus of life. Scripture says very little about physical prowess, other than as it relates to warfare. Here's the passage:

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 1 Timothy 4:8

It does profit "a little." Paul is not concerned whether the young preacher, Timothy, hits the fitness center three times per week. It is godliness that is profitable, that has eternal significance. My wife and I joined the local YMCA last year. Our goal is to slow the disintegration of our aging bodies so that we can stay as functional as practical. I just want to make my days count in serving the Lord. Our days are short and precious and a few more is better than a few less. I marvel at the young body builders, both men and women, who work *so hard* at their fitness routines. And do so while admiring themselves in the mirrors that cover the walls. I can see that they really love themselves, passionately! It doesn't last long though. Almost all of the older folks at the Y are in pretty sad shape, just trying to extend life and strength a bit. One fellow admitted to me that he joined because his doctor threatened him into it.

What sports are good for kids? (It's probably good that this book will have only a tiny circulation. Otherwise, lots of people will be mad at me!) I spent much of my youth on baseball, playing on organized teams from age 6 to 17. I became good at the game. If I had pursued it, I might have even played college ball. Looking back at those years, though – what a waste of time! You get some exercise playing baseball, but mostly you're standing around. A proper game takes 18 or more players, which requires organized leagues. Eventually, only a tiny fraction of the adult population will be playing – even considering baseball's step-child, softball (which is more popular with girls and sedentary men). In short, it's not a life sport and you don't get enough exercise to strengthen your body, or burn fat, or prevent heart disease.

What about football? It's not just a stupid choice, it's harmful! Don't think I'm a novice. I played a good bit of sandlot football growing up and I love to watch an occasional game. But is there any issue over whether football is a life sport – one that you can enjoy and benefit physically from

playing into your old age? National Geographic, in its issue of February, 2011 (the article “Lasting Impact”), reported research that repeated small hits to the head may lead to brain deterioration over time. In one study employing helmet sensors, a 21-year-old defensive end suffered 537 head impacts during a season at the University of North Carolina. 417 of those had magnitudes of 10 g or more. Two produced concussions. Other research indicates that brain damage in athletes can result in internal trauma and external behaviors similar to Alzheimer’s. Soldiers experiencing shock waves from nearby explosions and hockey players also experience such symptoms. What’s worse – a lot of small impacts or a few larger ones? Who knows? This research, like much brain research, is still in its infancy.

Want to risk it with your own children? And wait to see if they show Alzheimer’s symptoms in early adulthood? Note that I haven’t said a word about the plethora of other injuries from football that support a healthy fraction of the medical establishment. You can also consider whether you get much exercise from the sport. A professional football game has about seven minutes of “action.” Give special teams a minute of that, and a first string player (choose *either* offense or defense) gets about three minutes of exercise. Most of their conditioning comes from the weight room, sprints, and other workouts in practice. So just work out if you want conditioning!

My favorite choice for a life sport is tennis. Doubles is fun and social, but you get real exercise in singles, so focus on that. The sport is good for the tall and the short, the muscular and the weakling, the brilliant and the not-so. You can play from early youth until old age as long as you can move around. You get plenty of exercise and much satisfaction from spirited competition. The variety of physical skills to employ is large, and mental toughness and tactics often make the difference in a match.

For team sports, basketball and soccer seem to be the best choices, but your life may have to revolve around other people’s schedules if you invest there. How about golf? Bowling? Why not pool? If these last three are choices for “sports,” then why not checkers or poker? Enough on this. You’ve got the point and can make your own decisions. Just don’t go with the cultural flow. Figure out the long term implications.

Regarding more sedentary recreation, teach your children to read good books. Choose carefully. Most books in the culture, even the “best” of children’s books, teach anti-Biblical themes. An example: I enjoy the Berenstain Bears series of books. When I was reading several together with my young grandson, we would talk about the good and the bad things that the characters were doing. The authors of such books have worldviews where “good” and “bad” behaviors aren’t judged the way a Christian will see it. You can still use some of the world’s literature if you teach it and filter it properly.

Don’t let them read just fiction. They should develop interests in history, especially through biographies. For example, as I write this, I’m in the midst of reading the following:

- a biography of the missionary (not the actor) James Stewart: a wonderful evangelist, husband, father, publisher of solid Gospel literature, and a man of prayer
- a biography of Joseph Stalin, a truly evil man who showed what happens in a country given over to socialism
- a novel by Glenn Beck, [The Overton Window](#), which is also a commentary on our times
- a history of the development of the H-bomb, with details of the personalities involved, politics, science, technology, and espionage

- a biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a good study of a dedicated, religious Protestant (but probably not a born-again Christian) who stood up to the leaders of Nazi Germany at the expense of his life
- Mark Twain's travelogue of his European / Middle East cruise in 1868
- Henry Kissinger's commentary on his White House years as National Security Advisor
- Journal of Creation, a semi-technical journal of analysis and research results associated with creation – and showing the fallacies of evolutionism
- the Bible, plus several commentaries by respected pastors/evangelists. I'm always reading God's word. Every year I learn more.

The list changes all the time, of course, except for the Bible. I should note that from the above list, my wife and I are reading the Bonhoeffer biography together and discussing it as we go. Our small church group is reading / discussing the Stewart bio together. The Bible is both an individual study for me and a group study I lead in our small house church. The novel is my "brain candy," but as I get older I search for "candy" that has at least some "protein" in it, namely, I should be learning something.

Does the reading list above have anything to do with what your kids should be reading? If you do your job in educating your children, they should be able to handle serious books written for adults by the time they are 10 years old. If you believe what I tell you about education in the next chapter, you'll find out that my estimate is conservative.

If you set the tone for good reading in your family, your wife and children will follow. If you don't like to read, repent and God will help you build a love for learning. Your family should read to be inspired by the lives of the greatly used missionaries over the last few centuries. Show your kids how the world works today – including books that touch science, technology, economics, culture, and politics. You can find age-appropriate materials, if you work at it. If you read (at least skim) the books yourself, you can generate interest in your child by making a point of discussing what she's learning. Use supper time or the hours after supper to do this. If you cut TV out of your life, you will have enormous amounts of free time to invest in your children and to grow in maturity yourself.

Television is almost a complete disaster area. And it's enormously addictive. Have you noticed? Don't have it on much and filter it rigorously. If this is controversial to you, then you're in bad shape and this book is clearly too advanced for you. You need to be born again and ask God to help you see the differences between good and evil.

How about developing musical skills? You can't know whether your child has particular gifts or interests unless you provide the opportunities. Personally, I'm not gifted or motivated in this area. I occasionally wish that I were. I'd love to be able to play the piano, for example. My mother started me on piano lessons when I was young, but it was just drudgery for me, so she gave up. I give her great credit for that. My parents discovered that I had a great interest in science, so they nurtured that. I found out that I had enough talent and a career resulted.

Give your children the opportunities to test musical aptitude, but hold your own hopes and dreams lightly. It's not about you. You're just trying to find out if she's got the talent and motivation. Furthermore, musical talent is for recreation, edification for others, and for the glory of God. It's not about making a living. How many musicians make a living in comparison with hopeful amateurs? Most

of the money is in ungodly popular music anyway. Consider a Scriptural perspective on music in Colossians 3:

¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

God invented music. Its highest expressions are in giving thanks to Him and in teaching and admonishing others. Certainly teach your children to sing whether they have talent or not. They can always improve. As pitifully mediocre as my singing voice is now, I was truly awful as a young man. In congregational singing I made sure that my voice wouldn't carry as far as the fellow in the next pew. I didn't want to ruin his day! But I worked at it, especially when I took over a Sunday School bus route. Standard practice was to engage the kids in singing while on the way to and from church. This distracted their attention from injuring each other during the bus ride. I decided that kids couldn't tell whether or not I was a bad singer. They responded primarily to enthusiasm. So I pretended that I was an experienced, enthusiastic song leader. Apparently, I was able to fool them and so we all had a good time every Sunday on the bus.

I was knocking doors a few years ago in a different city and met a parent who had ridden such a bus (different church, same type of program) in his youth. He remembered those songs of his youth and was eager to teach his kids the same. Music sticks in the mind. One brilliant practitioner is a singer / writer named Buddy Davis, whose CDs can be found at <http://AnswersInGenesis.org>. He has a wide variety of songs for kids extolling God's creation and making fun of the foolishness of evolution. He also sings songs directly praising the inerrancy of the Bible. His music and lyrics are catchy, clever, and memorable. Your kids will get so familiar with basic truths through such music that they will see a liar coming at them a mile away.

Music is a big issue and you should do some research to know what's godly and what's not. Don't let your kids develop their tastes from the devil's culture. It's not just about the lyrics. The rock beat, for example, is designed to provoke sensuality. All the rock stars know this. Worldly music destroys inhibitions and leads to drunkenness and fornication. If that isn't plausible to you, then you haven't been paying attention to the world that kids have grown up in for the last few decades. Whether your taste has been corrupted by hip-hop, rap, CCM, reggae, country, or any other secular / worldly style, get over it and ask God to purify your desires. God will answer that prayer. If you let your kids resonate with the world's music, you will lose them. It promotes rebellion.

Look, this is a huge issue and if you don't already understand these things, it will take some work on your part. Where to start? I recommend the book Music in the Balance, by Frank Garlock and Kurt Woetzel for a thoughtful, Biblically conservative treatment. You can find this book plus a collection of good music for sale at <http://majestymusic.com>. You can also find a number of serious articles on missionary David Cloud's website, <http://wayoflife.org>. One more place: Find the 4-part DVD series, They Sold Their Souls for Rock and Roll, which can be purchased at <http://crosstv.com>. It documents the occult connections and degeneracy of almost every major pop / rock / rap star over the closing decades of the 20th century. I dare you to watch this video. If you do, and you love your kids, you'll keep them away from this snake pit.

One central theme of parenting is to train your children to think! Events they hear about, things they read, something a friend said, a puzzling passage in the Bible – Does it make sense? How should you think about it? How do you tell whether it's right or wrong or whether the thought is good, or better than another, or best of all possible ideas? Can you tell whether someone's position is based on some agenda? Does impassioned speaking guarantee that the politician or preacher or teacher actually means what he says? Can two smart people who disagree both be wrong? What are the facts behind the assertion? Why should I believe that? Is there data, history, evidence?

Teach your kids to think. Everything derived from a Biblical worldview should make sense, or else you just haven't learned enough yet. Over my forty-plus years as a Christian I have learned more and more about how God's word speaks truth in every area it touches. Where I haven't understood something, often I came to an understanding through study or experience. In any area that still puzzles me, I trust God anyway because he has been 100% trustworthy in everything I have checked out. That's the clear sight of *faith*. It's the opposite of "blind." It's based on established, trustworthy evidence, history, and experience. Your job is to lead your child to such maturity in her thinking.

Hopefully, the grandparents on both sides will be a help in all these things. If not, you must be clear about your standards, rules, and principles for raising your kids. Frankly, if the grandparents want to spend time with the kids, they have to be supportive and not make your job tougher. This issue isn't easy, but it's also not complicated. If you're timid about confronting either your folks or the in-laws, get over it. You can communicate your desires, plans, and goals for your children to the grandparents in the most reasonable and kind terms and ask their help in supporting you.

Trouble usually arises when communication fails. Parents gripe about how grandma is spoiling the kids or exposing them to out-of-bounds entertainment. The grandparents gripe to each other about how you are too rigid or mean or backward, etc. Just put the issues on the table and talk them through. If you communicate clearly and graciously, it's not likely that the folks will defy you openly, or even sneak around behind your back. The sneaking occurs when nobody is willing to talk. If they do defy you or persist in sneaky acts that you feel undermine your authority, then stop the visits. Your kids belong to you as a trust from God. You have the responsibility. Act accordingly.

If you're going to live on Biblical principles, it's going to be tough to find good friends for your kids. You can't just let your youngsters run amok and make whatever friends they find in the neighborhood, or at church, or at school. Any potential friend needs to be vetted. Get to know the other parents. Be ruthless in deciding whether a friend qualifies or not. Scripture teaches over and over again to walk with those who walk with God. For example:

⁶³*I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts. Psalm 119*

⁴*I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers. ⁵I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked. Psalm 26*

¹⁶*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. ¹⁷I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation. Jeremiah 15*

In that last passage, Jeremiah's devotion to the word of God produced joy in his heart. He rejoices to identify himself with the Lord God. The consequence is direct: He doesn't associate with those who mock God. Do we cut ourselves off completely? Of course not. We do business in the world. We behave as good neighbors and citizens. And we share the Gospel with the lost. But we don't make Bible-haters into good buddies and we protect our children, especially.

Some of the activities that were common in my youth are simply not practical anymore. Sleepovers are simply not done, or shouldn't be. There are too many crazies out there, including among your neighbors, and the risk is too great. The liability of a sleepover at your house isn't worth it, either. Especially when the children are young, play-dates simply have to be supervised. That's a raw deal, but the world has changed in the last 50 years.

I'd like to recommend two outstanding books in the area of child-rearing: Keeping the Kids: How to Keep Our Children From Falling Prey to the World, by David Cloud, and Training Your Children to Turn Out Right! – A Biblical Guide for Christian Parents, by David Sorenson.

Finally, I want to encourage you to consider child-rearing as the ultimate application of discipleship. You have the opportunity to raise your children to love the Lord and to be an enormous blessing to others. You will enjoy fellowship with your children not just in this life, but throughout all eternity. Make each day with them on this earth count. Love them. Pray for them. Teach them. Guard them. Care more about their well-being than you care for either yourself or how your kids feel about you. You're not their buddy, you're their dad. Thank God for the gift of children. Work to make the Lord pleased with His trust in you for this great task.

Chapter 6

Schooling – Kindergarten through Graduate School

Let's start with the biggest issue of them all. Under no circumstances will a Christian man send his children to a public school. I'm deadly serious about this. Would you send your daughter to play in a snake pit to get experience in herpetology? Should your son join a street gang in order to learn teamwork? How about having your kids dodge traffic on the interstate in order to increase their agility?

Here is the overriding principle for this chapter, from the mouth of the Master Himself in Matthew 18:

¹At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? ²And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, ³And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. ⁶But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. . . . ¹⁰Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. ¹¹For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.

Your children are even more precious to the Lord than they are to you. Anyone that offends them, particularly in the area of salvation, is in deep trouble. Don't allow anyone or anything to get in the way of your children getting to know the Lord. It's easier for a child to be saved because he hasn't had too many years to get addicted to sin. Sin addiction clouds the reason as one ages. Extreme examples include Ph.D. university professors who cannot understand the simple logic and evidence that refute their evolutionary worldview. Regardless of how "smart" they are, they don't think straight about the biggest issues of all. Similarly, drug addicts eventually lose the ability to reason and to communicate. They become walking dead men. But if you reach a child with truth and the knowledge of the Lord when he's young, he can live a victorious life.

The American public school will work creatively and relentlessly to destroy your child's respect for authority, her belief in the God of the Bible, and her moral purity. I recall that when my wife and I decided to homeschool our younger children, that our parents (both sets) were horrified. The dialogue went something like this:

Them: "What about their social development?"

Us: "Oh you mean learning from their classmates about sex, drugs, foul language, rock star worship, rebellion against authority, and which gang they should join?"

Them: "Oh surely, it's not that bad. Why, I remember . . ."

Us: “Mom, dad, that was the 1930s. Even when we were in school in the 1960s it was bad enough. And it gets much worse as each decade goes by.”

Them: “Surely, the teachers are still good. After all, they have to get certified by the state!”

Us: “Certified to teach evolution – that we are all animals who somehow developed from goo and therefore are not accountable to anyone but ourselves. Certified to prevent any child’s efforts to pray. Certified to graphically teach contraceptive techniques and provide girls with abortions without notifying parents. Certified to teach revisionist history that pretends our nation was founded by agnostics. Certified to teach socialism and make fun of conservative, not to mention, Biblical values.”

You might say, “We can’t afford a private school.” I’m not recommending private, or even Christian schools. There may be a “good” Christian school in the country somewhere, but I’m skeptical. You really have only one choice and that is to homeschool, which is even more expensive in effort and time. For one thing, mom will have to devote much of her life while the kids are growing up to educating them. And dad will have some of his off-time devoted to helping out, too.

How much money and how much time would you spend to keep your son from succumbing to a fatal disease? How much effort would you make to save the life of your daughter if she were threatened? How much is it worth to you that in eternity they live in the new Heaven and new Earth, instead of being hopelessly lost in the eternal lake of fire? I’m just trying to give you some perspective. If you just think through the elementary questions, you’ll make the right decisions.

Please, before you start – or continue – to send your children to a public school, read the wonderful, scary book by Bruce Shortt, entitled The Harsh Truth about Public Schools. It was published in 2004, which means that things are even worse now. Shortt details the deliberate attacks against Biblical Christianity and the promotion of New Age philosophy. He reports exercises in occult practices taught by “certified” teachers to elementary school students. Here’s a quote from page 29 that represents some of the goings-on in your tax-supported school system:

“Imagine asking your child some evening what he learned in school and having him respond: ‘Nothing much. We made images of a Hindu god, Ganesha, and learned that when we remove a plant from the garden or cut down a tree we should pray to Mother Earth to ask her permission. Oh, have you seen this really neat card game with demons and vampires that helps me learn math? We get to cast spells and sacrifice people and everything!’”

Every last vestige of Christianity is being expunged from school life. Legal cases have been fought over whether a child can bring her own Bible to school to read on her lunch hour, or whether a child can sing a Christmas song at a talent show that allows kids to pick their own music – any music unless it refers to Christ, that is. The Bible is attacked, but in California children have been instructed in performing Islamic religious rites in the guise of cultural diversity.

Here’s an item I plucked from an interview of a mom and son on Fox TV news this week (2/13/11): An 8-year-old boy in a Los Angeles school was feeling discouraged because his dad had just left on an Army deployment. For a school art exercise, he drew a picture with zombies and a caption, “I want to die.” The school reacted by calling a state social worker who committed the boy to a hospital

psych ward. Only after he was imprisoned did they bother to inform mom. The boy was held for three days while the mother vainly tried to get anyone in the hospital or the SS office to tell her what was going on. When dad heard about this, he terminated his deployment and came home. The idiot reporter asked the mother if her boy would be going back to school soon. Mom said he was afraid to go back and the family was thinking about homeschooling. Indeed. This could happen to your kid. What if he says or writes or draws the wrong thing? You might lose him the same way.

Our public schools include much worse than what I have already mentioned. But I'm not writing a book to expose these things. Shortt did a good job and if you merely pay attention to what's going on you shouldn't be unaware of these deadly issues. Subscribe to some Christian or at least conservative newsletters. The public school system is dead, gone, kaput. The battles are over. Satan has taken them over completely. Don't put your kids in the Devil's classroom for the sake of your own convenience. Oh my, I can't imagine a greater sin for parents to commit in this present age.

Consider the culture of the public high school – outside of academics. What business does a public school have in sponsoring dances? The rock music and dances of the late 1960s were vile enough, but the culture has been sliding a long way since then. A Sunday comic, "Zits" (1/30/11), reflects current affairs by showing a middle-aged couple reading school "guidelines" for a dance their son is going to. The guidelines include: "Provocative dress and lewd behavior are discouraged. Grinding, bumping, moshing, licking, freaking, booty dancing . . . will not be permitted." Of course, in many school dances, there aren't any rules to speak of. If your kids are in a public school, they will be part of the culture. Why would you try to resist it? You obviously trust these degenerates with your children for at least 30 hours per week.

So what's wrong with Christian schools? I'll agree that the best of them, typically found among the so-called "independent fundamental" Baptists, are less horrible than the public schools. The worst of them, typically in the evangelical camp, show a culture that's hard to distinguish from that of the public schools. I'm going to judge the "best" of the schools by their fruit. There is a Biblical principle to distinguish between godly and ungodly teaching:

¹³Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: ¹⁴Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. ¹⁵Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. ¹⁶Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? ¹⁷Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. ²⁰Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

Let's parse this passage from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7), which is normally applied to phony TV evangelists, but not often to school systems. The way to life – eternal life – is narrow and not many find it. The road to destruction is broad, encompassing a wide choice, or diversity, of errors, and many follow it to destruction. The diversity of errors propagated by false teachers can be judged by the fruit. You can't always tell by simply watching or listening (especially if you are ignorant of the Bible!), but over time you can certainly see the results – fruits – of their teaching.

Based on national polls, anecdotes, and personal experience, it appears that 80 – 90% of children raised in professing Christian families, who attend church weekly, and who graduate from a Christian high school . . . fall. When they leave home they quickly forsake their alleged faith and embrace the ungodly American culture. By this I mean that their music changes, they quit church, start drinking, engage in sex promiscuously, and despise any “boundaries.”

What’s going on? Clearly, it’s not just the fault of the Christian school. What about the parents? The church? The pastor? What about the responsibility of the child? It all works together. The parents are paying good money to entrust their children to a school system promoted by their pastor, who also decries the evils of the public school system. The teachers are allegedly all Christians and the classmates are children of Christian families, aren’t they? It’s natural, though, that with the press of daily life, Christian parents are delegating way too much responsibility for the Biblical education of their children to the Christian school, the Sunday School teacher, and the pastor in the pulpit. With all that instruction each week, tired parents honestly don’t feel they have much else to contribute.

Obviously, the system is not working. After 18 years of doing exactly what “everybody” says they should do, including their pastor, the kids leap gleefully into the snake pit as soon as they have a choice. By experience I know the following about what’s missing. The children are not learning to think. They know a good bit about the Bible, but don’t have any real understanding of it. They don’t know how to apply it. They don’t love God’s word and they don’t really believe it. They have not been taught to engage in evangelism and thereby contend with opposing views. They have been told what to do and what not to do, but they haven’t been taught the underlying reasons. They have been taught that sin is that fun stuff that they should avoid, rather than that sin is stupid and destructive and only a devil-following ignoramus would choose sin as a lifestyle. They don’t know the history of the world or the history of Christianity and so they think that their generation is experiencing new ideas and new philosophies. In short, they have not been educated.

There are other problems. For example, your typical conservative Christian school will have a weekly chapel service featuring speakers from the church staff or visiting missionaries, evangelists, etc. Every week, even apart from the Sunday and Wednesday church services, they are likely to hear an evangelistic message pressuring them to come forward at a public invitation and “get saved.” Children are, of course, susceptible to pressure from adults. Most of these kids, without any real understanding of sin, judgment, repentance, the atonement, or the new birth, will respond and go through whatever motions are demanded of them. Henceforth they are “saved” in their own minds. If they resist the first 50 times, don’t worry. There are hundreds of invitations still to come in their school-age future.

