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## 1983: Abilene Christian College Bible Lectures - Full Text

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**LIGHTS  
IN A WORLD  
OF DARKNESS**



# LIGHTS IN A WORLD OF DARKNESS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Main Speeches

Moral Leadership For A Modern World, <i>Juan Antonio Monroy</i> . .	11
Morality In the Market Place, <i>Glenn Owen</i> . . . . .	36
Morality In the Home, <i>Carl Brecheen</i> . . . . .	50
Television and Morality, <i>Joe R. Barnett</i> . . . . .	65
Morality In Education, <i>William J. Teague</i> . . . . .	79
The Christian In An Immoral World, <i>Jack Evans</i> . . . . .	90

### Afternoon Sessions

Jesus' Teaching About the Law in Matthew 5:17-20, <i>John Caleb Davis, Jr.</i> . . . . .	111
The Middle East Crisis In Biblical Perspective, <i>F. Furman Kearley</i>	131

### Featured Classes

Unraveling the Tangles of Family Communication, <i>Marilyn Lewis</i>	163
Christian Ethics In the World of Business, <i>Phillip V. Lewis</i> . . . . .	218
Life-Style Evangelism - Back to the Basics, <i>Eddie Leon Sharp, Jr.</i>	274



## PREFACE

If a person is not a Christian everywhere he goes, he is not a Christian anywhere he goes. It is not enough that we practice a selective Christianity: Christian at church and in our families, but worldly at other times. Yet this is the pattern of many who call themselves followers of our Lord.

The Lectureship Committee wanted this year's program to focus on the Christian in his various relationships beyond the church building. How can we instruct and train every Christian to practice Kingdom principles in every circumstance of life and in every relationship?

Moses gathered the children of Israel together just before they entered the Promised Land and spoke to them the words recorded in the book of Deuteronomy. The gist of what he says to them is this: "You are about to enter a special land and a special time in your life. Remember who you are. You are the People of God. That knowledge will shape the way you live."

In I Peter 2, Peter uses five different images of the People of God in New Testament times. Each is designed to say to the Christian: "Remember who you are."

Each generation of Christians must be sure that the next generation develops this sense of identity as part of "the People of God." This identity does not begin with Jesus. It goes all the way back to Adam, and through him to Abraham and a special promise.

Christians are “seed of Abraham” in Christ (Gal. 3:29). This sense of identity with their forefathers and that special relationship with Jehovah that is part of that identity, shapes the Christian’s life, and controls every relationship.

Thus we say to our children as they grow up and begin to take their place in the world: “Remember who you are. You are a child of God. Be careful that you live like a Prince. Here (the Bible) are your instructions for what that means.”

It is the hope of the Lectureship Committee that the messages of the Lectureship itself and those contained in this book will help us to be more nearly what God is calling us to be: “Lights In A World of Darkness.”

CARL BRECHEEN  
Lectureship Director

## Main Speeches



# Moral Leadership For A Modern World

**Juan Antonio Monroy**

**Address:** Apartado 2.029, Box 229, Madrid 2, Spain.

**Family:** Wife: the former Mercedes Herrero. They have four daughters: Yolanda, Loida, Monica, and Zoraida.

**Education:** Began studies in Morocco, specializing in journalism; studied English in London, 1961; Theological Defenders Seminary, Puerto Rico (Doctor of Divinities).

**Ministry:** Juan Monroy was baptized as an infant into the Catholic Church, was raised in early years as a Catholic, and became a fervent atheist as a young teenager. In 1951 he was converted to New Testament Christianity, and since then has devoted himself to preaching and teaching throughout the world. He has been instrumental in getting the Herald of Truth radio program broadcast over 20 stations in Spain. He currently preaches for an



active, 300-member congregation in Madrid, which he worked to establish. When he moved to Spain in 1965, there were six congregations in that country. Today there are thirty, with a total membership of approximately 2,000.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** Monroy started *Restauracion* magazine (1966) and *First Light* children's magazine (1972); is director of the Christian Bookstore (opened 1968); is President of the Defense Commission in Spain (inter-denominational committee devoted to defense of religious freedom); is member of many organizations, including the Evangelical Press and Literature Associations, both in Spain; is listed in the International Biographical Dictionary; has received awards from Pepperdine University and Abilene Christian University's Communication Dept.

Monroy has written 16 books in Spanish and translated six from English into Spanish, and four from French into Spanish. Two books are published in English: *Men of Fire* and *Strong As Death*.

He has travelled through 53 countries, including North, Central and South America, France, England, Switzerland, Germany, Greece and Africa. He has spent a month in communist China, and travelled to Russia three times, including Siberia the summer of 1982.

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(Acts 17:16-34)

Under the title of this lecture three basic elements readily stand out: The content, the hearer and the

communicator.

The content is Christian morality directed to a world in crisis and communicated by responsible leaders. The order is perfectly logical. The leader cannot exist without a program, and the program must have a receiver.

I have chosen as a Bible basis the sermon delivered by the apostle Paul in Athens because it contains the three basic elements suggested under this title: A leader who communicates, a rich theological content as a program and a specific world of persons who receive the message.

There is one slight exception here: The program that Paul presents to the Greek philosophers is not exactly of moral content, understanding the word “moral” to refer to an arrangement of human actions aimed toward the common welfare.

Beyond mere human morality directed toward the general welfare, Paul speaks in Athens about Christian morality, divine morality that deals with the existence, the attributes and the revelation of God. Before that group of worldly-wise Greeks the apostle presents in an outstanding manner the Biblical, the Christian concept of Divinity.

Such a treatment of the word “moral” does not deviate from the purpose of those who have arranged this Lectureship, because the moral principles of races are determined by their concept of the divine transcendency.

The concept that people have of God determines their ethical behavior and influences their ideas of religion /

and society, and even shapes their political and economic theories. To the old maxim, "Tell me with whom you walk and I will tell you who you are," we need to add: "Tell me in whom you believe and I will tell you how you live."

Morality is influenced by faith. We Christians are not different because we are Americans or Spaniards and not Russians or Chinese; we are different because our concept of God is different from that of other peoples and religions. We are different because our Holy Book, divinely inspired, is different from all the other books in the world. We are different because the Church of which we are a part is a divine institution, different from human institutions.

Paul has this clearly in mind when he confronts the Greek philosophers. He does not speak to them of human morality but of divine moral standards. He is not trying to modify their ethical behavior; what he wants them to change is their faith. Paul knows that if they abandon their idolatry and are converted to the God of Christianity, their life style will change as a natural result. Therefore the whole emphasis of his sermon is on the Person of the true and living God.

At the Areopagus, that famous Greek high court just opposite the acropolis, Paul delivered a majestic and profound discourse. Even today his teachings continue to illuminate the darkness of our decadent and almost atheistic Western culture. For Paul, God moves in a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference cannot be found anywhere.

## I Christianity's God

### *1. The Existence of God*

“Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you.” (Acts 17:23)

Paul is not trying to prove God's existence. Christianity does not need to prove the existence of the Supreme Being, who reveals himself in the order of the universe, the conquests of science, in the unfolding of history, in the fundamentals of man's conscience.

What Christianity does, as Paul does in this case, is to disqualify the unknown gods of paganism and to present instead the God revealed in the Bible.

### *2. God's Universe*

“God that made the world and all things therein . . .” (vs. 24)

The ancient Greeks, like the modern naturalists, exalted the forces of nature, even going so far as to deify the natural elements. With a single word Paul destroys the basis for the pagan belief in a universe that would be the product of its own blind, fixed laws. God is a Personal Being, who existed before anything was created, and who, by the power of his word, brought the universe into existence.

### *3. The Sovereignty of God*

“He is Lord of heaven and earth.” (vs. 24)

From his previous statement Paul now proceeds to a logical consequence: God, being the creator of all

things, even of the primitive cosmic forces, is also the Lord of them all. They are subject to his commands; they obey his will.

The great metaphysical thesis of Plato, well known by these Greek philosophers, that being (or reality) is ideal, is replaced with the more personal, more intimate truth that "The Being is the Lord."

#### 4. *The Spiritual Nature of God*

"He dwelleth not in temples made with hands. . ." (vs. 24)

In the Christian conception of God that Paul preaches, there is no place for the pagan polytheism of the Greeks. God, being Creator and Lord, transcends man's works. He cannot be contained in man-made temples. The infinite God cannot be represented by material objects. The spiritual is beyond the natural; it is impalpable. It cannot be expressed by an inscription, by an altar or an image, all of these being material.

#### 5. *The All-sufficiency of God*

"Neither is He worshiped by men's hands as though He needed anything . . ." (vs. 25)

Luther translated the indeterminate pronoun "anything" with the indefinite personal pronoun "anyone," but the indeterminate "anything" agrees better with Paul's general context here.

In contrast with the Greek mythological gods, Christianity's God does not demand *things* of men. He does not require sacrifices but rather wants persons. He loves them. He comes forth to meet them. From the depths of his Being He calls people.

6. *The Transcendancy of God*

“He giveth to all life, breath and all things. (vs. 25)

“The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool,” says God in Isaiah 66:1.

For the Hellenistic paganism of twenty centuries ago the divine was reduced to the astral world, a corner of the heavens. Christianity’s God, by contrast, is transcendent. Although He has his throne in heaven, the earth is the footstool of his feet. God condescends to man’s world and is present as much in man’s spiritual life as in his created surroundings.

7. *God’s Creation of Humanity*

“...and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth....” (vs. 26)

What wisdom! What tact! What depth and psychology in Paul’s oratory!

First he puts to rout the polytheistic concepts of the Greek philosophy, speaking of One as the only Creator, spiritual and transcendent; then he follows up by teaching them about one of the most important principles of Christian faith, the unity of the human race.

Paul is thinking about Adam. In the eyes of those philosophers anyone not a Greek or a Roman was a barbarian. In the heavenly geography of Christianity all men have one common origin: God.

8. *The Providence of God*

“ . . .and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation,. . .” (vs. 26)

Christianity is free from the Mohammedan fatalism

and from the rationalistic casualism which the philosophers of ancient Greece had already included, in other forms, in their theoretical ideology. Christianity's God is providential. He rules nature through his inviolable laws. He expresses himself through the great events of universal history. He intervenes in the life of man, and not a leaf of a tree moves without his consent.

### *9. God's Purpose*

“. . .that they should seek the Lord, if haply feeling after him they might find him.” (vs. 27)

To these men of Athens, accustomed to an abstract concept of God, these ideas must have appeared strange. Christianity's God has left his footprints in creation and on history so that men may seek him. This has been his purpose from all eternity. Even groping as blind men do, it is possible to seek God. It is also necessary to seek him. Man cannot live with his heart forever empty of God.

### *10. God's Revelation*

“. . .though He be not far from everyone of us, . . .” (vs. 27)

Here we have sketched for us the great theme of God's nearness, which is found only in the Christian faith. God is not a pearl, lost in the depth of the seas, the search and extraction of which would require superhuman effort. Plato called God the great geometrician. Even though not all human beings are congregated at one physical point, God considers each person individually and is as near to each one as heat is to fire.

### *11. The Fullness of God*

“ . . .for in him we live and move and have our being; even as certain also of your own poets have said, ‘for we are also his offspring.’ ” (vs. 28)

Paul here quotes Aratus and Cleanthus, whom his hearers well knew. In their original texts these authors were referring to their god, Zeus, famous in Greek mythology; but in contrast to Zeus—the Jupiter of the Romans—who governed only in that part of the sky granted to him after the partition of the world with his brothers, Christianity’s God is everywhere and fills all in all. We live immersed in him. We are his children. He is the hub of human life.

### *12. The Immateriality of God*

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device . . .” (vs. 29)

The lofty concepts of God that Paul has expressed reach here a natural deduction: If the human race is the offspring of the Creator, then man is obliged to seek him at a spiritual level. To materialize the Divinity in works of art means to degrade the immaterial nature of the only true and living God and to diminish the dignity of the creature.

### *13. The Mercy of God*

“ . . .and the times of this ignorance God winked at.” (vs. 30)

The “time of this ignorance” is the age of idolatry,

the ages prior to Christianity, characterized by moral and spiritual darkness. In regard to that ignorance, God winked at or overlooked man's sin. In this Paul is introducing into those Greek minds the doctrine of divine mercy, a concept unique to the Christian faith.

#### *14. God's Call*

“. . .but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” (v. 30)

Paul is reaching the highest point in his exposition of Christian theology. Moral repentance was completely foreign to the mind of those Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. The invitation to all men everywhere expresses the universal character of the salvation offered by God in his mercy and conditioned upon repentance.

#### *15. God's Judgment*

“. . .because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness . . .” (vs. 31).

The God of the Christian faith is not an abstract being nor an ethical principle. He is a personal Being, interested in man's problem and in his eternal destiny. Paul knows these truths and therefore cannot maintain his speech on just a philosophical level. He tries to take his hearers to the supernatural where history's destiny is decided. The Supreme Judge has appointed a day in which He will judge the actions of men.

#### *16. The Incarnation of God*

“. . .by that man whom He hath ordained . . .” (vs. 31).

Had Paul been in the presence of Jews or of a more tolerant audience, he might have mentioned the prophetic name of Jesus, "God with us," the Incarnate Word; but in this first encounter of the Gospel with Greek philosophy the apostle wants to be moderate yet without concealing or deforming the great principles of Christian theology. The mention of "that man" by whom He will judge the world introduced into the minds of his hearers new concepts concerning Divinity.

*17. God's Guarantee*

" . . .whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead." (vs. 31)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the certification by which God guarantees his dual mission as Savior and Judge.

The Greeks, who until then had been listening attentively to that strange but eloquent discourse, were disturbed when the resurrection was mentioned. In their own way they believed in the immortality of the soul, but the idea that a dead man could recover life seemed absurd to them.

This conflict between human reason and divine wisdom has been going on now for twenty centuries.

**II.**

**The Answer**

"Lights in a World of Darkness" is the general theme of this Lectureship.

Well, in verses 23 through 31 of the seventeenth

chapter of Acts of the Apostles, which I have just analyzed, Paul presents the enlightening concepts about God which emanate from the Christian faith. We have been called to proclaim these teachings to a world that is floundering in spiritual darkness.

These teachings, faithfully proclaimed, clarified with simplicity and preached with the power of the Spirit, can make an impact on confused, tormented twentieth-century man.

These truths expressed by Paul to the wise men of Athens carry a challenge to the conscience and offer solutions to the profound enigmas of the human soul.

### *1. These Truths Answer the Queries of Philosophy.*

When Paul arrived in Athens that city was the center of Greek culture. It was an eminently religious city in which there abounded temples, altars and statues dedicated to the mythological divinities.

Luke says that during Paul's public preaching in the market place, "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics encountered him; and some said, 'What will this babblers say?' Others said, 'He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods,' because he preached Jesus and the resurrection. And they took hold of him and brought him unto the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which is spoken by thee? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: We would know, therefore, what these things mean.' " (vss. 18-20)

Although Paul's first impression on entering Athens was one of indignation and pain, so much so that "his

spirit was provoked within him” when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry, the interest that his preaching aroused among the philosophers and the fact that he was invited to speak before the most authoritative and educated assembly of the city must have instilled optimism and hope in him.

The Stoic philosophers held to a naturalistic pantheism that consisted of identifying all things with God. They were indifferent to pain and had a high concept of duty. The Epicureans also were materialists but were less given to speculation. For them the purpose of life was the search for pleasure and the enjoyment of it.

These philosophers, belonging to two rival schools of thought, now ask Paul a question which can be considered as the eternal preoccupation of philosophy with spiritual and religious themes: “We would know, therefore, what these things mean.”

This questioning interest is still alive after two thousand years.

The Italian philosopher, Michele Federico Sciacca, in his book titled *God and Religion in Present Philosophy*, says that until today “the problem of God and religion can be considered as one of the fundamental subjects of philosophy.”

“The first thing that becomes crystal clear,” Sciacca continues, “since books and magazines are full of it, is how much is spoken today among the philosophers and scientists about religion, about God, about the revival of the need of faith, about the anxiety to seek and to

find faith again . . . . One of the characteristics of today's conscience is to speak about God, to give the impression that you feel religious zeal, that the torment of transcendence still exists."

The philosophers of today, like the Epicureans and the Stoics in Paul's time, want to know what Christianity means and what it has to say. If Paul had an answer and offered them an alternative, what is preventing us from doing so today?

## *2. These Truths Satisfy the Thirst for Knowledge.*

The Greeks' love of learning led them to search constantly for new ideas. Even Demosthenes, the most famous of Greek orators, who lived four centuries before Paul, said to the Athenian philosophers, "You like to go around asking each other, 'What new thing is being told?' or 'What's new?'"

Also Luke, in a parenthesis of his own, points out the curiosity of the Athenians for anything new and how this spirit also infected the foreigners living there: "For all the Athenians and the strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." (vs. 21)

In spite of the disorientation in the Western conscience after the two great world wars, the love of spiritual research which prospered with the Idealism of the 17th and 18th centuries has not disappeared. The thirst for knowledge continues to stimulate man's curiosity.

*The Ambassadors*, one of the best novels by the North-American, Henry James, published in 1904, de-

nounces the results of the emptiness of religion. When all is lost, when we find no other support, we decide to search for God and find the answers in the mysteries of the Bible.

Theodore Roosevelt, who was president of the United States from 1901 to 1908, published a book in 1897 which, at that time caused an impact on the society of his country. The title was *American Ideals*. Roosevelt's theme in this book is that a country cannot become great if it lack great ideals. To become great the spirit has to be constantly seeking, and the thirst for knowledge, so characteristic of the Athenians in Paul's time, needs to be stimulated.

The moral and theological principles of Christianity are lofty enough to give answers to all the anxieties of the intellect.

We do not give these answers because we do not have Christian intellectuals; and we do not have Christian intellectuals because the local churches hinder their development.

With a tremendous ignorance of God's plan the Christian churches manifest an antagonistic attitude toward intellectuals. Some even believe that knowledge is at war with faith, that the intellectual is a protege of the Devil.

Intellectual Christians find themselves in a difficult situation. They are not well accepted by other intellectuals who live outside the Christian faith, and at the same time they are treated with much suspicion by other Christians.

This in large part is the reason why the principles of

Christianity do not penetrate into the higher levels of human thought. These principles that come from God are in themselves the answer to man's search, but we lack apostles qualified to make them known.

### *3. These Truths Enlighten the Religious Soul*

When Paul spoke in the Areopagus, located on a hill just south of the Agora or forum, the place where they had condemned Socrates and where, according to legend, the gods had met to judge Mars, he began his discourse with these words:

“Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To An Unknown God.’ What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you.”

Free from the tumult that sometimes hindered his speeches in public places, in the silence of that assembly disposed to hear him with evident attention, Paul speaks to them about the darkness of the soul before presenting to them the light of the spirit.

The Athenians, a very religious people, had in their city altars and sanctuaries dedicated to all the gods known to them. There they worshiped the divinities of the Greeks, the Syrians, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Romans and of the other nations. In their exuberant religiosity they had dedicated one altar to a god that they did not know; but just in case he did exist, they did not want to offend him. Paul takes advantage of this circumstance to present to them the seventeen ideas concerning the true God that have been commented on in

the first part of this lecture.

These principles enlightened the religious soul of a man named Dionysius, of a woman named Damaris and of some other Athenians. In like manner these same principles can throw light into the religious darkness of twentieth century man today, foundering in a morass of confused and contradictory doctrines and ideas.

In countries of freedom of religious expression as much as in countries dominated by a single great religious authority the religious condition of mankind is extremely fragmented. So many different beliefs are offered to man that he does not know in what or in whom to believe. In any important city of the Western World today you can find more altars, more temples, more gods than in the Athens that Paul visited.

Our age is known as the nuclear age, the scientific age, the space age, the age of reason, the technical age, the industrial age, and other such. Religiously we are living in the age of absurdity. Never before in all the twenty centuries of Christianity has man invented for his own satisfaction so many religious absurdities as in our age. Only the Christian theology of God, preached as Paul declared it in Athens, can dispel the religious errors that are multiplying and filling the world. Only the pure Gospel of Christ can lead man to meet the God whom he worships under heathen names and robes without knowing who He really is.

#### *4. These Truths Provoke Different Reactions.*

From Paul's words, "The God whom I declare unto you" (vs. 23) to his words, "that man" whom God

raised from the dead (vs. 31), Paul has presented to the Athenians a very complete picture of the Christian theology of God. The reaction of the audience, according to Luke, was threefold: "Some mocked, and others said, 'We will hear thee again of this matter.' So Paul departed from them; howbeit certain men clave unto him and believed, among which were Dionysius, the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them." (vss. 32-34)

Those intellectual aristocrats, leaders of the Graeco-Roman culture, did not fully comprehend the Gospel message. Some mocked Paul; others dismissed him courteously as the governor Felix was to do later (Acts 24:25), promising to hear him some other time; but others stayed with Paul and accepted the Christian faith. Among these were the woman named Damaris and the Areopagite, Dionysius who, to judge by his title, must have been a member of the Council of the Areopagus or Superior Court, the most ancient and venerable of all the Athenian courts.

Of Damaris history tells us nothing more. The others who stayed with Paul probably belonged to that circle of intellectuals who were present at Paul's sermon in the Areopagus. These were the charter members of the church in Athens. Of Dionysius, the historian Eusebius says that he came to be an important leader of the church in that Greek capital.

More than the number of converts, it is important to know that when Christian principles are proclaimed faithfully, as Paul did at Athens, reactions are produced. Some will mock; some will show indifference;

but others will be converted to the Lord of life.

If we allow the salt to lose its savor the world will remain tasteless and insipid in a life without meaning. If we hide the city set on a hill man will be lost for lack of a guide, without direction toward God. If we keep the lighted lamp under a bushel darkness will indeed cover the whole earth.

Our light, a reflection of Christ, the true light of the world, must illuminate every corner of our inhabited planet. Some will huff and puff with ridicule to extinguish it; others will contemplate it from afar with indifference, and some with curiosity; but still others will be attracted to its splendor, will come to share in its brightness and will themselves become living lights of the Redeemer.

### III.

#### **The Christian Leader**

I am keeping in mind the title of this lecture, "Moral Leadership for a Modern World." Thus far I have dealt with the two main requirements of the leader: To have a program and to be ready to communicate it, believing in the effectiveness of it. A third requirement for the development of an effective leader is adequate education.

I will continue to use Paul as a model. He is a living example of what a Christian leader ought to be. As there is not time for an extensive analysis, since this lecture is already quite long, I shall limit myself to pointing out the seven principle characteristics that a Christian leader

ought to possess.

### *1. Conversion*

Nicolas Berdiaeff, the Russian philosopher who was converted from Marxism to the Orthodox church, says that today's world is not saved because 95 percent of the Christian leaders have never experienced an inner change. They have been educated intellectually, but they have never had a personal encounter with Christ; they have not passed the test of being born again.

In Paul's case, he would not have spoken as he did at Athens had he not experienced that wonderful conversion on the Damascus road. Having fallen to the ground, blinded by the splendor of the divine light, trembling in body and with quavering voice, Paul asks: "Who art thou, Lord?"

This is the way the beginning of a Christian leader ought to be, not merely reading the program of studies of a university or of a school of preaching, but down on the ground, defeated at the feet of Christ, inquiring about the identity of that Being who has begun to turn his life around.

If he does not begin on his knees he will end up sprawled on the ground.

### *2. Calling*

Immediately after conversion comes commitment. The first question of the troubled soul having been answered, the second one immediately arises.

"What wilt thou have me to do?"

"Lord, what will *you* have me to do?"

"What do *you* command me to do?"

“What do *you* want me to do?”

The calling of the Christian leader must come from God. It was God who chose Moses, not the people of Israel. It was God who selected David. It was Jesus who chose the apostles. It was Christ who chose Paul.

In the pulpits of our churches there are many men who have never been called by God. In the elderships of local congregations men rule who have not received a divine call for the ministry that they discharge. Men in these situations bear the burden of their own failure.

### *3. Feeling*

The success of a Christian leader is determined by the measure of his inner feelings, by the degree of love which he has for Christ.

The words of Jesus to his disciples, “Apart from me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5), mean that effective communication with others is conditioned by our internal dialogue with the Master. There are Christian leaders who are veritable masters of the art of cultivating their public image. They know how to put on the best appearance and to select the best words to achieve success in public; but they end up not convincing anybody.

When Paul tells the Galatians that he is crucified with Christ and that now he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him, he is prescribing the proper dimensions of Christian feeling.

It is out of place to seek a mystical meaning for Paul’s words. The real meaning is that every Christian leader must be moved by such a love for Christ that the sharing

of life between them becomes the only reason for his ministry.

#### *4. Responsibility*

Love is active. When it is fed only by beauty and dreams it lasts but a little while.

It is important for the Christian leader to think, but it is more important for him to love. Only love can create a real sense of responsibility.

A Christian leader is not made by a university degree, by a preachers' school diploma, nor by a work contract with a congregation. Without university, without schools, without studies, without a church to call him, the Christian leader must be a man so motivated by love for the cause of Christ that from his lips flow those words of Paul, "Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16)

The Christian leader must be in love with Christ to the very depths of his soul. When he achieves this, his sense of responsibility will be the dominant characteristic of his life.

#### *5. Conviction*

Responsibility and conviction, although they work together in the leader's life, are different characteristics. Responsibility is the moral obligation that you impose on yourself. Conviction is to be deeply convinced that you cannot do otherwise.

When Paul came to Athens and realized that its inhabitants were so wholly given to idolatry "his spirit was provoked within him." With these words Luke expresses the apostle's indignation at so many symbols of

false gods. His Christian conviction left him no alternative but to denounce the idolatry and exalt the glory of Jesus Christ. And so he did.

The Christian leader must be moved by a strong inner conviction. It cannot be, it must not be merely the result of some outline programmed in a great missionary center.

Just as it is true that every sick patient tests the professional skill of the physician, so it is true that every lost soul is a challenge to the conviction of the Christian leader.

## *6. Confidence*

Emerson said that confidence is the essence of victory. Confidence in one's own convictions gives security, offers inspiration, and capacitates one for great deeds.

On the Christian battlefield there are arising many leaders who demonstrate very little confidence in Divine providence. When they come up with a project, their first step is to prepare a financial budget. Next they write reports and give lectures till they have assured the amount of money needed for the project. But this is not confidence in God. It is simply human calculation. The Bible sets forth a different order of procedure. Evangelization ought not to be the result of a financial budget. First the missionary goes to the field; he begins the work, if necessary without wallet or saddlebags for the road. If the work being done is of God, the money will come when it is needed.

What kind of a financial budget did Paul prepare for

his journey to Athens? Times have certainly changed, but God is still the same.

### 7. *System*

Another thing is system.

The individual salvation of souls cannot be coldly programmed by data-stuffed computer banks in some missionary center. The Christian leader ought not to bind his work to some program learned in the course of his studies.

During his stay in Athens Paul discussed in the synagogues with Jews and proselytes. He spoke in the streets and markets with passers-by. That seems to have been his basic plan of action to begin with; but when he was invited to go to the Areopagus, the most important center of Greek culture, he did not hesitate. His missionary program may not have included this possibility, but he took the fullest advantage of it.

The Christian leader must have a fixed objective for his life, but he ought not to be tied slavishly to a program of work that others may have laid out for him. He must move in the light of each day and follow night after night on his way to the stars.

## Conclusion

I want to close this lecture with quotations from two men known world-wide. I believe their words are perfectly applicable to the subject assigned to me: "Moral Leadership for a Modern World."