I meet these train wrecks all the time, notably in their twenties after they have brought forth much “evil fruit.” Because they are convinced they “got saved” when young, and believe that they can live any way they want to, it’s impossible to convince them that their problem is that they never repented. They are still one heartbeat away from Hell and prove it by the way they live. Even more difficult is the case who still attends church, gives his weekly offerings, and is living the life of a decent guy. But there is nothing in his life different from that of the lost, but devout Roman Catholic or Calvinist. He knows about the Lord, but he doesn’t know Him experientially. It’s much more pleasant to talk to a polite atheist. In the chapter coming up on evangelism, I’ll discuss how to avoid creating such train wrecks.

What's the solution? Homeschooling lets you design your curriculum and move at whatever pace you judge appropriate. There is a wealth of curricula available from Christian sources. I'm not going to review them for you. An online search will get you started. If you get into this and have some questions, you can contact my wife or me through our web site, <http://truthreallymatters.com>. My wife knows a lot and I can help, too. The most important advantage of homeschooling is that the teachers (mom and dad) love the students and really care that they are learning and maturing.

One joy of homeschooling is that you can camp on a particular interest as long as you want. If your daughter gets fascinated with the debate between creationists and evolutionists on the fossil record, she can camp there for days at a time, if she likes. In real life, adults face problems that can't be broken up into 50-minute segments, to be addressed on alternate days. Let your child experience the challenges and joys of research. To get proficient at a complex subject requires extended periods of concentration. In this example, let her document her evidences, reasoning, and conclusions in a term paper. Let her brief dad verbally on her report so she can develop her presentation skills.

During one school year with my son, I expected him to write twenty essays based on current events. I graded him strictly, as if he were doing staff work for me as an Air Force officer. To earn an "A," he essentially had to write a paper that I would be willing to sign my name to. That's the way it works in the Air Force. When a captain prepares a staff study for his colonel, it had better be thorough, complete, and polished. Your son should be able to hit that standard before college. Toward the end of that academic year, my son entered a writing / public speaking contest and won an award.

Recent data show that homeschoolers score 37 percentile points above the national average on standardized achievement tests. The number of homeschoolers in America has increased by 74% since 1999. Universities have noticed and are actively recruiting them, as evidenced by presence at homeschool conventions and targeted ads in magazines, catalogs, and web sites. There are at least 2 million homeschool students in this country now. Wherever you are, you're likely to find a local group of likeminded parents to network with and plan joint activities together. (Stats gleaned from the periodical, Sword of the Lord, February 4, 2011, article "Colleges Nationwide Recruit Homeschool Grads.")

The curriculum and cultural disasters in the public schools are generated deliberately by the atheistic / humanistic teachers' colleges within American universities. This leads us to our next topic: Once your child gets through a high school level of education, then what? First of all, not everyone is cut out for college. If your son wants to be an auto mechanic, college is a huge waste of time and money. If your daughter wants to learn business skills, it may be more profitable to find her a job in the relevant industry than to go for a B.A. in business. For the rest of this discussion, though, I'll assume that they are headed for college. This discussion is also for you, O young man, if you are in a stage of life thinking about collegiate education.

Here's a common trap: A lot of pastors have convinced parents to send their children to a Christian college "for at least a year." Presumably, once they get past that first year, they can choose to go somewhere else. Of course, during that year, the school will be doing everything it can to entice them to stay on. They will make friends who are hard to leave behind. The Christian college's credits won't transfer effectively to most secular colleges. And simple inertia inhibits the expense and trauma of a major change.

Why do Christian kids brought up in Bible-believing churches and educated in Christian schools need that “just one year of Bible college”? Apparently, both parents and pastor are afraid that they have failed to prepare the youngster to face the world at age 18. So at 19 they will be ready?

What’s the purpose of a college education? After all, it’s time consuming and grossly expensive. It can’t be about developing Christian character. That is the God-ordained responsibility of the God-ordained institutions of the family and the local church. The purpose has to be about making a living that is significantly better than that possible without college. You don’t pick a trade school for mechanics before you go into the clothing industry. So you had better pick the university that has the right degree program to get the job to support your family for the rest of your life.

I have a big issue with so-called Christian colleges. (Here we go. Whoever wasn’t mad up to this point, you’re not likely to buy me dinner, or even a taco, after this chapter.) Let’s consider the foundational . . . Biblical . . . issue before we get into the practical. First and foremost, THERE IS NO BIBLICAL SUPPORT FOR BIBLE COLLEGES AND SEMINARIES. There are 3 God-ordained institutions relevant to Christian life: the family, the local church, and civil government. Training (discipleship) for all believers (children and adults) is clearly to be done within the family and the church. We see evangelism and discipleship performed in the Gospel accounts and the Book of Acts. We see the apostles (Paul, in particular) planting churches and strengthening them through visits and epistles. We see evidence of evangelists traveling and corresponding to enable communication among the independent local churches. We see ABSOLUTELY NO EXAMPLE of Bible colleges.

1st likely objection: Some Bible colleges are not “independent,” but rather under the ministry of a local church and its pastors / elders. That qualifies them, right? Perhaps there are not as many as you think. With some, the college is the “big dog.” Can the pastors, with and under the authority of the congregation, make substantial changes, including hiring and firing? Is the college incorporated separately?!?

In the case where the local church has authority, let’s examine some other issues. Is the curriculum designed and delivered as a ministry to the members of the local church? Or is there substantial money involved? Does the “college” or “institute” advertise nationally, thus attracting students away from service in their own local churches? Does the college use those students from out-of-state to build its own ministry, thus robbing the ministries of their home churches? Does it entice the best of them to stay after graduation?

Here’s a big issue . . . Does the college offer credits toward a degree? Is it not therefore emulating the world’s system? Do any Scriptures come to mind about copying / loving / having fellowship with the world’s system? (Like 1 John 2:15-17 . . . “pride of life” and James 4:4.) Consider that many pastors love to be awarded an “honorary doctorate” so they can be called Dr. So&so, and have this worldly title emblazoned on their business cards, the church web site, the church bulletin, and the church tracts. Weren’t “pastor” or “brother” prestigious enough? By the way, I heartily endorse getting academic degrees in disciplines such as physics, chemistry, electrical engineering, economics,

accounting, etc. (I have several, including an earned, not honorary, doctorate.) Why are the churches copying this system? They didn't get the idea from the Bible!

The family and the church have God-ordained responsibilities to train their children to know, love, and serve God. By the time a child in a Christian family is 18, he / she should have a solid understanding of the Bible, memorized hundreds or even thousands of Scriptures, have studied church history, engaged extensively in personal evangelism, and have a practical knowledge of the differences between a Biblical worldview and such heresies as evolution, Islam, Marxism, Roman Catholicism & other pseudo-Christian cults, pantheism, and post-modernism. From 18 onward, the Christian's practice must be to continually grow in knowledge, wisdom, grace, and devotion to the cause of Christ. That's the Biblical pattern: growth. There are no academic degrees cited in the NT epistles.

Practically speaking, what is the purpose of a Bible college that cannot be fulfilled by the family and the church? In the area of ministry, typical Bible college catalogs list courses on various Old Testament, New Testament, and ministry topics that should be old news to the Christian that's been involved in the ministry of a sound church. I noted above that many parents insist that their children attend a Bible college for at least a year or two. Why? Because the parents and the local church have done a poor job preparing the young person for adulthood. That's sad. Fix the problem – don't add another by supporting an institution modeled on the world's system!

What about those Christian colleges that offer majors in engineering, business, etc? I have many years of experience in teaching, designing, and comparing collegiate curricula, but check it out yourself. The Christian college versions of these disciplines are almost always pitiful in comparison with the offerings of secular schools. You can observe this at a superficial level by comparing the senior level courses of Christian colleges with sophomore and junior level courses at secular schools. You'll see a correlation.

A related topic we'll call "inbreeding." Multitudes of conservative (especially fundamental Baptist) pastors push their people to send the kids to a Christian college. Ministry degrees are the only ones that get attention in this sales pitch. The results are predictable – lots of unemployed or viciously underpaid Christian-school teachers (uncertified for state schools), unemployed men with degrees in pastoral or youth ministry, and a bevy of missionary graduates who face a 5-year deputation at best before getting to the mission field.

The whole system is broken. I've seen such graduates, with degrees but no employable skills, working as janitors or bus drivers or whatever, having returned to be faithful members of the church that sent them off on this adventure. (Janitorial work and bus driving are perfectly acceptable ways to make a living. But that wasn't the plan, was it?)

Furthermore, the most conservative churches are singularly lacking in members associated with the following professions: science, engineering, business (ownership), and government. Shouldn't Christians be in such positions? Early in our nation's history they were. Revivals under such Spirit-filled evangelists as Shubal Stearns, Peter Cartwright, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, and Billy Sunday produced

multitudes of converts from the lowest to the highest levels of society. That's why we have the freedoms that we enjoy. But the current system is at least partly responsible for the degradation in those freedoms. A less important, but practical point for dollar-obsessed pastors . . . because of "inbreeding" many conservative churches are rather poor in resources. It doesn't hurt the budget to have some members with good incomes!

Bible colleges also tend to attract to their faculty and administration the most intellectually talented of the Christians in this nation, thus robbing their home churches of their God-given gifts. Additionally, a paid faculty member at a Christian college must face the temptation to count his salaried work as his service for Christ. It's the unusual case to see those in the ivory tower engaged in street evangelism or teaching a lowly children's Sunday School class. (Thank God for the exceptions, few though they be.)

Colleges not under the direct authority of a local church leadership tend to go apostate. Consider the following short sample of colleges / universities that started out with the expressed purpose of bringing glory to God and propagating the Gospel, and where they are now:

Harvard . . . Yale . . . William & Mary . . . Brown . . . Dartmouth . . . Wake Forest . . .

Mississippi . . . Chicago . . . Vassar . . . George Washington . . . Baylor . . . and many, many others.

In the last few years I've read reports of the decline and compromise of what were once very conservative Christian colleges, as they attempt to increase their enrollment. In such decline, they will work hard to convince their alumni and associated churches that nothing has really changed. By the time you find out what's really going on, your child is likely to be corrupted by the latest fads in doctrine and church-building. You will have paid dearly for that corruption.

Should parents send their talented youngster to a secular university to study engineering or law? Absolutely, but with great care. Most Americans can find a good university program in most disciplines within commuting distance from home. Failing that, do some homework and find a school that has a solid church nearby which has a solid family for your youngster to board with. And keep in close touch. In all my years in fundamental churches I have never heard this proposed. If your pastor does suggest this, and helps you work it out, you have been blessed indeed. If he doesn't, ask him for help and show others how you made it work.

Finally, what if your son believes that God wants him in full-time ministry? What if he has been "called to preach"? As if any Christian has not been called to preach the Gospel! What this "calling" really means in the American church culture is that the young man goes off to Bible college, gets a job (if lucky) as an assistant pastor somewhere at slave wages and serves for enough years to pay his dues, before getting "called" to pastor an established church. Sounds like a profession to me. With "professionals" that have no clue how to minister to working families, because they never had a real job themselves.

If you or your son are called to “full-time service” then learn a job / career skill (at the university level, if desired), get a job to support yourself and a family, and start knocking doors. Why do you even want to inherit someone else’s ministry? Most established churches have only a tiny percentage of members who have a heart for the Lord’s work. Why not start from scratch and get converts who know no better than to serve the Lord with all their hearts? More about this in the chapters ahead on ministry.

If you decide to go to a secular university (or send your kids there), don’t have any illusions about it. You don’t go to college for the partying if you’re a Christian and / or you have a brain in your body. “Partying” means drunkenness and fornication. You don’t need to spend a hundred grand at a university to do that, if that’s your ambition. Treat college entirely as a business proposition. You pay big money and give up a serious chunk of your life, so you had better get some big value in return.

It makes sense to go to State U or XYZ Tech for degrees in engineering, physics, chemistry, computer science, or nursing, or comparable disciplines that simply cannot be learned effectively on your own. The specialized facilities and lab courses are essential to such degree programs. A good engineering program includes a serious design program, also. You can’t become an engineer by simply reading, writing, and working homework problems. You have to build stuff and test it. In physics and chemistry you must experience the frustrations and joys of research, under the tutelage of someone with professional experience.

On the other hand, getting a degree in literature or history or music is simply unprofitable. Do you love English lit or classical music? Great. I love tennis, but I’m not going to get a degree in it. What about pre-law? Don’t major in pre-law. What kind of degree is that for your resume? Who hires pre-law graduates, unless you are looking for a clerical job (a gopher) in a law firm. If you want to be a lawyer, major in engineering or applied mathematics or business / finance so that you have some hard skills to carry into your law career. That also gives you a backup plan if law school doesn’t work out. The best lawyers have some real expertise in some other discipline.

Similarly, if you want to be a medical doctor, make your pre-law program a degree in Mechanical or Electrical Engineering. The medical profession is invested with the most sophisticated technology on the planet, because it deals with the most sophisticated compositions of matter on the planet – namely, life. Furthermore, a doctor will understand human biological systems better if he has expertise in engineering. The human body, not to mention the human brain, represents the work of the greatest Engineer of them all. Learn as much as you can about mechanical and electrical systems before going to med school.

You will be under moral and spiritual attack as a university student. Don’t live on campus. Example: Ohio University is launching “gender-neutral” dorms to allow male, female, gay, and straight students to cohabitate – in the same rooms. Is this a new thing? Nope. Ohio U is the 56th American university to offer this option. In short, the educated elite of this nation are working to establish a cultural climate equivalent to that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Don’t live on campus.

Even in the scientific disciplines, you’ll have to work to distinguish true science from evolutionary or liberal propaganda. Physics, chemistry, mathematics, electrical engineering – such

disciplines are fairly rooted in reality, so there is not as much danger. Biology and the professors that teach it are hopelessly enmeshed with evolutionary philosophy, yet most biological science is practiced without reference to origins. Every college student in his first two years is going to have to suffer the humanist / feminist / atheist courses in literature, social science, and the humanities, however.

A "Human Events" article from January 6, 2011, reports a complaint by President Obama that among Americans, "facts and science and argument do not seem to be winning the day." He doesn't mean the same thing as we do when he uses terms like "facts," "science," and "argument." What he is really upset at is many Americans' resistance to following the religions of evolution, global warming, "animal rights," and euthanasia. Persecution is on the rise against any academics that dare to question whether evolution has any scientific basis. See Ben Stein's documentary "Expelled," for example. As I write this the University of Kentucky is being sued by astronomer Martin Gaskell, who is now at the University of Texas. Gaskell has evidence that although he was perfectly qualified for the position, he was rejected in his application to direct the UK observatory because of remarks on his personal website expressing an openness to intelligent design.

As a tenured professor at Michigan Tech University I once attended a faculty seminar on the subject of how to deal with students who have a religious worldview different from that of the faculty member. The intent of the moderator was clearly to provoke a spirit of respect for students and their family upbringing, regardless of how silly it seemed to the professor. There were several professors in the gathering who affirmed this approach. But there were also several atheists / evolutionists who expressed quite angrily their "duty" to destroy the faith of students who didn't bow to Darwin. They were quite open about how they were willing and even creative in humiliating students who spoke up.

Was that an unusual situation, peculiar to a small Midwestern university? Indeed not. Get yourself a copy of Jim Nelson Black's book, Freefall of the American University: How Our Colleges Are Corrupting the Minds and Morals of the Next Generation. Black makes a case that across the nation, college students are being "intellectually scarred, morally neutered, socially and intellectually programmed." The one thing they are not being taught is the truth, he reports. Black says that universities are "responsible for the collapse of educational standards and a debasement of morality that is unprecedented in American history." He cites hundreds of examples and dozens of personal interviews with faculty and students. I should note that the curricula and methods of the elementary and high schools are created in such "institutions of higher learning," which also indoctrinate the teachers who run the public schools.

An Associated Press article, "Student Tracking Finds Limited College Learning," January 23, 2011, reports a new study encompassing 2300 undergraduates. The research found no significant improvement in the areas of critical thinking, and complex reasoning and writing by the end of their sophomore years. Part of the problem is that modern courses don't require much writing or even the amounts of reading demanded a few decades ago. In my experience, professors simply don't like to grade essays or term papers. It's painful. It's much more fun for profs to pontificate and indoctrinate in the generic "soft" courses required for all students in their first two years. When I was a professor in electrical engineering, I went against the flow by requiring engineering students to write. I was shocked at how ungrammatical and unstructured most of the efforts were. So much for their public K-12 education! But as I demanded higher quality, students responded. In my engineering design courses, my students were eventually delivering professional quality documents to paying industrial clients.

So why am I suggesting that it's still OK to go to college? First, for your sake: if you're going to employ the talents God has given you, in engineering for example, go get the relevant degree and learn all you can. It's expensive, but a solid technical education will open up for you new worlds of personal exploration and ways to be of service. College tuition costs have risen much higher over the last few decades than any other segment of the economy. Some of the most prestigious schools charge way too much and don't deliver as much quality in their undergraduate programs as you'll find in some "lower-ranked" state schools. The highest ranked universities tend to have faculty that care much more about their own research programs (and money and fame) than they do about teaching undergraduates. You have to visit your desired school and note the quality of the laboratories and whether the professors are teaching the courses or delegating classroom duties to their foreign grad students – who often struggle with English.

You'll also have to suffer through the fluff and propaganda of some of your courses (literature, social science, etc.) in order to get the practical education in the advanced courses of your technical discipline. The Christian has to live in the world, so you can't avoid all of the pain. The Bible knows nothing of monasticism. In fact, the young Christian college student has a wonderful opportunity to be a shining light, a witness for Christ. The unbelieving college student often has an openness to discuss the big issues of life, at least among his peers. It's a lot harder for an old fogey like me to get a hearing with students than it is for one of their peers. Even so, my favorite type of candidate to share the Gospel with is a polite college student atheist.

Just keep in mind that the American university is the most dangerous place morally and spiritually for someone who is unprepared or weak. But it's also the best mission field in this nation.

Secondly, a college degree that imprints some real skills on your brain helps you contribute to your church, your community, and your nation. If the professions of business, law, engineering, science, and politics are all dominated by anti-Christians, our liberties will vaporize rapidly. Indeed, that's exactly what's been happening for the last few decades.

Let me offer some nuts and bolts advice for succeeding in college, assuming you have embraced all of the principles above. This section is more than "worth the price of the book" – if you or anyone you know is going to college.

1. Take only courses that are required for your degree. Electives must be chosen to learn something valuable. If you want to read sci-fi, do it on weekends. Don't take a course on it.
2. Take a full load of courses every semester. Get your degree done as efficiently as possible. Every semester you delay graduation costs you the price of that semester plus the "opportunity costs" of a half-year of salary and a half-year of career experience. That's VERY expensive.
3. Don't do a double-major. You can get a Master's Degree in about the same amount of time it takes you to get the 2nd Bachelor's Degree.
4. Stay ahead in your course-work. Read the material BEFORE your prof covers it. The lectures will make more sense.
5. Stay ahead in your course-work. I'm not kidding about this, so I'm repeating it. If you simply obey this one principle, it could mean the difference between a 3.8 GPA and multiple companies making you job offers, or a 2.8 GPA and desperation to get any kind of a job.

6. Get homework done early. Start it the day it's assigned. That keeps the pressure off, allows you to refine and overcome hurdles, and keeps the subject on your mind, which enhances learning.
7. Treat school like a full-time job. Use Monday to Friday as a real work week and try to take the weekends off so your brain can relax. Use the time between classes during the day for study. Don't just putz your time away on class days. If you carry 16 credits, you should be adding at least twice that many hours per week for study and homework. Yes, I know that's about a 48-hour work week. You're young so you can do it. If you're in a serious discipline, like computer science, you need to spend that much time. Otherwise, you'll be struggling along with B's and C's and envying the "geniuses" who are pulling A's. (Usually, they are not geniuses, but simply work at it 48 hours per week.)
8. Never cram for exams. If you stay ahead, you won't be tempted to. The biggest success factor for taking exams is having enough sleep. So sleep enough! If your exam is late in the day, do not study for it during that exam day. If you are caught up in all your preparation prior to exam day, any last-minute study will simply confuse your long-term memory with short-term data. I learned this principle by experience, and it works.
9. Get the best grades you can and not just for your transcript and resume. Typically, an "A" from a good prof who doesn't inflate grades means that you have really mastered the topic and can do stuff! A "B" means that you made a good effort, got some reasonable familiarity with the subject, but can't think creatively on the topic. A "C" means you just don't get it, but the professor is merciful. You're paying big money to learn, so learn!
10. When you get "stuck" doing a group project for a class, volunteer to be the team member who does the overall writing and editing. Volunteer to organize and lead whatever oral presentation you make. During my MBA work I had a major group project in every single course. I estimate that in my team of four people, I typically did at least 40% of the work in every project. "But that's not fair," you say. First: Since I was the smartest guy in my group (I humbly assert), I wanted to insure the best group grade. Second: I learned the most and got the most experience by working the hardest. If you develop this habit, you will be a star in any professional organization after you graduate. You can't be a slug in college and then just "turn it on" when you graduate.
11. Get to know your professors, especially if you don't agree with them or even like them. Find excuses to visit them during office hours to ask them questions about the course, or better yet, questions about the course topic that go *beyond* the course requirements. Profs love that! You will learn more and your prof might cut you some slack when it comes to your grade. You also need some professional references when you graduate. If you never get to know your profs personally, they won't know you and won't be references.
12. If your prof is an atheist, don't argue with him. Don't challenge him in class. The professors are not your mission field. They are hopeless. Your fellow students are the mission field, outside of class. If an exam tests you on some atheistic or evolutionary point, give the answer that is expected of you to demonstrate that you understand their philosophy. You don't have to lie about this. You are not likely to be tortured, as in a Communist prison, to determine whether you affirm or deny that Christ is Lord. You positively never need to lie about your faith because it's not likely to come up. Your job in school is to pass your courses, get your degree, and make a difference out there in the world. If you take on the professoriate on their turf, you simply lose. If you really want to witness to your prof, then do so after you graduate.
13. Pick a major that you are interested in, have some talent in, and produces graduates who get hired. You may work a long time in your career. It's hard to get up every morning if your chosen discipline is drudgery.

14. Find some Christian friends on campus. Even if they don't agree with you on everything and even if they are weak, you still need some friends. Work to encourage them. If you know things they don't, then you can help them learn. And vice-versa.
15. Go to job fairs intended for the seniors looking for jobs. Even when you're a freshman. Talk to employers at these fairs. You need the practice and you can learn what qualities they are looking for.
16. Line up summer jobs in your field. You can often find internships that pay good money through the job fairs and through the employment office at the college.
17. Find people working in your field and pummel them with questions. Try to find a mentor who likes you enough to buy you lunch occasionally so you can learn what the field is about. Professional life is not like studying for exams and doing homework.
18. Volunteer for paid work during the school year on some relevant research project under some prof in your field. That could lead to grad school and more exciting career opportunities.