One is from the English philosopher, Francis Bacon,

who in the sixteenth century wrote these words:

“Never has there existed in any age of humanity a philosophy, a sect, a religion, a law or a discipline that has done so much to exalt the common welfare and to increase private and individual good as the Christian faith. Besides, it is perfectly clear that it was one and the same God who gave the Christian laws to man who also gave the laws of Nature to his creation.”

Two centuries after Bacon the third president of the United States of America, Thomas Jefferson, added: “If the teachings of Jesus had always been preached with the same purity as that with which they came forth from his lips, all the civilized world would now be Christian.”

Paul did it in Athens. Why don't we do it today?  
We still have time.

*—English version revised by Haven Miller, comparing original Spanish text with Monroy's English version.*

# Morality in the Market Place

Glenn Owen

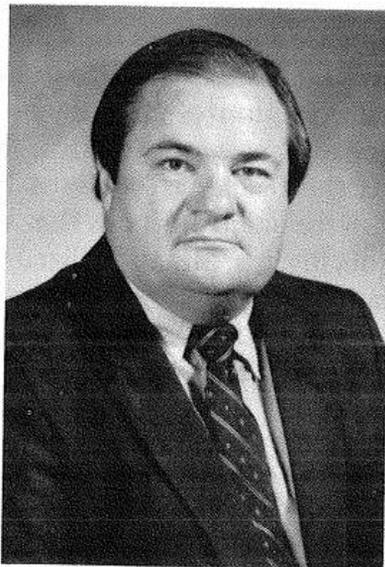
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Glenn preached in Fargo, Texas (1956-1958), Iowa Park, Texas (1959-1960), and for the East Ridge congregation in Fort Worth (1960-1961). His family did



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It's Sunday night, your are on your way home with your family after a reasonably good day "at church." The song leader hasn't talked too much between the verses, the sermon was inspirational and comforting and even the Bible class wasn't as boring as it has been on other occasions. It's been a good day. And yet as this "Lord's Day" draws to a close, a certain feeling of uneasiness or expectation begins to set in. Tomorrow is another day, for some another day, another dollar; for some, another day, another dollar in the hole. Life goes on and with it death and taxes and buying and selling and house payments and dental insurance and pressure and coping and surviving and somehow amidst all of the pressure attempting to maintain some semblance of at least outwardly being a "Christian." And so it goes and so it continues, the market place calls and the Messiah cringes. Is that the way it is with your life: Does it seem to you that Christianity and discipleship and honesty and integrity form a different world than the one you face each Monday morning?? If so, I want to speak to you about Morality in the Market Place.

The brethren have been outstanding. Their com-

pliments on your sermon were fulfilling. Their invitations to you for lunch are confirming and you feel that as a preacher you met needs, preached the Word, and held up the standard. There is, however, oftentimes a huge chasm between what is preached and what is practiced. There is at times a million light years between Sunday and Monday. It may be that a major part of the preachers in our fellowship have no concept at all of the difficulties facing those who leave the assembly to go to the assembly line. Preachers, too, need to learn about morality in the market place. One of the complaints voiced often by businessmen is that preachers do not "understand" and make time demands and financial demands that simply are not realistic and do not fit in with the "dog-eat-dog" strain of everyday business life. The fact is, for the Christian all the world is not a stage but all the world is "a market place." A place to worship in work, worship in life and demonstrate God's standard. A place to demonstrate "morality in the market place."

Business is almost as old as man himself. Ancient traders sent their caravans throughout all of the known and even into parts of the unknown world in search of goods to be traded for other goods. Abraham himself was a "merchant prince" whose territory reached from Haran to Egypt and concentrated especially in three areas, Palestine south of Shechem, Egypt and Arabia. Throughout the Old Testament and into the New there are numerable references of trade and commerce and inevitably God's involvement in and direction of the lives of his people involved in these enterprises. Contrary to

what some might believe, God is very interested in and has laid down specific standards for what happens in the market place.

It should be pointed out that the market place is a difficult place to live. According to Dunn and Bradstreet more than seventeen thousand small businesses failed in 1981. Unemployment and job dissatisfaction are at an all time high. White collar crime has now become the scourge of American business and I might add of business all over the world. The evasion of taxes, a national pastime in most countries, has now become one of the largest participator sports in the United States. The market place is tough. It has become an accepted, and even encouraged, practice in many business circles to cut ethical corners, to tell lies, to avoid taxes and to beat the competition no matter what the cost. Deals are closed and sales are made every day on the basis of bribery, favor, liquor and women. Attempts to justify this points to the government waste, or to able-bodied men who refuse to work, or by saying that it has become an acceptable standard because everyone else does it. Yes, the market place is tough. It behooves us as Christians, as businessmen, as preachers and teachers to understand the standard for "morality in the market place."

1. God sets the standard for all life. In Ephesians 4:17 Paul said,

"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do..."

Paul states clearly that there is a standard by which the followers of Jesus cannot live. We are not to live as the

world lives or make decisions on the basis that the world makes its decisions. Paul further says in Colossians 3:24:

“It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

There are many of us who oftentimes take the ungodly and unthinking view that other people’s conduct sets the standard for our action. For example, if someone is rude to us, we sometimes think that it gives us liberty to be rude to them. We think that if someone is vicious to us in a business transaction, we have the right to “protect ourselves at any cost.” This false conception of standard setting leads to a denial of the principle that God is first in our lives or not present at all. Peter told slaves that they were to submit themselves to their masters even if the treatment was harsh. That is, the master’s treatment of the slaves did not set the standard for the slave’s conduct to the master. The standard of conduct of the slave to the master was set by God and no action on the part of the master gave the slave the right to change the standard that God had set for him. I have many times seen businessmen, when they found that the negotiations were not totally aboveboard, abandon all standards of honesty and integrity and begin competition on the level of the “Gentile.” As long as Christians accept a different standard of conduct than that which God has stated, invariably there will be immorality not only in the market place but in the body of Jesus Christ. Our first obligation is to obey God in all things. The principle stated by the apostle Peter in Acts 4:19 must prevail in all areas of our life. “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you

rather than God.”

God's standard is faithfulness. He does not require that we be successful. He does not even require that we be brilliant. He does not require that we be anything but faithful. If and when our conception of discipleship arrives at the point of “faithfulness above all,” then our definition of behavior will remove itself from the realm of outside influences and circumstances and base itself on God's direction through his indwelling Spirit in our lives. All Christians, employers, employees, mothers, fathers, teachers, preachers, bakers and candlestick makers, have one standard. God is God and his standard is our standard.

2. The world distorts God's standard.<sup>1</sup> One of the most effective ways that Satan has of bringing about immorality in the market place is by deceptive definition of immorality or even of morality. There are some who believe that immorality is limited to sexual misconduct. Never has there been a more deceitful and damning life-shaping conception. Immorality is unreasonable demands of an employer from an employee. Unfair wages paid to an employee (Col. 4:1). Arrogance, ruthlessness or one of a hundred other attitudes and actions we could name. Immorality is the lack of morals and moral standards are the standards by which God has directed that his people live above the world. We might say that immorality is any redemptive attitude, action or activity. It is immoral to lie. It is immoral to steal. It is immoral to misrepresent a product. It is immoral to pad an expense account. It is immoral not to work diligently for whatever the pay may be when

agreed upon. Immorality is not just some secret rendezvous in a darkened motel room. It is any action that discredits God and lowers the standard of life that He has for His disciples.

The world also deceives us by its constant cliches, cliches that often become accepted as truth, when in reality and upon observation they are gross statements of immorality and false standards. For example, "All is fair in love and war." Sometimes we would like to add the word business to these two previously mentioned areas, all then would be fair in war and love and business. It doesn't take a lot of thinking to know that "all is not fair" in any of these areas. The only thing that is fair is that we consider the standard of God and do by his power and in his presence all that is possible to conform us to that standard. We also hear "that's just good business." This particular cliché is used to justify all kinds of actions. It is extremely contrary to the principle that Zacchaeus stated in Luke chapter 19 and verse 8,

"Look, Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor and if I have cheated anybody out of anything I will pay back four times the amount."

Four hundred percent repayment was not "good business," but it was an expression of extravagance in dealing with injustices, an extravagance that resulted in a demonstration of repentance and overwhelming restoration for any wrong done. Good business, not quite. Good discipleship, absolutely. Jesus said,

"Today salvation has come to this house."

A long time ago the Romans came up with a saying

that has been used by many to justify unethical business dealings. The saying can be used in two ways. It is "Caveat Emptor." It simple means "let the buyer beware." I have known businessmen who have used this phrase as a justification for defective business practices. They say that it is always the buyer's responsibility to make sure that the negotiation or the deal is good and acceptable. There is obviously virtue in a "buyer" examining his merchandise. There is, however, a standard that God has placed on his people and so it would not be just that "let the buyer beware" but also, according to God, "let the seller beware."

"You shall do no wrong in judgment in measurement of weight, or capacity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah and a just hin. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt."<sup>2</sup>

Solomon also said in Proverbs 11:1:

"A false balance is an abomination to the Lord,  
But a just weight is His delight."

In 2 Samuel 12 the Lord sends Nathan to David to rebuke him for having taken Uriah's wife. David, because of his power and his ability to command, had brought about Uriah's death in order to have Bathsheba. Nathan tells the story of a man who had only one little ewe lamb. The rich man took it and slaughtered it for a feast, not wishing to use one of his own sheep. David was incensed, but quickly humbled when Nathan said, "you are the man." What is the lesson on morality in the market place in this story? Might does not make right as the world tells us. No man

is above God's standard, even the king, and the ruthless treating of an individual simply because it is within our power to do so is not only below God's standard, but severely condemned by him as an uncaring, selfish act. Any act of selfishness is a rebuke to the selfless act of God in giving his Son. It is telling God that his giving all was a foolish gesture. It is telling God that having is better than giving or that it is better to "receive than it is to give."

The world also tells us that you have to "look out for number one." This is generally construed to mean that we are to defend our "rights" and always be wary of those who might take away anything that belongs to us. God tells us that it is better for us to suffer the wrong than to use unspiritual means to accomplish selfish results.

One of the more common deceptions offered to us by the world and accepted by us is the contradiction of the statement found in Proverbs 12:22:

"The Lord detests lying lips but he delights in men who are truthful."

I have often had dealings with those who think that a half-truth was not really a direct lie. Partial information was given in order that wrongful conclusions might be reached and erroneous decisions made. We must state openly and clearly that God's standard for speaking is "yea for yea and nay for nay." Any kind of misinformation, partial information, or deliberately leading someone to believe something that is not true is sin in God's sight.

"All liars will have their part in the lake of fire and

brimstone.” (Rev. 21:8)

He also says:

“What a man desires is unending love, it is better to be poor than a liar.” (Prov. 19:22)

The world also deceives us by *sanctifying success*. The common standard by non-Christians is that a man’s worth is measured by his wealth, by the number of employees that he has or by the power that he wields. In some circles the only real sin possible is that of bankruptcy. God says,

“Ill gotten treasures are of no value.” (Prov. 10:2)

God has never required that his servant be successful. He only expects faithfulness. By all standards Jesus was a failure. His disciples left him in his greatest moment. He was buried in a borrowed tomb after having died a criminal death. The world would surely have chosen Pilate to remember instead of Jesus. We should remember that the only reason that Pilate has any importance at all today is because his life crossed through a moment in the life of Jesus. Let us beware of using the world’s standard to judge men. “God does not judge by outward appearances but on the heart.”

3. The Christian submits to God’s standard. Even though the world may attempt to deceive us or even ignore the standards that God has placed for conduct for all men, we must recognize that there is no double standard. God has only one standard. In speaking to slaves, which we probably today could classify as workers or employees, Paul said,

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and

trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.”<sup>3</sup>

He was not less interested in or demanding of masters or employers,

“And, ye masters, do the same thing unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.”<sup>4</sup>

and

“Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

It is very easy to see why God does not have a double standard. In his sight all men are sinners and all men need redemption. Why should he have one set of rules by which a certain group would live and still another for someone else? All men are the same before God, in need of redemption and saved only by his grace.

God, however, sets certain standards for those who work in the market place as employees of either companies or individuals. He said,

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord

ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

A look at this passage will show that the slave or employee is to be honest in his dealings with his employer. The word sincerity comes from the Latin “sine cera,” which literally meant “without wax.” On some occasions pieces of marble with flaws were perfected by unscrupulous merchants by melting wax and filling the holes with it. Obviously a piece of marble that had been deceptively prepared and sold would not have the value of one that had no flaws. The abuse of the marble trade became so rampant that the government established official inspectors. These inspectors would look at a piece of marble and write “sine cera” or “without wax.” The worker was also to be faithful and fullhearted in his dealings with his master. The real motivation for his faithfulness in working was that the worker understand that his work was not just to the master but was a part of his Christian expression and therefore a part of his worship and relationship to God. I have heard many brothers state that they did not want to deal with members of the church or employ members of the church. I have often asked why. The answer is almost always the same. They expect the favors to all be one way. I would like to remind us all that the Christian is a conscientious employee and seeks to bless his employer with integrity, energy and faithfulness. It is wrong for a Christian not to be a good employee.

The standards do not, however, just apply to those who work but also to those who are in charge. Paul said,

“Masters provide your slaves with what is right and fair because you know that you also have a Master in heaven.”<sup>7</sup>

Christian employers, therefore, cannot be abusive. They cannot be threatening. They must be fair in demands of the employee and in reward for the employee's work. It is inconceivable that a Christian employer would not pay a fair wage or that a Christian employee would not give his best in the job that he has been assigned. Any failure to do this is a failure in our expression of Christianity.

Conclusion: The only acceptable morality in the market place is God's morality. His standard must prevail. His principles must be followed, His commands accepted. We must understand and fulfill the will of God. We must “provide for things honest in the sight of all men,” and by our conduct and by our dealings show that we love one another. If you have been engaging in deceptive practices or have let your success become a motive to you for arrogance or pride you are wrong. To assume that there is one standard for church life and another for the market place is to deny the universal presence of God and the unique demands of discipleship. If God is not the God of the market place, His is not God at all. Let us, therefore, press forward to set before the world a living example of God's morality in the market place.

<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 5:20.

<sup>2</sup>Leviticus 19:35,36.

<sup>3</sup>Ephesians 6:5-8.

<sup>4</sup>Ephesians 6:9.

<sup>5</sup>Colossians 4:1.

<sup>6</sup>Colossians 3:24-24.

<sup>7</sup>Colossians 4:1.

# Morality in the Home

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Publications include the book, *What Every Family Needs* (co-authored with Paul Faulkner), Sweet Publishing Co., 1979; *Marriage Enrichment Film Series* (eight 45-minute 16mm films), by Brecheen and Faulkner, New Day Productions, 1980; and cassette tape series, *Family Enrichment Series, Vol. 1*, Sweet Publishing Co., 1982.

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No study of morality would be complete without a study of the family, for questions of morality always arise quickly when people relate to other people.

"Can I trust you to tell me the truth? Can I trust you to keep your promises? Can I trust you not to hurt me? Can I trust you to help me when I need your help? Can I trust you to care about me—to care about how I feel and what I think? Can I depend on you to be there and to get involved with me when the going gets rough?"

These, and literally thousands of other questions like them, relate to moral elements in intimate relationships.

As important as romantic love is to a marriage, I am convinced that it cannot be maintained at a high level, for long, without a very high degree of morality. You cannot *love deeply* a person whom you cannot *trust deeply*.

But as important as morality between husband and

wife is, it becomes even more important when children are born, for its influence is about to be multiplied many times through young lives that depend on parents for instruction. Family training can never rise above family character, and it is in the family that we want to focus most of our attention in this lesson.

Several years ago a Connecticut judge stirred up a furor by having several sets of parents arrested for serving liquor to teenagers at a party. The incident would have gone unnoticed if it had not been for the death of a sixteen-year-old girl in an automobile accident on the way home following the evening's activities. The investigating officers discovered that she and her boyfriend had both been drinking, and that the liquor had been served to them by parents who were sponsoring a party for teenagers.<sup>1</sup>

The judge had been aware that there was a law on the books in Connecticut that made it illegal for parents to serve liquor to minors who were not their own children. The law had never been used, though judges had long been aware that parents were breaking the law. This judge decided that it was time to hold these parents responsible for the results of their illegal activities. His action sparked national headlines, and letters came from all over the country. Most of the letters commended the judge for his actions in holding parents responsible for the results of their activities in the lives of teenagers.

To hold parents responsible for the actions of their sons and daughters, at least up to a point, is very biblical. I Samuel 3:13 says, with regard to the godly

Eli, “And I tell him that I am about to punish his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because *his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them.*”

It has long been recognized that parents are the most important influences on the moral development of their children. One research study conducted many years ago revealed that the most significant influence in the moral development of children is the influence of their mother. The coefficient of relationship between that mother influence and the influence of father is more than double, yet father is the second most significant influence on the moral development of those children. Following the influence of mother and father is the influence of the children’s friends. The next most significant influence is the influence of the peer group leaders. Public school teachers are fifth in the line of influence, and Sunday school teachers are sixth.<sup>2</sup> There can be little doubt that we get our basic moral training in the early years of association with our family.

Dr. and Mrs. Ross Snider, in a lecture before the National Sunday School Convention in 1971, shared some insights with educators about the development of a child’s conscience. It is their contention that the conscience cannot be formed by merely verbally teaching children, but it begins by encountering and being encountered by a significant adult who enables the child to fulfill his potential. The Sniders then pointed out the following nine things that must happen in the building of a conscience in the child:

- 1) Children must have the ability to feel intensely if

they are to develop a good conscience. It may become the part of the adult to help the child to this state if he is to help him to develop this sensitive conscience.

2) The child must feel important to his parents. Parents must respect the child no matter what the differences between them may be.

3) The child must be able to work off his hostilities. Hostilities turned in on oneself will be crippling in their effect on conscience.

4) The child's problems must be respected, and he must have help in strengthening his ego.

5) There have to be conflicts in order to have a seasoned conscience that will stand up.

6) The child must be helped to understand the growing that he wants to bring about. One should respond to his deeper feelings, rather than to the surface ones.

7) At some point one must be willing to stand up and even be willing to fight for the personal—both in self and in others—if he is to develop a strong conscience.

8) The child must be helped to take part in building a little society. He must not simply be a bystander in life, but must be in the center of life.

9) There must be one or two persons who call out in the child the direction in which life is to be found.

Experts believe that the basics of right and wrong are planted during the first seven years of life. The application of these basics are developed between ages seven and twelve years. The foundation of these basic moral

principles will be severely tested during the adolescent years as the influences of the peer group are exerted in the life of the young person. Those moral principles will continue to be tested the rest of his life, but the basics have been worked out during the earliest years of existence when the principal influences on his life are those influences exerted by his immediate family.

Moral behavior is deeply rooted in faith: faith in God, faith in Jesus as the Son of God, and faith in the Bible as the Word of God. The best guide to moral behavior is that which is laid down for us in the Word of God. The greatest foundation for a moral life is a commitment to God and to living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Father calls us not only to a life of morality, he also calls us to be lights in a world of darkness. No influence is as great in shaping life in the light as the influence of the family unit.

The Bible reflects this influence in many ways. One example is contained in the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Moses stands on the border of the land of promise as the chosen leader of the people of God. For the last forty years of his life, he has been their deliverer, bringing them from bondage to the border of the promised land. As he stands with the people of God on the edge of the land that God has promised to give to his people, Moses gives to the families some of the most important instructions that they will ever receive about passing faith from one generation to the next. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words

which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Shortly after these words were spoken, Moses passes from the scene, and the torch of leadership passes to the hands of Joshua. After several years which were required to conquer the land, Joshua sends the men home to their families with these words: “And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). The response of the people is: “we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God” (Joshua 24:18).

With all their good intentions, these people failed to pass their faith to their children. In Judges 2, we are told “And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua.” Verse 10 continues, “ And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them, who did not know the Lord or the work which he had done for Israel. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Ba’als; and they forsook the Lord.”

Good intentions are not enough. One-time decisions

are not enough. The shaping of new life takes years, and the commitment of a family to shape the new life of children according to the ways of God is a commitment that has to be made over and over again.

I am convinced that it has never been an easy task to build a strong family. It was not an easy task in Noah's day. It was not an easy task in Joshua's day. And it is certainly not an easy task today.

The August 23 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* carries a lead article with the headline "The U.S.: It's No Place to Raise A Family." The article describes the changes that have altered the American environment to make it a very barren one for the rearing of healthy, competent children. You and I would recognize many changes in the environment of the family in America that make life potentially better for individuals within the society, but may, at the same time, threaten the family. Our move from the farm to the city makes life much more comfortable for most of us, but it also takes father and son and mother and daughter away from each other through most of the activities of most of the days of our lives. **Advances in travel have made automobiles available to** each member of the family who drives. This gives us tremendous opportunities for an improved quality of life. But it also offers opportunities for us to fragment, and thus destroy the family. Jet air travel further complicated this factor. The invention of the radio, the telephone, and the television have brought fantastic opportunities for improving the quality of life, but these very instruments also provide some of the greatest threats to family life. I believe that it is a difficult task to

build a strong family in modern America. But I also believe that it has always been difficult to build strong families, because strong families must be built by people who are willing to make decisions based on the good of the family in the midst of a world that is often going in other directions.

In the August 1981 issue of *Redbook*, there appeared an article by David Milofsky, entitled "What Makes a Good Family?" It was a report of the findings of a research project by Dr. Nick Stinnett and Dr. John DeFrain, both of the University of Nebraska. These two researchers located 350 families who were willing to respond to some questions about family life. In order to participate, the families had to meet four basic criteria: 1) all couples considered themselves happily married; 2) they were satisfied with the parent-child relationships in the family; 3) for the sake of uniformity within the study, all the marriages had to be first marriages; and 4) the families had to be intact. Among the families participating in the family strengths study, 60 percent were from urban areas. All socioeconomic groups were represented, with the overall average falling into the middle income range. The ages of the participants ranged from mid-twenties to couples in their sixties. People from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, including Blacks, Poles, Jews, Italians and Hispanics participated in the study. Given this diversity, it is all the more thought provoking, and perhaps instructive, that pronounced similarities showed up when Stinnett and DeFrain analyzed their data.

Stinnett and DeFrain found, first, that *strong families*

*spend time together.* Dr. Stinnett observes that by spending time together pleasantly, families build up a reserve of good feelings. These families do this in surprisingly simple ways. They work together on household tasks or in the yard, or they just go for a walk together. Outdoor activities are good because people can do these things as a family away from distractions, like the telephone and the television.

Second, *the families in the study have good communication patterns.* They spend a lot of time talking to each other. This doesn't mean that they never fight. Some of them fight like cats and dogs, but they are able to get their conflicts out in the open—they share their feelings.

Several years ago a friend of mine who has a doctorate in communications, sat down across the table from me to eat an evening meal. As we sat down, he turned to me and said, "Carl, what are you and Smitty doing to keep lines of communication open with your children?" I began to tell him several things that we were doing in our family that we felt were significant in keeping these lines of communication open. As I finished, I asked him, "What are you and your wife doing to keep lines of communication open with your children?" He shared some specific things, and then continued:

For many years my wife and I have been 'family watchers.' When we find a family that we think is particularly close, we make an occasion to be with the father and mother privately to ask them some specific questions about their family, especially when their

children were small. We have discovered that there are four characteristics of almost every family that we have thought to be doing a good job.

We have found that in these families, there was a lot of *open affection*. There was a lot of hugging and holding, patting and kissing. These moments of tenderness seemed to establish patterns and feelings that help very much in keeping lines of communication open in the family.

A second thing that we found was *mutual affirmation*. This means that members of the family offer encouragement to each other. This takes such forms as other members of the family attending functions at which one of the family members is involved, such as a football game, a school play, a recital, and so forth.

A third thing we found was *family rituals*. We found that the forms these rituals took varied widely. With most of the families, there were times of informal worship as a family. With some, there were family meals with a variety of emphases. Some families skied together. Others hiked together. Others developed pleasant experiences which created memories for family members as they passed from one stage of family life to another.

The fourth thing that we found was what I call *decisive living*. These families seemed to realize that good things happen only if someone is willing to see that they happen. When other things begin to interfere with the family, at any level, someone makes a decision to block the interference in order that the family interests might be promoted.

Returning to Stinnett and DeFrain's research study, the third finding was that *strong families show appreciation for one another*. According to Stinnett, a technique used in counseling unhappy families is teaching them to notice and to praise the positive qualities in other family members. He says, "You not only have to feel good about each other, but you have to learn to express those feelings; and then you have to learn how to accept compliments yourself." Comfortable patterns of showing appreciation and accepting it are part of the warmth and mutually supportive behavior of strong families

Fourth, *strong families are committed to the family group*. "Like everyone else, people in happy families sometimes are hassled and have problems in their work or social lives," says Stinnett. "But when these people found their life styles becoming fragmented, when they weren't spending enough time together (or weren't enjoying it when they were together), they made their families the top priority for a while. They crossed other things off the list to make more time for the family, and they tried to relieve themselves of unnecessary stress from the outside." This sounds simple, and of course, it isn't. At some point all of us have found ourselves unhappy with the course of our lives, but were seemingly unable to change. However things may appear, change usually is possible, but it may involve difficult decisions. But these tough decisions prove to be the difference between strong families and those which are not strong.

Fifth, *strong families tend to be religious*. One striking element of the family strength study was the high

degree of religious orientation among the families who participated. Stinnett points to other research conducted over the past 50 years that found a strong correlation between religion and success and happiness in all phases of life, not just family happiness. It is not surprising, then, that a shared religious life would provide a base of common values and a sense of purpose within the family. Religion can be a major source of strength for families, just as for individuals.

One of the factors which needs to be strongly emphasized is that religion almost never develops without a strong religious model. And that model is best presented by the older members of a family. Recent research indicates that where both parents go to church regularly while the child is growing up, 72 percent of the children when they are adults will go to church regularly themselves. If only father goes to church regularly, and mother does not, the research indicates that 55 percent of the children when they are grown will go to church regularly. If, on the other hand, mother goes to church regularly, and father does not, only 15 percent of the children will go to church regularly when they are adults. The research indicated that if neither father nor mother went to church regularly when the children were growing up, only 6 percent of the children, when grown themselves, will go to church regularly.<sup>3</sup>

The sixth quality of these strong families was that *they deal with crisis positively*. The families in the family strength study confronted a wide variety of crises, but they tended to deal with these crises in similar ways. "We noticed two things," says Stinnett. "First, they

had the ability to see something positive in every situation, no matter how bad, and to focus on that aspect. Second, they joined together to face the crises head-on.’’

I believe that strong families are not only possible in our modern world, but well within the grasp of any conscientious family that is willing to make the decisions that are necessary to build a strong family, and then stand by those decisions through thick and thin. Don’t misunderstand me—it will not be easy. There are too many influences going in too many different directions. There are too many pressures being exerted in the opposite direction. But I do not believe it has ever been easy to build a strong family. The only ones who have ever been able to build strong families have been those tough-minded individuals who were willing to spend the time and energy it takes to decide what they want for their family, and then were willing to place the family and its good at the top of their list of human priorities.

I believe that with God’s help, strong families can be built in any kind of world. God has not given us a task that is impossible. He will himself provide the instructions, the strength, the means for building strong families, even in a world as chaotic as this one in which we live.

<sup>1</sup>*McCalls*, January 1965, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>*Religious Education*, 1926, pp. 539ff. "Testing the Knowledge of Right and Wrong," by H. Hartshorne, M. A. May, D. E. Sonquist, and C. A. Kerr.

<sup>3</sup>Warren Mueller, as quoted in "Homemade," Family Concern bulletin, October 1981, Vol. 5, No. 10.

# Television and Morality

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Charles Lindbergh, flying for thirty-three and one half hours across the Atlantic, did not so much as have radio contact with anyone during that lone voyage in 1927. There were no updates—no progress reports from correspondents in New York, London and Paris supplying instant coverage to the millions of homes in America and Europe on that historic day. You almost wonder if it could have happened at all with no camera there to supply instant coverage.

A cartoon in *Saturday Review* pictured a little boy asking his father, “If a tree fell in the forest and the media was not there to cover it, would it be an event?” The cartoon suggests how totally the media now shapes our lives.

No technological advance has so profoundly changed our lives as has television. The time investment alone would make that so. Today more than 98 percent of all homes in America have television.<sup>1</sup> The average American watches television three hours a day.<sup>2</sup> For some segments of society, especially preschool children, the average number of viewing hours is significantly higher.<sup>3</sup>

Television has altered our patterns of conversation, our reading habits, our social lives and our church attendance. Our vocabulary has changed as programs and

commercials have given us new expressions and code words, new jingles and slogans. Our regional accents are being slowly altered by this "window to the larger world."

The TV schedule controls us in remarkable ways. We even fit our conversations into thirty-second and one-minute segments to fit the commercial breaks. There is a story going around about city water systems being redesigned to cope with the sudden loss of pressure when millions of people use a commercial break for a trip to the bathroom.

One hundred years ago the distance which a public speaker could count on to be heard was determined by the strength of his vocal chords. But when Neil Armstrong walked on the moon in 1969, people on every continent heard the words, "A small step for man, a giant step for mankind."

Today cameras send back dazzling shots which allow every school child to know things about the planet Saturn which were unknown a short time ago to the most learned astronomer. A child of six can know, through the power of television, more about *distant* lands than his grandparents knew about their own *homeland*.

This suggests the immense power of that tantalizing little box in our homes.

### **Environment Shapes The Child**

Of the great mysteries now being explored and unravelled, surely none is more intriguing than the mystery of the child's mind.

One thing has become increasingly certain: the environment in which a child lives strongly affects him. He is influenced by the way he is held, by the earliest experiences in the home, and by interaction with others. The child is always in the process of being shaped.

### **What Will He Be When He Is 40?**

No one knows for sure which year is the most decisive in developing the child's mind. Some informed people argue that the most critical period is in the very first days after birth, when the child is learning basic trust or basic mistrust.

Other informed people believe the most critical period is from eight to eighteen months. Still others argue the most critical period is the year or two immediately preceding the school years.

But there is one point at which all agree: the first six years of a child's life are critical to learning. During these years the child is constantly being exposed to an environment which determines outlook, intelligence, and moral values. Parents have the decisive role in determining this environment.

Someone has said it is not enough to ask, "Have you hugged your child today?" or "What has your child learned today?" We should also ask, "What will your child be like when he is forty?" What he will be like at forty depends to a large degree on those who determine his early environment. Bruno Bettelheim wrote in *Love is Not Enough* that love and good intentions are not adequate for the proper formation of the child; a suitable environment also is important.

### Children Love Stories

I have been especially impressed by Bettelheim's conclusions on how important stories are which shape the imagination and develop the child's picture of the world. In his book, *The Uses of Enchantment*, he points out that even the old "fairy tales" of the Brothers Grimm have a positive effect on the child, because they consistently point to a world which is orderly and trustworthy. They tell about the honorable people in conflict with the powers of evil. They show that honorable people ultimately prevail over the "big bad wolf." A little child senses his own helplessness at times, and such stories help him make sense out of life at this important stage.

It is not just the "fairy tale" which is helpful. Children love true stories, too. Stories affect their lives and the development of their character. Good stories have a positive effect. Henry Fairlie wrote an article in a major magazine a few years ago entitled "Too Rich for Heroes." He argued that a society is deprived if it presents no heroes for its youth. He tells how Alexander the Great kept a copy of the *Iliad* under his pillow. Washington lived in an atmosphere where the heroes of antiquity were "in the air." Josiah Royce wrote in *The Philosophy of Loyalty*, "If I have never been fascinated in childhood by my heroes and the wonders of life, it is harder to fascinate me later with the call of duty."

It makes sense that good stories provide positive images which help children, and that degrading stories can only do damage. So it is important to ask what kind of environment we are creating for our children.

### **Television—More Time Than Parents Or School**

It is at this point that we should be especially concerned about television's impact. For many children television has become the major source of entertainment. Recent studies have shown that television now occupies more waking hours of American children's lives than either their parents or their schools.

According to the most conservative estimates, preschool children in America spend more than a third of their waking hours watching television.<sup>4</sup> By age sixteen the average child will have watched 16,000 hours of television. At the end of a typical year, he will have seen 25,000 commercials.

Many programs can open up a bright new world for the child—scientific programs, educational programs, dramas which hold up good models of behavior. But there is also a darker side.

### **Encounters Which Never Occur**

This darker side comes, at one level, from the sheer amount of time spent with television—by both parents and children. Television has been referred to as “the great narcotic” or “the plug-in drug.”<sup>5</sup> Countless children have been “hooked” on television, being translated into “another world”—a world which is often more real to them than the real world.

And television has become the “narcotic” for parents who want a little peace from refereeing arguments between children.<sup>6</sup> Television has become the great babysitter which allows parents to get the children out

of the way for awhile.

There are profound moral implications here. It is nothing less than immoral to allow our children to become addicted to television for the sake of our own convenience.

The time we spend watching television means we are not spending this time with our children doing something else. In other words, television is replacing something else. The most important activity television tends to replace is the normal interaction between members of the family. Children suffer most of all from the conversations which never take place.

Research psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner, has expressed it this way:

Like the sorcerer of old, the television set casts its magic spell, freezing speech and action, turning the living into silent statues so long as the enchantment lasts. The primary danger of the television screen lies not so much in the behavior it produces—although there is a danger there—as in the behavior it prevents: the talks, the games, the family festivities and arguments through which much of the child's learning takes place and through which his character is formed.

### **“The Good People Have To Kill The Bad People”**

There is also considerable evidence that television programs produce a certain kind of behavior. It is only common sense that we tend to imitate the behavior we see. If good literature and entertainment affect us positively it is only logical that degrading entertainment

affects us negatively.

Soon after 28-year-old David Radnis watched the movie "The Deer Hunter" on TV in his Chicago-area home, he was dead—one of at least 29 viewers in the U.S. who shot themselves imitating the show's Russian-roulette scene.<sup>7</sup>

An airplane bomb threat on "Doomsday Flight" was followed by a rash of similar occurrences across the nation.<sup>8</sup>

A report released in May 1982 by the National Institute of Mental Health says that "violence on television does lead to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who watch the programs." In one five-year study of 732 children, "several kinds of aggression—conflicts with parents, fighting and delinquency—were all positively correlated with the total amount of television viewing."

"Television can no longer be considered as a casual part of family life, as an electronic toy," the report stated. "Research findings have long since destroyed the illusion that television is merely innocuous entertainment."<sup>9</sup>

A college professor recently gave his students in a class on marriage and family the assignment of viewing some television programs in order to analyze what *assumptions* are reflected in these programs about marriage and family life. Some students chose to report on daytime soap operas, while others chose evening situation comedies to see what lifestyles were being presented.

The results were rather predictable. On many of the

programs it was *assumed* that adultery and living together outside of marriage was a common, if not normal, occurrence. A steady diet of such programming, without influences to counteract it, *must affect the minds of those who watch it.*

In an age when millions of inexperienced young people are growing up in front of the tube without close guidance of parents, many Americans are justifiably concerned that the nation could be ruined by a generation that gets its moral values from "Flamingo Road," its cultural standards from "Laverne & Shirley," and its sense of family relationships from "Dallas."

An extraordinary proportion of those portrayed on television spend their time committing crimes, avenging crimes, or catching criminals. It is a world where force and violence are common—where problems are often settled with a gun.

A recent study in England on the effects of television on aggression in children revealed that small children widely held that "all the good people have to kill the bad people; you can't really talk to a bad guy—you must shoot him; all quarrels between good and bad end in killing; and settling quarrels with a gun was neither good nor bad—it was just how everybody did it."

Other studies have shown a connection between active, violent programming and children's behavior.

I'm not suggesting that the television set be discarded—but that it be controlled. Shall we condemn television in all its manifestations the same way the Puritans once condemned all forms of the theater? You see, the problem is not with television itself, for it can be

neither good nor evil. As Edward R. Murrow once said of television,

This instrument can teach, it can illuminate; yes, it can even inspire. But it can do so only to the extent that humans determine to use it to those ends.<sup>10</sup>

“Caesar was right,” said Murrow, “The fault, Dear Brutus, is not in our stars but in ourselves.”<sup>11</sup>

Malcolm Muggeridge, the great British writer, has worked both in print and television journalism. In his book, *Christ and the Media*, he offers an insider’s look at the distortion of reality which often comes from the media. Its danger, he says, is that we—including young children—get caught up in such a way that we believe that the media’s world is the real world. But Mr. Muggeridge, who only late in life became convinced that Christ is the world’s only hope, eloquently reminds us that the *real world* is the one offered in the Bible. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Or, as some have translated the verse, “If anyone is in Christ, it is a whole new world.”

If good stories have a positive effect, imagine the power the greatest story of all can have on young minds. The Bible presents the lives of real people like ourselves, complete with their strengths and weaknesses. You find the same love and hate in Bible characters which you might find in media personalities. In the Bible story there are wars, marriages broken by unfaithfulness, and accounts of people who built their lives on the quest for material possessions.

Yet, in these pages you cannot miss the fact that love

is more enduring than hate, that forgiveness is vastly better than vengeance, and that service is more important than looking out for your own advantage. All of this culminates in the life of the One who went to his death for others. It is indeed a different world from the media's world. It is the real world.

It is a tragedy to allow the *real world* to be replaced in a child's consciousness by the distorted *fantasy world*. So the two to four hours per day which a child spends watching television may be as regrettable for what he is *missing* as for the negative models he is *receiving*.

What he is missing is the time spent in hearing the *real story*. Children will be moved by the lives of those who gave their lives for a cause greater than themselves. Time spent discussing a Bible story and interacting with each other has strong value in shaping the mind of the child.

Of course, children need to *see* as well as *hear*. Hohn Westerhoff in his book *Will Our Children Have Faith*, speaks of the value to children of actually seeing what takes place in worship. A child of six may not understand the words which are spoken. He may not grasp the meaning of the Lord's Supper and baptism. But seeing these moments repeated over and over impresses him with their importance. As his mind develops, the repetition of the singing, the Lord's Supper, and other parts of worship take on increased meaning.

It isn't necessary to renounce all entertainment offered by television, for there is much which is useful. But we should be careful not to be controlled by it. We can allow our children the advantages of the great

technological wonders offered. But we should also make certain they hear the real story.

Centuries ago God told his people,

“And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 6:6,7).

We would be wise to give more time and attention to insure that the *real story* shapes the moral values of our children. We should take time to interact with them—and to worship with them.

I was recently reminded again of television’s unique power when I read about the child of a state department official who had lived in many countries. The child asked his father, “Daddy, why is it that we see Kojak wherever we go?” Kojak is known on several continents.

Over one billion people—a quarter of the world’s population—is a potential viewing audience for any great historic event. Within twenty-four hours three-quarters of the world knew of Elvis Presley’s death. Eighty-nine percent of the world knows about Coca Cola. How? From media exposure.

But less than seventy percent have yet heard the name of Jesus. Don’t we have a moral obligation to use this powerful tool for noble purposes, too?

In the Broadway play, *Equus*, a young man was convicted of the horrid crime of intentionally blinding all the horses in the stable he was tending. The play

is based on this young man's hours of conversation with the psychiatrist who attempts to probe into his background to discover what made him act this way. The boy came from an environment which had a damaging effect on his development. His father was an atheist, while his mother was very religious. The parents had spent their time in heated arguments in a home which had nothing which served as the center of values. The boy had read no books, could scarcely recite any line from literature, and had no knowledge of anything outside the world of television's commercial jingles. He could recite those jingles by heart. Except for this, his mind seemed empty.

This was the playwright's way of suggesting the emptiness in the minds of those whom we abandon to the fantasy world of the media. There is a good alternative in the real world of Jesus Christ. Those who have been carefully nurtured by this story will be able to recognize the fantasy world when they see it.

<sup>1</sup>Ben Logan, "Television: Introduction and Overview," *Television Awareness Training*, Ben Logan, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979), 8.

<sup>2</sup>William Fore, "The Role of Mass Communication in Society," in Logan, 263.

<sup>3</sup>Marie Winn, *The Plug-in Drug* (New York: Viking, 1977), 4. According to one survey made in 1970, children in the 2-5 age group average 30.4 hours each week of television watching.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, 4.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, 110-111.

<sup>7</sup>James Mann, "What Is TV Doing To America?" *U.S. News & World Report*, August, 1982, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup>John W. Macy, *To Irrigate a Wasteland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), ix.

<sup>11</sup>Gregor Goethals, *The TV Ritual* (Boston: Beacon, 1981), 100.

# Morality in Education

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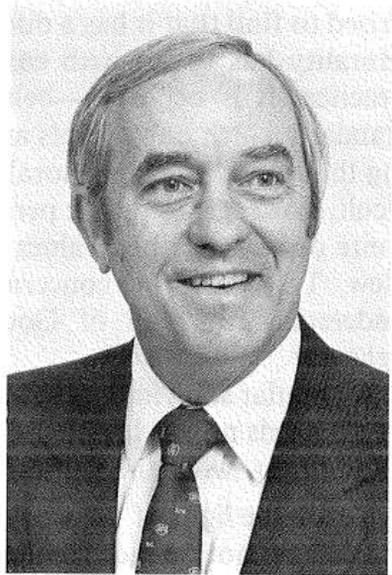
**Education:** He holds degrees from U.C.L.A., Columbia University, and Abilene Christian University.

**Work and Ministry:** Currently serves as the ninth president of Abilene Christian University. Dr. Teague has diversified experience in education, business, civic organizations, and in the church.

While serving as an officer of two major U.S. companies, he was an elder in three different congregations, with a total of 14 years experience.

He has spoken in pulpits and taught in Bible school classes throughout the world.

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Morality is one of those troublesome subjects that everyone can define, yet no two people agree on an exact definition. We each know what it means and are surprised to find that it has a different meaning to another. Morality has to do with custom, habit, manner, and practice. It is behavior—behavior that conforms to a standard which one accepts as right and wrong. Affirming the commitment to morality is easily done. It is difficult, however, to define personal morality on those infinite occasions when values collide. Almost all of the New Testament is concerned with helping people understand the will of God with regard to human behavior.

A popular song in the 1960's affirmed that "What the world needs now is love." Love is still an obvious need. In addition, what the world needs *now* is light.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-15

For men to *be* better, they must *know* better, and they must *see* that which is good. This generation does not have to document darkness! It is abundantly observable. It interests me that darkness is not measured—only light. We frequently compare darkness to the most nearly

complete absence of light with which we are familiar. But still, in technical terms, we are only able to measure light. It takes so little of it to have such a profound impact.

Light is essential to our physical and spiritual existence. In industry and in the home, light is necessary for work and security. It is easy for me to maintain my balance when walking in a lighted room as compared to one of total darkness. I progress more easily and with greater speed when light is available. Surgeons cannot operate without putting the patient in deep danger unless there is light. Even our sporting events depend upon light. Life in its best form depends upon light.

### **Quality of Light**

We spend a great deal of time and effort today to improve our quality of life—meaning the accumulation of comfort, pleasure, and security. Yet, a truly important objective for me should be the improvement of my “quality of light.” Jesus was light. He stood out. His light was strong, bright, unflickering. Ours, too, must be growing with intensity and brightness. It is more important to provide light than to achieve the feeling of comfort and pleasure and security. Role models are needed if we are to have more light in the world. Abilene Christian University is committed to helping build role models for a world of darkness. If I work on improving my light, the

Lord will take care of the quality of my life to His good pleasure (Matthew 6).

### Pattern of Light

The 12th chapter of Romans is particularly instructive. It urges the Christian to:

- 1 . Reject the world as a pattern. By definition, the pattern of the world can never bring me into a close relationship with God
- 2 . Seek to transform one's worldlike impulses.
- 3 . Reject conceit. God is able, not I.
- 4 . Develop one's personal gift.
- 5 . Love good and loathe evil.
- 6 . Seek the good of others.
- 7 . Serve with unflagging energy and in ardor of spirit. The Lord does severely reject the slothful, the indolent, the sluggard. We need to demonstrate some ardor in the spirit with which we approach Christian service.
- 8 . Be cheerful. Even sadness which should characterize the Christian should be that which we sustain because of the lost souls about us. We should be happy with our destination, with our Saviour, and with our mission.
- 9 . Stand firm in trouble! None of us will escape testing. We must all, at various times, endure unpleasant circumstances. We must resist the temptation to reject righteousness because of the appearance of safe harbors provided by the world.
- 10 . Contribute to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of God's people.

11. Practice hospitality! We need this admonition more in this generation than any of our predecessors have needed it. The isolation that many individuals feel comes about simply because we have lost the virtue of hospitality.
12. Seek blessings for those who persecute us. We must return good for evil. If we loathe evil, we won't practice it, even if it seems to balance the scales after a personal hurt.
13. Mourn with the mourners and be joyful with the joyful.
14. Do not be haughty, but have equal regard one for another.
15. Avoid thinking how wise I am because this turns the emphasis on the wrong person.
16. Persist in prayer.

### **Enhancing Candle Power**

These are the *light enhancers* that really count. My behavior influences others. It is the light they see. The way I handle problems or show happiness is a lesson to the observer. Even fasting shouldn't leave a gloomy look (Matthew 6:16f). Have I conquered a syndrome of "Poor me"?

My candlepower is determined by my behavior. My behavior is the result of my morality.

Any Christian will be different from the hedonist. We are told that we shouldn't think it strange that there is this difference. The difference is observed. Let me tell you a story. Leon and Lillian were severely injured when the car in which they were riding was struck by a

vehicle driven by a drunken driver who failed to stop at a red signal. The investigating officers were obtaining information while waiting for the ambulance. The first officer asked Leon where he and his wife had been. Leon replied that they had been visiting Jack and Lou, who were members of the church. The second officer said, "Let's check them for alcohol consumption." The first officer said, "We needn't bother. If they've been with Jack and Lou, they will not have had a drink." Isn't it marvelous that this officer, who did not know Jack and Lou personally, still knew enough about them to have formulated this solid opinion. ACU students have made great records as excellent workers in downtown businesses. Often, that is the only recommendation needed for a student to obtain a job.

### **A Different Ethic**

The Christian has a different moral base for his ethic. It is *not* in finding pleasure. It is *not* in developing worldly intellect. Rather, it is in serving. "For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Service is the basis of the Christian lifestyle. Stealing and cheating and cutting corners in class work or anywhere else is based upon a desire for immediate self-fulfillment. The Christian realizes his goal through serving others, though it may take longer.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul speaks of his ministry and the ministry which engages all who look to Jesus as Savior. We are reflecting Christ to a watching world. Darkness cannot be reflected. Our mission is plain:

- 1 . God created light (Genesis 1).
- 2 . God made His light to shine in our hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6).
- 3 . This light is the knowledge of God in the face of Christ.
- 4 . This knowledge—this light—gives us hope.

The essence of Christian hope is seen by Paul's testimony:

- 1 . Hard pressed on every side, but not crushed.
- 2 . Perplexed, but not in despair.
- 3 . Persecuted, but not abandoned.
- 4 . Struck down, but not destroyed.

We are always ready to die for the sake of Jesus so that His life may be revealed in our mortal body. What a magnificent challenge—my behavior in the body can help someone find Christ!

It is, therefore, the constant mission of the Christian school to urge a manner of behavior that will help students to mature in Christ. This is done in anticipation that each student will find a place of maximum influence in serving as light for other human beings. This Christlike behavior must become natural so that it is a conditioned reflex of the righteous mind.

### **Excellence is Golden**

The Christian who is trimming his lamp and improving the quality of his light has resolved questions that perplex others. He knows that Jesus is Lord, that the Bible is the inspired Word of God; hence, infallible. He

accepts it as the only safe guide to moral values. He is ready to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). He has a commitment to excellence in all that he does (Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:23; Romans 12:11). He knows that mediocrity cannot become the performance standard of either the Christian teacher or student because being average is simply "the best of the worst," or "the worst of the best." When one grows in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18), he cannot become average or ordinary. Students need to redeem the time because the days are evil. They need to make the most of every opportunity because so many in the world are depending upon their lifetimes of service. There is time, of course, for legitimate recreation, but there is no time for a misuse of opportunities.

Teachers have an obligation to set the pattern in every area of morality, including service. Being on time to every class meeting, being prepared for every class meeting, remaining in the class and teaching right up until the bell rings is due every student, and, therefore, no student should be deprived of his opportunity to learn. There are times, of course, when classroom absences are unavoidable, but they must be minimized, just as students willfully missing a class must be minimized, if both teacher and students are to make the most of their opportunities.

Parents have great impact upon their sons and daughters. Their emphasizing compliance to the highest level of morality will yield a harvest of gold.

### **The Right To Be Different**

Light has a right to be different from darkness. Light has a duty to be different from darkness:

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, that war against the soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

1 Peter 2:11, 12

We should always remember that “this world is not my home.” As strangers in the land, we have special responsibility for our behavior. The world has no reason to resist sinful behavior. Sin wars against the soul, hence, abstinence from sin is essential.

Live good lives among the pagans. It is interesting that pagans will recognize good and appreciate it. They also recognize hypocrisy and spurn it and deplore it. The pagans will accuse the Christian of doing wrong—why shouldn’t he? It is conduct that contradicts pagan performance.

Ted was a senior executive in a major corporation. He was urged by Bob, a subordinate two levels below his responsibility, to adopt a course of action that Ted’s boss thought to be foolhardy. When Ted would argue his case before his boss, Bob would give him positive strokes to his ego. “The boss doesn’t understand,” he would say, “the boss fears your strength,” “you are wise and the boss is stupid.”

Ted never stopped to consider the fact that Bob's advice was self-serving. Bob was also misusing company assets at that time. Ted enjoyed the stroking from a source that was less worthy than that of his boss. Ted demanded a confrontation with his boss before the Board of Directors of his company. The Board rebuffed him. Still he sought to have his way. It resulted in his being fired. He hasn't had a good job to this day. Our behavior as Christians must please the boss—God, our **Father**, the infallible and loving creator. We often will not see the practical justification of righteousness, but we don't have to. Don't waste time trying to make the right thing seem practical and prudent for the moment. Do it. God will reward.

At ACU, we frequently have a few students and some parents who appeal to us to lower our standards of conduct because "others are doing it." This rarely is a good justification by itself. Student thought is valuable as decisions are considered, but some matters must be decided by those with wider and longer experience. Often I am told by parents who are former students of ACU, "I hope you'll always hold to a strong standard of morals." Many of those parents were advocates of permissiveness when they were students here. We plan to follow their latter day advice. We'll be open to dialogue, yet slow to abandon a higher than average standard of conduct. Morality doesn't need practical justification to make it favorable with God.

### **No Apologies**

There are some things that are not negotiable—the

Lordship of Jesus, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the inerrancy of the Scriptures. We, then, make no apology for attempting to help others improve their quality of light. Our friends have a right to be concerned that this institution remain steadfast. Other schools with good beginnings have failed. The cornerstone of the ACU Administration Building states, "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). This remains our commitment. This remains our morality. Just as individual Christians belong to God, so does this institution. Perhaps ACU is the largest school in the nation that still has daily assembly, where students sing and pray together and where the Bible is respected as the inerrant Word of God. There are other institutions smaller in size who retain that same commitment to Jesus as Lord. We enlist your help in retaining that level of morality.

With the heritage of 77 years and the consciousness of our heavy obligations and exciting opportunities, we at ACU pledge to help every student who comes to this campus. We want to help them in many ways:

- 1 . To find themselves in the Lord.
- 2 . To grow in service to all men.
- 3 . To bring light to a world in darkness.

Your help is needed! Together, we make it happen!

# The Christian In An Immoral World

Jack Evans

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The child of God has been enlightened, has tasted of the heavenly gift, has been made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, has tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come (Hebrews 6:4-5). His living, therefore, is geared toward eternal life with God in heaven after this life is finished. But while in life on this side of death, he must live in the world and society in which he finds himself. And this has always been the case with the child of God. Enoch, before he was translated from this life to be with God, had to live among men who were not God's people. Elijah, before he was taken up to heaven by God, had to dwell among unbelieving men. Likewise, Christians of today must, like the prophet Isaiah, "dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" and hearts. And until the child of God

is called from his living in this world, he must dwell among evil men and keep himself unspotted from the world.

### **The Distress That We Are In**

When Nehemiah returned from Medo-Persian captivity and viewed the fallen walls of Jerusalem and the chaotic condition of that great city, he said to those who were with him, "Ye see the distress that we are in..." (Nehemiah 2:17). This statement is most descriptive of the moral chaos of the world in which we live today. And while Babylon of old was the seat of hedonism and moral corruption, it was only a microcosm of our present world. Max Lerner, a newspaper columnist and historian, said in a *Newsweek* article,

We are living in a Babylonian society, perhaps more Babylonian than Babylon itself...The emphasis in our society today is on the senses and the release of the sensual. All the old codes have been broken down.

Why, then, have the old codes been broken down in modern Babylon? Who broke them down? How were they broken down and with what results?

While the abuse of sex, not sex itself, is not the only symptom of moral decay in our world, it is one of the major contributors. Someone has said that the world's present "sexual revolution" is only an emergence of the world from an "age of hush" about sex. The so-called professionals, some of whom are psychoanalysts, scientists, biologists, doctors, and marriage counselors, have

decided that moral standards, based on the Word of God, need to be revised, and they have attempted to revise them—downward—under the do-anything phrase, “the New Morality.” It is this “new morality” that has created the immoral “distress that we are in.”

The basic philosophy of this “new morality” is that of receiving sensual pleasure. The early Greek philosophers of the epicurean school believed that pleasure was the highest good in life. Therefore, anything done, according to them, that resulted in pleasure for the individual was only the fulfillment of man’s purpose for living. This philosophy was imbibed and espoused by epicurean disciples such as Jeremy Bentham, Henry Sedgewick and Sigmund Freud. Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, attributed many neuroses and many nervous and mental disorders to sexual ignorance and repression of sexual desires. And if sexual repression and self-denial caused such conditions, Freud and his followers reasoned, then the world should be emancipated from sexual restraints by the revision of the interpretation of “morality.” This philosophy is presently being advocated by Joseph Fletcher and Hugh Hefner. Thus the “new morality” abounds in our present world.

The “new morality” is a direct outgrowth of the “new theology,” espoused by religious leaders of the world. These “theologians,” even in some of their seminaries, discounted the necessity of adhering to the authorized Word of God in their doctrines, and set the example for the hedonists in their pursuits of sexual pleasure. The *esprit de corps* was, and still is, “do your

own thing," regardless of what the Bible or religionists have to say about it. This spirit has given rise to the open display and general acceptance of topless (and bottomless) bars, pornography with every form of sexual perversion, coed roommates in college dormitories, free love, premarital and extramarital sex, wife-swapping, and homosexuality. The by-products of this "sexual revolution," of course, are an increase in venereal diseases, rapes, and abortions. The spirit of the present "sex revolution" is now a part of the world society. In some countries prostitution is practiced under government license and supervision. It is said that in one of the Scandinavian countries where pornography is rampant, ninety-five percent of its people have begun their sexual life by the time they are married. But we do not have to leave America to find sexual immorality. It is at its height right here at home. Any form of sexual immorality can be seen in the soap operas on our televisions, in our theaters, and in books that can be purchased by anyone at the corner store. Sexual innuendos even underlie many of our television commercials. No one in America or the world can escape the deluge of sexual materials and opportunities that confront us daily. Therefore, the Christian, facing this distress, must adamantly fight the battle for God on this front.