What about graduate school? Consider this: If a B.S. is like a baseball player hitting a single, then an M.S. is like a double. But a Ph.D. is like hitting a grand slam homerun. (Which type of player gets the big contract?) An M.S. will enhance your resume and may have direct impact on how a company opens up opportunities for you. You must ruthlessly design your M.S. to maximize your skills in areas you believe are most important to your career for the next few years.

The quickest way to get an M.S. is to find a no-thesis option. Don't do it! The practical research you do to support the thesis will be the best learning experience you have. An M.S. shouldn't be just an additional collection of courses to take. You want to be challenged and develop the confidence that you can do some heady work in your field. Many universities offer no-thesis options simply to attract paying students. It's a good deal for their bottom line. Make them earn your tuition money by working under a professor's direction on a thesis project.

Don't get an M.S. right after your B.S. You don't have any professional perspective yet! Get a few years of work perspective and then design the M.S. that will most benefit your career. Hopefully, your employer will pay for it. If you start the M.S. right after the B.S. it will just feel like another bunch of courses. Your motivation will be low and you won't be able to apply the learning to real-world experience. If you start the M.S. later, your motivation to learn will be much higher and you will naturally make connections between real-life problems and the course-work. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, you can design a research project for your thesis that has an impact for your career and for your company.

Don't get a Ph.D. unless you can't stand not to. You have to be a bit crazy to get a Ph.D. Recognize that by the time you're done, you will be doing and publishing leading edge work in a narrowly specialized, incredibly challenging field. The pain you go through to get to that point only makes sense if you really love the field and really love research. You don't get a Ph.D. because you want the prestige or a resume bullet. You get it because you love research and want to make life-long contributions at the top level.

You don't need an M.S. to get a Ph.D. If you know you're on this crazy path from the time you enter college, then make sure you embrace all of the numbered tips above, but especially the point about finding some research group to get a job with. Failing a paid job, you should qualify for undergraduate research credits to work on some project in your department.

There are a lot of issues about qualifying exams, graduate record exams, and comprehensive exams I'm not going to cover. Details, details – you can do your own homework. A big issue, though, is picking the right university with the right research reputation in the discipline you love. The Ph.D. is very much an apprenticeship under a particular professor for typically 4-5 years. Choose wisely. You need to interview your desired school and faculty as much as they need to examine you. In this, as with all other points covered in the last few pages, pray much and ask the Lord for guidance so you find the optimum path.

Chapter 7

Jobs and Careers – Strategy and Tactics

How to succeed in your career – there are libraries of books filled with case histories, advice, anecdotes, and data on this subject. I'm not going to try to be comprehensive in my treatment, but rather give you my own perspective in particular areas based on Biblical principles. Let's start with some basic Scriptural guidance:

¹⁸Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Ecclesiastes 5:18

¹³And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God. Ecclesiastes 3:13

²²Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? Ecclesiastes 3:22

It is perfectly acceptable in the Lord's eyes that we enjoy the fruits of our labor. God made a lot of stuff. He gave us incredibly sensitive taste buds to enjoy a huge variety of meats, vegetables, and fruits, not to mention soft drinks and candy bars. Consider animals that clearly don't linger over their meals for taste – it's all about quenching hunger for them. We eat for both sustenance and pleasure – too often to our detriment.

The skin that covers our entire body is wonderfully sensitive to a cool breeze, or a gentle touch, or a soft and luxurious fabric. We have a God-given aesthetic appreciation for beauty in this world and in art that glorifies God's creation. Our color vision can distinguish millions of shades and hues. That's not just about survival. God gave us these senses so we could take pleasure in His creative brilliance. So it's OK to enjoy things we buy with money we earn, as long as we don't make gods out of the stuff!

Solomon gives us cautionary notes about these purchased pleasures:

¹⁸Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. ²¹For there is a man whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity; yet to a man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil. Ecclesiastes 3:18, 22

There must be a great sense of frustration in the lives of the greedy – whether the billionaire I described in the first chapter, or the brick layer that just lives for the stuff he can buy. He can't take any of the "dirt" with him! All of his work to acquire dirt is "vanity and a great evil" – unfair in his eyes. Some other joker is going to inherit everything he owns. Think about that. Whatever you leave behind when you die, someone else is going to use and enjoy it. This can drive you nuts if you don't have an

assured promise that your real mansion is in Heaven with the Lord – and on the new Earth when the Lord returns.

It should be obvious to you that there must be balance in the enjoyment of your income. If you spend too much effort over too many years, you're just working for the pleasure of your heirs – or worse – lawyers and other vultures who clamor over your estate. On the other hand, there is no Biblical mandate for asceticism. I know professing Christians who live poorer than they need to because it makes them feel more spiritual. They will be disappointed at the Judgment Seat of Christ that they actually “lose points” instead of gaining any.

Whatever job you do to make a living, work hard at it. Solomon was right on the mark when he exhorted:

¹⁰Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. Ecclesiastes 9:10

Work hard and creatively. Make the hours count. During my approximately 37 working years, I usually made a point of making the minutes count. I found that if I devoted myself to getting the job done during normal work hours – helping the boss, meeting deadlines, getting reports done, accomplishing the organization's mission, etc. – that I could excel without wrecking the rest of my life. You can get A LOT of work done in 40 hours per week if you concentrate diligently during those hours. That leaves you 128 hours for learning, loving, and life. Many people that work 50 or 60 or more hours per week do not make efficient use of their time. They may stay late at the office, but spend chunks of their day chatting with co-workers or surfing the net. How foolish.

For efficiency's sake, make sure that you find a job that rewards you appropriately. Since you are trading a piece of your life away for compensation, you ought to get paid as much as is practical and honest. God pronounces a curse on rulers or employers who rip off their workers:

¹³Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work; Jeremiah 22:13

Don't allow your employer to cheat you, and if you supervise or employ workers, don't bring this curse down on your own head. The other side of the coin is that you owe your employer a full day's work for a full day's pay. Otherwise, you are stealing from him. It doesn't matter if you work with lazy people or whether they think you are “sucking up” to management by being a hard worker. Your work, even if it's in the kitchen at Taco Bell, is to be done for the Lord's sake:

¹⁷And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Colossians 3:17

³¹Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Honesty in business is a fairly basic principle. Regarding the marketplace, we find:

¹⁰Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD. Proverbs 20:10

A dishonest vendor uses dishonest weights. A dishonest business owner uses two sets of books for accounting – one for himself and one to show the auditor. A dishonest investment banker creates securities and derivatives so complex that an unwary buyer won't discover the worthlessness of the underlying assets – until it's too late. Of course, if he is exposed, his reputation and business may be trashed for life. Worse, what he has done is "abomination" in the sight of the Lord. Why is God so angry about such sins? He made all of us imagebearers and expects us to treat each other accordingly. Especially regarding how the Lord watches over His children (born again believers), we read:

¹And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; ²Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: ³And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. ⁴And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; ⁵Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. ⁶And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. ⁷And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? ⁸I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Luke 18:1-8

The unbeliever had better watch out how he treats God's children. The Christian had better watch out, too, how he treats others. In this parable we see that even in the world justice can sometimes be obtained by the downtrodden. God explicitly promises that He will bring vengeance on those who abuse His children. Just live by the golden rule and you'll stay out of trouble:

¹²Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:12

Whether you have great talents and big job responsibilities or modest talents and a modest job, be faithful with the resources and tasks given to you. The following passage applies both to life on this planet and the rewards you might receive from the Lord in the New Earth:

¹⁰He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. ¹¹If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? ¹²And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? Luke 16:10-12

If you desire more responsibility, be a diligent steward over what has already been entrusted to you. This applies within any organization that is well-managed. A good company will be looking to promote its best workers. If that's not true where you work, look for a better job. The principle also applies spiritually. Whatever God has entrusted you in talents, resources, wife, children, and ministry, be faithful. God has much more in store for you, whether in this world or later – either way, we can trust the Lord to watch over the details of our lives. That idea should be both exhilarating and scary if you think about it:

²¹For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. Proverbs 5:21

¹³Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

That second passage is the bottom line, the concluding verses, of Solomon's book. It's not complicated, is it? Fear God and keep His commandments. Just keep after it day by day, including on your job. You may be the only Christian on your job and, therefore, the only Gospel witness in the lives of your co-workers. The Lord sees everything you do and your co-workers see a lot. Don't steal a paperclip and always speak honestly.

The most basic point of a job is to make sure that you and your family eat. Consider the following:

¹⁰For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. 2 Thessalonians 3:10

⁸But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Timothy 5:8

The first verse above disavows government give-away programs for able-bodied men. The second verse is God's view of someone who claims to be a Christian, but doesn't work enough to take care of his own family. "Infidel" is equivalent to "atheist." Since words fail for how despicable such a low-life is who won't provide for his family, God simply says he "is worse than an infidel."

Let's get to some specific and practical advice for a money-making career. Timothy Ferriss has written a wonderful book entitled The 4-Hour Work Week: Escape 9 – 5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich. A caveat first: I do not recommend everything in this book, especially the hedonistic lifestyle that seems to motivate Ferriss. What I do appreciate is his very practical counsel on maximizing the bucks you get out of the hours you put into your career. In brief, he shows how to acquire expertise in an area that people care about, and turn that expertise into income from seminars and publications. He also describes how to create ideas for new commercial products and get them to market with a minimum of investment. He gives practical instructions on how to out-source activities that you don't want to handle yourself, including design, manufacturing, marketing, and distribution.

You probably won't believe me that what Ferriss has come up with can apply to you, especially if you don't consider yourself to be a genius or expert or experienced at much of anything. Trust me. His prescription for building a business is something that you can actually do, whoever you are.

If I had grasped some of the principles in Ferriss' book when I was twenty, I probably would have been able to "retire" at age thirty, instead of fifty-three. Is it so desirable to "retire young"? The point is that to make the most out of your life, which is so startlingly short, it's better to spend more of your time doing what you think is important, instead of what your boss wants. So if you can retire early and serve the Lord with all of your remaining energy, go for it. When you're working 8 – 5, most of the energy and creativity in your life is expended inside that "dash." Your time to serve God and love your family must make do with your residual energy. That's life, of course, but if you can do better, why not?

Given all of the choices of jobs and careers in America, just what should you choose to do for a living? Are you just going to trade your life for mere dollars, and then find yourself too tired to enjoy the dollars and the little time remaining? Would you rather be energized at the end of the day or be exhausted? Or both? Are you in an occupation, namely sitting still? Are you in a career that makes use of the talents God has given you? A lot of folks just enter a string of jobs that stretch between adolescence and senility. How about if your career could be a *calling* – a higher purpose?

How can you tell what career might be perfectly in God's will for you and such that He could use your efforts to be a blessing to others – regardless of who signs your paycheck, or whether you work for the government, or industry, or academia? I suggest two tests that you can answer in your gut, because God wired you with a "calling detector."

1. What kind of work would be exciting, energizing, and satisfying? Even if you don't have expertise in that area, it would be worth it to get the training and the education.
2. What kind of work will make a difference in the world? People will benefit from it and you will see tangible results that build satisfying memories as the years go by.

If you do 1 but not 2, you've wasted your life. If you do 2 but not 1, you won't sustain it and you won't do it with the passion it deserves. It may look exciting to be a professional baseball player or a Hollywood actor, but all you will accomplish is to provide moments of entertainment to others. A hard-working nurse who loves the Lord and lives faithfully will fare far better at the Lord's Judgment Seat than a Christian who wins the batting crown. However, no matter how much you think a job might make a difference, if God hasn't wired you with passion and talent for it, you won't be successful in the long run.

Everyone can find a 1 PLUS 2 combination. Especially, if you are following and trusting in the Lord. The prophet Amos was "merely" a farmer, but his faithfulness allowed God to promote him to be Heaven's ambassador in his time. Job was a wealthy rancher who loved the Lord, but was tested severely by Satan. In passing that test, God doubled his previous wealth and immortalized his life story. Peter, James, and John were small-business fishermen, but when the Lord Jesus called them, they responded immediately, "went to school" for three years in the Lord's company, and were used to build New Testament Christianity. Daniel was taken as a captive slave from his conquered country, was probably "eunuch"ed when he arrived in Babylon, but was faithful in what seemed to be the smallest thing – what God expected a young man to eat and what not to eat. God promoted him to be the prime minister of the most powerful kingdom on earth.

When these men demonstrated their faithfulness, God showed them what talents they had by giving them careers that they never could have dreamed of. You may not even know what you can accomplish in this life. God does. If you're a young man and don't know what work will energize and motivate you, don't worry. God does. Be faithful and seek His will:

⁴*Delight thyself also in the LORD: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. ⁵Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Psalm 37:4-5*

³*Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established. Proverbs 16:3*

What if you think you found the right job, but then you get fired or laid off? Don't get discouraged. Your calling hasn't changed. Just find another place – a better place – this is an opportunity! Abraham Lincoln lost every election he entered until he won the Presidency. Multitudes of successful entrepreneurs and businessmen have suffered failure upon failure and were broke for years before they built a profitable enterprise.

Thomas Edison famously opined, "Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration." He lived by that principle, determined to spend his life working strictly on useful inventions that would change the world for the better. Edison expected that he would invent a practical light bulb within a few weeks. He failed for two years, trying over 6,000 different variations before he found a workable carbon filament. In the course of developing a nickel / iron battery, he plodded through more than 10,000 experiments. Do you want to be a genius? Work, work, work.

Adoniram Judson, America's first foreign missionary, labored 7 years as a missionary in Burma before he saw his first convert. What if he had quit after 6 years? William Carey worked in India for at least 6 years for his first convert. By the end of his life, he saw hundreds. But in the decades after his life was over, hundreds of thousands came to Christ from the work he started. Many missionaries have worked longer with no visible results – one whose name I don't recall served 22 years in the Pacific islands without a convert, and then revival broke out, hundreds were saved, and churches were established.

Charles H. Spurgeon, the greatly used English preacher of the late 19th Century, in his "Lectures to My Students," offered: "We are, in a certain sense, our own tools, and therefore must keep ourselves in order . . . it will be in vain for me to stock my library, or organize societies, or project schemes, if I neglect the culture of myself; for books, and agencies, and systems are not remotely the instruments of my holy calling; my own spirit, soul, and body, and my nearest machinery for sacred service; my spiritual faculties, and my inner life, are my battle axe and weapons of war."

If you're still a young man, this thought is for you (if you're not so young, it still applies for whatever days you have left!): Whatever your calling / career, consider yourself to be a tool or an instrument in the hand of God. You have the responsibility to build and grow your skills for God's glory. Consider these Scriptures on personal responsibility:

²⁰But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, ²¹Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Jude 20-21

¹⁶Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. 1 Timothy 4:16

³I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. ⁴A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person. Psalm 101:3-4

The first passage speaks to our responsibility to build ourselves up, while focused on the Lord and His love and mercy. The second warns us to watch out for ourselves and especially to embrace sound doctrine, so we don't get distracted by the crazy and wicked philosophies of the world. "Save thyself" means simply that we can "deliver" ourselves from much trouble if we continue faithfully. The third is specific about what we put before our eyes and what type of people we hang out with. If you're

going to build a life pleasing to the Lord, you're not going to waste your life on raunchy movies, websites, and videogames. You won't spend hours of meaningless chatter and gossip on Facebook or Twitter. And you'll pick your friends carefully. We have to work and live in the world. We are certainly to bear testimony to everyone we encounter. But "friends" need to be those of like – Biblical – mind.

The more time you invest in building yourself up in Christian character and in professional skills, the less you will have to learn the hard way. Mark Twain said, "Good judgment comes from experience. And where does experience come from? Experience comes from bad judgment." Looking back on my own life, I have satisfaction in what I accomplished after investing in professional skills through coursework in mathematics, physics, engineering, and business. I am glad for the time I invested in reading and memorizing Scripture so that I could share the Gospel properly with individuals, and answer questions they posed. I am glad for every missionary biography I have read, and for study in church history, competing worldviews, and the doctrinal controversies of our times. However, I am ashamed of the enormous number of hours wasted reading science fiction, and developing tennis skills to the point of winning a fair number of amateur-level trophies. Tennis is a great sport, but I was only able to play that well because I got addicted to the game at times.

What are God's attitudes toward private property, contracts, and fair wages? Let's look at the parable in Matthew 20:

¹For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. ²And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

⁵Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? ⁷They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

⁸So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. ⁹And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. ¹⁰But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. ¹¹And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, ¹²Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

¹³But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? ¹⁴Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. ¹⁵Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? ¹⁶So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

At first glance, many readers of this passage sympathize with the complaints of the laborers who worked the entire day for "only" a penny -- which, by the way was not like an American penny, but was actually a full and fair day's wage, and could be lived on comfortably. Look carefully, though. The

early laborers wanted a contract. They wanted an agreement for a penny for the day's labor. They fulfilled their contract and were paid in full. In contrast, the later laborers were willing to trust the land / business owner for what he thought would be right. He honored their trust by giving them above what they likely expected. Clearly, their expectations would be for an amortized fraction of a day's wage.

Now, the principle application of this parable is spiritual, relating to God's ownership of this world and our duty to serve Him. Scripture teaches in many places that God will abundantly reward His believers who serve Him in this life. For our purposes in this chapter, we'll infer additional principles. One is that property and business ownership confers privilege to administer resources as the owner sees fit: "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" If you're in the position of owner, boss, supervisor, etc., you have the responsibility to make the decisions even if they are not popular. Do right whether or not "right" pleases others. Hopefully, "right" does indeed please your employees most of the time.

When I was a manager at Lockheed Martin, we enjoyed a time of expansion and hiring. One fellow in a technical specialty applied for a job, admitting that in his current company, working conditions were unpleasant. He was motivated to find a different job. When I asked him what salary he was looking for, he expressed a desire to match his current income – we'll call it "x" dollars per year. When I reviewed what people were making in our organization in that discipline, adjusted for skill level and experience, I counter-offered to the applicant, "We'd like to pay you x plus \$2,000 per year. Is that OK with you?" It was. And he entered the job with a noticeably extra high level of enthusiasm, simply because we had treated him so decently.

If you're on the employee side of the ledger, recognize that you don't own the business. You should generally have no basis for complaining, murmuring, and griping about how the business is run. The big decisions are simply not your deal. I'm assuming the company treats you honestly and fairly. If they don't, move on. If they do, accomplish your part of the mission as if the Lord Jesus, Himself, is your supervisor. Don't sow discord. Scripture is full of admonitions against griping, gossiping, and sowing discord. Should you communicate to leadership if you see a better way to do business? Absolutely! That's the surest way to get recognized and move up to greater responsibility and reward. If you consistently get shut down, or worse, if your contributions get stolen without any recognition coming your way, find another place to work.

We also see a principle here about how to maximize employer / employee relationships. If you have an employer who is a "good" man in that he wants the best, not just for his business but also for his employees, then the workers will benefit most – financially – in a relationship of mutual trust. Organizing unions and negotiating contracts do not produce a sense of shared mission and teamwork. Note that usually the "salaried" professionals in a company often make much more than the "hourly" workers. Yes, the principal difference is the type of work done, but it's also significant that salaried workers tend to voluntarily put in extra hours every week. The more they produce, the more the company benefits, and the more they are likely to be compensated. By the time an organization is locked together by contracts and union agreements, most of the trust, excitement, and potential growth have vaporized.

Everyone aspires to be a leader someday. What glory is there in following? Who talks about learning to be a follower? Certainly, NO ONE aspires to be a great follower. Going against the flow, the eternal Son of God taught such things as:

¹⁹*And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Matthew 4:19*

²⁷*And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. ²⁸And he left all, rose up, and followed him. Luke 5:27-28*

Peter, James, and John left their successful fishing business to become students and itinerant preachers. Levi, also known as Matthew, left a highly lucrative tax collecting job for the same uncertain future. The career changes worked out. Becoming followers first, they will someday have their names emblazoned on the foundations of the New Jerusalem, the capital city of God in the new Heaven and the new Earth. Additionally, they will reign as princes under the leadership of the King of Kings.

²⁷*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. John 10:27-28*

Who aspires to be sheep – a prime example of mere followers? When your Leader is the Lord Jesus, the rewards include eternal life.

²⁵*He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. ²⁶If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. John 12:25-26*

This is really counter-cultural. The irony is that if we count the stuff of this life as dung (see also Philippians 3:8) in comparison with following Christ, life becomes more rich and abundant, not only in these paltry few years in this flesh, but for ages to come – guaranteed by God the Father.

⁴²*But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. ⁴³But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: ⁴⁴And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. Mark 10:42-45*

Everyone wants to be boss. Jesus says that leadership in spiritual matters starts with servanthood. The principle certainly applies as you employ your God-given talents to serve others in business or government. Look first to help others and recognition tends to follow. Even if you don't get rewarded in this life, your heavenly Father sees everything.

Let me give a practical example in demonstrating followership when you are the leader of an organization. It will regularly occur that you call a team meeting to deal with a tough issue. Someone on the team asks you what should be done. In complete honesty you say that you don't have a clue. You seek everyone's analysis and develop a team-built solution that will solve the problem and is consistent with your company's mission and values. You have demonstrated leadership in that you have set an example on how to seek and construct the best ideas and solutions in a team setting. You have demonstrated followership in that you were willing and eager to embrace the wisdom and experience of others both individually and collectively and were eager to execute the resulting course of action.

Let me turn very briefly to the subject of resume preparation – very briefly because of the tremendous volume of published advice out there. I'll offer just a couple of tips. You have to work to make your resume stand out. Much advice in resume writing, especially that offered by universities to graduating students, tends to foster similarity in styles and formats, guaranteeing that you won't stand out. Make sure that you build a resume that *explains* what you have accomplished, what skills you have, and how you can benefit the company you're looking at. Bullets are not explanations.

In your career you should aspire to positions where you have considerable discretionary time and the ability to design your work days. For example, a cashier at a grocery store and an auto mechanic have no discretionary time. Their work days are filled by someone else thrusting work in front of them. The grocery store owner, however, chooses how to balance his time among purchasing, supervising, financing, advertising, and investing in new product lines. The auto shop owner has similar variety in his work day.

I had the privilege of managing several organizations during my career. There was always a press of business due to phone calls, correspondence, budget deadlines, and people walking into the office. It was easy to fill up my day with tasks that came from others. But for my organization to survive and prosper a year or two years downstream, I had to allocate blocks of time for planning, strategizing, and envisioning that future. Otherwise, a year downstream there would be no business at all for the people who worked for me. I had to be polite, but ruthless, in explaining that I couldn't chat or attend a meeting, at times, because I had a priority task at hand – namely, the creation of the future of the business which I could not delegate to anyone who worked for me.

I discovered early in my career that I should work to delegate everything I possibly could. Yes, there were lots of things that I could do just as well, if not better, than people who worked for me. Not everything – it's your job to hire expertise and skills that exceed and complement yours. But I found that if I could delegate a task, I should. That freed me up to do things that I couldn't possibly delegate. Besides strategic planning, such tasks include representing the organization to potential customers, to senior management, and to partner organizations. Developing the professional skills of my people is my job, too. I had better have an eye on keeping my people learning and growing or I'm likely to lose them to some group who cares more about their people.