But sex is not the only battlefield of immorality. Crime, in all forms, is another front. FBI reports reveal that over four million crimes are reported in the United States annually. Among these are one murder every forty-three minutes, one forcible rape every nineteen minutes, one robbery every two and one-half minutes,

one burglary every twenty seconds, one larceny (fifty dollars and over) every thirty seconds, and one auto theft every forty-eight seconds. No one in this immoral society is safe. It is possible that while you are attending this lectureship right now your house or car is being burglarized, looted or stolen. Crime is not only in the streets, it is also behind closed doors in houses and offices. All criminals are not street hoodlums that we can easily recognize, but many of them are well-dressed, white-collar businessmen who take economic advantage of others, because of their being without principles, morally corrupt. But morality is not confined to sexual purity—it takes in the entire scope of a person's behavior. A person's morals are directly affected by his system of ethics, that is, his system of determining what is good or bad, right or wrong. And men or women without such a system, regardless of how "respectable" they are, are as dangerous to the moral fabric of our society as the pimps, prostitutes and drug pushers.

And then there is another element to the moral distress that we are in. It is the element that I call "immoral moralities." These are the immoralities of groups, races or nations that have been accepted by the majority as being moral, regardless of Scriptural teaching. Past examples of such "immoral moralities" are American slavery and segregation. These societal immoralities were accepted as being moral by the majority of the population at one time, and even by some members of God's church. They were so acceptable at one time that many church leaders even attempted to justify their morality by the use of the Bible. Being

defeated in these attempts by the laws of the land and the laws of God, some people in today's world still try to maintain a system of racism, in their attitudes, as a "morality," based on group consensus. And while many of the "immoral moralities" are not as apparent as the immoralities of sex and crime in our world, we must be aware of the fact that they, too, account for much of the moral distress in which we find ourselves.

### **A Cloud of Witnesses**

God's people, in every age, have always been surrounded by immorality in the world in which they lived. Thus, we in today's world of immorality are not without example of how to respond to such conditions. Noah was one of God's men whose entire world was morally corrupt. In describing the world of Noah's day, the Bible says,

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart (Genesis 6:5-6).

Jesus describes the world of Noah in these words:

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away...(Matthew 24:38-39).

And even in this immoral environment, “Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord” (Genesis 6:8). He found grace in God’s sight because he maintained his moral integrity as a man of faith (Hebrews 11:7), and he preached righteousness to his immoral contemporaries (2 Peter 2:15). Because of his morality in the midst of an immoral world, he and his household were saved from destruction (1 Peter 3:20).

Another exemplary witness was Lot, the nephew of faithful Abraham, who lived in a city which has a name that is a synonym for immorality, Sodom. In the midst of an atmosphere of homosexuality and every other imaginable sin in Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot remained faithful to God. And because of his faithfulness in the very seat of sin, God delivered him. The Bible says that God turned

...the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy way of life of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)...(2 Peter 2:6-8).

This example is given by the apostle Peter to show that God expects his own to remain faithful to him in the midst of an immoral society, and that he will deliver them from the temptations of their environment.

Sodom and Gomorrah were another microcosm of today’s world. Our world, too, is sexually sick. Long

before our newspapers reported the moral sickness of our society, the apostle Paul, in describing the immorality of the Gentiles, described our world in the following terms:

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:... For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections, for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful...(Romans 1:24-31).

In reading such Scriptures that were written nearly two thousand years ago, the Christian today can better understand that the immoral society of that day was

much like ours today. And we can better appreciate the faithfulness of the children of God as they met and overcame the forces of evil in their world. For they were our "cloud of witnesses."

### **A Colony of Heaven**

During his personal ministry, Jesus told his followers that they were in the world, "but not of the world" (John 17:11,16). In this profound statement, Jesus was recognizing the fact that Christians, by necessity, must live in a world society that is not conducive to Godly living. But he also emphasizes the fact that Christians cannot be "of the world." In other words, Christians cannot take part in the evils of their world, for they belong to another world. After describing men of the world as the "enemies of the cross of Christ," Paul told the Philippian Christians, "For we are a colony of heaven...(Philippians 3:20—Moffatt Translation). The Philippians could easily understand Paul's use of the word "colony," for Philippi, at the time of the epistle, was a colony of the Roman Empire, and being such a colony, they realized that their laws did not originate with them, for a colony is a group of people who live in one geographical area of the world, but receive their laws and government from another part of the world. In other words, they do not govern themselves, neither are they subject to the standards of their locale. Their laws come from a central headquarters. Thus the Christians in this immoral world are a "colony of heaven." We are not to be controlled by the immoral mores of this society, for our laws of governance come from heaven.

God's colony is God-controlled. Thoreau said, "If you see a man who does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drum beat. Let him step to the music which he hears, no matter how measured or far away." The Christian in this world is not marching to the "drum beat" of his society, but according to the "drum beat of God."

The Christian's facing the immoralities of this world, however, is not surprising to him. Paul had foreseen the moral degradation of today's world and has given us a warning. He told us in his epistle to Timothy,

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away...(2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Paul further warns us of the fact that times, in terms of morality, were not going to get better, but worse. He says, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived (2 Timothy 3:13). What then should be the Christians' response to such an immoral world in which we find ourselves a colony?

The Christians should not leave the fight against immorality in our society to be fought by the Jerry

Falwells of the world and the "silent majority." And though the people of God are a minority in this world, they cannot be silent. For we have some moral laws that were not legislated in Washington, D.C., or adjudicated by the Supreme Court of our nation; but they came from heaven. And we cannot keep them to ourselves. After describing the actions of an evil society, Paul said to Timothy,

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, truly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

The Word of God, therefore, is the Christian's standard from heaven by which to live, and which we must use in combating the evils of this world.

Christians respond to the immorality of this world by embracing the Word in their lives and promulgating it in their speech. The apostle John says,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of

the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (1 John 2:15-17).

In our struggle against sexual immorality in the world, we, as Christians, must be careful to distinguish between sexual abuse and sex as God means for it to be. The “sexploration” of our world is geared to the exploitation of something that God created to be beautiful, enjoyable and procreative. God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth...(Genesis 1:28). This was, and still is, to be done through sexual relations between married persons. Procreation was not the only purpose of sex, according to God’s design. It was also meant to satisfy man’s sexual urges that were instilled in him by God. This of course, is within marriage. Paul says,

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband (1 Corinthians 7:2-3).

Thus we can understand that God means for sex to be confined to marriage. But the “sexperts” and exploiters of our world disregard God’s law from heaven, and put their sexual emphasis on the glorification and gratification of the flesh—any flesh—man and woman, man and man, woman and woman, and in some cases, man and beast. And to make it more alluring, the “sexploiter’s” emphasize the fact, through “adult” books and films, that the sexual partners are not married to each other.

They glamorize premarital and extramarital sex, homosexuality, and open adultery through “swinging” and “open marriages.” Because of this atmosphere of sexual permissiveness, trial marriages, “without benefit of clergy,”—called “shacking”—are on the increase among the young. But despite these deplorable conditions of sexual abuse and disregard for God’s law from heaven, God still says, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4). And God’s colony, the church, must adhere to this divine injunction.

### **Transformed Non-conformists**

Longfellow says that “...in this world, a man is either an anvil or a hammer.” And he means that a man is either shaped by his world environment or he helps to shape it. God wants the Christian to be a “hammer” in this world. He wants us to be influences for good in changing an evil environment. Paul says,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

The Christian, as seen here, does not conform to the immoralities of his world because he is transformed by

the power of God. The transformation takes place in the mind—"by the renewing of your minds"—and, therefore, his body, regardless of the surrounding influences, is under control. Thus in this world of conformity by the masses of society, the Christwn is a transformed non-conformist. He is not a "thermometer" on the wall of the status quo, but he is a "thermostat" in this world for God.

In every instance in the Bible when God's children did not conform to their surroundings because of their being transformed by the power of God, they, eventually, were the victors, and were influential in affecting their societies. For example, Daniel, while in babylonian captivity, would not conform to the king's unholy desires by eating his meat and drinking his wine. But, the Bible says, "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank..." (Daniel 1:8). Daniel requested meals for himself and his companions that would not defile them, which they ate while learning the language and culture of their captors. And when they were finally examined, after a period of non-conformity to evil, they were found by the king to be "...in all matters of wisdom and understanding...ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all Israel" (Daniel 1:20). Non-conformity with evil by God's people has always been rewarded by God. Later, in the same province, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, three of God's men, were challenged again by evil in order to conform. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, ordered them to bow down in worship to

his idol god, with the consequence of being thrown into a fiery furnace if they did not conform. They remained loyal to God by not worshipping the idol and, consequently, were thrown into the furnace. Their faith in the midst of trial can be seen in these words:

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up (Daniel 3:17-18).

God did deliver them from death in that furnace. And their loyalty to God and deliverance from the furnace impressed the king so, that he said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego...because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort" (Daniel 13:28-29). These examples serve to increase our faith and determination in these trying times, to remain loyal always to the principles of our God, with the assurance that he will give us the victory.

The goal of the immorality of this world is to give pleasure to the fleshly man. But pleasure, unlike joy, is temporary. The Bible describes it as being only "for a season." Moses had to make a choice between carnal pleasure, which appeals only to the flesh, and spiritual joy, which emanates from within the inner man. The Bible says that Moses chose "...rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25). The Christian's mind has been imbued with the Word of God, and he,

therefore, pursues the joys of this life and the life to come, instead of the pleasures of a fleeting moment. Paul shows the difference in the thinking of non-Christians and Christians when he says,

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be Spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you...(Romans 8:5-9).

Thus the Christian is filled with joy, as opposed to pleasure, because of the Spirit of God which dwells in him. And even in the midst of an immoral world, he walks in the Spirit, and does not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). For the Christian in an immoral world is a “transformed non-conformist.”

### **Conclusion—“Babylon is Fallen”**

Christians are constantly reminded of the fact that the battle of Armageddon is now in progress. It is not a battle that will be waged at the end of time, as is falsely taught by some religionists, but is now being fought between the forces of evil and the forces of good. And one of the most effective offensive weapons of the forces of Satan is pleasurable, self-serving immorality. Paul says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against

principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Wickedness is so deeply entrenched in our society that our world, I believe, is symbolized by Babylon of old, described in the Bible as the center of all that which was anti-God. Its corrupt character is seen in the Bible through the falsity of its prophets, the uncleanness of its spirits, its harlotry, fornication, drunkenness, blasphemy, abominations, luxury, persecuting violence, sorcery, submission to any evil, and war against the Lamb of God through the church. With all of this artillery, appealing to the masses, it may seem to some that “Babylon,” this world, will triumph over God’s army. But this will not be the case.

In reading an interesting novel, one is sometimes tempted, after reading only part of it, to go to the back of the book and find out the outcome of the intriguing plot. The Christian can do this in his reading God’s Book on the battle against evil in which we are not involved. In “the back of the Book,” the book of Revelation, God says, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen...” (Revelation 18:2). Symbolically speaking, God is assuring the Christian that the world of immorality and evil will eventually fall, and that the saints of God will be triumphant. The apostle John says that the forces of Babylon fought against the Lamb, but “...the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14). And even in regard to Satan himself, who is the god of this immoral world,

John says, “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony...” (Revelation 12:11). Thank God for the “back of the Book.” Thank God for the predetermined victory that he has given us through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

## Afternoon Sessions



# Jesus' Teaching About The Law In Matthew 5:17-20

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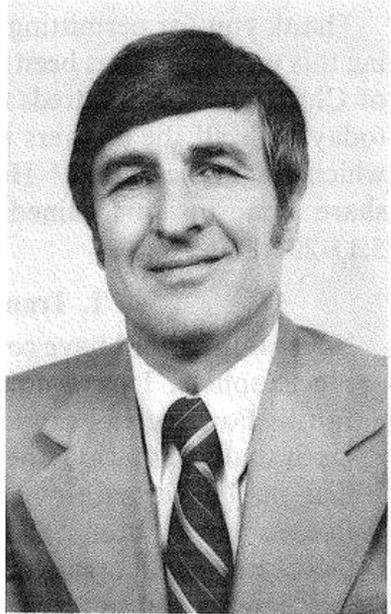
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Thank you for permitting me to speak today concerning this passage. It has been read and studied by millions of Christians for hundreds of years. So, I do not come today with all the answers to all the possible questions which might be raised.<sup>1</sup> However, it is a privilege to share some insights gained from a study of Matthew 5:17-20.

### **I. Translation**

Never think that I have come to annul the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to annul but to fulfill. For, truly, I say to you until heaven and earth shall pass away, one small letter or one particle shall never pass away from the Law until all things have been accomplished. Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments and so teach men, shall be called the very least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever shall do and teach (them), this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness greatly surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven.<sup>2</sup>

### **II. Exegetical Notes Related to Matthew 5:17-20**

#### *A. Verse Seventeen*

The expression “never think”<sup>3</sup> (me nomisete) or “do not begin to think” does not imply that the disciples already thought that way, but that such a thought is forbidden.<sup>4</sup>

The words “that I have come” (hoti elthon) express Christ’s entire mission to earth.<sup>5</sup> The great scholar Alford says, “observe how our Lord, through the whole sermon, sets forth Himself in his proceeding forth from God....”<sup>6</sup>

According to the standard lexicons, the aorist infinitive translated “to annul” (katalusai) means “do away with, annul or repeal...;”<sup>7</sup> “to deprive of force, annul, abrogate, discard;”<sup>8</sup> “to set at naught or annul;”<sup>9</sup> “to invalidate.”<sup>10</sup>

The phrase “the Law or the Prophets” frequently designates the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup> Jack Lewis states “The Law and the Prophets make up two main divisions of the Hebrew canon of Scripture (cf. 7:12; 22:40). Jesus, born under the Law (Gal. 4:4), was no antinomian.”<sup>12</sup>

The important phrase, “but to fulfill” (alla plerosai) may be interpreted several ways. Gingrich summarizes:

...depending on how one prefers to interpret the context, *pleroo* is understood here as ‘fulfill’—do, carry out, or as ‘bring to full expression’—show it forth in its true meaning or as ‘fill up’—complete.<sup>13</sup>

Thayer adds:

Universally and absolutely, ‘to fulfill,’ i.e., to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises

(given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment.<sup>14</sup>

Delling, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states:

He has come in order that God's word may be completely fulfilled, in order that the full measure appointed by God Himself may be reached in Him. His work is an act of obedience also and specifically in the fact that He fulfills God's promise cf. Matthew 3:15. He actualizes the divine will stated in the Old Testament from the standpoint of both promise and demand. How this is done is illustrated in verses 21-48....<sup>15</sup>

Allen in the *International Critical Commentary* says:

The meaning of the words is clear. Christ did not come to overthrow the authority of the Mosaic Law, which was to be eternally binding upon the hearts and consciences of men. So long as the world lasted its authority was to be permanent.<sup>16</sup>

Meyer is close to the meaning in saying:

The *plerosis* (fulfillment) of the law and the prophets is their fulfillment by the re-establishment of their absolute meaning, so that now nothing more is wanting to what ought to be in accordance with the divine ideas which lie at the foundation of their commands.<sup>17</sup>

McNeile agrees:

He came to 'fill' the law, to reveal the full depth

of meaning that it was intended to hold (cf. Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:14, and the instructive use of the verb in Luke 22:16). Although the moral law is external, yet under the Gospel it loses its form of external law, and becomes an internal principle of life' (Liddon).<sup>18</sup>

Lenski adds:

To fulfill the Law and the Prophets refers to the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies...Christ's entire vicarious atonement, and in addition all that Christ will do until the consummation of the kingdom is reached (1 Corinthians 15:24...).<sup>19</sup>

Barclay says:

He came to really bring out the real meaning of the Law. What was the real meaning of the Law?...The one great principle was that in all things a man must seek God's will, and that when he knows it, he must dedicate his whole life to the obeying of it....It is that reverence and respect which Jesus came to fulfil.<sup>20</sup>

### *B. Verse Eighteen*

The expression "for truly I say to you" (amen gar lego humin) emphasizes the authority of Jesus. Matthew records Jesus' words "truly I say to you" thirty times. "Truly" (amen) as an introductory phrase, is a construction unparalleled in Jewish literature.<sup>21</sup>

The words "until heaven and earth shall pass away"

(eos an parelthe ho ouranos kai he ge) mean “until the end of time”<sup>22</sup> or “forever.”<sup>23</sup> The expression “heaven and earth” means the universe (Matt. 5:18, 34f; 11:25; 24:35; Luke 12:56, etc.).<sup>24</sup> Gingrich understands “pass away” (parelthe) in the phrase “until heaven and earth shall pass away” to mean “pass away, come to an end, disappear.”<sup>25</sup>

“One small letter or one particle” (iota hen e mia keraia) or “iota or dot” is “a parabolic way of saying the smallest matter”<sup>26</sup> or “minutest part.”<sup>27</sup>

The expression “shall never pass away from the Law” (ou me parelthe apo tou nomou) means that the Law “shall most certainly stand.”<sup>28</sup>

The phrase “until all things have been accomplished” (heos an panta genetai) seems to be synonymous with “until the end of the world.”<sup>29</sup> McKenzie paraphrases verse 18:

The Law of Moses as an expression of the will of God is permanent, and I came to emphasize its true meaning. No smallest part of it may be eroded or explained away until everything has been accomplished.<sup>30</sup>

### *C. Verse Nineteen*

“Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments” (hos ean oun luse mian ton entolon touton ton elachiston) indicates that some commandments were regarded as more important than others. McNeile says:

The Jews recognized that some of the 613 com-

mandments in the Law were of less importance than others: they sometimes distinguished them as 'heavy' and 'light'.<sup>31</sup>

The Rabbis counted the command to honor parents (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) as a "heavy" Commandment, and not to remove a bird's egg from its nest as a "light" commandment (Deut. 22:6).<sup>32</sup>

The question arises whether the commandments mentioned are those of the law or those of Jesus. McGarvey understands the passage to refer to the commandments of Jesus:

Those who, by a false system of interpretation, or an undue regard for the traditions of men, enervate or annul the obligations of Christ's laws or ordinances, and teach others to do the same, shall be held in low esteem or contempt by the church or the kingdom of God as it comes to a knowledge of the truth.<sup>33</sup>

Lewis is probably correct when he indicates concerning the commandments, "likely they are of the law."<sup>34</sup>

The words, "and so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven" (kai didaxei houtos tous anthropous, elachistos klethesetai en tei basileiai ton ouranon) indicate the seriousness of teaching others to break a commandment. To teach others to break a commandment "is, if possible, worse than breaking the Law oneself."<sup>35</sup>

The passage, "but whoever shall do and teach (them)" (hos d' an poiесе kai didaxe) indicates the priority of "doing" before "teaching." Robertson

notes:

Jesus puts practice before preaching. The teacher must apply the doctrine to himself before he is qualified to teach others.<sup>36</sup>

The words, “this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (houtos megas klethesetai en tei basileioi ton ouranon) indicate that not all will be regarded as equal in the kingdom.<sup>37</sup>

#### *D. Verse Twenty*

Now, look at verse 20:

For I say to you that unless your righteousness greatly surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. (lego gar humin hoti ean me perisseuse humon he dikaiosune pleion ton grammateon kai Pharisaiou, ou me eisethete eis ten Basileian ton ouranon).

Meyer interprets that the disciples must combine “action” with “teaching”:

For if ye do not unite ‘acting’ with teaching, then can ye not enter into the kingdom, being upon the same stage of righteousness as the scribes and Pharisees.<sup>38</sup>

Robertson adds: “A daring statement on Christ’s part that they had to be better than the rabbis.”<sup>39</sup> The “righteousness” which Jesus demands is “integrity, virtue, purity of life, uprightness, correctness in thinking, feeling, and acting: Matt. 3:15; 5:6, 10, 20...”<sup>40</sup> *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* lists three

basic meanings of "righteousness" (*dikaioisune*) in the New Testament: 1. "Righteousness" as Just Judgement and Rule; 2. "Righteousness" as used by Paul; 3. "Righteousness" as Right Conduct before God.<sup>41</sup> A study of the six examples in Matthew indicates that "Righteousness as Right conduct" before God is "the consistent usage in Matthew."<sup>42</sup> Lenski observes:

that the righteousness of Matthew 5:20 "is not the righteousness of life over against the righteousness of faith but the righteousness of life as manifesting the righteousness of faith."<sup>43</sup>

Observe the words, "you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven" (*ou me eiselthete eis ten basileian ton ouranon*). *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* states:

Observance of the Law and the traditions will secure the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; this righteousness will not gain admission to the reign. The righteousness of the disciples must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees; it is a submission to the will of God that goes beyond the observance of the Law.<sup>44</sup> According to Hunter, entrance into the kingdom requires a "higher righteousness": The Messiah demands something far more radical than Moses; as he deepens, completes, exposes the profoundest implications of the ancient directives, we see that "Jesus understands the Old Testament better than the Old Testament itself."<sup>45</sup>

### *III. Conclusions*

1. The mission of Jesus, “I came not (ouk elthon) to annul the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17), cannot be isolated from the rest of the teaching in Matthew’s gospel, including Matthew 20:28, where Jesus used the same verb and said: “...the Son of Man did not come (elthen) to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” So the “fulfilling” would include Jesus’ sacrificial service and atoning death (see also Matthew 26:28). However, in context of Matthew 5, sacrificial service and “atonement” are not the main thrust.

2. To “annul the Law or the Prophets” means that Jesus would not lower the moral standards of the Old Testament. His standards would be even higher than the standards of the Old Testament as interpreted by the scribes and Pharisees. That “ethics” is the main emphasis is evident from the following ethical contrasts in Matthew 5:21-48.

*The scribes and Pharisees said:*

No murder

No adultery

Divorce for “some indecency”

No false oaths

Limited retaliation

Love neighbor

*Jesus said:*

No prolonged anger

No lust

No divorce except for  
unchastity

No oaths

No retaliation

Love enemy

3. "To fulfill" (plerosai) seems to include three basic ideas. First, "*to fulfill*," means "to do, keep, carry out." Jésus came to "keep" the law perfectly, to "fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15). The exact form (plerosai) occurs in Matt. 5:17 and in Matt 3:15. In the latter passage, Jesus indicated that by submitting to John's baptism he would "fulfill all righteousness." Jesus regarded baptism as one of God's commands and therefore "kept it" in the sense of Psalm 119:172. "May my tongue sing of your word, for all your commands are righteous." Second, "to fulfill" means "to bring to full expression, bring out the essence or show its true meaning." That the meaning "to bring out the essence" is present in Matt. 5:17-48 is evident, as can be noted by a study of the contrasts noted above. Third, "*to fulfill*" means to "fill up" or complete. Many commentators point out that the Old Testament ideals and prophecies were like a vessel waiting to be filled. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament ideals. He also fulfilled the prophecies with the exception of Daniel 12:2 and perhaps other passages relating to "Eschatology" which are yet to be fulfilled (1 Cor. 15:24-26).

4. The change in covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) does not result in a lowering of the moral standard of the Torah. The New Covenant has replaced the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:7-13; 2 Cor. 3). The perfection in love

demanded in the Old Covenant—“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:5) and “...love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18)—is also the abiding essence of the New Covenant. Jesus quoted the above scriptures and said: “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:40). Jesus taught that his requirement was a summary of the Old Testament demand: “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7:12). Therefore, since the essence of the “Law and Prophets” is love and doing good to others, and since Jesus “came not to annul but to fulfill,” Jesus’ standards for love are high. That is the reason Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” What is meant by “be perfect”? In the context, Matthew 5:43-48 is a discussion of love. God loves all men: “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45). God’s children must also love all men. “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” means in context that the love of God’s children should be as all-inclusive as the heavenly Father’s love for all men. *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* or *Didache* 1, 3-5, in the earliest commentary on Matt. 5:48, indicates that the “perfection” demanded by Jesus is an all-inclusive love or moral maturity that involves a love for enemies, a blessing of them and a prayer on their behalf and not just a love of one’s neighbors and friends. The love demanded by Jesus goes beyond the letter of the commandment: “You shall not commit

adultery.” Jesus forbids lust (Matt. 5:28) or as stated in 1 Peter 2:11 and the the *Didache*: “Abstain from carnal passions.” The love demanded by Jesus also goes beyond the letter of the commandment: “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Matt. 5:38). “Non-retaliation” instead of “limited retaliation” is the ideal required by perfect love. The *Didache* says: “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, and you will be perfect.”<sup>46</sup> So, love as exemplified, taught and commanded by Jesus (John 3:16, 13:34) is the essence of the New Covenant. Brown states:

...the commandment of love is really related to the theme of covenant at the Last Supper—the ‘new commandment’ of John 13:34 is the basic stipulation of the ‘new covenant’ of Luke 22:20.<sup>47</sup>

Such a love has definite content which manifests itself in keeping the commandments of Jesus. It is not the same as “Situation Ethics,” which frequently gives careless inattention to the Law. According to Paul, “...love is the fulfillment of Law” (Romans 13:10).

5. The “righteousness” (*dikaioisune*) required for entrance into the kingdom is “righteousness of life” in harmony with the meaning of the word throughout Matthew. This does not contradict Paul’s understanding of “righteousness by faith” (Romans 1:17; Phil. 3:9). “Righteousness of life” assumes the death of Jesus as a ransom (Matt. 20:28; 26:28). “Righteousness of life” is an outgrowth of “righteousness by faith.”

6. But if “perfection in love” is demanded for entrance into the kingdom, is it possible for anyone to be saved? On the basis of human merit, the answer is

“no.” On the basis of Jesus’ atoning death, the answer is “yes.” But why is a Christian obligated to be “perfect” when such seems beyond one’s capacity? Maston has a good practical answer:

Paul’s ‘I press on’ is one man’s response, if not a logical answer...It is only those who are continually challenged by the high calling of God who can be salt and light in the world. And after all, there is no movement toward the ideals of perfection unless one feels an obligation to measure up to them.<sup>48</sup>

7. A question might be asked, “Is the Christian under the Law of Moses?” The answer is “No,” for Paul said:

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law (Gal.3:24-25).

Another question is relevant: “If the Christian is not under the Law of Moses, why is it wrong to murder, commit adultery, steal, etc.? It is wrong to murder, commit adultery, steal, etc., because these were not only condemned under the Old Covenant but were also incorporated into the new eternal covenant by Jesus (Matt. 19:18) and the apostles (Rom 13:9). Christians are bound by the New Covenant which upholds and gives full meaning to the moral requirements of the Old Covenant. Another question is important, “If Jesus did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, how could Paul say: ‘Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes’ (Rom.

10:4)? There is a sense in which the “Law and the Prophets” is eternal. Christianity in fulfillment of the essence of the law “...stepped in and accomplished, as if with the stroke of a wand, all that the Law strove to do without success” (Rom 13:10...).<sup>49</sup> To that extent, Paul makes sense when he says: “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law” (Rom. 3:31). In Christianity, in a sense, “law” which includes “the Law of Moses” is upheld and regarded as permanent. Jesus and Paul are in agreement on this point. But in another sense, “Christ is the end of the law...” (Rom. 10:4). Here “end” (Telos) means “termination” (Thayer, Gingrich, Sanday). Christ is the “termination of law” as a method of putting men right with God: “For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4).<sup>50</sup> The principle of law has been superseded by the principle of faith. The time “when the Law of Moses dominated men’s lives with its demand of legal uprightness is terminated, superseded by Christ” (Eph. 3:15; John 1:17).<sup>51</sup>

8. Although the Law in one sense has been annulled, in another sense it has not been annulled. The moral ideals of the Old Covenant were incorporated into the New Covenant which requires a “righteousness” and a “perfection in love” that goes beyond the letter of the Law. The New Covenant replaces the Old Covenant not by “destruction,” but by “fulfilling” the ideals inherent in the Old Covenant. Jack Lewis explains the relationship of Jesus to the Law:

He kept its precepts, fulfilled its prophecies, and accomplished its purposes (Gal. 3:19; 5:14). As marriage does not nullify courtship but accomplishes its purposes so the new system, while modifying, fulfills the law and the prophets.<sup>52</sup>

So the essence of the Law and the Prophets is not annulled but rather is fulfilled in the New Covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Archibald M. Hunter, *A Pattern For Life: An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, Its Making, Its Exegesis and Its Meaning* (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1963), p. 47, affirms that between Matt. 5:17 and 20, "lie the hardest verses in the Sermon." Read Hunter for an excellent outline and a general analysis of the Sermon on the Mount.

<sup>2</sup>This translation takes into consideration the standard Greek grammars and dictionaries and is a result of grammatical analysis of the entire Sermon on the Mount. The translation is based on Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament* (United Bible Society, 3rd ed., 1975), and Kurt Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, editio tertia, 1964), p. 78. No significant textual variants were found.

<sup>3</sup>Nigel Turner and J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), Vol. 3, p. 77. See also H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 299: "When a prohibition which is a negative command is expressed in the aorist it means to forbid in advance whatever may be contemplated."

<sup>4</sup>R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1943), p. 204.

<sup>5</sup>A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 833.

<sup>6</sup>Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament* (London, Cambridge, 1863), Vol. 1, p. 42.

<sup>7</sup>William Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* Second ed., revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 414.

<sup>8</sup>Joseph Henry Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors, Inc.), p. 334.

<sup>9</sup>James Hope Milligan and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), p. 329.

<sup>10</sup>Hermann Buchsel, "kataluo," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 338.

<sup>11</sup>John L. McKenzie, "The Gospel According to Matthew," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 71. Lenski, p. 215 adds "Here the adversative 'or' divides the Old Testament into two parts: 'the Law' or Pentateuch; 'the Prophets' or all the rest of the Old Testament."

<sup>12</sup>Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Part One* (Austin Sweet Publishing Co., 1976), p. 86.

<sup>13</sup>Gingrich, p. 671.

<sup>14</sup>Thayer, p. 518.

<sup>15</sup>Gerhard Delling, "pleroo," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 294.

<sup>16</sup>Willoughby C. Allen, *The Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1907), p. 45.

<sup>17</sup>Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (Winona Lake, In.: Alpha Publications, 1980), p. 120-121.

<sup>18</sup>Alan Hugh McNeile, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew:*

*The Greek Text with Introduction. Notes and Indices* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), p. 58.

<sup>19</sup>Lenski, p. 207.

<sup>20</sup>William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), Vol. 1, p. 127.

<sup>21</sup>Lewis, p. 87.

<sup>22</sup>Lenski, p. 208.

<sup>23</sup>McNeile, p. 58.

<sup>24</sup>Hans Bietenhard, "Heaven," *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 196.

<sup>25</sup>Gingrich, p. 626. Thayer concurs: "to pass away, perish," p. 488.

<sup>26</sup>Lewis, p. 87. Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1930), Vol. 1, p. 43 states "not an iota, not a comma (Moffatt), not a smallest letter, not a particle (Weymouth).

<sup>27</sup>Thayer, p. 344.

<sup>28</sup>Lenski, p. 208

<sup>29</sup>Allen, p. 47.

<sup>30</sup>McKenzie, p. 58.

<sup>31</sup>McNeile, p. 59.

<sup>32</sup>Lewis, p. 87.

<sup>33</sup>J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton, *The Fourfold Gospel* (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing), p. 236-237.

<sup>34</sup>Lewis, p. 87.

<sup>35</sup>Sherman E. Johnson, "The Gospel According to St. Matthew," *The Interpreters Bible* edited by George Buttrick (New York: Abingdon Press, 1851), Vol 7, p. 293.

<sup>36</sup>Robertson, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup>McNeile, p. 59.

<sup>38</sup>Meyer, p. 120-121.

<sup>39</sup>Robertson, p. 44.

<sup>40</sup>Thayer, p. 149.

<sup>41</sup>Gottlob Schrenk, "Dikaiosune," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 198.

<sup>42</sup>Schrenk; se also Alan Richardson, *An Introduction to the*

*Theology of the New Testament* New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 82.

<sup>43</sup>Lenski, p. 216.

<sup>44</sup>McKenzie, p. 71.

<sup>45</sup>Hunter, p. 48.

<sup>46</sup>Cyril C. Richardson, *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1970), p. 171.

<sup>47</sup>Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel According to John (13-21)," *Anchor Bible* (Garden City, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1970), p. 614.

<sup>48</sup>T.B. Maston, *Biblical Ethics: A Survey* (Waco: Word Publishing Co.) p. 170.

<sup>49</sup>Sanday, p. 97.

<sup>50</sup>C.F.D. Moule, *An Idiom-Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), p. 70 suggests as a translation of Romans 10:4: "Christ is an end to legalism for the attainment of righteousness, as a means to righteousness." C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), p. 520 objects to the interpretation that Christ is the "termination, of the-law-as-the-way-of-attaining-to righteousness-before-God" on basis of word order because Paul did not place "righteousness" next to "law." A.T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 417 states: "The freedom of the Greek from artificial rules and its response to the play of the mind is never seen better than in the order of words in the sentence." F. Blass, and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Trans. and rev. by Robert W. Funk (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 248 indicate that "Word order in Greek and so in the N.T. is freer by far than in modern languages." So, perhaps Cranfield goes too far in basing his objection merely on word order.

<sup>51</sup>Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Letter to the Romans," *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A.

Fitzmyer, Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 321.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis, p. 86.

<sup>53</sup>C.F.D. Moule, "Fulfill," *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, p. 329 asks concerning "fulfill" in Matt. 5:17: "...is it not conceivable that it represents fairly faithfully an 'extreme' saying of the Lord himself, designed in so emphatic a form precisely in order to correct a misapprehension that the way he taught and showed was morally less exacting than that of the rabbis? On that showing, it would mean that Jesus' way of life - even if in detail it proved to involve breaches of the law (such as sabbath rules) - would in essence prove to be an 'establishing' or 'corroborating' of the law."

# **The Middle East Crisis In Biblical Perspective**

**F. Furman Kearley**

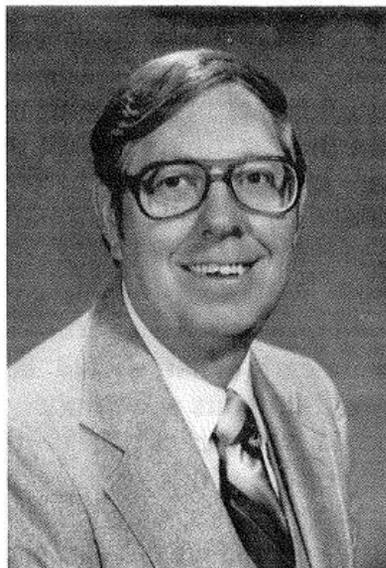
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## INTRODUCTION

In the light of Biblical teaching, what should be the Christian's attitude toward the Middle East crisis? Are these events a part of the prelude to the fulfillment of literal prophecies in the Bible? Is the battle of Armageddon about to take place? Is the second coming of Christ near? Will Christ soon come and set up a literal kingdom and reign for a thousand years from Jerusalem? What should be the Christian's attitude toward the wars and rumors of war in the Middle East? Should the Christian be working with all of his might and praying with all of his power that we may avoid war in the Middle East and thus use his influence to work for peace? On the other hand, should the Christian be praying that the war will grow more intense and become Armageddon and should the Christian work to urge our government to get deeply involved in this in order to bring on a great worldwide war which will fulfill the prophecies concerning Armageddon?

Answers to the above questions deeply divide Christians and Bible believers of equal devotion and integrity. Serious problems are posed within Christendom and in Christendom's effort to reach out to those of other religions or of no religion. There are many other pro-

blems of serious proportions involved in finding a solution as to the proper Christian attitude concerning the Middle East crisis by means of a careful, prayerful study of the Bible.

To put the discussion in sharper focus, some Christians, who view the present situation in the Middle East as the fulfillment of prophecy, believe Christians must strongly support Israel and encourage escalation of the conflict. One champion of this view has said,

Should Christians support Israel? They must if they are to fulfill one of God's purposes in the church: to serve as a catalyst to provoke Israel to envy and thus to encourage her to seek God more earnestly in penitence and faith in preparation for the coming of the Messiah.<sup>1</sup>

This same advocate strongly defends the conduct of Israel and affirms that God is responsible. He stresses,

Do not condemn Israel for being "too warlike." She is fulfilling God's word and His role for her in these last days of the age. It is God who has made little Israel "a threshing sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth" to thresh her adversaries round about her. If you must criticize someone for Israel's military prowess and successes, take the matter up with God, for He is responsible.<sup>2</sup>

While to many, the above statement may seem strange and extreme, it is representative of an increasingly vocal element within Christianity who view the present Middle East crisis as the beginning of a holy war

understood by them to be the battle of Armageddon. They view this holy war as inevitable and victory for Christians as certain, culminating in the establishment of the literal reign of Christ for a millennium in Jerusalem.

The number of Christians espousing this view has been growing steadily for one and a half centuries. The growth has accelerated tremendously during the last decade. One source estimates the present number of members in this movement to be between 30 and 50 million in the United States alone.<sup>3</sup> In addition, there are many millions in Europe, Canada, Australia and even in South America. Those who believe in the above concepts cut across many denominational lines. In general, most of them would accept the designation as premillennialists though the full picture is more complex.

### **A Brief History of Developments in the Middle East**

To understand the present Middle East crisis and its relation to Christianity, one needs to study thoroughly the history of dispensational premillennialism, Zionism and the state of Israel over the last one and one half centuries. Sources for this are cited in the footnotes but such a thorough study is impossible here. Hopefully, a brief resume will be helpful and stimulate a more thorough study.<sup>4</sup>

The main feature of dispensational premillennialism relative to the Middle East crisis is the doctrine that all the Biblical prophecies concerning restoration of Israel relate to the return of the Jewish people to their

homeland prior to the second coming of Christ. About 1830 J. N. Darby, one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren, began teaching what has come to be called dispensational premillennialism. Many have furthered and popularized this doctrine. No one person has been more influential in spreading dispensational teachings than C. I. Scofield. His Bible-study courses, preaching, numerous articles, pamphlets and most of all his *Scofield Reference Bible*, popularized the doctrine throughout the United States and Canada. Though he did not claim originality for his work, he clarified and standardized the work of others.<sup>5</sup>

Scofield, in his scholarly and didactic works, drew heavily on the preaching and practical work of William E. Blackstone. Blackstone laid a solid foundation for modern militant dispensationalism and Zionism. He accomplished this by his popular preachings, his famous work *Jesus Is Coming*, and his benevolent activities on behalf of persecuted Jews. Blackstone affirmed,

The title deed to Palestine is recorded, not in the Mohammedan Serai of Jerusalem nor the Serglio of Constantinople, but in hundreds of millions of Bibles now extant in more than 300 languages of the earth.<sup>6</sup>

Blackstone is considered by some to have been “the father of Zionism.” He devoted much time and money to evangelization among Jews and to the advocacy of Zionism. He organized a large conference of Christians and Jews in Chicago in 1889 to discuss the persecution of Jews in Russia. He and other Christians proclaimed

strong support for the immigration of Russian Jews to Palestine. He and others of like persuasion supported the course of Zionism before large audiences all over the country in their prophecy conferences. A Jewish friend wrote Blackstone expressing his own appreciation and that of Supreme Court Justice Brandeis who was at one time president of the Zionist movement. The letter stated, "Mr. Brandeis is perfectly infatuated with the work you have done along the lines of Zionism....in fact, he agrees with me that you are the father of Zionism as your work antedates Herzl."<sup>7</sup>

Lord Shaftesbury is another leader with Christian background whose understanding of Biblical prophecy moved him to work hard in England to prepare the way for Jews to return to Palestine. His daily prayers were directed to the second coming. The ring he wore on his right hand contained the words, "Oh, pray for the peace of Jerusalem." He and others helped to create an atmosphere favorable to Zionism that survived well in to the twentieth century when the Jews themselves began to press for a homeland in Palestine.<sup>8</sup>

*The Zionist Movement stands on the shoulders of dispensational premillennialism.*

One student of Zionism has observed, "Zionism is as old as the Jewish dispersion. The idea certainly did not start eighty years ago—the *organized movement* did."<sup>9</sup> However, both Jewish and Christian historians clearly conclude that Jewish Zionism could never have gotten off the ground, much less achieved the actual creation of the state of Israel apart from help and encourage-

ment from the Christian community based on two convictions. The first is that the Bible prophesies the return and reestablishment of the nation of Israel in Palestine before the second coming of Christ. The other is the Christian compassion and sympathy for the severe persecution suffered by the Jews, especially as these reached the zenith in the holocaust under Hitler.<sup>10</sup>

Many have thought of the Zionist movement as a secular and political movement. While there have been some secular unbelieving Jewish and Christian Zionists, basically the underlying conviction and emotional appeal has been based, either consciously or unconsciously, on the religious belief that Palestine belongs to the Jews as promised by God and that the Jews must return there. The basic religious nature of the present crisis in the Middle East is seen in the fact that the Zionist movement basically refused to consider any possible home for the Jews other than Palestine. For example, in 1903 the British government made the Zionist organization a provisional offer of an area of 6,000 square miles in the uninhabited highlands of the East Africa protectorate. This offer was warmly appreciated as a mark of British goodwill, but it gave rise to sharp differences of opinion between a minority of Zionists who urged its acceptance and a much larger body of Zionists who were alarmed at any suggestion of the diversion of Zionist energies from Palestine.<sup>11</sup>

Modern Zionists clearly acknowledge the religious basis of their movement and credit the success to God in fulfilling His promises. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, evaluates the reestablishment of

Israel as the fulfillment of God's promise, "I will surely assemble, oh Jacob, all of these; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel."<sup>12</sup> Many other Jewish Zionists could be quoted both as to their belief that modern Israel is the fulfillment of God's promise to the Jews and their recognition that Christian Zionists have helped greatly to create the atmosphere to make modern Israel possible.

### *The Erroneous Basis of Premillennialism and Zionism*

Many Christians, probably the majority of Christians, believe the premillennial and Zionistic interpretation of the restoration prophecies is an erroneous one. This writer certainly believes that premillennialism and Zionism is based on an error-filled system of Biblical interpretation. This means the present state of Israel is of men and not of God. Furthermore, this writer believes that the premillennial and Zionistic understandings of scripture and practices resulting from these pose grave dangers to our present civilization.

#### **Premillennialism and Zionism wrongly interpret the Bible.**

1. *The historical context of Biblical prophecy must be considered.* Premillennial and Zionistic interpreters read the Bible as if it were written in this present generation. They ignore all of the history of Judaism and Christianity between the prophets and now. They ignore the historical context in which the original statements were made.

For example, one such interpreter refers to

Deuteronomy 32 as the prophetic ode of Moses and views this as prophecy instead of seeing what it really is—a poetic history written by Moses concerning the experiences of the children of Israel in the wilderness. Clearly Deuteronomy 32:16, 17 and 21 refer back to the incident of the golden calf in Exodus 32 and the incident of Baalpeor in Numbers 25 and similar instances of idolatry. When Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:21 in Romans 10:19, he is not citing his as prophecy but rather as history repeating itself. In rejecting Christ the Jews were acting as they did when they rejected God in the wilderness. If Deuteronomy 32 was a prophecy in any sense, and Paul was using it prophetically, he still was viewing Deuteronomy 32 in relation to events involved at Paul's time in the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles. It is false and dangerous hermeneutics for a modern uninspired interpreter to apply Deuteronomy 32 to the situation in the present day Middle East.

Time does not allow a careful consideration of this or of many other passages. Briefly, most of the passages used by premillennialists and Zionists are prophecies of restoration of physical Israel to physical Palestine from physical Babylon. These prophecies were uttered by the prophets before, at the point of, or during the Babylonian captivity. To the extent that they were fulfilled, they were fulfilled in the restoration proclaimed by Cyrus and led by Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah and others between 536 B.C. and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Passages such as Jeremiah 30, 31, Ezekiel 33-48 and others must first be studied very carefully in their historical context and in terms of the

history that followed between then and now. When the passages are so studied, one will see that God has fulfilled all that he could fulfill in view of the continued sinfulness of the Hebrew people.

*2. The conditional nature of prophecy must be recognized.*

In Jeremiah 18:1-12 God clearly reveals the conditional nature of His promises and His threats. Verses 9 and 10 affirm “at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.” According to verses 7 and 8, the reverse is true concerning His threats. If God’s threats are conditioned upon man’s continued disobedience and may be withdrawn when a man or a nation repents, then the same is true concerning God’s promises.

The prophets’ basic mission was to warn the Jews to repent and serve God or else God would take them into captivity. Amos 9 serves as an excellent example of the conditional nature of both threats and promises. In Amos 9:1-10, the prophet speaks of the destruction and scattering that was to be done in Israel, particularly in anticipation of the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom. In the light of all the rest of the scripture and especially the message of the prophets, it is clear that the purpose of such threats was to move the Jews to repent. If the Jews had listened to Amos and later to Hosea, the northern kingdom would have been spared and would

not have gone into captivity. God's threats were conditional, but the Hebrews did not meet the conditions by repenting so that they could be saved from captivity.

Further, in support of the above point concerning the conditional nature of God's threats, the case of Micah and his preaching should be studied. Micah strongly condemned the sins of Judah and warned of the serious consequences of destruction and captivity that would come to Judah and Jerusalem. In Micah 3:12 he warned that Zion would be plowed as a field and Jerusalem would become heaps. In Jeremiah 26:16-19, we have an inspired interpretation of this. Here we learn that Micah's prophecy was an unfulfilled prophecy. Jerusalem was not plowed as a field nor did it become heaps. Yet Micah and God were most happy that the prophecy was not fulfilled. The prophecy was not fulfilled because Hezekiah, king of Judah, and the people of Judah listened to Micah and were moved by him to repent and to entreat the favor of the Lord. The Lord then repented of the evil which he had pronounced against them and did not bring Micah's prophecy to fulfillment. In this Micah stands in exact parallel to Jonah and his prophecy concerning the destruction of Nineveh. Micah did not express a specific condition and neither did Jonah. Yet it is clear from the inspired interpretation of both Micah's prophecy and Jonah's prophecy that the threats were conditional.

Amos 9:11-15 speaks of God's promise to bring back His people and to rebuild the wasted cities. God's promises to bless Israel in this passage are no more binding upon him than his promises to the generation he

took out of Egypt and promised to take to Canaan. God did not keep His promises to the generation twenty years of age and older that he brought out of Egypt. However, it was not God's fault, but the sinful Israelites' fault because they disbelieved God and died in their disbelief as Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 clearly present. Had the Jews who went into Assyrian captivity repented and served God, and had the Jews who went into Babylonian captivity repented and served God, then God would have blessed them and fulfilled all of His promises to them concerning a renewed kingdom and prosperous land. However, it is clear from Haggai, Ezra, Nehemiah and the New Testament that the Jews in captivity and after captivity were no more faithful to God than those before. They simply sinned in different matters and directions. While they may have been cured from idolatry, they moved to self-righteousness, nationalism and the Phariseism of binding the traditions of the elders above the will of God. They shifted from the liberalism of disregarding God's law to the legalism of making laws where God had made none.

Proponents of premillennialism strongly insist that God's promise to give the land to Abraham and his descendants constitutes an everlasting covenant that can never be broken and must ultimately be fulfilled by the restoration of Israel to the land. However, this assertion is totally refuted by the many passages that clearly affirm that their continuation in the land is dependent upon their righteousness. If they are righteous and obedient they can stay in the land, but if they are disobedient and rebellious, they will be scattered and punish-

ed. Monser gives an extensive list of passages that affirm that the possession of the land by the descendants of Abraham is conditioned upon obedience to God and their refraining from idolatry.<sup>13</sup> Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 are entire chapters devoted to this concept. Deuteronomy 4:25-31 is a very explicit passage concerning the Hebrews' limitations and possession of the land. God warns that if they commit idolatry they "shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto you go over the Jordan to possess it; you shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed."<sup>14</sup>

3. *The actual fulfillment of God's prophecies must be recognized in history.* God did fulfill His prophecies and promises to bring the Hebrews back from captivity, to restore them to the physical land of Palestine, to rebuild the temple, to reconstitute worship in the temple, and to bless them in the land. It is clear from sacred and from secular history that Cyrus decreed that the Jews could return. Many of them chose to return, the temple was rebuilt, and many blessings came to them. The rebuilt temple stood and was in use from 515 B.C. to A.D. 70. The promises of God did not come to full fruition after the Babylonian captivity not because God failed but because of the Jews' sins. When the Jews continued in their sin and rebellion and ultimately when they rejected God's son, God abolished all obligation concerning His promises about a physical nation and announced through His son, "your house is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:38).

Jesus then proceeded to prophesy the total and utter destruction of the city of Jerusalem and of the temple. Ezekiel 40-48 concerning the rebuilding of the temple was uttered sometime prior to 560 B.C. That temple was rebuilt as Ezekiel prophesied and his prophecy was fulfilled. Christ himself decreed the destruction of that temple which Ezekiel had prophesied and it was destroyed in A.D. 70. There is no reason whatsoever, and no sensible approach to the interpretation of scripture at all, that could lead one to look for still another fulfillment of Ezekiel 40-48. His prophecy has been fulfilled. The Jews sinned again and brought utter destruction upon the second temple. There is no prophecy of a third temple and no reason that anyone should ever expect at any time in the future that a third Jewish temple should be built. Ezekiel prophesied of one rebuilt temple and not two. Christ in Matthew 24 announced the destruction of that temple and the abrogation of any further obligation of God concerning a physical temple and a physical homeland for the Jews.

The prophets had prophesied of one return and restoration to the homeland. That took place from 536 B.C. to A.D. 70. The Jews had their opportunity but forfeited it. There is no reason to look for any further physical fulfillment of those physical restoration prophecies. One restoration was prophesied, not two. Christ decreed an end of that restoration and announced the beginning of a new dispersion. If Christ and His apostles had expected a second restoration they would have so announced. The New Testament is in dead silence concerning any further restoration of the

Hebrew people to the physical land of Palestine after A.D. 70.

4. *The principles of typological prophecy and the fuller meaning of prophecy, recognized and used by the New Testament authors, must be followed in interpreting Old Testament prophecy.* The apostle Peter affirmed that “No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20). This principle is clearly illustrated in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. The eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53, when asked by Philip, “Do you understand what you read?” The eunuch answered correctly for himself and for all others when he said, “How can I except someone shall guide me?” Philip, beginning in Isaiah 53, preached unto him Christ and explained the way in which Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the suffering servant was to be understood in Christ.

This same principle is true of all of the prophecy of the Old Testament. Apart from an inspired interpreter such as Philip or an inspired interpretation such as those given in the New Testament, one is on dangerous grounds to begin making his own private interpretations of Old Testament prophecies. While we might think a particular Old Testament passage might contain in it some reference to fulfillment in Christ or in the church, we must avoid dogmatism with such interpretations and certainly not bind such interpretations *nor divide the body of Christ over them.*

The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 3:1-8, makes it clear that neither he nor any of the other apostles or New Testament writers could understand God’s eternal pur-

pose, God's promises and prophecies with respect to Christ and the church, until they were revealed to them by the Holy Spirit. Paul, Peter, John, Matthew and the other New Testament writers, after receiving inspired interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, wrote their meaning so we can understand. As Paul says, "I wrote before in few words, whereby, when you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ." Thus, the first basic New Testament principle concerning the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is that an inspired interpreter, that is a New Testament writer, is needful for us to understand Old Testament prophecy.

Another clear New Testament principle in the use and interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is that certain Old Testament events or institutions, and in some cases poetry and prose expressions, were types or prefigurements concerning Christ and the church. Hebrews 9 clearly understands the tabernacle and some of its services to have had a literal Old Testament function and yet in addition to have symbolized or typified the spiritual things about Christ and the church. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 understands the passing through the Red Sea to typify or prefigure baptism for Christians. Matthew likewise indicates that Israel's going into Egypt and being called out of Egypt was typical or symbolic of Christ being carried to Egypt and then being called out. when Matthew cites Hosea 11:1, he is using Hosea and the exodus experience as a type or figure. Hosea 11:1 studied in context is not a prophecy, per se, of Christ but a historical reference back to the exodus.

The New Testament also clearly presents the principle that Old Testament prophetic expressions had at least a dual and perhaps a multiple meaning. Matthew 2:17, 18 cites Jeremiah 31:15 as being fulfilled in the weeping at Bethlehem associated with the slaughter of the innocent children. When Jeremiah 31:15 is studied in context, it is clear that the original audience of Jeremiah would have understood this to refer to the figurative weeping of Rachel as the symbolic mother of the Hebrew people because the Hebrew people were suffering so much in the destruction of Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit, as he inspired Jeremiah, certainly must have had a more extensive and a more long-range meaning in consideration. Thus a partial meaning was fulfilled in the Babylonian captivity, but the full meaning was accomplished or fulfilled in the weeping at Bethlehem for the slain children.

According to 1 Peter 1:10-12, the prophets by inspiration may have had some consciousness that their messages had a meaning greater and more extensive than the one for their immediate audience. However, they did not apparently have a clear understanding as to the long-range meaning of their own message.

This same principle is true in some of the early preaching of the apostles. On Pentecost Peter said in Acts 2:39, "To you is the promise, and to your children, and to all who are afar off." Peter certainly did not understand this to mean the Gentiles, yet it becomes clear from Acts 10 that the Gentiles were included in the promise. If Acts 2:39 could have a multiple meaning or a partial meaning to Peter and the audience on that day

and a fuller meaning after the events of Acts 10, the principle can certainly apply to Old Testament prophets and some of their messages.

This multiple or fuller meaning concept is involved in James' use of Amos 9:11, 12 in Acts 15:15, 16. As noted earlier, Amos 9:11-15 would have been understood by Amos and his immediate audience to be a promise from God to the Hebrews of the northern Kingdom. Israel had rejected the Davidic dynasty when they followed Jeroboam in the rebellion against Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. Amos was telling them that after they went into Assyrian captivity and the northern kingdom was destroyed, if the individual Hebrews would repent and turn to God, God would again bring them under the dynasty of David. He would bring them back from captivity and rebuild their wasted cities and give them peace and security in the land. The words of Amos had a literal meaning to him and his audience. However, they had a fuller meaning to God and the Holy Spirit. This fuller meaning was made known by the revelation of James which he revealed to other Christians at the conference in Jerusalem, just as Philip revealed the fuller meaning of Isaiah 53 to the eunuch. Even though the Jews had continued to sin against God and thus had not received the fulfillment of the literal promise, the fuller and spiritual aspects of the promise were fulfilled in Christ and in the church.

Philip Mauro was at one time a premillennialist. Through careful study of the Bible he led himself out of that doctrine and wrote an extensive refutation of it. After extensive study of the arguments in support of

premillennialism and response to each, he summarizes the basic response and refutation of premillennialism. His response concurs with and underscores the above four principles that have been stated.

But some will ask: How about all those promises to and concerning the people of Israel, especially the promises of the repossession by them of the land God gave to their fathers?