Within a week after I took a management position at a new company, I discovered that a fellow in my division we'll call "Ed" was constantly being sought out to solve problems -- not just within my group but from all over the company. I knew he wasn't spending all of his time on our unit's tasks, but I didn't make an issue of it. I decided to just watch for a while. It didn't take me long to recognize that this fellow was the most indispensable engineer in the company. And he wasn't even trained as an engineer! Within a few months I was promoted to the next level. I had to pull strings and call in chips, but I succeeded in busting hidebound company tradition and obtaining for Ed several out-of-cycle raises and a promotion. That first promotion was just in time to circumvent an offer from another company that would have snatched him away. In fact, he trusted me enough to reveal the offer well before I had secured his first substantial raise. If I hadn't been extolling his virtues early on and working to promote him, he would have just disappeared and we would have been hurting big time.

If you're in a company that employs more than just a few people, you will not only be part of a team, but you necessarily will be in competition with your peers. Only a minority get the promotions and the largest pay raises. What if you know that a number of your peers are smarter and more skilled

than you are? Is it possible to outperform them? Indeed. The key is to focus on doing the most important things as well as you can.

While I was in the Air Force, I was assigned for four years to a faculty position at the Air Force Institute of Technology. In addition to teaching, I was expected to devote some of my time to research, developing technology that would serve the nation's defense. In my specialty (laser physics), developing and applying computer models was a typical and key element of such research. I felt a bit intimidated by some of the geniuses I was working with because they were just *so good* at writing sophisticated code, regardless of their research specialty. (Some were laser scientists, but others did research in plasma physics, nuclear reactors, or physical electronics.)

I wasn't nearly as talented as some of my faculty peers. But I knew what the mission was – do successful and relevant research and publish your results. So I devoted all of my efforts toward that goal. I only got as sophisticated as I needed to get with code development to get the results I needed. And I got my results published.

I noticed that some of the other guys developed more and more sophisticated algorithms, input / output routines, and even parallel processing methods so they could use multiple machines to make their codes run faster. I was really impressed. But they never seemed to get RESULTS! And they never got around to publishing – at least not very much. The *mission* was never accomplished.

In a different assignment, I once knew an incredibly creative experimental scientist in one of the nation's premier laboratories. He could devise and construct the most innovative experiments, making wonderfully sensitive measurements, and make rooms full of sophisticated equipment harmonize as if he were an orchestra conductor. But once he found out what the results were, he would get bored and move on to another project. He lacked the discipline to make the exhaustive series of measurements always required in experimental science to obtain statistically significant and repeatable results. And, of course, it was like pulling teeth to get him to write anything up. Later in his career he wanted to move on to a more prestigious position. It was only then that he discovered how weak his resume was. He was wonderfully talented, but had no mission focus. *It's nice to be talented. But it's vital to be mission-oriented!*

Here's a tip for both your career and your personal life that will pay off hugely over the years: Schedule everything! Whether you use an electronic or a paper-based device, record all of your planned meetings, deadlines, tasks, and even blocks of time for planning. Whenever you accomplish a task, check it off. There is joy in seeing a bunch of checkmarks in your scheduler at the end of each day. If you can't get something done when you planned to do it, then check it off and reschedule it. Too many professionals rely on their memories and so occasionally forget responsibilities or even promises they made. If you are diligent in scheduling, then the only task you need to remember is to check your scheduler regularly!

This practice reduces stress, too. How often do you struggle with remembering something you know you have to do? How many times have you apologized for missing a meeting or forgetting to deliver on something you promised? Scheduling, therefore, increases your integrity and the perception people have of your dependability.

Related to the scheduling principle is your consistency in delivering on what you promise. In my professional experience, I have found that I have to double-check or even triple-check on everything.

Perhaps as few as 5% of people in the work force will consistently deliver on something they promise after one verbal interaction. What do I mean by this? For example: As I walk by my co-worker, Joe, in the hallway, I ask him if he would send me a copy of a report he worked on. He replies, "Sure." If he always comes through in situations like this – without a reminder – then he's part of the 5%. When I took over as a manager at Lockheed Martin, I bought a scheduler for every one of my employees. I taught them that every time they committed to a task, even the smallest, if it couldn't be done immediately, then it had better go into the scheduler. In the case above, I would want to see Joe pull out his scheduler and make a quick note – which would give me a tiny dose of peace and happiness!

This chapter could easily be expanded into a book. I hope that within a few years I might write a book on leadership and success in the work force, centered on Biblical principles. In this chapter's brief treatment, let me conclude by encouraging you to keep your wits about you. Your talents and your integrity will be on display in whatever job you have. You have a responsibility to work hard, speak graciously, act honestly, and be a living witness for Jesus Christ in front of your co-workers. It's not complicated, but it's not easy. Temptations will arise with no warning. Who you are will determine how you respond. Be in prayer about your job. Ask God to help you do right without exception. If you make mistakes, be open to others and apologize. Be humble, not defensive, and you will enjoy much grace both from God and your co-workers.

Chapter 8

The Ministry of Personal Evangelism

In the late 1970s I attended graduate school at Michigan State University. One of my fellow grad students – we'll call him "William" – was a committed atheist / evolutionist. But he was quite polite and willing to discuss the big issues of life. Over the course of our friendship I worked hard to try to reach him for Christ. After about two years he confessed that I had convinced him that evolution was unsupported and unscientific. But he wasn't willing to become a Christian. His worldview had shifted by only a bit: on the subject of origins he figured that someone would come up with a better naturalistic idea than evolution. He professed that the only thing that would likely provoke him to become a Christian would be some traumatic experience. In short, *he didn't want to give up his favorite sins and he didn't want any God telling him what to do.* We lost contact upon graduation.

"Warren" was another grad student who worked in the same research team as I did. We weren't close, although we had a good professional relationship. Warren was also an atheist, but didn't want to engage in discussion. I know that I shared the Gospel with him in those days – I was in the habit of sharing the Good News with everyone I knew – but I can't remember doing so. After graduation we lost touch for 20 years. That's when Warren called me. He was a researcher in a West Coast lab and I was teaching at Michigan Tech in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Warren told me that he had become a Christian five years before. He said that he could never get out of his mind the truths that I had told him. Over the course of 15 years, God had brought circumstances into his life that got his attention. He repented and trusted Christ and was serving the Lord in a local church. He wanted to call me to thank and encourage me.

That encouragement was timely. I had been praying for encouragement at the time that he called, because I had seen so little response to my efforts in personal evangelism for several years. The Lord used that experience to show me that He is always working. God cares more than I do about the salvation of souls. He expects me to be faithful, whether I see any results or not. I'll spend time with my "brother-in-Christ" Warren in the new Heaven and the new Earth. We'll rejoice together over the love and grace of God, Who sent someone to me with the Gospel when I was a young man – someone who cared enough about me to warn me about sin, judgment, and Hell. When I got saved I got "soul-conscious." I want to invite more people into God's family and out of the Devil's. That's what motivated me to "preach" to Warren, even though he didn't like it at the time. But now he's glad that I did.

Is the practice of personal evangelism – witnessing – Gospel preaching – sharing your faith – soul-winning, etc. – just an "add-on" to the Christian life? Based on typical American church practice, you would think so. Most American churches advertise scores of activities, events, ministries, meetings, and clubs for their members without any evidence of reaching out to the lost with the only Good News that can save from Hell and grant everlasting life. Even the most "fundamental" of American churches pressure their members to faithfully attend all of the "worship services," typically Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. Then they schedule a weekly "visitation" time on Thursday night and are content with a handful of people to go out and invite people to church.

Before my wife and I moved to the city where we now live, we came to visit relatives and check out the area. On Wednesday night we visited the mid-week service of perhaps the most conservative

and “evangelistically minded” church in the city. I was excited to see about 500 people in attendance that evening, and there seemed to be a good bit of enthusiasm in the congregation. The pastor appealed to the crowd to remember to participate in the next night’s visitation program. (Typically, from 7 – 9 pm on Thursday night, members go out to see people that have been visitors to the church recently. Some effort may also be expended knocking on new doors to share the Gospel and invite people to a church service.)

Even though I wasn’t a part of the church, I decided to show up Thursday night and help out. On Thursday night, to my surprise, there were only three of us: myself and two of the assistant pastors. Where were the other 497? I came to learn later that there were often 6-8 people who came on Thursday. The church also ran a “door-knocking” program on Saturday morning that might include a few folks.

By experience I now know that this was one of the most “fervent” churches in the area. Obviously, evangelism is not important to most churches and most professing Christians. This is true across America. Should it be?

The practice of Biblical Christianity is not as complicated as some think. Is it about big facilities, paid pastoral staff, worship teams, a bundle of “ministries,” pulpit-pounding sermons, etc.? No. Biblical Christianity is about two primary, overlapping missions: **EVANGELISM** and **DISCIPLESHIP**. The message of the Lord Jesus Christ to his apostles, between the resurrection and the ascension, was about telling lost people how to be saved (“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature . . .”) and making disciples (“ . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you . . .”). This chapter and the next focus on the two areas in a man’s life that will count for eternity. If you reject most of the ideas in the rest of this book, I implore you to study the issues in these two chapters with a clear mind and an open heart.

Do you want to be a godly man, a man transformed by grace to make his life count? Look at the earthly lives of the Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul. Their activities were consumed with these two missions. The Lord reached out to individual souls everywhere he went *and* invested his life in the twelve. (When Judas failed the course, the Lord replaced him with Paul.) When Paul wasn’t winning souls he was traveling to encourage the churches he had already started. If you *merely* invest your life in reaching out to the lost and encouraging the believers you find around you . . . then you will have *merely* followed the example of our Lord and His apostles. Not a bad plan.

There is much confusion — even heresy — in American Christendom in both of these areas. Biblically-based evangelism is rarely practiced and proper discipleship (which includes godly fellowship) is not found in the program of most churches. As a way to start thinking about Biblical evangelism, consider the quotes below, defining repentance as it applies to salvation. If your Gospel preaching is not aimed in this direction, then your church is likely filled with false converts / the religious lost — the hardest to reach demographic in America. Don’t be afraid to examine yourself as Paul challenged the problematic members of the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:5). If you haven’t deliberately and willfully experienced Biblical repentance, then do so immediately!

Recognizing his guilt, there is a turning from sin. There is a turning to God. The actual word ‘repentance’ means a turning completely around: a change of course; a change of mind . . . To think of repentance

that does not cause the sinner to turn gladly from his sins is impossible. . . . I know that we have a shallow religious movement in our times that will allow men to profess faith in Christ and at the same time continue to live in the world. Such a shallow religious faith is not real. These are mere professors and have no part with God in salvation. – Harold Sigtler, pastor

Repentance is a forsaking of sin. Real repentance is putting your trust in Jesus Christ so you will not live like that anymore. Repentance is permanent. It is a lifelong and an eternity-long experience. You will never love the Devil again once you repent. You will never flirt with the Devil as the habit of your life again once you get saved . . . Repentance is something a lot bigger than a lot of people think. It is absolutely essential if you go to heaven. – Lester Roloff, evangelist

Neglect of the doctrine of Biblical repentance is the reason there are so few converts within America. Few converts? Isn't this a "Christian nation"? Even if you properly discount the Roman Catholics and the liberal mainline Protestants, aren't there at least 50 million evangelicals and fundamentalists in America?

Yes, but out of these there are perhaps only about 6 million real Christians – about 2% of the population. This is my personal estimate, extrapolating from two sources: (1) comprehensive national polling about what professing Christians actually believe about the Bible, their own salvation, the person of Jesus Christ, etc., and (2) personal conversations with many thousands of individuals in street ministry over many years. Only about 2% of us show real evidence of being born again. And I'm afraid that I may be too optimistic.

Why so few converts? Consider that most of those 2% have been raised in Christian families, at some point trusted Christ, and have continued to live their lives as disciples into adulthood. It is therefore clear that the number of Americans getting saved from evangelistic efforts, especially as teens or adults, is woefully small. Adults that have grown up without a Biblically-based faith, have been exposed to a wide variety of confusing pseudo-Christian heresies, and have immersed themselves gleefully in the sewer of American culture (pop / rock / rap music, pornography, Hollywood, pro-sports team worship, etc.), have powerful resistance to the message of repentance, faith, and the new birth.

America's prosperity and religious freedom have produced an insipidly watered-down imitation of Christianity, with a false Gospel propagated by many (Thank God, not all!) of its most conservative churches . . . yes, specifically what we would call the fundamentalist and the evangelical churches. Let me give you a recent and startling example of the energy expended in producing false converts.

A leading fundamentalist organization recently organized a Memorial Day weekend event in Washington, D.C. About 250 "soul-winners" from perhaps a dozen churches spent two days passing out tracts and "sharing the Gospel." They reported that they "saw 685 people bow their heads and trust Christ as Savior." One man "set a goal to lead 10 people to the Lord by the end of the day . . .", but "at the end of the day . . . had led 24 souls to the Lord!"

Somehow he *knew* that. He professed no supernatural ability, however, to inspect the souls and spirits of those individuals, to determine whether the Holy Spirit had taken up residence. Perhaps his *methodology* was fool-proof. The leader of the expedition (a nationally recognized figure) testified that

the workers explain the Gospel “in detail” using the so-called Romans Road, talking through the following Scripture verses: Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9, 10, and 13.

If you’re not familiar with this approach, that’s good! In brief, these verses are used to explain that everyone is a sinner, that the wages for sin is death, that Christ died for us, and that if we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that all this is true, then we can be saved eternally. The last verse, Romans 10:13 is used to provoke a “sinner’s prayer,” affirming the points above. (Look carefully! 10:13, in context, is not about “how” to be saved – a method – but rather “who” can be saved – whosoever! More about this point later.) If all this is done with apparent sincerity, the sinner is pronounced “saved.”

The leader above talks of “drawing the net.” By this he means that you can “close the deal” by leading someone in a sinner’s prayer. *No you can’t!* It is the Holy Spirit who “closes the deal” when a truly repentant heart trusts Christ as Savior. The “soul-winner” is the one who wants “closure” so that he can report that 24 people got saved that day! By the way, the term “soul-winner” derives somewhat from Proverbs 11:30. I find the term dangerous because it leads to a mentality of “closing the deal.” It’s better to use “evangelist” or “Gospel preacher” or “witness.”

Let’s back up a bit. This false-Gospel encounter with a stranger is often initiated by the question, “Do you know for sure if you are going to Heaven when you die?” If the response indicates uncertainty, the follow-up may be, “Wouldn’t you like to make sure?” Now, who wouldn’t want to “make sure”? Do you see the fallacy? The typical American, raised up with some church background (even if not active in a church presently), has some belief in the God of the Bible, sees himself as a Christian of some kind, and is “pretty sure” of going to Heaven. Perhaps 98% sure, because he thinks of himself as such a good guy. He is self-righteous and, therefore, in deep trouble, but doesn’t know it. At any rate, he hasn’t been worried about it even though the stakes are infinite. So the “soul-winner” offers him a method to get the missing 2% of assurance. Why not take it?

What’s the problem? To be saved you have to know you are 100% lost, headed for Hell because you deserve it, with no hope at all unless God offers you a way out . . . namely, salvation through Jesus Christ. If you don’t know you’re *lost*, then you can’t get *saved*. Jesus came not to call the self-righteous, but sinners to repentance!!! (Luke 5:32)

It’s amazing that anyone turns down the opportunity to “pray to receive Christ.” That phrase sounds rather “Catholic,” doesn’t it? In the RC Mass, a priest supposedly yanks Jesus out of Heaven via an incantation . . . to inhabit a wafer. Similarly, the “soul-winner” entices the sinner to yank the Holy Spirit out of heaven to inhabit his heart via a “magic prayer.” Yet many people who have some “Christian beliefs” refuse the sinner’s prayer. When this occurs I believe it’s because the non-believer instinctively knows that he is not willing to give up his sins, namely, he is not willing to repent – even though the “soul-winner” hasn’t said a word about repentance. In fact, such “soul-winners” explicitly do not believe that repentance from specific sins is required for salvation.

So the eager Christian walks the sinner through the Romans Road, who then nods his *intellectual assent* to each point. At the end he’s quite willing to pray a simple prayer if the result is a mansion in Heaven. Then back he goes to his wicked party life on earth and nothing changes. He is told that *to be saved he must trust only in Jesus for salvation and not in his works, church, etc., and that believing that*

Jesus died for him will save him. The fallacy is that mental assent to *the fact* that Jesus died for his sins and *the fact* that only Jesus can save, says *nothing* about repentance from sins – a true change of mind that produces a lifelong change of actions. If you want forgiveness, you must agree with God that your sins are wicked . . . not just that sins in general are wicked, but that *your sins* are wicked. When you *believe that*, you'll turn around, change roads, repent — follow Jesus and not Satan anymore. What you believe is shown by how you act. If you believe you are in a burning building, you will act to leave.

My sad experience, along with many others who preach the Gospel Scripturally, has been to run into the train wrecks of false converts every week. They are the most hardened lost people of all. They were never born again, have never passed from death to life, and have shown no evidence of being a new creature in Christ – old things have not passed away (2 Corinthians 5:17). Still lost, but now they are *assured* of their salvation. Children, of course, are the easiest to fool with such simplistically false methods. A child will agree with an authority figure in his family or church, make a profession, get baptized, attend church until 18 years old, and then race into the world to make up for lost party-time.

Recent statistics in fundamentalist and evangelical churches indicate that 80-90% of the kids raised in those churches depart from “the faith” as soon as they leave the nest. Parents are consoled by their foolish pastors that the kids are “still saved,” just backslidden – just “carnal Christians.”

How tragic. If you think you are dealing with a “carnal Christian,” you won't be preaching judgment, damnation, and the need for repentance unto salvation, will you? You'll be preaching such gentle, esoteric concepts as loss of reward, not loving Jesus enough, etc. The false convert, addicted to the sins of the flesh, is not motivated by “loss of reward.” He is called a “backslider,” but he never slid forward in the first place. He is still on the road to Hell.

Permit me to attempt to motivate you in the area of personal evangelism – and for you to do it Scripturally so that you don't create false converts. It's probably easy for you to find motivation for a loving marriage, educated children, and a successful career. I've invested previous chapters in offering a Biblical perspective on these vital areas. But those things are really about you, aren't they? Your wife and your children are part of you. Your career is about you. Even pagans desire happy families and worldly success. So what are you doing for others?

Evangelism is the subject of propagating the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's what the Bible is all about, isn't it? After a perfect creation, man rebelled against God. The entire Old Testament is centered on the promise of the Messiah through a people (the Jews) who were entrusted as the oracles of God's word. The New Testament is the fulfillment of God's promises. Each of us is a sinner in need of a Savior – not complicated, is it? Once you become a follower of Jesus Christ, then what? The principal “work” of the Christian is the Great Commission. The Bible indeed gives much instruction on marriage, the raising of children, stewardship, business, and the general conduct of life. But the purpose of a Christian's life is to sow seed which bears fruit. (Read John 15 thoughtfully.)

The Lord Jesus began His ministry by preaching repentance (Matt 4:17). Similarly, John the Baptist (Matt 3:2) plowed up the spiritual ground before the Lord's ministry, as Peter did after the Lord delegated the Great Commission to His followers (Acts 2:38). Paul's summary of his own ministry cited “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20-21, Acts 26:18, 20). Jesus commanded His disciples and others to follow Him (Mark 1:17-18, Luke 9:59). What was the purpose of

the Son of God in coming to earth? Scripture is clear: It was to call sinners to repentance, provide forgiveness of sins through His shed blood on the cross, and provide for life everlasting through the resurrection – defeating death (Matt 1:21, Luke 5:32, Luke 19:10, John 12:32, 1 Corinthians 15).

So how can you claim to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and NOT be about what He was doing on this Earth? In the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, it is recorded that He spoke to His disciples at least five times to provoke them to preach the Gospel. The rest of the New Testament reports that they obeyed enthusiastically. To love the Lord is to obey His commandments (John 14:15). To love your neighbor and not warn him of the judgment to come is no love at all. Jesus taught that the whole of God’s law is contained in two commandments: loving God and loving your neighbor (Matt 22:34-40). If you don’t share the Gospel with the lost, you break the two greatest commandments continually.

Many claim to preach the Gospel, but do so unscripturally. American churches are filled with false converts due to the preaching of false Gospels. Many would like to “accept Jesus” or “ask Jesus into their heart” or other such unscriptural nonsense. The Bible’s message to a lost sinner is to repent from the sins in his life and believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The transition from lost to saved changes everything in the conduct of your life!

I’m going to camp for a few pages on the subject of repentance. Why? Most Christians in America – even pastors – don’t preach it and most of the people that believe they are born again have fooled themselves because they refuse to practice repentance. Our ultimate authority on any matter of doctrine is the Bible. First, to warm up, let’s add two more quotes from notable American preachers who got this right:

The proper evidence (of the new birth) appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life . . . being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient Savior. – J. Frank Norris

To repent literally means to have a change of mind or spirit toward God and toward sin. It means to turn from your sins, earnestly, with all your heart, and trust in Jesus Christ to save you . . . The jailer repented when he turned from sin to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. – John R. Rice

How about The Most Notable Preacher? Jesus defined repentance in Matthew 12:41 when He stated that the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah. Review Jonah chapter 3 to find out what Jesus meant by “repented.” In verses 8-10 we see the king pleading with his people to cry out to God, for everyone to turn from his evil way and his violence, and hope that God would repent from His coming judgment. Nineveh made no simple profession, followed by a return to rape and murder. That wicked nation turned completely around. If their profession had been empty, would God have repented from His judgment? Consider Titus 1:15-16 and James 2:14 in this context.

John the Baptist proclaimed the necessity of repentance and defined it in Luke 3. He refused to baptize the religious hypocrites, commanding them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. (How many pastors refuse to baptize applicants today?) He promised that those who refused to repent would

be cut off and be cast into the fire – Hell. He defined repentance when asked by the people, “What shall we do then?” Verses 11-14 covered specific sins and specific remedies that the sincere repent-er would demonstrate.

Acts 2:38 and 3:19 are explicit about repentance being tied to the forgiveness of sins that is necessary for salvation. Acts 20:20-21 summarizes Paul’s view of his own ministry – preaching “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” In that context John R. Rice once pointed out the distinction between repentance and faith – that they are like two sides of the same coin. When you repent from sin, you turn to Christ in faith. Alternatively, when you turn to Christ as Savior and Lord, you turn away from Satan and his works. In preaching to pantheists on Mars Hill, Paul says that God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). By the way, the first recorded message that Jesus preached was “Repent” (Matthew 4:17).

The Gospel of John, which nowhere explicitly uses the word repentance, nevertheless does teach the concept clearly. John 3:14-21 emphasizes believing as the key to salvation. This “believing” must be more than simple intellectual assent. Note that in verses 19-21, we see that the lost love darkness and hate light. The saved come to the light that their deeds may be made manifest. So faith produces a changed life, as also proclaimed in Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:11-14, and Titus 3:5-8, plus 2 Corinthians 5:17 and many other passages. Note that John 12:42-43 shows a degree of “believing” that falls short of salvation. Compare this passage with Matt 10:32-33. The true Christian proclaims his faith before men. This concept of true life-changing belief is dramatically emphasized in John 8:31-47. There were “believers” in that crowd in the manner of intellectual assent, who nevertheless remained children of wrath. Matthew 13 is filled with this teaching in parable after parable.

In Mark 10:17-22 we see a young man seeking salvation. Consider how Jesus, the Master Preacher, handles him. Jesus uses the law, but the man proclaims his own righteousness (see also Proverbs 20:6). So Jesus goes for the jugular, knowing the man’s god is his money. Jesus does not try to “get him saved” before dealing with his sin. The young man walks away unrepentant and lost. The modern “soul-winner” would try to lead this man through a “sinner’s prayer” and hope that he might deal with his greed and disobedience some other time.

Practically speaking . . . In my experience, almost every lost person you meet will understand the necessity of repentance for salvation. Among the literally thousands of individuals I have shared the Gospel with, I cannot remember one (not counting atheists) who did not grasp the necessity of heart-felt repentance when reviewing his sins before a holy God. When you explain that one can’t expect a ticket to Heaven unless he has a repentant heart, it makes sense. Apparently, it takes a Bible-college education to convince preachers that you can somehow believe in Jesus Christ and still live like the Devil.

Now, there is a lot of foolish phraseology used by Christians with the lost. In Scripture the lost are always commanded to repent and believe. If anyone really understands one side of the coin, the other side is obvious. If you know the ice is thin on the lake, you won’t walk across it – your will changes and your actions follow. So don’t talk about “receiving Christ” or “making a decision for Christ” or “accepting Jesus into your heart.” There is some Scriptural relevance in these phrases, but that’s not how we see lost people taught in Scripture. If someone truly repents from sin / sins / self-rule, and truly

believes / trusts in Jesus, God will save him. Also, don't emphasize Heaven – Bible prophets didn't. If someone wants eternal life, it starts now – and the changes in life start now, too!

Words count. Why do some preachers beg the lost to “receive Christ”? What they mean is that when someone is saved, the Spirit of Christ, namely the Holy Spirit, comes and indwells the believer. There are two relevant passages often cited:

¹⁰*He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. ¹¹He came unto his own, and his own received him not. ¹²But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: John 1:10-12*

⁶*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. ⁷Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Galatians 4:6-7*

The first passage speaks of the entrance of Jesus Christ into this world. Verse 10 identifies Him as the Creator, but unrecognized by the inhabitants of the world. Verse 11 reports that He came to His own people – the Jews – and they did not receive Him. What does that mean? They rejected His message and His person. They rejected Him as Messiah and Savior. They rejected the entire package. Verse 12 contrasts those individuals, which include both Jew and Gentile, who received Him in the sense of embracing the entire package. This passage therefore does not teach that an individual can get saved “right now” by expressing a desire to “receive Christ” as if He were a gift that could be taken in hand. Yet verse 12 is often ripped out of context and used in personal evangelism. If you want to teach the lost to “receive Christ,” then explain that what you mean is to repent from your sins, trust Him and nothing else as Savior, and recognize that life changes henceforth as you follow Him.

The passage in Galatians teaches that the Spirit of Christ does indeed dwell in the believer. Our spirit is made alive by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Note that neither passage, John 1 nor Galatians 4, was written to record the presentation of the Gospel to the lost. Both passages were written especially to teach believers. In stark contrast, when we see the Lord or the apostles or the Old Testament prophets dealing with the lost, we see the commands to repent and believe. That's the message that produces the broken and humble heart in the lost that God is looking for. God wants to regenerate, to make a new heart, to produce a born again child of God. The message that provokes repentance and belief unto salvation includes preaching repentance from sin and belief in Christ, resulting in a transformed life.

How much repentance and faith? That's a fair question. Answer: Enough so that one is born again of the Holy Spirit (John 3). In addition to all the New Testament passages, consider this blunt passage from God through the prophet Ezekiel:

³⁰*Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. ³¹Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? ³²For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Ezekiel 18:30-32*

Focus on the personal responsibility of the sinner in this passage: “his ways”, “turn yourselves”, “your transgressions”, “your ruin”, “(you) cast away from you”, “ye have transgressed”, “make you a new heart and a new spirit”, “why will ye die”, “turn yourselves”, “live ye”.

Yes, Scripture teaches that God does the saving, the “regenerating.” Such Scripture regarding God’s part includes Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 4:6-7, 1 Peter 1:23, 1 Peter 3:18, and Romans 8:9-11. But God also gives us responsibility to repent, turn from iniquity, make a new heart, believe in Christ, etc.

What if someone doesn’t think they are repentant enough or believe enough? Tell him to seek God, asking Him for repentance and faith for salvation. Anyone that asks and seeks God will find God. The evangelist (that’s you, O Christian man) can’t see into the heart, so don’t get in the way! It may take minutes or hours or days. You don’t know what battles may have to take place in the heart to forsake cherished sins.

If you are sharing the Gospel with someone, what if he responds favorably? If he wants you to, hang around. Answer questions. Teach him all you can about salvation (Matt 28:18-20) and the difference between the lost and the saved – both in destination and in day to day life. When someone is born again, let him profess it (Rom 10:9-10, Matt 10:32-33), and come for baptism (Acts 8:36-37). You will search through the Scriptures in vain to find a preacher manipulating someone to and through a so-called “sinner’s prayer.” If you are foolish enough to teach someone that at the end of some simple prayer that he is saved – guaranteed – you may prematurely terminate the confession and pleading that person needs to find repentance and faith unto salvation.

Yes, he can know that he is saved (Romans 8:16, for example). But teach him to start living the Christian life so that he can “work out his salvation” (Phil 2:12), that others may see it and God may be glorified. God knows precisely when someone passes from death to life in salvation (John 5:24, Luke 15:7). But you don’t, do you? Don’t deliver a still-born child into “professing Christianity” – someone who has fooled himself, but is still lost.

A final note on the necessity of preaching repentance: Some misapply Rom 10:13 to motivate a “sinner’s prayer.” The emphasis in verse 13 is not *how* to be saved (“call”), but rather *who* can be saved (“whosoever”). Proof: the context is given by verses 11-12. The “call” for salvation, in the context of the rest of Scripture, must include repentance and faith to be effectual. Otherwise, how do you explain Matt 7:21-27? In that passage, Jesus teaches that many that call upon Him will be lost – He never knew them. How tragic. Don’t be part of the American disaster in evangelism. Preach Scripturally. Salvation is between the sinner and the Savior. You can’t close the deal. You are entrusted with a great task: preach truth and introduce the lost to the Lord.

Now let’s get very practical. How do you share the Gospel with someone, from start to finish? What if the soul you are burdened about is a relative? A co-worker? A neighbor? A stranger? How about an atheist, or a Roman Catholic, or a Mormon, or a Muslim? I have good news for you. Lost people come in a variety of flavors, but the Gospel doesn’t change. Everyone comes to Christ the same way. He is the way, the truth, and the life. (He said that in John 14:6.)

Here's what I call "A Very Short Gospel Presentation – Cold Turkey – one to one, or 121." The scenario is that you approach a total stranger – Oh my! How scary! You have in your hand a Gospel tract to offer to him.

INTRODUCTION: *Hi! How are you doing? Did you get one of these? It's a comic book with a good story and a Gospel message . . . you know, life / death / Heaven / Hell? Do you ever think about the big issues?*

JUDGMENT: *Here's the biggest question of all: If you died today, where would you be? Heaven or hell? Innocent or guilty?*

LAW / SIN: *The Bible says an amazing thing: God loves you, even though He knows everything about you. He knows our secret sins, even when we think we're getting away with it. You've heard of the 10 commandments, like "Thou shalt not kill." Ever murder anyone? Jesus Christ says you have. Jesus said if you call someone a fool, or if you're angry without cause, you've committed murder in your heart — in God's eyes. Murderers will not inherit the kingdom of God. And we're all guilty.*

You've probably noticed that the world is messed up – it's in deep trouble. You know whose fault that is? Yours and mine. Times 7 billion people. We're all rebels.

Jesus said that if you look at a woman with lust, you've committed adultery already in your heart. Innocent or guilty? Hundreds of times? Thousands? Pornography is a sin of lust, too. Adulterers are condemned to Hell, along with murderers.

The Bible says that God's standard of justice is so high that liars will be condemned to Hell. Ever tell a lie? We're all liars at times. The first step to salvation is to admit you're guilty!

HELL: *Do you know how many sins it takes to go to Hell? That's right — just one. Why? Because God is holy and just and won't let sin into Heaven. But you and I have sinned against God thousands of times. Here's the problem: If we say, "God, give me what I deserve," God could say, "I know everything you've ever done, said, and thought. You've broken my laws thousands of times — willfully — and you deserve Hell." God didn't create Hell for people. He created it as a prison for Satan and the angels that rebelled against God. But when we sin, we rebel just like Satan. Whenever we sin, we're telling God we don't want Him telling us what to do. If we die in our sins, we share the Devil's fate – Hell. I don't want you to go to Hell and from what you've told me, that's where you're going!*

GOSPEL: *God did something to keep you out of Hell because He loves you. He must judge sin because He is just. Somebody is going to pay. Do you know what He did? 2000 years ago the Creator of the universe became a man – Jesus Christ. He lived a perfect life, and made people mad by preaching that we must repent. When He went to the cross, He was innocent. He shed His blood for your sins and mine. He suffered hell on the cross – it was more than physical torture, it was the supernatural wrath of almighty God. He took hell in our place on that cross so you and I could go free. He died and was buried. Three days later He rose from the dead. Nobody else ever did that. Only Jesus Christ has the power to overcome death. Want to live forever?*

REPENT & BELIEVE: *So here is salvation: Admit to God that you've sinned against Him and deserve Hell. Turn from your sins and your selfishness to God (that's repentance – turning around), and trust Jesus*

Christ for salvation. Jesus wants to save you for eternity, and that includes changing the rest of your life. Eternal life isn't just for after death. It's for right now – today! Get free from the addictive power of sin. All sin is stupid – alcohol, drugs, lust, greed, anger, selfishness – sin just hurts you and others. Get smart! God will make you a new creature and give you the gift of everlasting life. God loves you and wants you to live with Him forever. If you reject God's love gift through the cross – if you don't repent – you get God's judgment and wrath, not His love.

When you repent and follow Jesus your music will change from worldly (rap / rock) to godly. Your attitude toward sex (outside of marriage) changes. Your mouth changes – you speak kindly to people. You start reading the Bible and obeying it. You find Christians to befriend and encourage. You start sharing the Gospel with the lost people around you. You'll lose some friends because they despise Jesus Christ. But you'll gain new friends. Life changes!

A lot of people would like Jesus to give them a ticket to Heaven and then get back to their wicked party. No, it's a package deal. Jesus is both Savior and Lord. That means He gets to call the shots in your life. Get alone with God today – now – confess your sins, repent, and trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior. God will respond by giving you a new heart and a new spirit. That's called being "born again." And call me! We'll get together and talk about what to do next.

In the passage above I have explained much Bible truth, although I haven't explicitly quoted Scripture. If you want to or need to quote Scripture, that's great. I have memorized over 8% of the Bible and I use Bible verses whenever appropriate. The key point is that the sinner *understands* the message. Be clear. Watch his body language for whether he is getting it or whether he is even interested. Note the key elements as emboldened in the paragraph headings:

INTRODUCTION: You don't have to be clever in breaking the ice. Get right to the point. Most people are polite and will at least take the tract. Some will linger and talk. In America it's only the rare individual who is rude enough to speak unkindly. As blunt as I tend to be in discussing with people such personal issues as sin and judgment, I haven't been hit yet. Not yet. You do want him to respond to your points, so you can make sure you are communicating. But don't let him take over the conversation. This isn't a debate and it's not a dialogue. You've got a message to give.

JUDGMENT: He needs to think about consequences beyond the stupid little cares of this life. His eternity is at stake!

LAW / SIN: This is the core of the presentation. Lawbreakers are in trouble with God. He has to get lost in his own mind before he can get saved.

HELL: The most important gift you can give a lost person is the honesty to tell him that he is going to Hell. When you tell him that you care and don't want to see him in Hell, my experience is that he will believe you and won't get mad, even if you have never met before. Your presentation isn't about a theological or philosophical disagreement. It's life or death, Heaven or Hell. Make that clear.

GOSPEL: The good news will make sense once he understands the trouble he's in. Most pastors and, especially, TV preachers, like to skip right to the Gospel. Hey, it's nice to deliver good news! Before you plant the seed of the Gospel, you had better plow the ground up with law, sin, and judgment.

REPENT & BELIEVE: Make sure you're clear. Camp on repentance as long as you need to. Describe how life changes. He should be able to decide whether he wants to live Jesus' way or Satan's way.

Once again, note that there is no "closing the deal." Once he understands the issues, it's between him and God. You should volunteer to be there for him as soon as he wants your help, especially if he decides to trust Christ and begin to live the Christian life. Then you've got a friend for life and for eternity.

I admit that my "very short" presentation still has some length. The key point is to make the essentials clear. The order isn't important, just make sure you explain the issues. You definitely want to leave him a good Gospel tract with your contact info on it. On my website I have an article that discusses how to find and use good tracts.

What if you get stuck or confused? A super-short Gospel summary you can use anytime with someone, including as a "bottom-line" summary at the end of a longer conversation, might go as follows:

Just remember this: You're a sinner and you need a Savior. Do something about it!

If you need to expand on the concept of *sinner* or the concept of who the *Savior* is, then you can go back and do so. The concept of *sinner* gets you back into the law, judgment, and Hell, and the concept of *Savior* gets you back into the Gospel, who Jesus is, and repentance / faith. Surely, any Christian can witness using a 2-point outline . . . *You're a sinner and you need a Savior!*

You still may feel that this is complicated or a lot of work. Get over it! How many years did you go to school, take exams, write papers, and give presentations? How much effort did you put into learning the rules of baseball? Gospel preaching is sooooo much more important than anything else you will learn in your lifetime. Work at it. If you can only do it poorly, then do it poorly for a thousand times. Eventually you will become mediocre!

What about preaching to grandma or Aunt Jane or your co-worker? If you care about them, you will certainly try. Preaching to people you know well is often very difficult for some Christians. You have invested much in your relationship and don't want to risk a falling out. You know you need to "find an opportunity," but the opportunity never seems to come up. But you certainly don't want to see grandma at the Great White Throne judgment, lost and about to be cast into the Lake of Fire. She would properly accuse you of selfishness and hatred for not sharing the Good News with her when you could.

Here is some practical advice for reaching out to grandma. You may get only one shot if, for example, she is an old-fashioned Roman Catholic, and you don't want to blow it. She may tell you she doesn't want to talk about it again, so the pressure is on. (I've been there and done that.) What you want to do is to get lots of practice on strangers. It's usually much easier to preach to strangers than to someone close to you. If you blow it, it's easier to put it behind you. Of course, you want to do a good job with everyone, but I'm being "real" here. Some people are more precious to you than others.

The more you preach to strangers, the more natural you will find it to share the Gospel with people close to you. You will also discover that the reactions you get from relatives and

friends to the Gospel message correlate with the responses you get with strangers. So you will not have any undue difficulty sharing the Gospel with those close to you, once you decide to actually care about their souls and do it!

Your main effort in personal evangelism must be with strangers – on the street corners, knocking door-to-door, and in the stores and restaurants as you go about your business. Some Christians think that they are satisfying the Great Commission by merely reaching out to those around them. Face it: there aren't that many people close to you. The Gospel is not going to be spread if Christians have no care for people outside their own circle. The only reason that you are a Christian now is that the Gospel was spread by faithful believers in centuries past to lands beyond their own.

So get out on the street. Find a sidewalk with some foot traffic. Offer tracts to people as they walk by and try to get some to stop and talk. (Check out the Evangelism section on <http://truthreallymatters.com> for more details, but it's actually as simple as I just described!) Get some practice and learn what types of objections people come up with. You'll find out that there aren't many questions or objections that will stump you. If you get one, admit you're stumped and go home and study it out.

Based on experience, I expect that you will discover that lost folks have only a few basic objections, whether they are blue collar workers or university students. I've taken new evangelism partners to a university campus, despite their concern that they will get stumped by brilliant academic arguments. They quickly find that university students – and even Ph.D. professors – who aren't believers are all equally ignorant and illogical concerning the great issues of eternity. Mostly, they avoid thinking about the reality and imminence of their own deaths. That's unpleasant, after all.

Now that you have some practice, it's time to tackle grandma. Here's how you do it: First find some quality time for the two of you to spend together. Three is a crowd. Then you "create the opportunity" by being loving and direct:

"Grandma, I'm so glad to have some time to chat with you. There's something I really want to talk with you about, because I care so much about you. So please, hear me out and be honest with me. I want to talk with you about the big stuff: you know, life / death / Heaven / Hell? Do you ever think about the big issues?"

And off you go. You're now on the same track as with strangers. You'll note that in my "very short presentation" I don't include sample verbiage from the person I'm talking with. It's desirable to get some short answers from the lost sinner, but this is not about dialogue! I meet people on the street who want to "dialogue" with me. I have no interest in learning all about whatever worldly philosophy he is trapped in. The "dialoguer" is invariably interested in preaching to me. I already know where he is coming from. I've been there and been saved from that junk! My intent is to help by sharing the Gospel. If the stranger on the street is an argumentative "dialoguer," I'd rather move on and find someone who is more open.

I do love to get serious questions from the sinner. That shows interest and reveals what stumbling blocks are in his mind. With grandma, it's certainly appropriate to engage in a more leisurely 2-way conversation, if that's what she wants. The main thing is to preach the truth of the Gospel to her. The Biblical Great Commission says nothing about dialogue, but much about preaching.

What about co-workers? OK, this is important, so listen up! You don't use work time to preach. You don't rob from your employer by stealing his time. Furthermore, in the present culture, you will likely risk your job by appearing to "proselytize" on the job. Almost anyone else can get away with talking politics or sports or religion, but the true Christian will get singled out for "harassing" his co-workers.

Yet, it's easy to get opportunities to reach out to the guys in the workplace. First, work creatively and industriously so that you earn their respect. Get to know them as much as work allows, especially if you have scheduled breaks. After you've built some rapport, invite a co-worker over to dinner. Or out to dinner. If he's married and you are, too, make it a family get-together. Once he's on your turf, then you are free from accusations of harassing him on the job. So here's how to create the opportunity, after the small talk and after the dishes are cleared away.

"So, Joe, I'm so glad to have you over for dinner. I've enjoyed chatting about . . . (sports, weather, kids, business, etc.). There's something I really want to talk with you about, though. So please, hear me out and be honest with me. I want to talk with you about the big stuff: you know, life / death / Heaven / Hell? Do you ever think about the big issues?"

You see how simple it is to "create opportunities." The best encounters are with people who have expressed an interest in the Gospel. They see their need and have lots of questions. Several years ago a Christian friend of mine brought over a co-worker and his wife to visit on a Saturday night. They were in their late twenties and quite open about the problems they had with Biblical Christianity. We spent five hours that night answering questions and talking through issues. The next Saturday night we spent another four hours. And again the next Saturday and again the week after that. Once they got through their issues and saw that the Bible had answers for every vital issue of life (2 Peter 1:3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17), their objections evaporated and they trusted Christ. Their lives have shown much evidence as they have grown spiritually in the years following.

True converts have left the old, broad road to destruction and stride out bravely on the narrow road which leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14). They don't look back, knowing that the world has nothing to offer them (Luke 9:57-62). Recently, I got a call from an old friend I worked with on a Sunday School bus route 30 years ago. Our church in Albuquerque had 10 bus routes that covered the entire city area. "Bus workers" would meet together on Saturday morning for mutual encouragement and whatever organizational business we had to transact, and then visit the routes. After the meeting, we called on the "regulars" – the families of the kids who normally rode the bus to church on Sunday – and often spent some time knocking on new doors, to preach the Gospel and invite families to attend.

I remember one visiting preacher who criticized us for bringing kids instead of whole families on the bus. The way I see it, we tried hard to reach out to and bring entire families to Christ and to be part of the church. But when adults would often refuse, they would, nevertheless, be willing to send their kids. So my choice was to either let the whole family go to Hell or to try and reach the kids first. I chose the kids. And sometimes, over the course of months or years, parents would repent, too.

My old friend and partner called to tell me about a call he got from a 40-year old man who had been a young child when he rode our bus. He had gotten saved as a youngster and wanted to let us know that he grew up to serve the Lord faithfully, was married to a fine Christian woman, and was

raising his children to follow the Lord, too. What a joy to hear such a report! I remember working with hundreds of kids in those years who gave every evidence of responding to the Gospel by faith in Christ. But I have no idea what happened to them. God knows. There will be much rejoicing in Heaven.

Many times while doing sidewalk evangelism I have had adults approach me to see if I have a tract on hand that they haven't seen before. Recently, a mom asked me for several copies of one title that she wanted to give to her lost children. A dad once called me to thank me for the tract I gave him. When he got home he read it and realized it was the perfect message for his jailed son. Once when I was knocking doors, a lady responded to my tract offer by exclaiming, "Oh, I've got one like that on my dresser." I asked her how she got the tract. She said that two years before, someone had dropped it through the open window and on her car seat while she was in a store. (That had been me.) Last year I shared the Gospel with an out-of-town man who told me that he had been saved a couple of years before through a Chick tract (www.chick.com) given to him at the local courthouse. (That would have been either myself or one of my partners.) Jack Chick publishes hundreds of testimonies of people who have been saved through their comics.

I regularly press Christians I meet to give out tracts if they have not made that part of their Christian walk – especially if they are too "shy" (cold) to normally do so. I recently experienced how precious this opportunity is. A young mother of three girls recently visited our church. She told us how that four months previously, she was walking downtown and an apparently nervous fellow gave her one of our tracts with my contact info printed at the end. The Gospel message gripped her soul, she got into her Bible, and was gloriously saved . . . and has shown much appropriate fruit in her life. At first, she tried going back to a Roman Catholic church, but she realized that wasn't the place to be. She tried an evangelical church that wasn't helping either. So after four months she decided to call the number on the back of the tract. My wife and I met with her and she became part of our small fellowship. We determined that the "nervous fellow" was not one of our church members, but must have been a Christian I had met and encouraged to hand out some tracts. Praise God!