The answer can be given in a few words:

(1) That most of those promises (if not all) were spoken before the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity, and many of them, including all such as were to have a literal accomplishment, were fulfilled in that event;

(2) That the promises concerning the possession of the land of Canaan were conditional upon faithfulness and obedience on the part of the people of Israel, who were repeatedly warned that if their hearts turned away from the Lord they should be plucked from off the land (Deut. 4:26; 8:19,20; 30:17,18; Josh. 23:13,16).

(3) Such of the promises of that sort as were unconditional are the heritage of the true Israel, the spiritual children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7,29); and they have their fulfillment in the true land of promise, which the fathers of Israel had in view; for they were desiring—not the land of Canaan, or any other earthly territory, but “a better country, that is an heavenly” (Heb. 11:16).<sup>15</sup>

5. *Figurative language must be accurately and con-*

*sistently distinguished.* Many premillennialists are inconsistent in their interpretation of language. They mix literal language and figurative language extensively in the same passage. For example they interpret Ezekiel 38 as a literal battle rather than as a figurative battle of spiritual forces of good and evil struggling for supremacy. Thus, they interpret the passage literally so far as war is concerned, but they interpret the elements involved in the war figuratively. Instead of literal horses and horsemen they now have automatic rifles and advanced weaponry.

The same problem is involved in their inconsistency in the interpretation of Revelation. For example, Revelation 16:10-19:21 is generally interpreted by premillennialists to refer to the great battle of Armageddon. They understand this to be a literal war between literal physical nations at the literal mount Megiddo in Palestine. Yet, they want to understand Babylon in this section to be figurative of the modern opponents of Israel. They interpret the horses, horsemen and swords and other aspects of the battle figuratively since they believe that modern weapons will be used in the forthcoming Middle East war. Such inconsistency invalidates their approach to the interpretation of prophecy.

### **Premillennialism and Zionism Create Grave Moral and Doctrinal Consequences**

If premillennialism and religious Zionism are based on a false interpretation of scripture, and this author

firmly believes they are, these false doctrines and interpretations may well lead to several disastrous results, both of a moral and a doctrinal nature. It is urgent that one consider the consequences of a doctrine. If these consequences are not in harmony with the principles of Christ, one should recoil in abhorrence from the doctrine.

1. *Militant premillennialism and Zionism must bear the moral responsibility for recent bloodshed in the Middle East and for more extensive bloodshed in World War III if it comes as predicted by militant premillennialists.* If the present and forthcoming conflict in the Middle East is truly the great battle of Armageddon and the proper interpretation of Revelation and other prophecies, then militant premillennialists can feel good and vindicated. However, this writer and most Christians have serious doubts that this is the proper interpretation.

Had the state of Israel not been established in 1947, the history of the Middle East for the last 35 years would be entirely different. We cannot, of course, know what that history would have been. We can know, however, that bloodshed during the last 35 years has been caused by premillennial and Zionistic agitation that resulted in the creation of the state of Israel. As established earlier, without premillennial preaching in the western world, the atmosphere would never have been created to make Zionism, whether political alone or religious Zionism, successful. Further, if militant premillennialists and religious Zionists persist in viewing the Middle East conflict as a holy war and pressing for

the possession of all territories by Israel which they formerly possessed, the rebuilding of the temple and other such matters, World War III will certainly result. Millions will be killed and their blood will be upon the head of Jerry Falwell and a long host of names of those who for a century and a half have pressed for this so-called "Holy War" which will be a most unholy war.

One militant premillennialist states that soon Russia will conquer the Middle East and Israel and this "will ignite World War III, whereupon God will destroy all the nations that came against Jerusalem." Since he believes this is an inspired description of what must happen, he believes Christians must support Israel if they are to fulfill one of God's purposes for the church.<sup>16</sup>

The question concerning Christians' support for Israel is a two-pronged one. It is one thing to recognize that the present state exists and to try to come to some practical, moral, political, economic solution to work for peace. It is quite another thing to view the present Middle East conflict as a holy war and to work to further escalate it rather than diffuse it.<sup>17</sup>

If indeed it turns out in history to be that this present conflict is of men and not of God, then militant premillennialists and Zionists must bear tremendous moral responsibility for the slaughter and maiming of millions. What a terrible burden for the conscience and what a terrible burden to carry unrepented of as one stands before God's judgment. This author thoroughly believes that the present conflict is of men and not of God and urges Christians to attach no holy war concept to it. When God wants to bring Armageddon, He will

bring it in His own time and His own manner. He has given us no specific inspired instructions other than to live a Christian life day by day.

2. *When time and history make clear that militant premillennialism and Zionism is a false system of men and not of God, this will result in the disillusionment of millions who have been attracted to groups preaching this doctrine.* If time allowed, past historical occasions could be cited when limited movements were started based on the forthcoming fulfillment of prophecy and working for the return of Jews to Palestine. When these movements failed, each time many became disillusioned, fell away themselves and caused many others to be disillusioned in the possibility of understanding prophecy or the Bible. Since the present situation is by far more pervasive and involves millions of people, the damage that will be done by these false systems of Biblical interpretation is incalculable.

3. *Militant premillennialism by its aggressive presentation of its theory creates division in Christendom that is unnecessary and destructive.* This division weakens and undermines the effectiveness of Christians. Theoretical interpretations of prophecies should never be pushed with the force of dogma and should never be the occasion of division among the people of God. If one wants to hold a theory individually and discuss it academically, this may be well. However, to push a theory to the point that it involves nations in war, and maybe the whole world, is utterly insane.

4. *The erroneous interpretations of premillennialism will result in producing unbelief in present Christians*

*and strengthen the unbelief concerning the Bible and Christianity in the irreligious and those who are believers in other religions.* Unbelievers and those of other religions will use the obviously false interpretations as evidence that the Bible is erroneous or that it is impossible to understand. Already, the ultra pro-Israel stance of militant premillennialism “has driven countless Arabs, Muslims, and other ‘third world’ people from the savior.”<sup>24</sup>

The doctrines and practices of militant premillennialism result in harsh, unmerciful, unloving attitudes and actions toward the Arabs and other enemies of Israel. There is a clear tendency to practice respect of persons instead of recognizing that “in every nation, he who fears God and works righteousness is acceptable to Him” (Acts 10:35).

Christians should be working to bring about peace between both sides and they should be working to evangelize and get both sides to accept Christ as redeemer. If militant premillennialists are successful in involving the United States in a war on the side of Israel against the Arab world, the Russians and China, as Hal Lindsey is working to accomplish, the mission efforts of Christians will be hampered for generations, if not centuries, to come. Of course, premillennialists do not believe there will be centuries left but decades or less. However, if they are wrong as this writer believes they are, their doctrine is doing and will continue to do untold damage in the efforts to reach others with the true Gospel.

*5. The premillennialists' preoccupation or obsession*

*with matters of eschatology leads to the neglect of emphasis on practical matters of Christian living and evangelization of the world, as noted in the section above.* Many in these groups are not practicing Christian attitudes toward those in Arab countries. Their approach in doctrine hinders evangelization.

6. *Premillennialists err in their approach to the interpretation of the scriptures.* They do not make a proper practice of exegesis and hermeneutics. This erroneous approach not only leads them to wrong conclusions concerning eschatology, but it also may lead to erroneous doctrines concerning redemption, election, apostasy and other important matters concerning the church and Christianity in the here and now.

7. *The premillennial interpretation results in denying the doctrine of the free moral agency of man.* If the Jews had free moral agency at the time when Christ first came, and God could not guarantee or force them to accept Christ, how can one believe that God will force Israel to accept Christ at His second coming?

The very point of Romans 11 is that the Jews were cut off from the olive tree because of unbelief. They could and can come back into the olive tree at any time they believe in Christ. However, this is a matter with each individual Jew. God will never force them to believe.

8. *The premillennial doctrine concerning the rebuilding of the temple, the reconstitution of the Levitical priesthood and the reinstatement of animal sacrifices contradicts plain New Testament teachings that Christ is the final and ultimate sacrifice.* Hebrews,

especially chapters 7-10, argues plainly that the law of Moses and its institutions were never fully effective and are no longer in effect. Christ has replaced the Levitical priesthood and is a better priest. His sacrifice is sufficient, whereas those sacrifices were insufficient. His sacrifice is made once for all and there is no need for any further sacrifice. There is absolutely no place in the Christian age nor in the heavenly age to come, when Christ returns again, for a temple with a Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices. The prophecy concerning the second temple in Ezekiel was fulfilled in the temple built by Zerubbabel in 521-516 B.C. When Christ decreed the destruction of that temple, neither he nor his apostles made provisions for building another temple, for another priesthood or for any other sacrifices. This doctrine is in total contradiction to the entire purpose for which Christ came to earth.

### **Conclusion**

In light of the above discussion this writer presents the following conclusions and recommendations.

1. It is a serious and dangerous thing for a man or movements to stir up nations to war at any time. Already hundreds of thousands have died and suffered extensively due to the Middle East crisis. Unless concerted efforts are made by all to end the Middle East crisis in peace, millions more will likely die and suffer.
2. One should study carefully and prayerfully and examine his conscience thoroughly before accepting a doctrine and becoming part of a

movement whose major goal is to create World War III and to cause the deaths of millions of people. One needs to be absolutely certain that the doctrine he is following is of God and not of men before he advocates a doctrine that will put the blood of other men on his hands.

3. It is one thing to espouse a cause or follow a theory that might result in persecution to oneself and even death to oneself. It is a totally different thing to become a part of a movement and advocate a doctrine that is going to bring death to thousands of others.

4. The difference between premillennialists and non-millennialists is far more than an academic discussion. To a great extent it involves nothing less than world peace. It is therefore important and vital that Christians study and properly interpret Biblical prophecy. First, one should study that he may know and practice the truth; secondly, that he may teach those in the church and children the truth that they may not be led astray by false doctrine. Thirdly, one must study and teach to turn those who are in the error of premillennialism from that error which is a powerful contributing force to the past and possibly forthcoming wars in the Middle East.

5. Christians must pray for peace in the Middle East. However, this is the most tragic consequence of the theory of premillennialism. They must pray and work for World War III so Armageddon will come. They cannot pray for

peace.

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<sup>1</sup>See Robert Shank, "Should Christians Support Israel?," an unpublished manuscript circulated by Robert Shank, Mr. Vernon, Missouri, pp. 6,7. See also his *Until: The Coming of Messiah and His Kingdom*.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>See Ruth W. Mouly, "Israel: Darling of the Religious Right," *The Humanist*, May/June, 1982, p. 6. See the statistics on the many groups sharing literal millennial views, including Zionism.

<sup>4</sup>See *Zionism*, Volume 5 of *Israel Pocket Library* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, Inc., 1973). See also William H. Rutgers *Premillennialism in America* (Goes. Holland: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, [1930]).

<sup>5</sup>See C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: It's Rise and Development* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1958), pp. 111, 34, 35.

<sup>6</sup>See W. E. Blackstone, *Jesus is Coming* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1898, 1908, 1932), p. 235.

<sup>7</sup>See Ruth W. Mouly, "Israel: Darling of the Religious Right," p. 8.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>See Michael Pragai, "First-Hand from the Mideast: The Messiah and the Land," *Christianity Today*, October 6, 1978, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup>See G. Douglas Young, "Israel: The Unbroken Line," *Christianity Today*, October 6, 1978, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup>See "Zionism," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1957), 23:955. See also "Zionism," *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Isidore Singer, ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1909), 12:678.

<sup>12</sup>See Shank, "Should Christians Support Israel?" p. 8.

<sup>13</sup>See Harold E. Monser, *Topical Index and Digest of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1960), p. 129.

<sup>14</sup>See F. Furman Kearley, "The Conditional Nature of Prophecy," *Sound Doctrine* Vol. 4, No. 1, 1980, pp. 17-22.

<sup>15</sup>See Philip Mauro, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 221.

<sup>16</sup>See Shank, "Should Christians Support Israel?", p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 6,7.

<sup>18</sup>See Mark M. Hanna, "Israel Today: What Place in Prophecy?", *Christianity Today* January 22, 1982, p. 15.



## Featured Classes



## UNRAVELING THE TANGLES OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Marilyn Lewis

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**Education:** Jones High School, Houston, Texas (1961), Abilene Christian University (B.S., cum laude, 1964), University of Northern Colorado (M.A. 1966), Oklahoma State University (Ed.D. Oral Communication and Higher Education, 1982).



**Work and Ministry:** She is presently an ACU instructor of Women in Management, Marketing Promotion, and Sales. Serves as educational consultant to Region 14 Education Service Center, National Association of Accountants, Tinker Air Force Base, and American Society of Public Administrators. Has conducted training in personal development and communication skills for church and education groups in Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Texas. Has taught oral communication

and employment interviewing at Oklahoma State University, and extension courses throughout the state. She taught three years in the Flagstaff, Arizona and Westminister, Colorado schools while pursuing her master's degree. Marilyn teaches women's classes (family communication, interpersonal and leadership skills, listening, coping with criticism and anger), and has taught Bible classes on many levels, including a neighborhood Bible study, and is a certified instructor of the Christian Woman's Course.

**Other Fields of Special Interest:** Is a member of Women of ACU, Faculty Wives, Business & Professional Women's Club of Abilene, and the American Society of Training and Development (past vice president of Stillwater chapter). She was President-elect of the O.S.U. Graduate Student Council, and was Supreme Court Justice for Student Government. Was P.T.A. president, and served on various community improvement committees. She is listed in *Who's Who of American Women*, *Who's Who in the South and Southwest*, and *Personalities of the South*. She is a member of A.A.U.W., Speech Communication Association, International Listening Assoc., and Phi Delta Kappa.

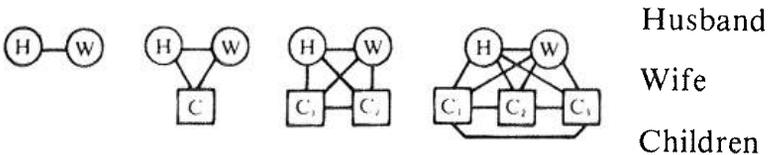
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Each of us begins the process of family communication at our birth. We immediately begin to express ourselves to those around us by our facial and body tension, cries, and coos. While families serve as a model in

language development, they are also important components in the very beginning of communication. The foundations of family life are so dependent on communication that it is important for all of us to better understand the family communication process so we can unravel any tangles that occasionally plague our lives.

*The Family System*

One of the most exciting concepts for a child is the discovery that the world is inside a huge solar system surrounded with mysterious planets, moons, and smoldering-hot stars millions of miles away. Later the child learns that the body has many different systems happily working away inside. Much later he learns that he's made of even smaller molecular systems which are made up of atoms that have tiny systems of parts also. Though these systems may be hard to visualize, the concept that the child lives in a family and is part of a family system may not be so hard. It is usually made up of a couple who married and have a relationship, much as the earth and moon are related. As children are added, the network or system grows more complex as the family relates to each new child's needs and demands and behaviors and communicates to each member. We could picture the "ropes" of communication that bind the person to the other in this manner:



As the family grows, communication patterns become more complex and probably louder as we demand attention, love, and play from other family members.

### **Family Networks: Systems of Related Families**

As atoms are parts of molecules, this family network is part of a social network or extended family made up of the kin of every member of this original couple. The network system may range in size from 15 to upwards of almost 100 relatives or people who have been considered family by custom or tradition.<sup>1</sup> This large family tribe are joined to make a large communication system which is bound together by common experiences and tensions. There is a common past, an ongoing present, and a future that makes for relationships. Each family has its own heritage of values, loyalties, family wisdom and secrets. This large family system communicates by visits, phone calls and letters, and may share special occasions like holidays, births, deaths, and reunions.

### **Workings of the Family System**

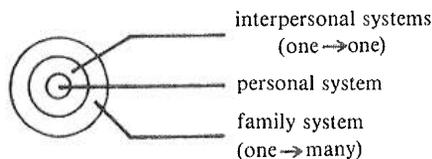
A good way to view the family would be to picture a mobile made up of people instead of birds or joggers or airplanes. It is a moving system bound together in some way where any part that moves affects the actions, reactions, and interactions of all the other parts.<sup>2</sup> It's in a delicate balance. As one part changes, or acts or speaks, it affects the actions or reactions of the other parts. as people are added to the home by birth, adoption, remarriage, or by taking in a grandparent to live, the delicate balance is changed and renegotiations are made to get

the system adjusted to a calm balance once again. The same disruption happens when a family member is disabled, is in the hospital, leaves for college, or dies. Viewing the family as a mobile may help you to picture the importance of all the members in a home being flexible, able to rebound from the crises that invariably come from living together.

### **Systems Within the System**

No family is exactly like another. Not only are some families made up of different parent combinations (natural, single, remarried, unmarried), but the children in the home may come from the original couple, from another union of one of the current parents, from another union and are adopted in. Also, people may live with the family and take on roles of a family member.

Each person under the one roof is a subsystem, with his or her own personal psychological and biological system, interpersonal system with each of the other members, and his or her own relationship with the family unit as a whole.<sup>3</sup>



### **Workings of the Family System**

Events affect the rest of the family system to the extent of each person's current relationship with the person who's being pushed out the family's usual balance. In fact, certain members may try to balance out the

rocking system, either consciously or unconsciously.

The system has a whole life greater than the sum of its parts, so in this way it may be considered to have *synergy*. In other words, the cooperative action of the family has a total effect greater than two or more people in the family taken separately. History records many families that are known for their dedication to good as well as evil. Where does your family strength lie? In building up a business, building up the Bible school? Where?

Synergy leads to the idea that systems have a *wholeness*. Though the people are seen as individuals, parts of a whole, the whole family is also seen as a unit and may be described that way, though each family member may not fit that description. For instance, “The Houcks, yeah, they’re all high achievers!” and “The Lyles are all so smart!” You might ask the question—how is my family labeled by others? What do we say and do that is communicating to the world?

The family system is such an on-going process that it becomes almost impossible for anyone to determine the causes of certain behaviors. Once *cycles of behaviors* start, each act triggers new behaviors. The statement “it all started when you...” is very hard to prove true in families and it may not even matter any more! For every “it all started when” there is a “but it wouldn’t have, if you had not done...” A child’s behavior leads to the parents’ behavior and the parents’ behavior leads to the child’s, in a cycle of behaviors. At one point in time, for example, the husband may cause tension between himself and his wife. This diffuses to the kids, and the

kids may misbehave at school or get sick or even get into drugs to balance out the tension they feel.

Families also work through *patterns or rules*, pre-scripted things by which people live. If someone made a videotape of your family over time you could see these patterns in operation. You could begin to predict actions, behaviors, remarks, or ways of punishment for broken family rules. You would also see a *calibration* of responses, as the family allows for only a minimal range of behavior before correction is made. These regulations may evolve over time in healthy families. For example, children may not be allowed to talk with their mouths full, but at parties this isn't noticed or punished, and when they become teenagers the parents don't mention this infraction because they're glad the kids are talking to the rest of the family at all!

### **Family Themes**

Each family has one or more *themes* by which it can be identified and by which it lives with the outer world. For instance, Family X might have the themes "us alone against the world" and "us four and no more!" These themes have behaviors that go with them which are tied to values and attitudes. For example, would the X Family be apt to invite visitors home after church? Sign up to help with youth activities? Go to Church dinners? Offer a ride to a widow on Sunday evenings? Probably not. Other family themes might show seeking behaviors ("it's hard to be a family without a man") or philanthropic behaviors ("We help those less fortunate than ourselves.")<sup>4</sup> To find your theme, ask "who are we?"

and “what do we do about it?” You may be surprised if you ask your family. One child told me, after he pondered this question for a minute, that their family’s theme was, “We keep the living room clean”!

Thinking through your family theme to find your underlying philosophy of life will help you understand how you spend your time, how you handle your money, and how important communication is with those in the church, the neighborhood, the people at work, and the extended family. If your family theme is “we are survivors” you will probably find assertive dealing with outsiders may be encouraged and any signs of weakness may be unacceptable. Parents support determined, independent, and self-sufficient behavior, while dependence, clinging, and expressing emotion are discouraged. Each member might be expected to join the others in the battle for survival by putting family before all other people. When adversity comes, the individuals may be encouraged to find alternatives, make the best of a bad situation, and to keep a stiff upper lip.<sup>5</sup> So in the process of putting your family’s theme into words, you may see some decisions have to be made or priorities rearranged. You may also notice that your theme is different from that of your family you grew up in, or other families you’ve admired or tried to have as role models. Do you still want to buy into their themes? Adjust them? Or reject those themes as not right for your family?

### **Family Boundaries**

As well as having family themes, families also seem to

set up physical and psychological boundaries for dealing with the world. These may include geographical limits and aspirational levels. When individuals push beyond these limits, this may be seen as a threat to the family value system that serves as a guardian for these boundaries the couple and the family has. A particularly gifted child may push the family boundaries by moving far away, or getting unusual training for an unheard-of occupation for anyone in that given family. This usually results in decreased meaningful communication as the gap between their two worlds keep widening. We often see this when someone from a non-religious family is converted and wants to become a preacher, or someone in a religious family leaves the church. The scorned family values lead to pain, strained communication, and perhaps even rejection. This testing of family boundaries may involve deep emotional conflict which could be resolved and learned from, resulting in family growth like that of the Prodigal Son. Or, the action could result in severing of the family bonds with members who eventually leave the system. How sad it is to see how children are kicked out of the family for marrying the “wrong person” or not getting the education or reaching for certain goals the family had in mind. Thus, the boundaries set by each family heavily determine the kinds of communication that can occur within the family system.

### **Communication and Family Life Cycles**

Many popular books have been written about the cycles a family goes through and how communication is

affected by them. These cycles may be represented by six stages.<sup>6</sup> In the first stage, *courtship and engagement*, there is usually much self-disclosure and breaking down of facades. Affection is expressed, dreams revealed, and plans made. In the second stage, *marriage to first pregnancy*, conflicts may occur and roles defined. Rules are developed and old relationships with friends are renegotiated. The couple communicates about sexual and economic matters, and self-disclosure, planning, and dreaming still goes on.

With the *birth of the first child* the couple moves into the third stage of the cycle. A new language is used and transmission of culture and religion becomes important. All this may call for a renegotiation of roles and rules as life is less predictable with the child taking up more time, and the parents are tired and distracted from one another. One couple realized they rarely talked directly to one another when the baby was around: they said, “tell Mama to give me the salt” and “tell Daddy he cleaned the garage so cle-e-e-n!”

With the arrival of school for the first child to adolescence of the last comes the fourth stage, *individuation*. Now the children often take the lead in communication style. What the kids are involved in is what today’s family is apt to get involved in and discuss. Closer ties may develop between the same-sex parent until the teen years, when new sets of conflicts may arise. The parents are dealing with mid-life crises while the children are coping with identity crises. Housewives may start talking of returning to school or work and more negotiating of roles needs to take place to keep the

system in balance.

With the departure of the children comes the fifth stage, the *empty nest*. This is an awful term for a stage that can be as endearing as that original couple who cheerfully began marriage together, loving and learning one another. But there is a change in the communication pattern where so much has centered around the children. This may be the time when external resources are sought to regain a sense of self or worth.

The sixth stage is *integration of loss or aging*. There can be a loss of cross-generational conversation. People often feel the need to share what they've learned, but this is often difficult as there are fewer listeners. The soap opera family may take the place of the goings-on of the "missing" family system in the house. This is where small groups at church may help the situation with weekly quilting and groundskeeping parties, dinner and game nights, care and visitation groups where sharing takes place, van treks to church retreats and lectureships, and adopted grandparents programs.

If couples are aware of the changes and stress family cycles may bring they can better prepare themselves to deal with these situations with love, humor, and grace, helping one another to feel more secure with each new adjustment. Coming from two other systems that have been through these same cycles gives them some first-hand experience. The family system in which you were reared is your *family of origin*. How did our family of origin cope? How is their example useful to us now, either to copy or reject?

When a person marries into another family system, he

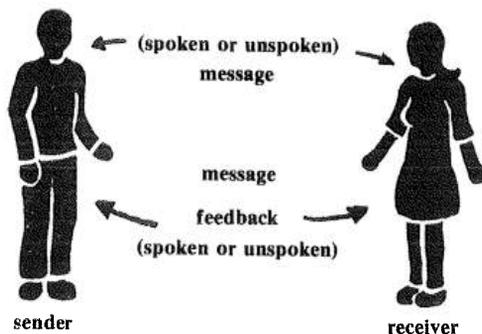
or she finds that even though the message systems were similar, they were still different. The greater the difference, the harder it is to bring these together in marriage. For example, there are wide differences in the way families handle conflict, show love, and celebrate holidays. These various rules and patterns relate to the family's culture, mobility, education, and economic level. If a family member remarries, new ideas from their family of origin have to be incorporated or rejected by the system. This can be especially painful for the children involved.

### How Communication Happens

Most of our relations with members of our family are based on and regulated by our communication with them. We typically communicate face-to-face, by phone, and by scribbled notes and letters. Whatever medium we use (a) all behavior is seen as communicating a *message* between a *sender* and a *receiver*, and (b) all communication defines, maintains, or changes the nature of the relationship between the people communicating.<sup>7</sup> Whether the communication is with words (verbal) or with body language or tone of voice (nonverbal), we always have to do two things: (1) actively listen and pay attention and (2) check on the meanings we receive from the sender (give and get *feedback*—see figure below). Since people have different meanings for words and we have to fight hard to avoid miscommunication. For instance, when we have the sender attempting to communicate she can intend to give a message “I hate you!” It may be that this

message was not heard or was reinterpreted (e.g., “She’s just tired, so she doesn’t really mean it,”) but the sender attempted to communicate this information. So a message sent is not necessarily a message correctly received. Nothing is so easy as talking, but maybe nothing is so difficult as communicating. In fact, we’d be a “perfect” person if we were never at fault in what we said (James 3:2b).

Sometimes the communication may be from the viewpoint of the receiver. The receiver interprets a message from someone’s behavior and believes this to be a message (e.g., “You didn’t say anything, so you must think it’s okay.”) Whether or not the sender intended to send this or any other message, the receiver got one, because he or she figured the other’s behavior intended to send a message. When the sender and receiver agree about the message sent and message received, we have mutual communication.



Try as we might, we simply cannot *not* communicate to others. “Every little movement has a meaning all its own” is not just true in Hawaii. Plus, every little word

and inflection and lift of an eyebrow means something to us as senders and receivers. Families communicate facts, opinions, perceptions, wishes, and information about the world, themselves and their relationships to God. People even talk about what they talk about or point out that they can't seem to talk about certain things easily. If you watch what family members say you will see that their communication not only conveys what the sender wants done (this is the content part), but also shows a certain relationship between sender and receiver, one in which this kind of order can be given.

Often we infer what the relationship is, but people do sometimes talk to each other about the nature of the relationship between the two. For instance, the imperative "Get the lawn mowed today" not only conveys what the sender wants done (this is the content part), but also shows a certain relationship between sender and receiver, one in which this kind of order can be given.

Often we infer what the relationship is, but people do sometimes talk to each other about the nature of their relationship. For example, "I'm the head of this house," or "We'll act as equals," or "I'm dependent on you." But whether we talk about the relationship, it is always being defined and redefined as we behave in each other's presence. Seeing what child orders the other around, who initiates peacemaking, or ends up giving in helps us understand relationships in the family, and what roles we play in its ongoing process.

### **The Importance of Listening**

Since so much communication goes on in the family,

it is logical to assume not all of it is attended to. That is why we have seen selective attention and selective inattention going on.<sup>8</sup> With *selective attention* the listener hears or perceives what he or she wants or expects to hear. For example, a child in the next room hears her name whispered and she runs in to hear what's being talked about. A teenager can hear a Pepsi being opened four rooms away with the door closed and radio on, but he doesn't hear you remind him it's his day to put up the clean dishes. The latter *selective inattention* may occur also when a tired wife hears nothing of her husband's report of his workday, except his mention of his business partner's going on a trip to Sesame Place with his family this week-end. Selective inattention is one of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of nagging. Who listens? Who even wants to? This is why the newspaper and television have become such a dread to those wishing to communicate, as they know the stage is perfectly set for selective attention and inattention. A woman can be almost as jealous of the Dallas Cowboys as of another woman who has gained the attention of her man. Sometimes even worthwhile projects and "church work" can take away the proper attention we need to give our family.

Males and females appear to differ somewhat in the factors they include in the process of listening, and women seem to notice more factors that, to them, mean people are listening.<sup>9</sup> On the whole, women mention factors such as "maintained eye contact," "they seemed interested in helping me" and "they seemed interested and concerned about me" more often when

describing effective and ineffective listeners. Men are more apt to mention “they remembered things I’d told them in the past,” “they followed my directions or suggestions,” and “they showed enthusiasm.” It appears females need to have an empathetic listener, while the males need to see mental and physical evidence of listening. Both sexes want feedback, whether it’s a nod or a question to clear things up.

Ineffective listening is assumed if the speaker feels ignored or no reaction is made verbally or nonverbally, directions or suggestions are not followed, physical movements are made that interfere (like shuffling through papers), interruptions to talk to someone else occurs, not acting like they remembered what you told them in the past, and not maintaining eye contact while they’re being spoken to.

### **Family Communication Barriers**

We are used to having barriers in our lives, either real or imagined, things we see that keep us from getting married sooner, from having more children, from saying what we really think, from taking the trips we’d like to take, giving the gifts we’d like to give, getting a job we think we’d like. As in everything else, communication has its *barriers*—blocks that keep us from transferring our meaning correctly to others. Until we can have flip-top heads where we can literally “pour in the information,” we will need to be aware of communication barriers so we can adjust for them. If we have trouble or can’t get through to others, we’re apt to see misunderstandings, envies, malice, evil speaking,

hatreds and divorce as a result. Husbands and wives are emotionally divorced by “not being able to talk.” The church “system” suffers from lack of communication between elders and deacons, or the elders and the congregation. People won’t attend certain classes if they know certain people are going to teach that day. Families decide to change church membership or quit attending because they “get nothing out of the sermons.” All these problems because the parties involved either built, or didn’t know how to cope with, barriers to their communication!

In the family, some of these communication barriers might take the following forms: preoccupation, emotion-laden subjects. Hostility, past experiences, lack of verbal skill, assuming words have meaning in themselves, assuming things don’t change, assuming people can be categorized, allness, physical environment, sensory limitations, defensiveness, language, relationships, close-mindedness, and status. Looking at each one briefly may help us identify the sources of communication breakdowns in the home.

One common barrier is *preoccupation*, and one of its biggest drawbacks is that we often get caught with this problem. One Christian lady got so fed up with people at the church responding to her in a way that was inappropriate to what she said that one Sunday she tried an experiment: to everyone who asked how she was she answered, “My cat died.” No one picked up on this sad tale, until after lunch the phone rang and the caller said, “It just dawned on me that you said your cat died. I’m so sorry!” How often are we caught in the act of being

preoccupied with our own thoughts? No wonder our family members drive us crazy asking for feedback, saying “ya know?” after and between every sentence—ya know? Isn’t that right??? Do you catch my drift?

Another barrier is *emotionally-laden-subjects*. Words may have become emotionally-charged for a person due to conditioning or current circumstances. We may not talk about someone’s raise because dad’s didn’t come through, or we don’t talk about dating as Sis is still miserable over breaking up with her boyfriend. Another instance might be that of a new nursing mother trying to nurse her fussy baby after a long trip. She may not be able to respond to grandma’s comment, “he must be crying because he’s not getting enough milk.” Or, the young mother may find herself responding irrationally to this solicitous comment.

*Hostility* may create a barrier also. A man may come home from the office having had a confrontation with his co-worker and may carry over his hostility to his family by overreacting to the supper’s not being on the table and the children’s socks laying all over the living room. Or, he may simply filter out all messages and respond with a grunt to any attempts at communication. The subject matter being dealt with may make for hostility and so the message gets distorted. A mother may comment that the daughter should put on more appropriate attire and find her message has been taken as an all-encompassing criticism of her daughter’s life style.

*Past experience* can predispose us to erecting barriers. If the family devotionals have always been less than ex-

citing or challenging to one family member, they may come to each succeeding meeting expecting not to give the messages there much consideration or to hear them as not relevant implications for them. In another instance, one person may be trying to diet or start a walking routine for the umpteenth time, and the past "failures" cause the family to make unsupportive remarks. Sometimes the person is doomed to these wise cracks and ego-destructive remarks whether he or she tries to start a new routine or whether he or she falters in the good habit. In another example, past experiences such as one member getting to take business trips while the family stays at home can make it hard for the traveler to explain to others than these trips are not really vacations for him, but experiences that are also full of boredom, frustration, anxiety, and loneliness. What is needed is the verbal skill to communicate these feelings and experiences to the family.

Simple *lack of verbal skill* may cause the sender's message to be warped out of shape or incomplete. Since being clear is essential for our true meaning to be understood, an individual may never be able to communicate effectively if he has never developed verbal skills. The message may be dismissed or ignored. Children, especially younger brothers and sisters, have an unfair disadvantage in verbal sparring. Since "putting people down" is so much a part of today's culture, we are hearing our children develop a repertoire of retorts and phrases that appear to make them verbally skillful. These catch-phrases also extend to compliments that are not very specific about what we're complimen-

ting. We settle for “way to go!” which doesn’t entirely take the place of hearing “I’m proud of you,” “you’re a good sport, that means a lot to us,” “you showed real skill, that hard work you did paid off—I’m glad,” “I’m glad to see you showing some assertiveness/tenderness/kindness,” etc. When people have experience that other family members don’t share or never had such as wider travel or educational experiences, it may be hard for the one without these experiences to have the verbal skill to ask the “right” questions or use the correct terms to discuss the experience. This causes families to avoid talking about these life experiences in any deep way because one or both don’t take the initiative to explain things to the others in ways that are meaningful. For instance, it’s hard to understand the specialized terms in college, like hours and credits, until you live through having to figure it all out yourself. Children who have never experienced the Depression or life without dishwasher or T.V.s make it hard for older folks to explain why we have to be frugal and work hard and save our money. There are not enough words to paint the pictures and feeling we want to convey. This can be frustrating to both parties.

Along with the problem of lack of verbal skill comes the barrier in the form of the faulty *assumption* we make that our *words have meaning*. Much of the time our attitude is, “If I said it loud and clear, that’s all that’s needed. My responsibility is over.” However, we need to be person-minded, not word-minded, tailoring our words to our listener. To the woman at the well

Christ spoke of living water. To Peter and Andrew he spoke of changing their goals only slightly, using their skills to become fishers of men. When the Appalachian child was asked to list the seasons of the year and he replied, “deer season, ‘possum season, fishing season...,” he showed an excellent grasp on the seasons, albeit not a standard one. Sometimes we need to ask questions or paraphrase what we heard to be sure we have grasped the meaning of the person’s words. “Be home early” does not mean the same thing to parents and children. Many a young husband has been dismayed to find saying “you look fine” is simply not enough to say to a wife who has spent 47 minutes getting ready to go to the boss’s house for the department Christmas reception—unless it’s said with a lot of fancy voice inflection and highly appreciative body English!

Another faulty *assumption* barrier is that *things don’t change* or people don’t change. It may seem slow, but actually no one is the spouse they were the first year of marriage, or even three years ago. People are always in the process of changing, however minutely. The child that you couldn’t trust last year might be worth giving another chance this year. Our experiences together have changed both of us. God gives us all a chance to change, and is slow to give up. Sometimes a family you asked over for dessert doesn’t particularly hit it off with your family. Perhaps with a few more visits you will learn to know each other’s backgrounds and appreciate each other on a new level and get very close. We need to give our family the freedom to change, expect it, permit it, encourage it, recognize it, and accept it.

Another barrier in our thought patterns that hinder communication is the *allness* barrier. This is the attitude that what I say about a subject is all there is to say or know about it. We've laughed at the mental blunders of the T.V. character Archie Bunker, but it is considerably less than funny to have a parent like that, or, to have a child that thinks he or she knows the only way to dress fashionably or to conduct his or her own behavior. The strong-willed child and parent are often victims of the allness disease, and this causes problems in interacting peaceably with others.

*Physical environment* alone may create conditions under which communication cannot take place effectively. A stuffy, warm room may make it impossible to talk with ease. Our mind wanders and we squirm and look for ways to escape. A person's physical state is often detrimental to communication, as we all know if we've ridden in a closed-up car with children for a few hours. Sometimes changing the physical environment in even a small way, such as eating or praying by candlelight, can dramatically alter the moods and the openness we try to achieve with loved ones. Sitting on the side of a child's bed in the dark often starts communication flowing, though adults may drift off to sleep leaving you sitting there. Children like to catch mom and dad in the bathroom, perhaps because they've got them in an environment where the parent is confined and may have to pay attention. Sometimes we have seemingly good ideas for aiding the mood that backfire, like having a devotional in front of the fireplace. However comforting and relaxing, it does require ten-

ding and this is a distraction. Some families with teens have been known to take the phone off the hook so they could have uninterrupted time for a change to study Sunday's coordinated curriculum.

*Sensory limitations* of our five senses, especially those of hearing and seeing (both our own and others), gives rise to many communication problems. Though aids are available to help in these areas, some don't realize they need them, or won't admit it, or for some reason won't use them. Often these sensory limitations make the person feel like they are missing out or that they are being made fun of if they are not sure of what's being said or done. The noise level of living in a small area with children can make communicating difficult and nerve-racking. Living in a home with a lot of space and rooms adds another problem, as there may be less touching and interaction. Comments and requests can be ignored by simply pretending "I didn't hear you, you were too far away!" this barrier can be coped with by compensating for sensory limitations by moving closer, turning on more lights, talking after you've gotten the person's eye contact, and turning off interfering noise.

*Defensiveness* leads to continual barriers to our messages. The insecurity of the person tends to destroy questions into accusations and the replies into justifications. A husband may ask his wife if she happened to get some Cokes when she was shopping. His intention is to get information, as he is planning to go get the gas tank filled and would pick up some Cokes at the same time, if she hasn't already bought something. The issue is duplication of effort. The insecure wife, however,

may respond as if the issue were her ability to think of his needs: “No, I didn’t. I can’t think of everything, and when I’ve got to hurry to get the kids to soccer, and I can’t even find a decent steak we can afford. I suppose you think my buying junk food is more important than making a good meal tonight!” Touchiness puts up walls and keeps them there. We need to hold our fire, control our emotional reactions, remembering the proverbs “only a fool utters his whole mind” as “reckless words pierce like a sword.” If one family member is described as “picky” and the other as “careful” for virtually the same action or attitude, this could also cause defensiveness. Why is one person called “forceful and insistent” while another is “persistent”? *Language* sometimes raises our defenses as we see the inequality in the use of words. If we could help our families feel secure, thus defusing defensiveness, the feelings of peace and cheerfulness will help us to overflow with love (Rom. 15:13).

When we attempt to communicate with another person we are giving out two messages at the same time—content and *relationship*. The other person may be so preoccupied with hearing anything that hints about the relationship that the contents of the message is lost. For example, a father tells his child he has a set of instructions for him and that he wants to be sure he gets them right this time. If he’s insecure about his relationship with his dad, if he fears his anger or disgust, he may hear an implication that he is being evaluated negatively. Consequently, he may distort his hearing of

his father's instructions.

Being *closed-minded* is a problem Christians especially need to overcome. The Pharisees were spoken to rather strongly by the Lord for having locked minds, rejecting the counsel of God. Family members can be inflexible, locked in tradition, habits, or ideas, selfishly having no desire to learn from others. Personal development is thus hindered, hard feelings grow, unkind remarks are spoken and friends are lost from the attitude that lies behind this communication barrier. sometimes people appear closed-minded because they feel threatened by new ideas or certain decisions that might be called for. Opening our minds may require a change in attitude and behavior. People may not want to discuss a certain vacation plan, for instance, or hobby or project, because they think they don't want to spend their money or time on that, and don't want to be convinced of its worth. We need to remember the admonition to understand the other person's opinion and look also to their interests (Phil. 2:1-4). We should cultivate the attitude that invites others to tell us more. All things change, except the word of God. Welcoming new facts and unfamiliar ideas keeps us mentally alive and challenged and keeps communication open between people.

Perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome is that of *status*, since it embodies most of the elements which have already been discussed. Parents typically have higher status, and because of this the child may find communication more difficult because of the perceived power the parents have over him. This is similar to the

trouble employees typically have talking to their boss. Parents might push that power by giving out the nonverbal signal “in my position I don’t have to explain.” Friends of our children may have trouble talking to us, especially when they are dating our teenagers. One person may be preoccupied with impressing the source of power, while another may be defensive, fearing openness or complete truthfulness might bring punishment or limitations on privilege. For instance, parents might let their child go to the lake with a friend, but not if they knew certain other people were meeting them there, or what has been going on at the lake lately.

### **Context for Family Communication**

Communication takes place in various places with silent rules that apply and are accepted as good or bad for communication. The way our *personal space* is arranged—the furniture, walls, lighting—can encourage or discourage interaction between people. In many homes all the furniture is aimed at the television and video games, so we interact with the inanimate objects more than we do with one another. Eating on T.V. trays hinders the camaraderie that should to on at the table. Most of the time we can maneuver our furniture or choose various chairs to get as close to others (or as far away) as we feel is needed for the particular type of relationship and the subjects we are discussing.

In our culture, people have these standard distances that they can handle comfortably:

- 0-18” *intimate communication*: Here you can kiss, hug, whisper, tell secrets,

and punch each other. Only the few closest to us are allowed this close for very long. We get very uncomfortable if someone we barely know or with whom we have only a formal relationship stays within this distance for more than a very few seconds.

- 18''-4' *Personal communication*: In this space you can't hug but you can reach out and have comfortable touching. Somewhat private conversation or sharing can go on, with good eye contact and the chance to catch facial expressions. Our friends and co-workers and family are usually in this distance.
- 4'-12' *social communication*: In this space "party-type" conversation is carried on, and generalized talking. This is what we might see when you're in the break room at work, or going out to eat with the family.
- 12'- *public communication*: Here we teach class, preach, call out directions to someone, or wave hello. The distance may not be as much as 12', but our posture gives the hint that the speaker is in charge, has the floor, or possibly that he or she is in a hurry and doesn't expect a reply. With this wide distance people can ignore

directions and orders using the excuse they didn't hear you. This distance factor makes for a lot of problems in the home—we're ignored too much in this semi-legitimate way.

Our *personal space* is so important to us that we have even built and maintain invisible *bubbles* around us that make us feel comfortable. These boundaries in our minds are sometimes "pushed" by others, as when we're in a crowd at a ball game and in an elevator, or have to sit by a stranger on a plane.

People make *boundaries* in their rooms, staking out their *territory*. How many times have you heard kids say, "You're on my side—move it!" Families are full of "space invaders"; we feel we have to defend our space. Some don't like to share their desks or clothes, or let family guests sleep over in their room. We hear people say, "the kitchen is my domain," and "don't put that out here in my garage," yet these places mysteriously become the family's kitchen or garage when it's time to do a thorough clean-up and the family is supposed to pitch in and help.

Each person's ability to operate with *time* furnishes part of the setting for communication. Some people are able to do lots of things at the same time (polychronic), which is an admired trait in the American culture. Housewives are praised if they can also head up a civic group, lead a scout troop, bake bread, volunteer a day a week at this and that, and jog three miles a day. Overachievers and supermoms and superdads are "in."

Unfortunately, this makes for people who don't have time to teach Bible classes and do visitation sometimes. Our time can only go so far, and other things take priority. Other people realize they can do only one thing at a time (monocronic), and they finish it and move onto something else. If we are monocronic, we may feel we're not communicating well with a polychronic person who's reading the paper or cooking dinner while we're trying to talk to them, all the while insisting they are listening. Children are often hard put to understand this ability in parents, and often they are right—we can't really listen and catch all the nuances of the conversation while doing two other things, but neither can children.

Some family systems operate with a different view of time that regulated their activities. A "closed" family has regular times for meals, for instance. There are other rules and prescribed actions the family follows also. They constantly plan for the future and there is not a lot of living in the present, for the moment. An "open" family might have a range of times for the evening meal. Decisions are more apt to be dealt with by consensus rather than parental coercion, which is likely to be the last resort. If members of the family differ on their *pacing* from the rest of the family, they may not synchronize well with each other and not know how to describe it. Through this, we need to "forbear" personal differences and discuss and negotiate what can make life easier for the whole family (Col. 3:13).

Families often have a method of *centering* to help pull the family together on a practical level, such as notes on

a chalkboard, bulletin boards, large calendars, or a person who is usually home all the time to keep everyone where they are supposed to be. This person is the switchboard operator who keeps people together.<sup>10</sup> This person has rights to certain rooms and drawers and cars and letters to keep the system afloat.

Another method of centering is when families have *icons* about which they often talk. These icons on a physical level represent the family and its attitudes and beliefs. They take the form of a family's religious or cultural heritage, or collections and equipment. These values keep the family focused when they move to strange neighborhoods where traditions are apt to be lost. Sometimes the family icons are dropped and others of a higher class are taken on as the family grows. A family rock collection that came from camping trips may be traded for collecting antique toys or clocks as the family's bank account and experiences grow.

### **Rules and Patterns of Family Relationships**

When we look at a family system, we begin to recognize various family rules and patterns that carry over from each spouse's original family where they were brought up. Some patterns were chosen for the newly-formed family, others rejected or altered. This can be a conscious or unconscious choice. The family of origin with its social network made up of some 40 or 50 people (the kin of every member, friends, neighbors, work associates, significant people from church and school) have within it the resources to develop creative solutions to the human predicaments of its members.<sup>11</sup> This group

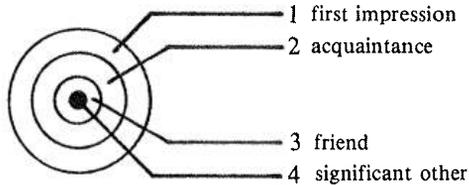
has a common background of experiences, know each other intimately, and will continue to do so. They have a history of trespassing on each other's lives. Privacy and confidentiality have a different meaning in this group that shares a sub-culture and mythology of its own, and who have shared tensions and upheavals in their lives. The relationships in the family network have a quality of regularity and dailiness, a history of regular intrusions into our past, present, and future.

Putting the collected tribe of husband and the tribe of the wife together through marriage is essentially combining two different message systems. Whether they are similar or not the couple will discover many differences as they live with one another. If they are very different, the couple will find it hard to bring them together into one smooth system. Each will have to respect the uniqueness of the other and the trunkful of family communication patterns and rules that come with the spouse. It's a package deal.

### **Development of the Family Relationship**

To develop a good relationship in a family and between families, there is nothing more crucial than self-disclosure. Talking about things from our hearts lets me know who you are and what is happening to you. Relationships develop slowly, in a continuum of stages. They may progress and regress through time, but layer by layer, as feelings and experiences are disclosed, we develop a feeling of trust and predictability about the other person. As one former priest put it, "People are like an onion. You get to know them layer by layer, and

sometimes you weep.”<sup>12</sup> Using his onion analogy, we could show four stages of how relationships develop:



(1) The first stage we make our *first “onion skin” impression*. It’s too bad we get only one chance to make a first impression! This is the orientation phase where clichés are bandied about—the flaky outer surface of our personalities. When we are in the courtship phase, just meeting our future in-laws, here is where we begin communicating, trying to reduce our uncertainty about the other and increasing our ability to respond to what they do. For example, we are not sure at this time whether we ought to offer to help her dad with the car he’s repairing or stay out of the way and leave him to himself. However, most behavior is predictable upon first meeting and lots of idle chit-chat may go on, but very little can be predicted about the person’s moods or uniqueness. We can only go on assumptions we make about their clothes, grooming, etc. There is adherence to rules of the group or the situation we are in. We determine if we want to know more about the other person during this phase.

(2) The second stage, *acquaintance*, bring a little more

self-disclosure, though rules and manners are still very much in evidence. We become more aware of the nonverbal communication of the person, and share some facts and explore feelings and opinions. We're putting up our antennae, trying to find our way step by step to decide if the relationship can go deeper. There is no commitment at this stage. If the relationship stops it will be of no significant loss to you. Families who see little of one another often get stuck at this stage, being friendly, or maybe not so friendly, acquaintances.

(3) In the third stage we become *friends*, and may start dating or going places together. Trust is developed through more sharing of our past history and maybe even our religious or political or philosophical views. We can exchange negative feelings and it doesn't affect our friendship. We are able to predict the other's moods and feelings effectively. We allow these friends to talk to us at closer distances some of the time. We may even develop some slang, private jokes, and verbal shorthand. Potentially we are able to handle even silences with some people.

(4) The fourth stage is close to the core of the onion/relationship, when we reach the point of being a *significant* other person. This level is usually reserved for adults, or an engaged or married couple. Now we are able to trust the most significant things about ourselves as we get to the core of our being where the growth takes place. However, this doesn't mean we know everything about each other. Some things are found out over time. In fact, the relationship itself is probably discussed. We're aware of each other's moods

and are very free in our nonverbal communication. We need quality time when we're not too tired to engage in conversation that helps us keep our close relationship. Since this level takes so much energy, usually we only have three or four friends at a time who qualify as significant others beyond the husband-wife relationship, such as our best friend and perhaps our adult children. As children grow in the family, of course they are always "significant others" to their parents, but only teenagers and above seem able to make the effort to reach out at the highest stage, expressing deep feelings and disclosing their inner selves in a give-and-take relationship.

Once reached, the fourth stage stable exchange relationship doesn't necessarily stay that way. In fact, stage four may be reached before children come into a marriage relationship. Some don't choose to reach this relationship with anyone, but most move up and down these last three stages. Relationships can only function at the lowest level of involvement of one of the couple. Relationships that dissolve filter back down these stages as new people, new interests, and time commitments alter the conditions of the relationship. These stages may fluctuate with the stage of life, finances, educational or business opportunities, and physical and emotional needs for the other. Couples ought to rethink the stability of their relationship if they tell their spouse no more than their neighbors or acquaintances.

### **The Family System as a Learning Unit**

We all realize that families are *shelter units* where

people eat and sleep together. But we also need to see the family system as a *learning unit* where everyone is teaching all the time. Most of our teaching is inadvertent and unpredictable. Children are taught how to be a spouse and parent, how a Christian functions as a neighbor, citizen, and worker by watching and listening to their parents. Children are not “potential people”: they have some things to teach us too, such as assertiveness, spontaneity, and how to get an overbearing aunt to quit talking! In the same way, older adults are not “past people”: they have much to teach, if we’d just ask or be more observant. They can show us what is really worth getting upset about and what to let roll off our back. Each family member has rights, character, and possibilities, and everyone hears and teaches at the same time.

As we communicate within the family, we should spot people from whom we could learn various types of information. From our parents, children, brothers, sisters, and others like our spouse, grandparents, other relations, and special friends. If we could create a fantasy high school where only our family was hired to teach, what would be their area of expertise, either by teaching, experiences, or inclination? Who could, for whatever reason, most easily teach these subjects or fit these functions:

Bible teacher	home economics teacher
history teacher	health and sex education teacher
industrial arts teacher	teacher
P.E. teacher & coach	guidance counselor

business teacher  
math teacher

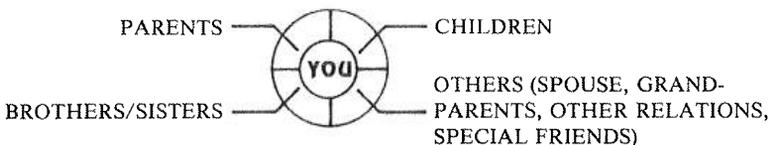
principal  
art and/or music teacher  
any others?

If you were applying for a job in this school, which position would be best suited for you? What are your talents? What can you teach?

Now, pretend you are a student in this school: Which is your favorite class? To which teacher do you want most to bring an apple? Which teacher is probably most underpaid? Which teacher will most likely keep you after school? Who doesn't give many A's? Whose class do you flunk? Who could best recommend you for an important honor?

This fantasy school is a good exercise to do when the family is together for a holiday. Ask them if they would be willing to share what they wrote. This game reminds us that families are interlocking. We teach each other, and the contract can't be torn up. It's with you for life. In fact, family members continue to "teach" even after their death through our memories of their teachings, attitudes, and values.

To follow up on these discoveries, it would help to make a *family learning resources map* to put this knowledge in perspective:<sup>13</sup>



1. Make this target-map large enough to write on easily. In the center of this map is “you,” as you can’t help but be the center of your own universe as you think through this exercise. Transfer the names of the people from the fantasy school exercise into the quadrants, putting the names at a distance from you that indicates the interpersonal distance. You are not forced to learn from these people, but if you are alert to someone’s style, you can learn *not* to be this way, like how not to treat small children.

2. Next you can spot resources for you to learn from using the acrostic “C-A-R-E”:

C - cognitive information: facts, how to do something (i.e., car repair)

A - attitudes, beliefs, values (i.e., feelings about church, politics)

R - relational skills (i.e., how to maintain friendships)

E - emotional or personality style (i.e., putting, retreating)

To indicate how these family members are learning resources for you, either positively or negatively, put a parentheses after each name and write in a C, A, R, or E, or two or more of these letters. For instance, mother may have (C,A,R,E) and dad may have (C,A,R). Remember, sometimes the most powerful learning experiences come from negative experiences, from bad teachers who show us “how not to treat a husband,” for example. Putting it all down doesn’t mean I *want* to

learn that so well, but it makes you aware you could if you wanted to. This would not necessarily correspond to your level of love for them.

3. Next, indicate the link between you, strong or tenuous, with a wide line or a dotted line, or somewhere in between. A link is there if you're aware of each other's existence, or even if the person is deceased but is still a strong influence over your actions and behaviors. For instance, dad may have told you never to sell the family farm so after all these years you still are hanging on to it. Then, draw an arrow back to their name to indicate resources you could give to them (C,A,R,E). What could you do to establish this link? or reestablish it?

4. Next, make a bar across the linking line to indicate barriers (----/----). These could be myths, assumptions, distance, hurt feelings, age, etc. Awareness of the barrier is the first step to getting rid of it. Is the barrier occasionally theirs, or is it closer to you? Who has to leap farther to tackle the barrier?

5. Last, imagine networks of lines, how these people interact with one another, if at all. If you were on their map, where would you be? What could you offer them? What might bar this exchange of learning?

As you look at your family, try to determine who needs what from you. Perhaps everyone in the family could participate in this learning exercise and discuss it together. It could open up paths of communication for everyone.

### **Rules Within the Family Unit**

Within each family there are *rules* between people that help them operate, rules consciously made or unconsciously decided upon; some people don't talk directly, but messages are carried through a third person, or maybe messages are never sent at all. Sometimes the rule is to go through a person who is the "switchboard operator," carrying messages to many people: "Dad said for you to study for your test; dad asked how you were feeling;" "Grandma wants all the relatives there, so please don't disappoint her. She told me to tell everyone."

As we notice certain rules operate in families we might agree with a recent comic definition that a rule is a regulation designed to prevent something from catching on. Some rules effectively shaped our communication as we grew up, like what was and was not talked about, i.e., certain relatives, or a particular illness, or money. One man remembered that when he was three his father walked out on the family. It was not until this man was 18 that his mother allowed him to talk about it.