I've had so many interesting experiences simply from passing out tracts. I once got a call from a town 50 miles away (where I had never been) from a young man who found my tract on a gas pump and wanted to talk about spiritual things. That tract must have changed hands at least once. I recently got a call from two construction workers who found a tract during their work day and wanted to thank me for the message. They were calling from North Carolina (I haven't been there) and I live in Illinois.

Participating in the Lord's work, the Great Commission, is the most satisfying work you will ever do. Most Christians who are diligent in getting out there have the following experience: They feel some fear and trepidation and have to fight an internal battle ahead of time. When they hit the street, they get "in the moment" and enjoy working hard to get the Gospel to people through tracts and a verbal witness. Afterwards, they feel great joy and satisfaction. The next time they plan to go out, the same pattern repeats.

What's going on? Is there any other experience in life that you find joyful and satisfying, but you consistently dread ahead of time? Do you dread going out to have a steak dinner with your sweetheart? If you plan a vacation to Disneyworld, would you fear it up until the time you arrived? Of course not. But preaching the Gospel initiates a spiritual battle. Whatever devils – fallen angels – live in your neighborhood, do you think they notice that you are in the incredibly tiny minority that practices

personal evangelism? They will fight you. But once you're on the battlefield, you are walking with the Lord Jesus. As He promised in Matthew 28:

¹⁸And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ¹⁹Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus promised to be with us always, until the end of the world, *in the execution of the Great Commission?* Don't you want to walk with Jesus in this life? If you are obedient to Him in this great work you will. If you aren't, don't expect His active presence in your life. You can fool yourself with emotional experiences and hyped-up "worship" meetings, but if you're not obedient in the principal work of the Christian, you won't walk with the Lord.

I'll end this chapter with the *most important point*. You must bathe every aspect of your Gospel witness with prayer. I can't reach into someone's heart and bring conviction. Only the Holy Spirit can. My job is to preach the truth. The Lord brings conviction and understanding. The sinner must willfully repent. It is only the Holy Spirit who regenerates. Our part is absolutely essential, but God does the big work. Pray for wisdom. Pray for power. Pray for the lost. Pray to keep the devils away so they don't snatch the seed away as soon as you sow it. Pray that the Lord Jesus walks with you, ahead of you, and after you in all your evangelistic efforts. Pray that the Lord chases after the people who get your Gospel tract. Be a man of prayer. The Lord Jesus prayed much while He walked the earth, and He was already in perfect communion with His Heavenly Father. Can we afford to pray less? Pray, pray, pray.

Chapter 9

The Ministry of Discipleship

I'll start with the most important point of this chapter. In every aspect of discipleship, you must immerse your efforts in prayer. Spiritual growth is, indeed, spiritual. Our spirit needs communion with the Holy Spirit to come alive with salvation and to grow from babe to mature adult. To grow we must seek wisdom from the Source of wisdom. Only by humbling yourself, O man, and confessing to God that you don't know everything, will you be able to pray for the spiritual wisdom you desperately need.

Helping other believers – the ministry of discipleship – begins with praying for them. Paul's epistles are filled with his prayers and desires for the spiritual growth of the believers he brought into the family of God. Pray for yourself. Pray for the believers around you. Pray for the missionaries you support. Pray for the publishing ministries that are a blessing to you. Pray to encounter Christians that you can be a blessing to. Some of my most satisfying experiences in street evangelism are in meeting Christians, who speak a word of encouragement to me and I to them. Do you love the Lord's people? Pray for them!

Let's define "discipleship" this way: the practice of teaching believers to grow in faith, hope, charity, knowledge, and zeal, conforming ever closer to the person and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. Definitions should be short in order to be useful. The above, as ambitious as it seems to me, feels woefully inadequate in light of such Scriptures as 2 Peter 1:5-10, Romans 12:1-2, Romans 8:1-10, Rev 2:19, 3:8, and countless others. Given the two principal missions of the NT church, namely evangelism and discipleship (or perhaps more simply – preaching and teaching), discipleship is about growing the Christian in every aspect of life. We should daily work to please the Lord in our private study and prayer, in our marriages, in our business, in our neighborhoods, and in our churches.

The two missions are intertwined, of course. Of what possible use is a soldier of Jesus Christ, armed with the spiritual equipment of Ephesians 6, who never enters the fray – reaching out to the lost? Bible study and personal holiness is vanity if one is disobedient to the Lord's commands to preach. Similarly, of what use is the evangelist (a necessary role for every Christian) who knows little of the Bible, lives a worldly life, and cannot discern between truth and heresy?

The big problem is that American churches are *designed* to prevent their people from doing the two missions. You might have read that last sentence too quickly, so let me say it another way . . . The standard weekly program of American churches is *designed* to insure the failure of the Christians who attend. The word *designed* implies intent by an active party, doesn't it? If the *designer* of the standard weekly church program is not the Lord – you can't blame Him for this mess – then it must be another spirit, namely the Adversary, himself.

It is you, O Christian man, who is responsible for discipleship in your own life, and for your wife, and for your children. You are also responsible before the Lord to encourage, exhort, and pray for your Christian brethren – those Christians that are pleased to be in fellowship with you in a local church. The family and the local church are the two institutions ordained by God for teaching and training. (There is

no such thing as a “global” or “universal” church until the Lord returns and gathers us all to one big assembly. But that’s another subject.)

What is the standard church program? There are variations, but let’s consider as a baseline the weekly schedule of a typical independent Baptist church.

Sunday, 10 – 11 am: Sunday school classes divided by age groups, from pre-school to senior adult.

Sunday, 11 am – 12:15 pm: “Worship Service,” which includes carefully scheduled elements as, for example: Opening prayer, congregational song, announcements, congregational song, special music, offering, choir song, sermon (45 minutes), invitation plus congregational singing, closing prayer.

Sunday, 6 – 7:15 pm: “Worship Service,” with a format very similar to the morning session.

Wednesday, 7 – 8:30 pm: “Prayer Meeting,” which is actually organized as a “Worship Service,” but may include asking for some prayer requests and some time for corporate prayer. The time is usually dominated by the standard carefully scheduled elements above.

Thursday evening and / or Saturday morning: A tiny fraction of the membership participates in calling on church visitors or inviting new people out to church . . . And that’s it. Evangelical (as opposed to “fundamental”) churches will have perhaps just one “worship service” per week, which will feature much more lively, entertaining, and worldly music than will be seen in the most conservative, fundamental churches. They may also feature small group Bible studies or discussion groups that members can opt into or out of or hop around from one to another. Large evangelical churches will feature a large list of activities to keep one as busy as one would like.

Let’s discuss the standard “fundie” program first. What’s wrong with it? It’s easier to ask, “What’s Biblical about it? How does it contribute to evangelism and discipleship? How does it help believers grow in love, wisdom, and zeal?” So here we go . . .

How can Christians love one another Biblically (John 13:35) when they are sitting next to strangers while watching a scripted show? Within the standard church program, how can you pray knowledgeably and effectually for one another? Face it: your “worship service” experience is passive. The majority of the members, who sit in the pews each Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night, do not prepare in any way for the meeting of the church. (Getting dressed up doesn’t count.) It’s easy to just show up and go through the motions.

If you go through the motions for several decades, and you do so faithfully, you are deemed to be a mature saint. During parts of my career I have taught science and engineering students to prepare for successful employment. I have taught at all collegiate levels, helping students to attain B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees. (I have also worked hard in the practice of science and engineering: I am by no means an academic! (See my bio at the end of the book.)) I assure you that you cannot prepare an electrical engineer for employment by sitting him passively in a chair for four to five years and lecturing at him. Furthermore, the lectures he does attend will not feature emotional appeals to “Get serious about your engineering! Get out there and do some great engineering!” I’ve never seen a lecture

conclude with an invitation, accompanied by music, to draw students forward to induce them to repent from bad homework exercises or make a public commitment to study harder this week.

You may think that I'm being unfair. "That's apples and oranges!" you cry. "Church isn't like an engineering college!" You're right. We actually train students to be engineers and do engineering. We put them in labs to get their hands dirty. They build and test circuits and systems, make mistakes, break things, and learn to make designs that work. They practice calculations until they can solve equations in their sleep. (I know by my own experience that physics problems can be constructed and solved during dreams.) By the time they hit the work force, they can actually do stuff.

"Church" doesn't have such goals. Looking at the modern American church system, it looks like success is determined by building buildings, filling pews with paying members, and keeping the bills paid. When in the church program are Christians trained to practice and do evangelism and discipleship? Your family may sit next to or behind another family week after week and never get to know them. How can you pray for them? How can you encourage them? The program does not schedule for such vital elements of Christian life.

Some years ago we moved into a new city and joined a fairly large fundie church. One Sunday morning after we had been there for several months, I found myself looking around the congregation a few minutes before the opening bell. I counted about 15 people (men / women / children) we had made some effort to befriend. My wife and I were aware of the problems and heartaches and aggravations that troubled these lives. It struck me that the rest of the 900 people in church that morning certainly had comparable trials. Everyone looked so prim and proper at the start of that service. The pastor and his staff looked upbeat. The choir was primed. I wondered whether anything would be done that morning that might alleviate some of the pain in those lives or, even better, help solve problems. With that in mind, by the end of the service, I concluded that nothing that happened that morning in church could have helped in any specific way. Yet everyone left on schedule, still looking prim and proper. Offerings received. Mission accomplished. Cha-ching!

Surely members who attend faithfully must be increasing steadily in Bible knowledge and the application thereof. Not really. It's clear that most of the "Bible expertise" resides within the paid pastoral staff. If a really serious doctrinal issue grabs someone's attention (this is rare), the first thought is to run to the pastor rather than to search the Scriptures.

Bible knowledge is disappearing fast. Why? Consider that most pastors preach topical sermons. They will use a verse or two or perhaps even a passage from the Bible and then go on to talk for 45 minutes on a subject that may relate loosely to the passage. During this speech, you will hear many opinions, assertions, personal anecdotes, and emotional appeals. Over the course of a year, favorite topics will be revisited. The pastor often insists that God has literally led him to preach on the topic of the week. Hmmm. Really?

There is much danger in this approach. In topical preaching Scripture is often divorced from context, despite the best intentions of the preacher. If he unfairly applies a Scripture away from its contextual roots, the hearers won't have a clue. Worse, over the years, the topical selection will be grossly out of balance in comparison with the Bible's coverage. What is God's Biblical balance? You can tell by how often topics come up in Scripture. Prophecy comes up a lot. Preaching on repentance

happens frequently throughout both Testaments. Church polity comes up a little. Tithing in New Testament churches doesn't even exist.

What's the solution? Find or start a church where the Bible is taught, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, and book by book. In your typical New Testament chapter, you'll find multiple topics. In our small church on Sunday morning we typically cover a chapter per week. That's a "bite size" that is conducive for capturing the flow of the passage, without skipping through too quickly or dwelling too long on favorite verses. Over the course of a year we cover a lot of topical ground, but everything is in context and God determines the balance of topics by the frequency with which they appear in His word.

I'm not decrying selectivity entirely. I wouldn't spend weeks going through the genealogies in 1 Chronicles. That passage was important to establish Jewish family lines in olden times, but less vital for Gentile believers today. Let me give you a specific example. In the first four years of the existence of our small start-up church, on Sunday morning we taught through and discussed, chapter by chapter, the following books: John, Acts, Revelation, Genesis, Exodus (Chapters 1-20), Matthew, Daniel, and Isaiah. When we did Isaiah, we found that three chapters per week was a useful bite size.

Our Sunday morning study usually takes 60 – 75 minutes. One wonderful benefit we derived from the pattern above was a deep appreciation of the richness, the beauty, the connectivity, and the brilliance of Scripture. Studying Genesis after Revelation made us appreciate to a deeper level how consistent is God's will and wisdom throughout history. The same themes interconnect throughout the Bible. I wasted so many years under topical preaching. I didn't need emotional appeals. I needed to know and love the word of God.

I have more information about designing a small church, a so-called "house church," on my website, <http://truthreallymatters.com>, in the Discipleship section. Check it out.

Assuming that you do have the benefit of some serious Bible study as part of your church, you had better be doing the lion's share on your own. Your wife also needs to immerse herself in the Bible each day. It's easy to get your children to read the Bible daily. They don't need to know that that's a struggle for so many. Yet most pastors only pound the pulpit to exhort their people to study the Bible. Don't they care whether their students obey? Imagine the engineering professor merely exhorting his students to read the textbook and do the homework problems . . . without any follow-up via exams or graded assignments. I guess that secular universities care more about their mission than churches do about theirs.

As a man, and a husband, and a father, you need to make sure you and your family demonstrate proficiency in the ultimate textbook, the Bible. How you do accountability is up to you. Be creative. Be gracious. Be loving. Be diligent. Do it. Specific ideas? Have discussions and debates over dinner. Turn the TV off at night and play "Stump the kids" and "Stump mom" and "Stump dad" by mutually peppering each family member with questions about what they've been studying. Do role playing. Pretend you're an atheist and teach your child to contend (Jude 3, 1 Peter 3:15). Have everyone in the family write essays or articles for a family website. Knock doors and see what crazy things other people believe. Write letters to the editor of your local paper. Etc. Start living the Christian life and you'll find it exciting and satisfying!

There is no substitute for memorizing Scripture. Some churches are wise enough to establish Scripture memory programs for children, but there is usually nothing to sustain such momentum as they grow up. The kids that memorize hundreds of verses and get awards and other recognition can't help but notice that the adults don't value the practice. You don't *know* Scripture until you have it in your heart. The longest chapter in the Bible is Psalm 119. The subject is the word of God. Consider this brief excerpt:

⁶Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. ⁷I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. ⁸I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly. ⁹Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. ¹⁰With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. ¹¹Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. ¹²Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

This psalm displays the heart of the serious Christian man. He wants to know the word of God – all of it. All of the commandments of God are precious to him. He knows that in order to walk the way that God ordains, he must heed God's word. He hides – memorizes – the word in his heart. Scripture in the heart strengthens you, protects you from temptation, and enables you to speak truth to people who need to hear it.

When I was a young man, I heard a sermon by an evangelist who challenged me regarding just how much Scripture I knew. How much could I quote, particularly if my life depended on it? I was ashamed that I could quote offhand only a tiny number of verses. So I determined to memorize Scripture. As I read my Bible I picked out individual verses or passages that really grabbed me. Once I memorized them I wouldn't have to go search for them in the future. Over the years since then I have memorized over 2,650 verses (about 8.5 percent of the Bible). My regret is that I didn't start earlier or work harder at this over the years.

Memorizing Scripture makes my Bible reading come alive. I see connections that I would otherwise miss. Scripture comes to mind as I need it when I share the Gospel with the lost. When discussing doctrine with other Christians, it's a blessing to know what the Bible says rather than just assert that there must be a verse somewhere on the subject. As in professional life, situations often arise where it's what you know "right now" that counts, and not what you can go look up when you get home.

How hard is it to memorize Scripture? It takes a little work, but I'm sure it's not as much as you do on the job – making money. I recommend writing verses on small cards. You can cut up 3x5 cards into thirds, for example. Spend 5-10 minutes per day on "new" verses and 5-10 minutes per day on "old" verses that you have previously memorized. If you spend just 15 minutes per day in this manner, you will accumulate hundreds of verses over the next several years. I have divided my cards of "old" verses into 20 decks. I review one deck each day in about 30 minutes, by quoting each verse or passage twice to myself. If I find myself glitching, I'll go over the verse three or four times. After 20 days I'm back to the first deck, which covers my work in Genesis to Deuteronomy.

I have over 3 decks from the Psalms, because I find so much encouragement there. I have lots of individual verses memorized, but I find that some verses simply must be memorized along with the

passage that defines their context. For example, several verses in Psalm 51 are particularly precious, but it's best to just take in the entire Psalm. The Psalms I've memorized whole include numbers 1, 2, 3, 8, 19, 23, 24, 51, 91, 101, 103, 117, 121, 127, 128, and 150. I started out memorizing several verses in the Sermon on the Mount, but eventually found the entire sermon so precious that I had to take it all in. The passages on the final judgments in Revelation 20 and the New Jerusalem in chapter 21 are too precious to ignore.

The 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians is the Holy Spirit's description of true love: Would you think that to be useful? The book of Romans is filled with so much foundational doctrine that I have a whole deck just for the verses in that book that I can't live without. I could go on, but you get the idea. Just this one discipline will transform your life in ways you can't imagine, and it only takes a few minutes per day. You can find the time if you care enough. Work on this during breakfast or lunch, for example. Just do it.

As you build your memory stack, work to cover key passages throughout the Bible and, eventually, at least some Scripture from each of the 66 books of the Bible. Cover every significant doctrine so you know what to believe and why to believe it. Find verses that cover law, sin, judgment, Heaven, Hell, repentance, the new birth, marriage, parenting, business, and every other subject that affects your life and those around you. Include Scriptures that specifically refute the heresies that plague our age.

If your church doesn't have a culture to build you and other believers up, why are you there? If you can't stir the pastor up to lead in these matters, it's time to move on. Where is the practice of personal evangelism? Most of the pastors rarely sally forth from their pulpits and palaces to deign to preach to a lost person on the street or at their door. What can such a man teach you? Nothing. Also, the most faithful and zealous members of a typical conservative church, by the time they have attended several meetings and activities each week, are exhausted. They don't have time or energy to teach their children, not to mention reach out to their neighbors for whom Christ died. Exhaustion also precludes fellowship and friendship. In fundie churches it is almost impossible to get families together often enough to build friendships. Annual or quarterly "fellowship dinners" don't count.

Although most of my Christian experience has been in fundie churches, let me speak briefly on the issues in the "gelly" (soft "g") churches. ("Fundie" = Fundamental; "Gelly" = Evangelical.) Many evangelical churches have gotten away from pure passivity by establishing small groups that meet weekly. This is a good idea if done well. The time must be spent profitably. My impression is that most small groups squander time in vain chatter or in study of some insipid pseudo-Christian book. (I'm FOR studying serious books!) If time is spent to get to know each other for the purposes of encouraging, exhortation, teaching, and prayer, then believers can be strengthened and God can be glorified.

In any given case it's not hard to figure out whether the situation is good or bad. Many people drop out of small groups because there is no teaching, no serious fellowship, and no solid friendships developing. Some attend poorly run groups because they enjoy the social contact and don't even notice the absence of spiritual content. Keep your wits about you. Demand the same standard of excellence that you would in a professional work environment. Shouldn't we do at least as well for the Lord as we do for mammon?

If you're in a church that identifies itself as "evangelical," watch out. Most American "gelly" churches have been afflicted with several of the following problems: corrupt Bible versions, worldly "worship" music, and seeker-sensitive marketing practices to draw unregenerate members. Many have been corrupted by heresies which include Calvinism, Pentecostalism, ecumenism, evolution, and repentance-less salvation. Many are careful to avoid teaching the whole counsel of God and so never provide Biblical teaching on specific sins, discernment in music, the second coming of Christ, the influence of Satan in the culture, and modesty in clothing. The decline of American churches is a big subject. I encourage you to check out the articles and books by David Cloud, which can be found at <http://wayoflife.org>.

But you don't have to read a whole library to get on the right track and stay there. Let me describe a simple Biblical model to help you evaluate your church and to help you determine whether you are growing in the essential disciplines of the Christian life. As a physicist I recognize that all models are necessarily simple in order to be useful. The downside of modeling is in the neglect of critical details. Nevertheless, I offer a simple "3-pillar" model for a New Testament church. This can be used in the design and practice of a new church – even if it's just you and your wife to start with – or in the analysis of an existing church that you might be part of . . . or are considering being a part of.

The three pillars are: **Truth** **Love** **Zeal**

Unfortunately, it is extremely rare for an American church to score decently in any two of these areas, not to mention all three. Most churches go "oh for three." If your church goes 3 for 3, please write to me. I want to move there. The first pillar is . . .

TRUTH

The Bible is the inerrant word of God *and* . . . I can hold the *inerrant* word of God in my hands. Typical evangelical statements of faith cite inerrancy in the original autographs, but don't trust God to preserve His words through the ages. Note: the "original autographs" don't exist anymore. And they *never* did at any one time. By the time the Gospel of Matthew was written, there were no "original autographs" of the Old Testament books. So with the modern position, there never was an inerrant Bible.

What to do? Trust God's inspiration *and* preservation. Consider the truths about preservation and the importance God places on His word in the following Scriptures: Deut 4:2, Ps 12:6-7, Ps 19, Ps 119 (including verses 89, 152, 160), Ps 138:2, Matt 4:4, 24:35, 2 Tim 3:16, Rev 22:18-19.

Short version: If you take *truth* seriously, take the following position . . . God's inerrant, inspired words have been preserved through the ages, especially in the Hebrew Masoretic text for the Old Testament and the Greek Received Text of the New Testament. In English the King James Bible is a wonderfully accurate translation of the preserved original texts, such that we can say that it is the word of God for the English speaking people. Modern English versions (NASV, NIV, NLT, ESV, etc.), are based on corrupt, recently discovered texts and use interpretive translation techniques. The "scholars" behind these versions deny preservation and are continually in search of the "lost text" of the original autographs. (Continually in search . . . keeps them employed.)

Now this is a big subject, so . . . for more discussion of these points, see my article, “The 10 Most Deadly Heresies . . . ” (heresy #8) on <http://truthreallymatters.com>, including the references cited.

Once you know which Bible is trustworthy then you must take it seriously! Most churches pay lip service to their devotion and obedience to the Bible. To cite one example, I recall a “gelly” church in Michigan that claimed Biblical authority, but got itself embroiled in a debate about the validity of homosexuality and gay marriage for the ministry. So their claims of Biblical fidelity were baloney.

Believe the Bible. Stand on it. Study it. Memorize it. Quote it. Meditate on it. Make it the study of your life! Take God and His word seriously!

LOVE

Biblical love / charity is really the essence of discipleship. This pillar gets much lip service, too. In order for a church to practice love among the brethren, Christians need to know each other well enough to allow mutual encouragement, exhortation, prayer, and friendship that rises to the level of brotherhood within a family. The clear teaching of the Lord in John 13:35 and the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 must be taken seriously and actually practiced. Yet most churches are designed around a pulpit ministry, a show, and facilities to support them. Find support for that in the New Testament!

Recall my example of sitting in the church service, knowing the problems suffered by the few folks that we knew. In a church that large it's impossible for the pastor to know people well enough to really help, even if he wanted to. Besides, that pastor explicitly claimed that his main ministry was from the pulpit, thereby putting up a nice wall to shield him from messy problems. At any rate, it's not about the pastor and his staff. All Christians in a fellowship need to be equipped with love and knowledge to help each other through the calamities and trials of life. We are to exhort one another, encourage one another, and pray for one another, and do so Scripturally. One guy can't do it for everybody. Consider Hebrews 10:24-25. The whole purpose of “assembling together” is to provoke and exhort “one another” to love and good works. One another . . . not just the super-preacher to a crowd of scores, hundreds, or thousands.

Consider the passage in Paul's letter to Titus, instructing him how to establish and develop leadership in local churches. In chapter 2:

³The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; ⁴That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

In the middle verse, older women are to teach the younger women. How can this happen in the pulpit / pew system?

The evangelical churches often design “small group” experiences to enable the practice of Biblical love among the brethren. That's good, if done well and with substance. Some would get a passing grade in this area. Unfortunately, the ones that do best seem to be totally derelict in the other two pillars.

Examine your church. Is it designed so that people have the time and opportunity to talk of spiritual things (see Malachi 3:16), to discuss the Bible and ask questions, to encourage one another, to work together in the ministry, to share prayer requests, to lift up prayers in the hearing of those who need to know that you care? If not, why not?

ZEAL

To use another term . . . Evangelism. I like the word “zeal” in this 3-pillar model to emphasize the enthusiasm required. Preaching the Gospel to the lost is not merely a duty. It’s the life adventure and glorious opportunity of every Christian as long as he lives. Since I devoted a whole chapter to this subject, I’ll be brief here.

The Great Commission is fundamental to the practice of New Testament Christianity. How can someone be a Christian in fellowship within a church and not be about the Lord’s work? If you or the people around you in church don’t care whether the lost around you are going to Hell, then you need to repent. If they won’t repent, then leave.

I live in a city of about 200,000 people, a few hours away from a city with millions of people. In our city we have about 300 “churches” of all varieties. Yet I see evidence of perhaps 20 people that consistently reach out to lost strangers with at least a somewhat Scriptural presentation of the Gospel. (Those few that are zealous, but with heretical presentations of the Gospel, are doing harm – they don’t count!)

In the “city of millions” nearby, there are some obviously terrific places in the downtown area to conduct 121 street evangelism. Since I travel there often I can stipulate with some authority that there is only one person outside my own tiny church that hits those hot spots. There are likely (hopefully?) other folks throughout the city working different neighborhoods, but it’s remarkable that we have effectively no “friendly competition” for the premier corners in the city.

What’s going on!?!?! What are the churches doing? The Lord is coming back! The time is short! Souls are headed for Hell! Christians: Preach the Gospel!!

Bottom line: If you can’t find a church “scoring well” in all three pillars, then start one that does! New Testament Christianity – in Biblical practice – is consumed with love (as the core of discipleship) and zeal (evangelism). These two pillars cannot stand without the third pillar – the pillar of truth – an inerrant Bible that is studied and taken seriously. Absence of any one pillar leaves a church in terrible weakness.

But if you start with truth and work hard in love and zeal, you’ll be prepared for the Judgment Seat of Christ. Are you ready for that? Is your church ready for that?

Why is it so important to find a church that practices truth, love, and zeal? We see the phrase “one accord” popping up several times in the book of Acts. Unity in doctrine and practice characterized the churches formed in the first century and in every vibrant church since then. For example:

¹⁴These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren. Acts 1:14

¹And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. Acts 2:1

⁴⁶And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Acts 2:46

¹²And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. ¹³And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. Acts 5:12-13

In that last passage we see that those that weren't in accord did not join the new believers. Yet we see in modern churches a mixture of saved and unsaved, godly and worldly. Churches knowingly tolerate conflicting doctrines. I met an assistant pastor at a local mega-church who admitted that a minority of staff members was trying to sow Pentecostal doctrine throughout the congregation, even though the senior leadership and the majority of the membership held opposing views.

Many churches suffer much disagreement and conflict. In the worst cases, churches split over trivial issues. A split can be a good thing if one of the surviving groups is of one accord with Biblical principles, and that's the cause for the split. I have also found that many pastors work to script the weekly program to prevent discussions that could lead to conflict. Namely, there are underlying disagreements, but they are never put on the table. I had one pastor who rejected my suggestion to have some meetings among the men because he feared that he couldn't control the discussion. My intent was simply to try to enlist commitments from the men in the church to get the Gospel out consistently.

Is the Lord serious about the problem of churches slipping in truth, love, and zeal? Review the warnings delivered by Jesus Christ to the seven churches of Asia in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. John recorded these messages near the end of the first century, which means that those believers likely included the children of the founders of the churches. The warning to the church at Ephesus – a “good church” – includes:

⁵Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. Rev 2:5

If this “good church” doesn't straighten up, the Lord promises to “remove thy candlestick,” a symbol for its responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission. Namely, the Lord would destroy the church's capacity to represent Him. I don't want to be part of a church that insists on following a path that leads to destruction. Do you?

If you cannot find a church that fulfills its Biblical responsibility, don't quit. Starting a house church can be lonely, but I'd rather have just a few people in one accord than be part of a multitude who care not for the work of the Lord. If you head down this path, feel free to contact me through drdave@truthreallymatters.com. We'll try to encourage each other as we look forward to the Lord's return.

Chapter 10

Money – Managing It, Investing It, and Giving It Away

In previous chapters we have dealt at length with the Biblical perspective on wealth: namely, don't worship the dirt you acquire in this life, because the true riches are found in the next life. In this chapter we'll focus on how to take care of the money you make, what to do with the extra, and how to give it away for the biggest impact in God's work.

Money is important. The Bible has much to say about it. We spend much of our lives making it, spending it, and worrying about it. The Biblical position is that every atom in the universe belongs to God. After all, He made it all. We are to be stewards of the stuff which God has entrusted to us. For example:

²⁶And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. ²⁸And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. ²⁹And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. Genesis 1:26-29

This “dominion mandate” hasn't been rescinded, although the fall of man has made it a lot tougher to manage Earth's resources, as God warned Adam in Genesis 3. In the New Testament passage below we see the gravity God attaches to the use of money in His work. The consequences for the new believers, Ananias and Sapphira, were severe, indicating that they lied at the wrong time and the wrong place, such that God brought down the hammer of death. God will usually cut us more slack than they got, but that's not the point. Read on, and then we'll get to the point.

¹But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, ²And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. ⁵And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. Acts 5:1-5

In the context, it is clear that God respects their ownership of their property. They can keep it or sell it or give it away or whatever. The problem is that they sold it and claimed that they gave all of the proceeds for the use of the church to help out persecuted believers. The land was theirs. The cash proceeds were theirs. But they lied to get glory for their charity. If they kept back half and gave away half and simply said so – no problem. The glory-seeking lie cost them their lives.

In both the spiritual and the physical, we are to be faithful stewards of what God gives us:

¹*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.*
²*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2*

Money or the lack of it does not constrain God, so it need not constrain us in our service. In the Lord's message to the church at Smyrna in Revelation 3 we find out that the church was in poverty in a material sense, but rich spiritually. This "poor" church was the only one of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 that wasn't rebuked in any way. Their material poverty did not constrain their service.

Recall that when the disciples came to the Lord to ask how to pay the Roman tax, that the Lord sent them to collect a coin from the mouth of the next fish they caught. When Peter and John and the other disciples got discouraged after the resurrection, they went back to their fishing business and caught nothing – until the Lord showed up and told them to cast the net on the other side of the boat. The net was immediately filled with 153 large fish. If the Lord can use us in business, He'll bless us accordingly. If he wants to use us in other ways, He'll provide accordingly. The main thing is to be faithful.

Read the life stories of Hudson Taylor, a missionary to inland China in the 19th century; Adoniram Judson, the first European missionary to Burma; William Carey, who opened up India to the Gospel; and George Mueller, who founded and built huge orphanages for the castoff children in England. James Stewart (not the actor) set out to evangelize eastern Europe in the 1930s. In his first trip outside of England, he traveled to Latvia because he believed that God wanted him there. He arrived in the dead of winter, not knowing the language or anyone in the country, and without any money in his pocket. But God had the people and the resources ready. Revival broke out. Stewart's life showed a pattern of trusting God to come through and not being shocked when He did.

These faithful men never "got ahead." They deliberately trusted the Lord for the resources they needed on a daily basis. Miracles abounded in their life. My wife and I help support an American missionary who is planting churches in the Ukraine. As a young man he was convinced that God was calling him to go. So he went without any financial support. The Lord blessed his faith by providing over the years to follow. In addition to a growing ministry with the financial support that came when it was needed, God provided him with a wife and children while on the mission field.

It's clear that not many exercise faith like the men above. I know that in my own case, I am "wired" to plan ahead, marshal resources, develop schedules, and check off the milestones. These skills have served me well in my career, but they work in the opposite direction to a faith that trusts God moment-by-moment to provide. I believe that you can do both, however. Plan ahead AND trust God to provide each day. Biblically, there is nothing wrong with planning ahead. The Lord approved the practice when he taught:

²⁶*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? ²⁹Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, ³⁰Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. ³¹Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not*

down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? ³²Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. ³³So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:26-33

Jesus is teaching on the cost of discipleship. Following Him may cost you relationships or even your life. Before you trust Him as Lord and Savior, make sure you're willing to follow through. Indirectly, he also affirms the common sense practice of planning ahead when building a tower and making sure your army is adequate before you go to war.

When the Jews were in the wilderness after departing Egypt, God fed them with manna. They were forbidden to collect manna on the Sabbath day, so God told them to "plan ahead" by collecting a double portion the day before. The Lord "planned ahead" by insuring that Joseph of Arimathea had a tomb all ready to receive His crucified body. God tells us throughout Scripture to plan ahead for His Second Coming, that we be not caught unawares. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church to take up offerings in advance of his trip to collect gifts for the persecuted saints in Jerusalem.

In Mark 6 we find the Lord sending His disciples out on an evangelistic campaign. He tells them to take virtually nothing with them – no money, no food, and only one coat. They are to go shod in sandals and armed with only a staff. In Luke 22 the Lord reminds them of this event and asks them if they lacked anything. They admitted, "Nothing."

³⁶Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one. Luke 22:36

So sometimes the Lord expects us to launch out on faith with no resources and sometimes we embark on faith, but we're responsible for preparation. I believe that these are judgment calls. The closer you walk with the Lord, the more you'll be in touch with His perfect will.

In what form should we hold our wealth? When you get your paycheck, what do you do with it? Let's talk about what constitutes wealth from a Biblical perspective. In the 21st century we clearly have a lot of choices in how to measure wealth: cash, savings accounts, money markets, bonds, stocks, mutual funds, 401k's, gold, silver, land, jewelry, etc.

We see in 1 Corinthians that the Lord likens our future rewards to the best available expressions of wealth in the 1st century:

¹¹For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ¹³Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. ¹⁴If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

The primary application is spiritual, of course. But we also see by inference a Biblical view of wealth. Hold onto things that can't easily be burned up!

When God builds the heavenly city, New Jerusalem, with His own hands, what materials does He include?

¹⁸And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. ¹⁹And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; ²⁰The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. Revelation 21:18-21

Gold and precious stones are clear indicators of wealth. God can make as much as He needs, even using gold for paving material. Men certainly value precious metals such as gold, silver, and platinum. Wars are still fought in Africa over diamonds. Throughout history the prospect of such loot has produced much evil. The evil is in the lust, however. As Paul wrote to Timothy:

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. ⁹But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. ¹¹But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 1 Timothy 6:6-11

The root of all evil is the love of money. How stupid it is to worship the dirt instead of the Creator who can provide you with dirt anytime you need it. Paul warns the preacher Timothy that if He is to be a man wholly dedicated to serving God in ministry, he had better flee from covetousness. Paul makes it clear that godliness and contentment are great riches. If we have food and clothing let's be content. Well, what if your business prospers beyond what you need? First, let's consider other Biblical forms of wealth.

Abraham obeyed God by leaving the land of his fathers and journeying to a country he had never seen. His obedience and faithfulness were rewarded:

¹⁴And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: ¹⁵For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. ¹⁶And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. ¹⁷Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. Genesis 13:14-17

What forms of wealth are promised to Abraham? Land and children. Did Abraham receive this land in his lifetime? No, but he knows that in the resurrection he and his descendants will be princes over the land of Israel, the land from which the Lord Jesus will rule His kingdom. Furthermore, the Bible makes clear that all believers are spiritual descendants of Abraham. Clearly, having many children, especially spiritual children that you have helped lead to Christ, will be true wealth in the ages to come.

Peter and the eleven who followed Jesus faithfully (Paul, the 12th, comes later) invested their lives in following the Lord. Peter put the issue on the table in his normally blunt way:

²⁷Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? ²⁸And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. ³⁰But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first. Matthew 19:27-30

The family of God will be a big one. Be part of God's family and you acquire multitudes of brothers and sisters. Your heavenly Father created the entire universe for His pleasure and desires to share it with you.

In addition to all of these future promises that depend on our investment now in what we can't see, it is clear that God considers land and children to constitute wealth. Abraham's wealth included much cattle. We see that measure of wealth reflected in the lives of his son Isaac and his grandsons, Jacob and Esau. When God restored health and wealth to Job, he doubled the livestock that Job once enjoyed. Job was wealthy before Satan afflicted him, but he was doubly so when God rewarded him for his faithfulness. We see also that God gave Job ten more children, thus doubling his offspring – ten on Earth plus the ten in Heaven that Satan had murdered. God also extended Job's lifespan, a blessing that we see awarded to other faithful men in Scripture – not everyone, but some.

When Heaven comes to Earth after the final judgments recorded in Revelation, we see two quintessential examples of "sustainable development" – a river of pure water that never quits and the tree of life that bears a different fruit every month!

¹And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ²In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: Revelation 22:1-3

The promise of the millennial riches shows up throughout the Bible, as for example:

¹⁷So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. ¹⁸And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim. Joel 3:17-18

Combining this passage with the one above, we see that Biblical wealth includes an abundance of food, drink ("new wine" is pure grape juice), milk, and fresh water.

Let's make some practical applications for the principles we've already covered in this chapter. As you prosper in business, how should you handle your money? When you get your paycheck, just how should you spend it? How should you save money? How can you invest money for use down the road? Surely, you should have some substantial savings to tide you over the rough spots in life. You may say that you are trusting the Lord to sustain you materially if you lose your job or have unexpected medical expenses. But could it be that the Lord is, indeed, providing those resources now and expects you to save them up? Or perhaps you use "faith" as an excuse because you simply want to spend money on toys now. It's your call – just be honest with yourself and with God.

Food, clothing, and shelter are the priorities, of course. Let's talk about food first, but briefly, because there are libraries on this subject. Eat for strength and health first, and then for enjoyment. Give your body a chance to live a fairly long time, so you can invest in the Lord's work. About 1/3 of Americans are officially obese and another 1/3 are seriously overweight. A visiting Philippine pastor and his wife once confided that they were disgusted at how fat Americans are. Gluttony is sin. Let me repeat that. Gluttony is sin. Flagrantly open sin ruins your Christian testimony. If gluttony is your sin, be assured it's out there in the open!

Is there anything wrong with the occasional cheeseburger or bag of chips? No, in moderation. Keep your weight down, your heart healthy, and your energy up. Get enough exercise. Your body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit," so treat it well!

Can you invest in food? Yes, in two ways. First, make sure you have enough food on hand for your family to get by for six months. The world is getting crazier by the day and it's always possible that natural disasters or war or political action might disrupt food supplies. Don't depend on the local grocery store to be open for you when disaster strikes. Consider that under crisis the manager of that store and the employees may well get first crack at what's on the shelves. I wouldn't be optimistic that the cashiers and stock room workers are going to work faithfully through the crisis for you while you clean off the shelves and they miss out. Your six-month stock need not be very tasty, but it must have enough nutrition to keep you alive. Build your stock by getting some canned food and other dry staples for it every time you go shopping.

Second, invest in historically solid companies that grow, prepare, or distribute food that people depend on. These companies should have international markets so that if America suffers great trouble, your investment survives. More about stocks later.

Some brief words on clothing: Dress modestly and comfortably and see that your wife and children do, too. Don't waste your money on the fashions of the day. Find some good mail-order companies (like Duluth Trading Company) and watch for sales. We shop a couple of times a year at Kohl's, waiting for the "30% off" coupon to hit our mailbox. Then we'll spend a few hundred bucks on sale items, including some clothing stock for the future, in case we're hurting for money downstream. Don't get down to your last pair of shoes and then lose your job!

Housing: Rent or buy? As I write this in the Spring of 2011 the housing market looks to be grim for years to come. Don't get deep into mortgage debt. That puts you at the mercy of the Federal Reserve and your own bank. If you can't put a big chunk of cash down on a house, then rent. If you can stand it, wait until you can pay cash for a house. If you do get into a mortgage, make it for 15 years or

less. Do the math on principal plus interest and get amazed at how much interest you pay for a 30-year mortgage. It's ridiculous how much you actually pay for that house once you include the interest.

We acquired our previous house on a 15-year mortgage, paid double payments whenever we could, and paid it off in 7 years. During those years I was blessed to be creative and acquire extra income to make this possible. When we sold it we moved to our present location and paid cash for the house we now own. It's a wonderful feeling to get out of a mortgage! But then you never really own a house in America, do you? There is always property tax, an ungodly system wherein the state really owns your house and land. Don't think so? Don't pay your property tax and see what happens.

Don't use your house as an investment. Remember the crash of 2008? A major factor was the belief that you could always sell your house, so why not borrow against your equity? Don't borrow! Don't run up credit card debt. Use a debit card or make sure you pay off your credit card bill every month.

Based on Biblical concepts of wealth, it seems prudent to invest in stocks that represent useful land: agricultural or mining land, for example. Diversify your portfolio away from strictly American stocks. Spread the risk around the world. Do avoid the most volatile countries, where corruption is the most rampant. Corruption is universal, but the difference in degree is important.

In order to save and invest, you must allocate some portion of your pay every month. You can't procrastinate and expect to get ahead. My wife and I just had the pleasure of cashing in some U.S. savings bonds that had been maturing for about 20 years. We acquired those through a payroll savings plan. A bond was purchased each pay period before we even saw the paycheck. I'm glad we did that. If we hadn't, we would have just spent the money. It's useful now.

Are U.S. savings bonds a good way to save? Absolutely not. The Fed is going to be printing money for years to come and will pay off your bonds and the national debt with inflated dollars. Inflation has been and will in the future be far above any bond interest rate. We had held onto the bonds because they paid *some* interest, and we always want some cash reserve. Savings accounts pay virtually zero interest these days. Although we did find a bank that pays 3% if you use their debit card religiously.

Because of inflation, don't just save by sticking cash into a savings account. Those dollars are worth less and less as the months go by. Yet you need to have at least six months of cash available for the unexpected emergency. So some of your savings needs to go to cash, at least until you have your emergency fund stocked. The rest needs to go into a diversified portfolio. One more point regarding "cash." If there really is an emergency that shuts down banks for a while, it would be useful to have a few small silver or gold coins handy. Precious metals are always valued for trade. In a catastrophic situation where you need to buy a few days of food, but your dollars aren't worth anything, some silver or gold may keep your mouths fed.

I'm not an expert on investing, but I've done my homework and read the experts who have a perspective that's at least consistent with a Biblical view of wealth. Don't get into the stock trading game. Buying and selling frequently is no different from gambling. You'll lose. There are lots of geniuses who spend their lives trying to beat the market and many of them lose regularly. Find some

stock funds and individual stocks that you feel comfortable holding onto. Find two different stockbrokers who see things the same way you do, or at least are willing to listen to you and operate under your principles.

Divide your investments, whether via 401k, IRA, or simply your monthly savings investment plan into multiple stock funds and, perhaps, a variety of individual stocks. Spread the risk internationally. Invest in “real stuff” like gold mines, oil, natural gas, coal, shipping, agriculture, grocery chains, electric power, and other areas that people can’t live without. You and your broker won’t always guess right. Some stocks go up and some go down. Always pick stocks that consistently pay dividends. If they are not paying dividends then you are simply betting that the stock price goes up over time. If they do pay dividends every quarter, then they are generally generating profits. That’s a good thing!

Keep track of your investments, but not every day. If you watch too closely, you’ll go nuts or lose perspective. Check on them weekly, so you can get a feel for trends. Ask your broker all the dumb questions that occur to you. But don’t spend your life ogling the money. That’s idolatry and the Lord may do you a favor and remove that idol. Trust Him and do your diligence. It is our job to take care of our business, as Solomon wrote:

²³Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds. ²⁴For riches are not for ever: and doth the crown endure to every generation? ²⁵The hay appeareth, and the tender grass sheweth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered. ²⁶The lambs are for thy clothing, and the goats are the price of the field. ²⁷And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food, for the food of thy household, and for the maintenance for thy maidens. Proverbs 27:23-27

If you’re young, invest in education that makes you more skillful, more employable, and that pays off in multiples of your investment. See the chapter on schooling for details. Don’t do schooling “for fun.” Life is too short and college courses are too expensive. The right training or the right degree can pay off hugely in both income and satisfaction.

Let’s turn to the subject of giving – charity. (I’m going to cover a bit of the same ground I covered back in Chapter 2, but that’s unavoidable.) How much should you give away and how do you find the right people to make use of your gifts? This is not easy, but the principles are straightforward. Given the two major emphases of the Christian’s life throughout the New Testament record, namely evangelism and discipleship, it should be obvious that our financial resources should contribute primarily to these areas. (We’ll talk about helping the genuinely poor a bit later.)

Most Christians in conventional American churches default to their church’s giving program. The conservative independent churches teach that the tithe should go directly to the church’s bank account and that support for missionaries comes on top of that. Additionally, there are all kinds of special offerings. Occasionally, some special need for a family in trouble comes up. The question is whether these modes of giving support evangelism and discipleship. Most church members don’t come anywhere near giving a tithe of their gross income. Therefore, to begin with, the majority of any given church membership is in rebellion against their own leadership and membership compact.

Let’s consider those that do tithe. How is the money spent? The church building mortgage must get paid off. Electricity, heat, water, garbage collection, and insurance bills are due every month.

Salaries for the pastor, associate pastor, assistant pastor, youth pastor, janitor, and secretary must be paid. Church bulletins are printed, decorations and flowers for the auditorium are purchased, office computers and software must be maintained, furniture and carpets get replaced over time, and the parking lot needs new blacktop. Lawnmowers and fuel and gardening tools cost money. Soap and paper towels and cleaning supplies for the bathrooms, plus vacuum cleaners for the carpets, and mops and brooms for the hallways, etc., etc. Wow. Having a facility-based church costs a lot of money! It's no wonder that people need to tithe!

How much of those costs go to evangelism and discipleship? Essentially none. Biblical evangelism is done by the Christians out there in the world. Most churches hope that visitors are attracted to their gorgeous facility and hear the Gospel at the end of a weekly sermon. Where is that in the Bible? When a church promotes evangelism by inviting people to church, it stunts the growth – the discipleship training – of its own people by reserving Gospel preaching for the paid pastoral staff. Shame.

A conventional church's claim to promote discipleship is based on its "pulpit ministry," and perhaps whatever Sunday School classes or Bible studies are organized on a weekly basis. If the substance and content is Scriptural and the "students" are attentive and held accountable, then praise God! Christians can learn and grow . . . a little. But we've already discussed how lecturing is a poor substitute for training.

My point is that you can be contributing thousands or tens of thousands of dollars per year to such a program and generating almost no eternal value. Writing that big check every month may feel good (or bad, if you begrudge it), but how much does it really help in preaching to the lost and in building up the believers? If you're a business man, you continually evaluate cost / benefit ratios, return on investment, bang per buck, etc. So think this through for your family and your church.

We certainly have liberty in the New Testament regarding how to organize a local church and how to spend our money. If you want to spend big bucks on facilities, salaries, and supplies, you have the liberty to do so. Will your "business plan" hold up at the Judgment Seat of Christ?

In our "house church" we spend no money on facilities or salaries. We don't even have a "church bank account." In every possible legal way from an American perspective, we aren't a church at all. So my wife and I can spend money that goes directly to activities that count. I'm for spending money on tracts for the lost. I spend extra money to get my phone number and website on the "business card" size tracts we use. I spend lots of money to buy Chick comic book tracts in quantities large enough so I can have them print a final, personalized appeal on the back of each tract. We spend perhaps \$1000 per year on transportation to get to the "hot spots" where we can reach the most people. We spend about \$1000 per year for food and soft drinks for a fellowship dinner each week.

I'm for supporting mission projects, both domestic and foreign. My wife and I send (modest) monthly checks to support the following:

1. A church planting missionary family in the Ukraine.
2. A church planting missionary family in Belarus.

3. The Russian Bible Society, which distributes Bibles and Gospel literature throughout Russian and eastern Europe.
4. The Christian Law Association, which defends American Christians who are persecuted for sharing the Gospel, or running a Christian school, or are coerced to deny their faith in the workplace, etc.
5. A prison ministry in America, which distributes Bibles and tracts and corresponds with prisoners who want to know the Lord and serve Him.

I don't know of any more eternally effective way of spending money than to use it to spread the Gospel. When Barnabas and Paul were sent out on their first missionary journey by the church at Antioch, they doubtless sent money and supplies along with them. In the two passages below, Paul refers to support he got from individuals and churches to allow him to travel and focus his life on preaching the Gospel. In doing so, he also rebukes the Corinthian church which apparently was too tight-fisted to help.

¹⁷I am glad of the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. 1 Corinthians 16:17

⁸I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. ⁹And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. 2 Corinthians 11:8-9

The missionary must be willing to support himself by his own labor. We see below that Paul provided income for himself and his team by making tents. Consider that: the greatest missionary / evangelist of all time was a mere tentmaker. It's not about how you make your money, is it? Outside of working, Paul did everything he could to reach out with the Gospel.

¹After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; ²And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. ³And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. Acts 18:1-4

The two passages below are misappropriated severely to get more money into the offering plates of modern churches. In the first passage, verse 2 is often ripped out of context to teach tithing to the local New Testament church. It is clear, however, that the subject is the "collection for the saints," namely a love gift for the saints at Jerusalem who were under continual religious and economic persecution by the Jewish hierarchy. Verse 2 does teach proportional giving, but not for the building program in Corinth! The proportion "as God hath prospered him" also says nothing about 10% of your gross income.

¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. ²Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered

him, that there be no gatherings when I come. ³And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 1 Corinthians 16:1-3

The next passage is ripped out of the context of 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, to teach giving above your tithe for the purpose of supporting missionaries. These two chapters are in fact speaking of a specific need to support the Jerusalem saints. There is nothing about missionary support here. Other passages do support the principle. Why warp these Scriptures? Furthermore, there isn't anything about tithing in these chapters.

⁶But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Let's talk about helping those outside the church. I'm for helping the truly needy. In America that's harder than you think. The welfare state has created a large chunk of the population that refuses to work, and yet enjoys enough free cash from the government to: (1) enjoy apartments with heat and air conditioning, (2) eat enough food to be overweight, (3) watch color / cable TV, and (4) ingest alcohol and illegal drugs. I know I'm painting with a broad brush – nevertheless, the overall situation is clear for all to see.

I talk with panhandlers regularly as I do street evangelism. They can walk and talk and they generally look more plump than I do. They admit that they are not interested in working. They get enough government support to live comfortably and they can panhandle for tax-free cash, too. I recall one older lady who wept (real tears!) as she gave me a tragic story about her sick daughter and how she was broke and needed just a few bucks to catch a bus from Rockford to Chicago to visit her in the hospital. I bought the story and gave her a few bucks. A few months later the same lady came up to me with the same story. When I rebuked her for her con game, she got huffy and stalked off. I saw her a couple of minutes later weeping in front of another mark.

It's not easy to tell who is really needy in America. My wife and I have helped out families at particular times with particular needs. For the Christian, charitable giving starts within your church. Consider the following passage, wherein Paul gives Timothy guidelines for supporting widows with financial needs:

³Honour widows that are widows indeed. ⁴But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. ⁵Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. ⁶But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. ⁷And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. ⁸But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. ⁹Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man. ¹⁰Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. ¹¹But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; 1 Timothy 5:3-11

What are some of the principles here that we can apply to determine a genuine financial need? A widow is a “widow indeed” if she has no family at all. If she does have relatives, it is their duty to care for her. Even if she is needy, she must have demonstrated solid Christian living. If not, she simply isn’t worthy of support. Younger widows will likely marry again or they can find other employment, so they do not get the same consideration as the aged.

Sounds a bit tough-minded, doesn’t it? Even within the church there are standards to be met before charity is invoked. What about helping people financially outside the church? Consider the parable of the “Good Samaritan” in Luke 10. Read the whole chapter for context. By the way, he wasn’t really “good” – he was just keeping God’s law, thereby doing his duty. Noting that the Samaritans and the Jews had no respect for each other, the Samaritan could see that the robbed and beaten Jewish fellow was truly in need! When it’s clear, then act accordingly. When it’s not, a little investigation is in order.

Within the church, we still live in a fallen world. Circumstances bite us regularly. One young couple had a disaster that left them suddenly with no money, no food, and no baby supplies. We, along with several others, pitched in to see them through to the next paycheck. Another middle-aged couple suddenly lost their jobs and were several weeks short of making their rent payment. They were also worthy of help at the time. Someone doesn’t have to be entirely destitute to warrant help. Sometimes they need just a boost to get them over the bump. Have we gotten fooled at times? Probably. Be as discerning as you can be, pray for guidance, and trust God to do good with the help you offer.

Outside of the family of believers, my baloney detector stays fully charged. I recall one big fellow in his twenties who approached me in Rockford, asking for a few bucks for him to buy lunch at McDonald’s. I pretended to be shocked. I pointed out that for the same price he could walk to the local grocery and buy three meals worth of much healthier food. Fast food wasn’t what he needed! He said that he’d be agreeable to take the money and find the grocery store. I suggested a better idea: “Let me walk you over to the Rescue Mission. They’ll feed you a free lunch, and supper and breakfast, too, if you like.” He didn’t like that idea, complaining that they would make him listen to a sermon before they fed him. I guess he’d been through that drill before.

I’ve also informed panhandlers that they can get up to six meals per day if they move efficiently between the Rescue Mission and the Red Cross. Another fellow objected to the Rescue Mission idea because it was early afternoon, so he had already missed their lunch time. I tapped him on his ample belly and assured him that he would likely survive until supper time.

If you give them the cash, you are facilitating their alcohol and cigarette addictions, at the least. In some cases the money will go to cocaine and prostitutes. It’s common to find a panhandler smoking while he’s begging. Cigarettes are expensive! I have on a few occasions given someone a dollar when they give me a reasonable story about needing bus fare to get home. That’s almost always a con, but sometimes the story and the person ring true enough that I take the chance. I truly don’t care about the dollar. I do care about enabling lies and addictions. Mostly I refuse such requests.

Scripture is clear about helping out the truly poor. Consider the following:

²⁷Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. ²⁸Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee. Proverbs 3:27-28

¹⁷He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again. Proverbs 19:17

¹⁶He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want. Proverbs 22:16

The first passage above is straightforward. If the need is real, act on it. The second passage assures us that God sees our charity. The Lord will repay us, although it may be in the next life. The third passage warns those who exploit the poor that God will bring vengeance. Who exploits the poor? In addition to such vermin as drug dealers, these include the politicians who promote the welfare state, government officials who sanction lotteries and legalized gambling, cigarette companies who keep the nicotine content high enough to assure addiction, beer and liquor companies, and businesses who sell products with designed-in obsolescence.

The final thought is cautionary against giving to the rich. Don't get conned into contributing to a televangelist who already has a home on each coast and a private jet. Don't give walking-around money to the already "rich" welfare recipient who wants to upgrade his cable TV with a new movie package.

Let me say just a few words about the so-called "social gospel." Many modern churches increasingly invest in programs to help the poor, both in this country and around the world. There are many "Christian" organizations designed to feed the poor, clothe the children, and provide medical assistance where it has been nonexistent. All of these things are good things to do, but the general characteristic of these programs is that they don't proclaim the Gospel! These organizations will always find professing, but religiously lost, Christians to fund them. You, O faithful Christian man, should invest your resources in the Biblical areas that are so often neglected by the churches.

I'm for establishing ministries that help in the physical realm as long as the preaching of the Gospel is priority #1. If you provide someone shelter, but let them continue on the road to Hell without a warning, you have done them more harm than good. Now they are more comfortable and less likely to even think about God. I'd like to ask some of the proponents of these programs what their ultimate goal is. If they could suddenly lift up the entire world's population to the economic standards of middle America, would we have Heaven on Earth? Is middle America Heaven on Earth? If every family in the world could join a fitness center, enjoy cable TV, send their kids to a godless public school, and get fat on fast food . . . is that success? America is more lost spiritually than it has ever been. Even in the economic turmoil of recent years, Americans live richly and despise the word of God.

Most evangelical churches despise genuine evangelistic outreach, but love to create their own social welfare programs. They buy shoes for orphans, make turkey sandwiches for the homeless, and collect castoff clothing for the poor. Are these bad things? Of course not. But if God's work is primarily about giving money or stuff away, then why do these churches spend millions of dollars on facilities, auditoriums, gymnasiums, sound systems, and staff salaries? Why not follow the New Testament

model? Let the elders earn their own living, establish a house church network, and then spend those millions on huge giveaway programs? The hypocrisy is evident.

The bottom line on charitable giving is to do your research, pray much, and keep evaluating bang per buck.

Finally, let's briefly address the so-called "prosperity Gospel," continually promoted by televangelists and megachurch preachers. Giving because you think that God will reward you with Rolex watches, sports cars, and endless health will insure that you get no reward at all from the Lord. The preachers who promote the "prosperity Gospel" are wolves in sheep's clothing who are to be identified and shunned.

If the worldly prosperity message is valid, how do you account for faithful Christians in North Korea, China, and Muslim nations who are persecuted, impoverished, beaten, imprisoned, and killed for their faithfulness? Is this "gospel" only valid in North America? Have you also noticed that "health and wealth" preachers also get sick, grow old, and die? The Lord Jesus had no place to lay His head for part of His earthly ministry. Eleven out of the twelve apostles were martyred. (They tried to kill John, but couldn't.) Christians throughout the ages have lost jobs, had businesses confiscated, and have even been enslaved for their faith. Consider Paul's prophetic promise:

¹²Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. 2 Timothy 3:12-13

The promise is for persecution, not prosperity. But evil men and seducers shall work hard to teach the reverse. For a serious treatment of this issue I encourage you to read David Cloud's book, The Pentecostal-Charismatic Movement, which can be obtained through <http://wayoflife.org>.

The Lord Jesus taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive. When you give joyfully and according to Biblical principles, you will experience this again and again. I feel almost like apologizing for all of my cautionary notes. But there is much danger in wasting the resources that God has put under your stewardship. Many Christians have discovered that when they give generously in directions that God wills, the Lord will entrust them with more stuff to give away! You can become a conduit with an ever increasing flow. Jesus portrayed Himself as a spring of flowing water, the ultimate source of eternal life.

¹³Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: ¹⁴But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John 4:13-14

Our privilege is to be a secondary source of life. In so doing we will never thirst and yet we will be a well of water to quench the thirst of others. The priority is always the spiritual. Use the physical to multiply the eternal.

Chapter 11

Make Your Days Count!

Life is short. Make your days count. Consider the following nuggets of Biblical wisdom:

¹*Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. ²He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. Job 14:1-2*

¹⁰*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. ¹²So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Psalm 90:10, 12*

¹⁵*My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. ¹⁶I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. ¹⁷O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. ¹⁸Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Psalm 71:15-18*

Seventy years is a good run. If we make eighty, we've beaten the average. Even the oldest among us find life to be too short and too full of trouble. Our lives seem to pop up like spring flowers, just to be cut down or wither after just a few days of joy. All we can do is to make those precious days count. The truths we learn are not to be sealed up in a vault, as if they are jewels meant solely for our own miserly benefit. May the Lord teach us the truths of life and may we live long enough to share them with others, for the glory of God.

Charles Handy was a London Business School professor, author, and consultant. He was in his mid-forties and already very successful when his father died. He was quite proud of his career. "My father, on the other hand, had been a quiet and modest man. He had lived most of his life in the Irish countryside, where he'd been the minister of a small church. Secretly I had always been disappointed by his lack of ambition. It was difficult for me to understand his reluctance to move on or up in life. When he died, I rushed back to Ireland for the funeral. Held in the little church where he had spent most of his life, it was supposed to be a quiet family affair. But it turned out to be neither quiet nor restricted to the family. I was astounded by the hundreds of people who came, on such short notice, from all corners of the British Isles. Almost every single person there came up to me and told me how much my father had meant to them – and how deeply he had touched their lives. That day, I stood by his grave and wondered, Who would come to my funeral? How many lives have I touched? Who knows me as well as all of these people knew this quiet man?" That funeral changed his life. He determined to structure the rest of his life to make real differences in the lives of others. (From Fast Company, "My Greatest Lesson," Anna Muoio, ed., June-July, 1998.)

I recently asked a friend, a solid Christian young man, to imagine his life five or ten years down the road, and pretend that he could have exactly the kind of life that he wanted. What would his ideal life be? My friend works a normal job in the Midwest, is studious in his Bible, and shares the Gospel with people regularly. In short, he's growing and serving the Lord. He surprised me by saying that he

would most like to be a missionary in Latin America. I pointed out to him that he needed only one thing to prepare for that – learn Spanish. Once he knew the language, he simply needed to move to Argentina, for example, and get a job to support himself. A single man can support himself very inexpensively in a city like Buenos Aires and spend much of his time sharing the Gospel and establishing a “house fellowship.”

If he took the conventional route for an American missionary, he would spend five years in Bible college and another five years trying to raise support. Many fail to get through that obstacle course and are often exhausted when they do. “Brother Andrew” is a modern example of a fellow who wanted to serve on the mission field, but was discouraged by such denominational roadblocks. His book, God’s Smuggler, is a testimony to the grace of God poured out on a Christian who wants to serve. Andrew wanted to reach out to the people of Eastern Europe, who were imprisoned for decades behind the Iron Curtain. If he had gone through a standard missionary development program, he never would have been allowed to launch into a Bible smuggling ministry, with his liberty and life continually on the precipice. Yet God blessed his simple, devoted faithfulness.

I don’t know if my friend will act on his dream. The point is that you can visualize what you really want to accomplish in this life and act toward that end. It may well mean that you are to work professionally as a physician, or lawyer, or engineer, or in a less prestigious day job as a clerk, or custodian, or mechanic. It may mean that you find a way to devote most or all of your time to evangelism and discipleship, trusting God to supply your needs. Whatever you hope to accomplish in love for the Lord Jesus Christ, get started!

Your ultimate performance review looms ahead: The Judgment Seat of Christ.

¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. ¹¹Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11a

¹²So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Romans 14:12

In my last Air Force assignment I was chief of a large group of military and civilian scientists. I asked each one to prepare a draft of his annual performance review – for the *next* year. Once he clearly had in mind what an outstanding year would look like, then he could work in that direction. Since you can’t do a whole year’s work at once, you have to break it into bite-sized chunks, with monthly and weekly goals. A weekly goal can be attained by completing tasks at the daily or hourly level. Simply put, if your year is to be successful, you had better get something done today!

Not all plans work out. As all military strategists know, no battle plan survives contact with the enemy. Yet a plan is essential. You’ll certainly adjust, tweak, or even scrap and rebuild “the plan,” but if you’re not aimed at some goal, there is no chance of getting there.

Multitudes of work-place professionals understand this. Yet the Christian doesn’t view his own performance review before God Almighty with the same gravity. I’m just trying to get you to think about it! If you really think about what’s important, what’s eternal, and what makes a real difference, you would be insane not to act accordingly.

How much is it worth to you to live a life pleasing in God's sight? Let's see what Jesus had to say about this.

⁴⁴Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. ⁴⁵Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: ⁴⁶Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. Matthew 13:44-46

³³So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33

Is God asking you to sell everything, leave everything, and hit the road armed with just a Bible in your hand? No – not necessarily. He certainly expects you to devote all of the gifts and resources in your stewardship for his service. (See Romans 12:1-2.) At any rate, use the atoms in your body and in your possession for His glory. Any atoms and molecules that you have built by yourself can be used entirely at your own discretion. Do you realize that whatever you say, whether blessing or cursing, wise or foolish, holy or disgusting, you do so with the tongue that God designed? Scripture teaches that your Creator actively holds the atoms of your body together, even while you may choose to use them for sinful pleasure. Just give God what is His.

If you need to catch more giant fish in order to serve God, then the Lord will tell you on which side of the boat to cast your net. If God will use you as a cattle rancher, then He will multiply your livestock. Read the life story of Jacob in the book of Genesis. He's the fellow whose name was changed to Israel, whose sons founded the twelve tribes of that nation. He served for 21 years as an indentured servant. His selfish overseer, Laban, changed Jacob's wages ten different times. Yet God rewarded his obedience and faithfulness with huge earthly riches and, more importantly, an inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom and the ages to come that exceeds what any modern billionaire could lust for.

My greatest ambition is to please the Lord Jesus. He saved me from my sins. He has made me His child and His younger brother. The one reward that I most anxiously yearn for is described by the parable below. Please read it carefully. There are vital principles that you ignore at your own peril.

¹³Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. ¹⁴For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. ¹⁵And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

¹⁶Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. ¹⁷And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. ¹⁸But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

¹⁹After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. ²⁰And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. ²¹His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

²²He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. ²³His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

²⁴Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: ²⁵And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.

²⁶His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: ²⁷Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. ²⁸Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. ²⁹For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.

³⁰And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 25:13-30

The Lord will return to this Earth to establish His kingdom and today could be the day when the events described in prophecy begin to unfold. You will either be serving God or serving Satan when that happens.

He has intended every human being to be His servant, in fellowship with Him and with each other. Some of us have more “talents.” Some have less. The first talent that we all possess is to recognize our Lord and His authority. We’ve got to recognize our need for the Savior and our responsibility to repent and trust in Him. Then we can use the rest of our talents in His service, which is the only way we can be a blessing to others in ways that count.

The “more gifted” servant received the reward I most yearn for, hearing the words “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” He also gained great responsibility in the new kingdom. Such a modest amount invested now . . . such great responsibility and reward later. I am also excited at the prospect that the Lord may reward me with joyful service and responsibilities when He returns. Emotionally, however, my deepest hope is for those words from Him to tell me that I have pleased Him. If you don’t know what I’m talking about, keep reading.

The “less gifted” servant received the same rewards from the Lord. His faithfulness with what he was given was decisive. On a different occasion, the Lord offered a nearly identical parable (Luke 19). In that case, the more gifted servant received more responsibilities than the other. However the Lord sorts these things out in His actual coming kingdom, we can trust Him to reward us justly and graciously.

What about the third servant? Why was he condemned, and in the spiritual application, sent to Hell? He proved that he didn’t know his Lord, in calling Him “hard.” He accuses his Lord of robbery, by claiming that He reaped where He didn’t sow. Spiritually, he denies the Lordship of His Creator. Unbelievers have no desire to serve and please the Lord. They don’t even want to admit God’s right to

ownership of this Earth. So they hide their first “talent,” digging a hole and hiding it away, searing their conscience so that they deny their sins and refuse to repent.

Do you desire to please the Lord? If you search your heart honestly and discover no such care, then admit to God that YOU DON'T KNOW HIM. You need the one and only Savior.

If you've read all the way through the book to this point, you know a lot more about me than I do about you. Please do me the favor of dropping me a line via drdave@truthreallymatters.com. Let me know how you're doing and whether the Lord has blessed me to be a help to you through this book. It's a great pleasure to me to find out that other brothers and sisters in God's family are serving Him. We'll all have much joy in the New Heaven and New Earth regaling each other with tales of the grace of God. Until that day . . .

Appendix

Your Biggest Problem & Your Greatest Need – a short tract.

Life is full of problems, but none compare with death. Whatever you accomplish in life, death takes it away. Then you face God and will be judged for everything you have done, every word you have said, and for every thought. Imagine a microchip attached to your brain that records EVERYTHING! Scary, isn't it? Especially because God is holy, just, and righteous . . . He will not let sin dwell in His presence. You and I have sinned against God thousands of times. Ever lied? Liars will be cast into Hell. Ever committed adultery or even thought about it? Adulterers will be judged. Have you insulted someone or gotten angry without just cause? God judges you guilty of murder in your heart and unworthy of Heaven.

Is there a way out? Your greatest need is forgiveness from God. Here is some good news. God so loved the world that He was made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ 2000 years ago. Jesus lived 33 years and never sinned. He made people angry by preaching repentance ("Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!") and angrier yet by proclaiming that He is the only way to find God. Jesus was crucified on a cruel cross to pay the punishment for your sins. He was innocent, but loves you that much! Three days later He rose from the dead. Nobody else ever did that! Do you want to live again? Jesus, God Himself, the Author of life, can give you everlasting life. Please, we beg you, confess your sins to God and forsake them. Then trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You will be born again, a new creation, with a home in Heaven. God will give you the strength to live right, follow Him, and get rid of the sins that you have been addicted to. Please contact us so we can meet with you and explain more. Life is too short to neglect your very soul!

Author's Biographical Sketch

Dr. Dave is a former atheist / evolutionist who became a Christian as a teenager, and has been involved in many levels of ministry throughout his Christian life. Presently, he is a full-time street evangelist. He holds five academic degrees, including a Ph.D. in laser physics and an MBA. He enjoyed a 20-year Air Force career in research and development, and has won the Air Force R&D Award for Advanced Technology. After retiring from the Air Force he enjoyed a second career as an R&D manager at a large defense contractor and then as a professor at a major state university.

In ministry, by the grace of God, he has served as a Sunday school teacher, a junior church "pastor", a bus captain and bus ministry director, taught evening classes at a rescue mission, created a training program for street evangelism . . . and should have done far more and wasted far less of his discretionary time through the years. Presently, he is blessed in helping to lead a small house church and doing street evangelism in Rockford, Chicago, and other northern Illinois locations.