Some rules dictate words we use for things. Sex is spoken of with certain terms or euphemisms. Death is spoken of indirectly, using "she passed away, she's gone now." If Uncle Bob has been drinking we may tell people "he's not feeling well." There was a movie made a few years ago about "Papa's Delicate Condition," dealing with the muzzling effect of family rules about

alcoholism. On a recent *Today* show, Lana Turner, in talking about her drinking problem, said she wasn't "a drinker," but she'd been a "sipper," sipping a glass of vodka all day long.

Some things may have been talked about in your family only by using a particular style; one could be direct on some subjects, but on others one might have to be indirect, to play a role. For instance, in order to say "I love you" it had to be done in a gruff, joking, or teasing manner to be acceptable.

Thinking through the rules of our family of origin may help us to understand our family better, and why we do things as we do even now. For instance, how did your family disapprove of certain things. Did someone use baby talk when they were angry? Or just glower? A healthy family will adjust the rules as the family changes. A rule can be abandoned when it is no longer needed, like forbidding a child to cross the street without your watching. Some are always in force, like "we will respect our elders."

Another question to ask about your family rules is "where could you talk about certain things?" One person noted he could never talk to his mom in his room without fighting over how his room looked. Some people find the car is a good place, or while walking or jogging. There is no phone, no big distractions, and they can make eye contact when it's necessary. Taking away family chores like gardening and hand-washing the dishes has taken away prime opportunities for some families to have a chance and a place to talk easily and regularly.

To get another clue about your family rules you might ask “who could hear it?” Who was allowed in? Sometimes only certain information was allowed to only a few people, like when mother was pregnant again, or how much the family gave to the church. Rather than just giving the facts to the kids, one family let the teens keep the checkbook on a rotating basis to get a feel for budgeting. To help younger children understand giving, another family got the family paycheck in dollar bills and divided the fixed expenses in piles and let the children see how much went to the Lord. This exercise helps visualize priorities for adults, also! Some subjects were only discussed with the older child, and he or she passed the information down—sometimes garbled, however. Other topics were discussed with only the one child a parent felt closest to, and so the closing out of the other children was even more firmly set in place.

Because family life involves reproduction all people are faced with sexual identity issues either while growing up and/or while forming their own family system and dealing with their own children. Sex and physical development affects the way people interact. A family which assigns responsibility based on sex operates differently than one which uses interest or preference as the basis for assigning chores. If physical size automatically determines duties and privileges the rules will be different than in a setting where physical development is only one factor among many by which privileges are awarded and duties assigned. Certain families may prescribe communication behaviors appropriate to males and females, such as the women will not lead in

the prayer at the table when males are there, but they might tell the males what to pray about. Females may be allowed to express their emotions freely, but this experience is denied the male members. These rules may creep into our lives and are hard to change.

Each two- or three-person group in families has their own rules and unique characteristics. Mom may never tease Cindy but easily kids Kent. Yet Dad may easily tease both of them and be more affectionate with them than Mom is able to be. Mom and Kent may spend long hours talking about his future plans whereas Cindy may choose not to discuss this with anyone but her boyfriend. In another family Dad may start realizing that he doesn't kiss or hug his grown son when he comes home from college—it's usually a handshake greeting. He really doesn't remember when this lack of physical contact started, but just being aware of the rules he has developed may help him to start changing the ones he really doesn't like.

Once your family can have a friendly discussion of the rules they have discovered, both in your family of origin and in the present household, new avenues of understanding should open up. Sometimes the skeletons have to get out so the family can "own" itself and face up to its own uniqueness. Some rules may not be seen as exactly the same for different people, even by your own brothers and sisters, but other people's closets must be respected. From this discussion of rules it may be clearer how a family one might marry into may have different ways of talking about all sorts of things, all the way from methods of birth control to pregnancy to disease

to finances to love for the Lord. The couple will have to then negotiate out the rules by which the newly-formed family will live and by which it will cope with life.

### **Patterns Within the Family Unit**

All systems have cycles that repeat over and over and families are no exception. These patterns help maintain the balance and provide clues to their functioning. All systems need regularity and predictability to continue functioning. These relationship agreements prescribe and limit a family member's behavior. For example, when mom is tired the family knows to keep out of the way and not ask for special favors. When Sunday morning rolls around, everyone knows to get up for church, and that this is Dad's day to make pancakes. The kids will come to the car and forget their Bibles and one of the parents will have a five-minute sermon about responsibility and planning ahead and what do you think you're going to study from today anyway! To get even, the kids will ask if the family is going to eat out for lunch, and give their spiel about how they hate roast at home—but they know just how far to go without getting too severe a reprimand and bringing down another sermon on their heads. And on and on the patterns of family talking and dealing roll.

Patterns, most of which are formed in the first two years of marriage, provide the stability of the home, yet most systems develop prescriptive patterns, or rules, to govern important aspects of life. For example, everyone knows the children are going to get a higher education, so it stands to reason they better get their study habits in

order in high school to get prepared. Money might have to be saved by the children and parents, and good grades and school projects are verbally encouraged and rewarded. They are also expected to be leaders in the church, so the family makes an effort to get classes and special meetings and Bible Bowl practices to model steadfastness to their children. This religious emphasis is seen in the values the family buys in to: love, responsibility, forgiveness, patience, helping each other, bearing one another's burdens, seeing the best in others, looking out for the best for all. These spiritual attributes, especially prayer, have a positive impact on human relationships and family life.<sup>14</sup>

Though patterns are good for efficiency, or to get common messages across, and rituals are desirable for joyful holidays, patterns can let you get numb to certain meanings. This is similar to the person tuning out nagging, whining, and complaining that he's heard over and over. In another example, there was the case one husband who always sent two dozen roses to his wife on their anniversary. After 24 years, she discovered he'd had an affair and when the roses came she threw them out. When the church gave them help and counsel they started working on their marriage. That year he sent one rose and she said, "He loves me!" The pattern was broken. Yes, we don't have to work or think as hard if we have patterns, but sometimes they get as boring and meaningless as an absent-minded peck on the cheek.

### **Patterns of Conflict**

Conflict is as inevitable as it is important. *Conflict* is

simply having differences that have to be resolved. This can promote needed growth and change, stimulate curiosity, and even be fun. When it does these things, it shows evidence of resiliency and strength.

In relationships we often see two basic types of conflict: overt and covert conflict. *Overt* is when everyone knows there is a conflict, it is out in the open and can be dealt with. Some say the noisier conflict is the less there is to worry about. It's the difference between the barking and the growling dog. Quiet anger is a good clue of its intensity, and can be a scary thing. Some members use silence to punish another member of the family and to induce guilt. That is an overt act but it's displaying *covert* conflict that is underground and hard to get at. Maybe it hasn't occurred yet but logically it should. Sometimes it's *denied*, as in "No! I'm not angry." We must be willing to admit to it, or get the other person to, so we can get past it.

Often the way we deal with conflict is *reciprocal*, as we often mimic the behavior of the conflicting person. Rausch, et. al., found that men were usually more conciliatory in the last few weeks of their wives' pregnancy, but four months after the birth they were back to newlywed levels of conciliation.<sup>15</sup>

Sometimes we disqualify the conflict as we get scared by our anger or other emotions. We get upset, then later say, "It really doesn't matter," as we don't want to continue with the problem. We can also disengage ourselves, like stopping the argument to turn the T.V. on, or we leave the discussion and never talk about it, so it's unresolved stress. Some people *displace* conflict by

“kicking the dog”—venting anger toward undeserving objects. Often we bring home unresolved conflicts from places like work or school. We couldn’t let off steam there, so we yell or sulk at home and no one understands what is happening. We gripe about the wrong issue instead of getting at the underlying conflict in an assertive manner.<sup>16</sup> Conflict can come about in the sexual area and instead of handling it we try to get even, put the other person down, or disqualify what they do.

### **Productive Conflict**

A Christian might especially be tempted to see conflict as destructive, but it need not be hurtful. Every day we do battle with ignorance, with evil, with the ethical thing to do in business, school, and society. A lot of problems with the concept of conflict comes from our attitudes. Perhaps we saw conflict misused and we’re scared of it. A lot of factors influence conflict, but especially these factors: characteristics of the parties involved, their prior relationship, the nature of the issue, the social environment (facilities and restraints), the strategy and tactics taken, and the consequences of the conflict.<sup>17</sup>

Resolving conflict can be a productive achievement in any system, whether it’s untangling typewriter keys or untangling family mix-ups. It makes for creative thinking and problem-solving, and gets the troubled parties cooperating together in honest communication. Using a trusting, friendly attitude each can encourage the recognition of the other’s legitimate interests. The best can be assumed about the other person’s views as the

parties try to get cooperative commitment to the solution.<sup>18</sup>

To fight fair we may have ground rules that we agree on. You have to care about someone, have an investment in the relationship, to have guidelines for conflict. Bach listed at least six guidelines for dealing with conflict:<sup>19</sup>

(1.) *Don't gunnysack*: Level with each other, and fight now if you can. Do not put it off, do not store it. Name the threat you see, or anger, and tell the person you need to talk about it as soon as possible.

(2.) *Limit the issue clearly*. Know what you're fighting about and keep on that issue. What do we hope will come from the conflict? Get at the right issue through getting in touch with the feelings going on. If the other person doesn't express them, say, "Stop! Tell me what you're feeling." If the person won't or can't say, we might guess aloud: "You seem angry," or "I think you're feeling insecure (frustrated, etc.)." Then ask "What exactly is the behavior (or attitude) that you see that is causing you to feel this way?" Then the person is helped to communicate the issue: "I am feeling totally ignored and unloved when you never even look me in the face. You just jump into bed and shut your eyes, so I feel dismissed." This "I statement" helps to isolate one issue that is bothering the speaker.

(3.) *Avoid red flag words*, old words that have caused things to ignite in the past, like "idiotic" and "stupid." You may want to make a rule not to use these when you're both upset. Instead, realize that if conflict is starting, some need is not being met. Therefore, state your

need in a non-threatening way, like “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_ and I wish you would \_\_\_\_ .” In this I-statement you are merely saying you have a need that needs meeting, it’s your own problem, and you’re not calling them “stupid” for not changing, but you are bringing the need to their attention in hopes that some compromise can be made that will help your relationship.

(4.) *Describe, don’t label.* Don’t stereotype the other person, but describe the behavior that’s upsetting to you. Saying “You’re crazy, just like your mother,” to someone who has had a mother with a history of being in mental institutions is unnecessarily hurtful and cruel. Even kidding can become caustic, like “Well, I can tell you’re a Lewis!” No one likes to be put in neat little Baggies like a bunch of grapes. We like to think we are an individual, worthy of special consideration. And of course the Bible teaches that, so who are we to label others because of their name, their hair color, their sex. The Golden Rule certainly applies here. So, instead of saying “You’re a real killjoy,” you could say, “I feel lonely when we don’t do anything alone together. Why don’t we get season tickets to the Wildcat games and eat out beforehand, just the two of us.” After a statement like this the partner can practice reflective listening. After two or three minutes of conversation he might try to repeat to partner’s satisfaction what she said before he tries to make his point: “You must be feeling a little neglected from our frantic pace. I can understand that. So you think reserving game nights for just the two of us will help out the predicament.”

(5.) Have a stop signal. This would be some word or gesture that would indicate to you both that it is time to put the discussion away. Sometimes there is no time to deal with it any more today, or you're at a breaking point. When a party is under stress of a situation coming up, sometimes the family reacts to that stress by "acting out" and causing more stress. This often calls for a mirror to be held up to the situation, to name what's going on: "I know I'm going berserk trying to get ready for this banquet. I realize I'm dragging you kicking and screaming, but I can't spend the emotion to fight about it right now and still be a sparkling emcee. So! I'm going to table it and we'll talk about it later. I love you, but I'm not going to let a squabble get started." You may be surprised how this will bring a destructive pattern to a stop.

(6.) *Negotiate a time and place* where you will discuss the issue at hand. In the situation above, the speaker might offer to talk about the conflict over coffee after the banquet. Sometimes the morning after is not best as people may not be awake enough to fight, but if we put off the argument it may be more productive. We should try to sign a peace treaty before bedtime, not going to bed all torn up inside (Eph. 4:26). As to place, a couple may agree not to have conflicts in the children's rooms or their bedroom so these places won't be associated with warfare. Some like to leave the house or sit in the car while talking things out.

If we could play back our arguments on videotape we would probably start to see patterns or styles of fighting, or that fights seem to coincide with certain

events. One couple may conflict over even small things if one doesn't want to do something, but feels pressured into it by the family. The argument is a pressure valve that leaves steam burns on the other person if fair fighting rules aren't observed. These guidelines are only useful if both agree to try them. If both parties consider compromise and only reasonable changes, both aren't afraid then to admit they were wrong and let the other be wrong too. Conflict doesn't have to be nasty. We can be angry and sin not, or we wouldn't have that command (Eph. 4:26). We can, through God's help, be slow to wrath (Prov. 14:17), and slow to speak our mind (James 1:19), thus saving ourselves from a lot of unnecessary conflict.

### **Balancing the Family System Through Listening**

Communication, or listening and sharing our selves and the meanings we hold, is at the very heart of Christian living. Through the scriptures God commanded the prophets and the redeemed to tell about His will and His plan for man. They were to preach the Word courageously, always speaking the truth in love. Jesus spoke about the power of the tongue, and Solomon, with his hundreds of wives, grew wise about the issue of communication!

Most people say they are average listeners—or worse—even though it's our most frequent communication activity. In spite of this, listening is taught less than reading, writing and speaking in the public schools and is hit very little (if at all) in sermons and lesson series at church. When we study husband-wife communication

we find several reasons why husbands and wives don't listen to each other:<sup>20</sup>

(1.) They are *afraid* and/or ashamed to listen.

(2.) They feel *guilty* so they shut out what the other is saying.

(3.) One or both may feel that feelings or *emotions aren't important*.

(4.) One or both may not really want to *get involved* with each other.

(5.) One may be too *preoccupied* with his or her own problems to get involved with other matters. Thus they "don't have time" or are "too tired to listen right now."

(6.) One may *fear criticism*. The Bible encourages us, however, to overlook offenses (Prov. 19:11) and not create turmoil (Prov. 15:16) with an unguarded mouth and tongue (Prov. 21:23).

(7.) They may *not want to understand* the other as it will mean change. The Lord repeatedly chastises the foolishness and rebelliousness of not "hearing" (Jer. 5:21; Ezek. 12:2,3).

(8.) They may *never have learned to listen*. If we are determined to learn we can, as listening, like any other habit, can be improved with determination and practice. We need to keep in mind that these habits may be long-standing, so we need to be patient as we *learn to listen* better.

It may help motivate us to better listening if we realize that being an active listener helps people to open up and talk freely to us. A good listener will try to *note all the "cues"* that give clues to what the speaker means; The

hesitancy of the speech, the facial expression, body posture, hand and eye movements, and the stress on certain words.

As we try to put ourselves in the speaker's shoes we are using up a lot of energy. We need to let the speaker know how we can see why they might think or feel as they do. This shows *empathy or caring* and encourages them to talk to us instead of having to move on to someone else to find a loving listener. We especially should feel this way about our family members. We don't want to be the last to know about their joys, sorrows, conflicts, and pain. To our best friend or employer or important client we probably listen actively automatically, so now all we need to do is apply those good habits to our loved ones.

As we listen for the *total meaning*, not just the facts, we take into account the content (the actual words) plus the feeling that lies behind the words. Then we can respond to their feelings without taking over. If Blair says, "Mother, Brook won't play football with me anymore," we shouldn't take over, question, try to distract, solve the problem, put him down or avoid the issue ("well, how about some apple juice?"). An actively listening parent responds to help the person clarify his feelings. Then conflicts can be resolved and problems can be solved: "You seem unhappy," could be your response to Blair. This puts him in a position to clarify how he feels: "I guess I'm unhappy, but mostly I'm frustrated because he always quits playing with me after five minutes."

Being an active, responsive-to-the-feeling listener

shows acceptance of the person as they are right then. Maintaining eye contact also shows the person you are paying attention to the conversation and taking it seriously. It's hard for a person to share with us when we throw up an invisible shield when we say, "Oh, you shouldn't be hurt/jealous/embarrassed." The fact is, they *do* feel that way; feelings are very real. What's real to us *is* real, to us. We as a listener are privileged when someone will share themselves with us.

God offers to listen to us any time, any place. We are encouraged to live a life of constant communication with him as we pray without ceasing. Christ promised to be with us always. He sent the Comforter, and the Spirit interprets our prayers to God. All these offers to help us as we communicate, as we live. Can we offer our families any less? We are in a family to help one another through this earthly life. Through this family we offer a God-like service that lasts a lifetime and beyond. God grant us the wisdom to use our communication wisely, that the words of our mouth and the outreach of our arms well be acceptable in His sight and bless the lives of our family.

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<sup>1</sup>See La Pierre, K., "The Transition From Couple to Parents," in *Family Therapy*, ed. J.K. Pearce and L. Freidman, (New York: Gunne Shalton, 1980), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>See Satir, V., *Peoplemaking*, (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1972), p. 119.

<sup>3</sup>See Hess, R.J. and G. Handel, *Family Worlds*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

<sup>4</sup>See Galvin, K., "Introduction to Family Communication," an

unpublished manuscript, (Chicago: Northwestern University, School of Speech), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>6</sup>See Sheehy, Gail, *Passages*, (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979), or *Seasons of a Man's Life* by Levenson.

<sup>7</sup>Adapted from Watzlawic, P., et. al. *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*. (New York: Norton, 1967.)

<sup>8</sup>See Bowman, H. A. *Marriage for Moderns* (6th edition). (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 395.

<sup>9</sup>See Lewis, M.H., "Listening Factors in Work Environments," an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1982), pp. 38-46.

<sup>10</sup>See Howard, J. *Families*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), p. 68.

<sup>11</sup>See Speck, R.V., and Altneave, C.L., *Family Networks*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. xxii, 7.

<sup>12</sup>See notes from Wilkinson, C., Speech 4010, *Family Communication*, Oklahoma State University, Summer, 1979.

<sup>13</sup>See Anderson, B. and Hawkins, R. "Families as Learning Units," Speech Communication Association Workshop, San Antonio, Texas, 1979.

<sup>14</sup>See Dye, K.G., "The Family Interviews One of Its Own: Nick Stinnett," *The Family*, (Fall/Winter, 1978), p. 14.

<sup>15</sup>See Rausch, H.L., et. al., *Communication Conflict and Marriage*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974), as quoted by N.L. Reinsch, Jr., "Conflicts in Early Marriage Seminar," Stillwater Church of Christ, 1979, with Marilyn Lewis.

<sup>16</sup>Pausch, et. al., *ibid.*, as quoted by Galvin, K., and Wilkinson, C., Speech 4010 notes, *Family Communication*, Oklahoma State University, Summer, 1979.

<sup>17</sup>Deutsch, Morton, *The Resolution of Conflict*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), p. 126.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>19</sup>Bach, G.R. and P. Wyden, *The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage*, (New York: Morrow, 1969).

<sup>20</sup>See Jones, J.A., "Reasons Why Husbands and Wives Do Not Listen to Each Other," (*Christian Bible Teacher*, April, 1980.)

# Christian Ethics in the World of Business

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### **Introduction**

Ethics has become a topic of much discussion by American business executives. Although ethics is not a recent discovery, it has become "the designer label" of corporate boardroom talk. It is the "in" subject, what is chic.<sup>1</sup> That is why you will find courses in business ethics in schools of business, departments of philosophy, sociology, and theology. There are centers for the study of ethics, seminars about ethics, articles, books, speeches, and, of course, sermons on ethics. Unfortunately, all the talk about business ethics does not always agree with *the Designer's* labels of ethical conduct.

Consider, for example, the stories in the newspaper and on the air (radio and television) about kickbacks, price fixing, corruption in office, embezzlement, fraudulent use of public funds, deceptive advertising, shoddy product quality, bribes to foreign officials, etc. Unethical business behavior apparently is widespread (although little attention has been directed at the analysis of these behaviors). Such a decline in ethics, values, and morals has been seen by many Americans as an area of great concern, for there is great opportunity for such unethical behavior at all organizational levels—top to bottom. Some studies of American industry suggest neither managers nor workers can state with certainty what is definitely right and wrong in all situations. Therefore, persons who practice or condone “small” unethical practices have a tendency later to attempt more serious unethical activities. They apparently feel since no repercussions occurred when something little was done there is no threat in attempting a more serious activity. Thus, they seem to adopt the attitude that if they can fool the public in the little things, eventually they will be able to fool them in the big things.

What causes such attitudes? Business is complex, dynamic, interdependent, and its operation is often tainted with compromise. Judgment is clouded on questions of what’s right and wrong and in whose eyes something is ethical or unethical. Apparently we need a strategy for dealing with ethical questions—what’s moral and immoral.

### **Ethics, Values, and Morals**

The terms “ethics,” “values,” and “morals” are

often used interchangeably. For example, a survey conducted by the Ethics Resource Center to determine what “ethics” means to the general public showed that more than 86 percent associated ethics with standards and rules of conduct, morals, right and wrong, values, and honesty.<sup>2</sup> Thus, “ethics” is basically a system or code of principles for one’s behavior. “Values” are beliefs that a particular code of conduct is preferable to other systems of behavior. And “morals” are the inner dispositions of individuals which result in external acts deemed proper, good, and acceptable. So several meanings are available. And there is no real need to make major distinctions among these terms, except that the way we define things places limits on the way we think about them. What we need to realize is this:

Business ethics extends the range of criteria whereby human actions are judged to include such things as societal expectations, fair competition, the aesthetics of advertising and the use of public relations, the meaning of social responsibilities, reconciling corporate behavior at home with behavior abroad, the extent of consumer sovereignty, the relevance of corporate size, the handling of communications, and the like.<sup>3</sup>

There is also another important point we should underscore in the beginning of this paper, and this thought must be grasped: One’s business ethics cannot be separated from one’s personal ethics—or all other ethics. Business will never be any more ethical than the people who are in business. Thus, when we speak of ethics in business we are usually speaking about *a lack*

of ethics.

### **Business Ethics**

This paper will raise a number of questions about ethics in business. It is impossible not to do so when you consider that a recent poll by Gallup and *The Wall Street Journal of Fortune's* top 1300 chief executive officers (CEOs) showed that none of the top 200 on the list considered maintaining ethical standards important to the public image of business.<sup>4</sup> So for the moment let's try to link ethics to business behavior in organizations. To do this, we need to look at what research says about business ethics.<sup>5</sup>

### **Sound Business Ethics**

Someone has suggested that business and ethics don't mix. But two studies have shown that business agrees with the statement, "Sound ethics is good business." For example, one study (1961) of readers of *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) found 99 percent of the executives responding to the poll agreed with this statement.<sup>6</sup> Most stated they felt this policy made for good public relations which is conducive to making money. Another study using MBA graduates from the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) schools as a population found 90 percent of these persons agreed with this statement.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, persons about to enter the business world as well as executives in the field indicate sound ethics *is* good business.

When asked whether profit alone is the motive for business activities, persons in three surveys agreed it was

not. In the HBR study mentioned above, 94 percent of the participants disagreed with the statement, "Business exists for only one purpose, to create and deliver value situations at a profit." A study of the same population 15 years later (1976) showed only 69 percent of the group felt profit alone was not the determining factor in business situations.<sup>8</sup> Finally, the study of MBA graduates mentioned above also were asked about the profit motive; 89 percent disagreed profit was the only legitimate business concern.

Despite the idea profit is not the sole business motive, some persons feel a conflict between what is expected of them in order to show "results" and what is expected of them as ethical human beings. However, this feeling is on the decrease. In 1961, three out of four individuals stated they experienced conflict between what was expected of them as "efficient, profit-conscious managers" and what was expected of them as ethical persons. This number decreased to four out of seven individuals in 1976. Two possible reasons for this decline were cited: (a) ethical standards have declined and/or (b) situations once causing ethical discomfort have become accepted practice.

### **Personal Standards**

Other studies indicate persons in the business world feel pressure to lower ethical standards to achieve necessary results. One study reveals 78 percent of the respondents agree with the statement, "I can conceive of a situation where you have sound ethics running from top to bottom, but because of pressures from the top to

achieve results, the person down the line compromises.”<sup>9</sup> These feeling of pressure are keenly felt at the middle and lower management levels. This same pressure is felt by persons in both the private and public sectors. Sixty-four percent of private sector employees and 60 percent of public sector employees feel pressure to compromise personal standards to achieve organizational goals, although senior managers and persons with higher educational levels are less likely to feel this pressure.<sup>10</sup>

When managers at Uniroyal, Inc. and at Pitney Bowes were asked if they felt pressure to compromise personal ethics to achieve organizational goals, 70 percent and 59 percent respectively responded they were.<sup>11</sup> Only one study showed fewer than 50 percent of the respondents stating they felt no such pressure. This study polled members of the National Association of Purchasing Managers (NAPM). Only 27 percent of the respondents stated they felt internal pressure to behave unethically.<sup>12</sup>

### **Competition**

Another cause often listed as a reason for unethical behavior is competition. In business this problem is seen between various businesses competing for the same dollar as well as between individuals in the same company competing for promotions and salary increases. Forty percent of the MBA graduates discussed previously felt stiff competition could force businesspersons to resort to shady practices which become necessary for survival. Therefore, it would be logical to expect these

same students to justify later behavior in business on this expectation. Competition can encourage persons to ignore ethical considerations and to justify any action of the basis of good end result. Therefore, if the outcome of unethical activities (i.e., profits) caused by stiff competition seems "good," the whole behavior can be viewed in another light.

Competition between individuals within businesses or organizations also causes problems. Some of these problems are: distortion of information, hiding of failures, falsification of figures, empire building, and mutual distrust. All these problems could be viewed as unethical and perhaps could be avoided if less competition existed between individuals.

### **Pressure to Achieve Results**

Like competition, pressure from superiors to achieve results can cause unethical behavior. In fact, all activities of superiors influence the ethical way in which subordinates act. This has been substantiated by a study of managers in an executive development program. Researchers found most of these persons felt their ethical beliefs were highly congruent with those of their superiors."<sup>13</sup> The conclusion suggests top executives serve as a reference group for others in a company in the setting of ethical standards. A comparison between workers at Pitney Bowes and those at Uniroyal also showed young managers in these companies go along with superiors in order to show loyalty.

This loyalty to or agreement with superior's beliefs can cause both ethical and unethical behavior by subor-

dinates. For example, in the HBR studies, the behavior of superiors was the number one factor influencing executives to make unethical decisions. The behavior of a person's superior was the second most likely influence in causing a subordinate to act ethically. Therefore, it can be seen that an ethical boss is an important factor in causing ethical behavior in a work group.

### **Company loyalty**

Just as superiors influence subordinates to act ethically and unethically, the way people relate to an organization affects their behavior. People seem to view self-enhancement or hurting as more immoral if others act on their own behalf rather than as an agent or representative of some group. The implication is: The more employees and managers are taught to identify with companies, become representatives of their companies, and have loyalty to the same, the more they are encouraged to abdicate personal responsibility for their actions.

### **Business Values**

Values are such an intrinsic part of the businessperson's life, she or he may take them for granted. These values are acquired early in one's business career. They are transmitted by superiors, peers, and others and are expressed in any number of ways. One of the conceptual schemes of value orientations which illuminates the differences in people's values—business and personal—was developed by Edward Spranger and is listed below.

1. *Theoretical* individuals are primarily interested in the discovery of truth and in the systematic ordering of knowledge. In pursuing this goal they typically take a “cognitive” approach, looking for identities and differences, with relative disregard for the beauty or utility of objectives, seeking only to observe and to reason. Their interests are empirical, critical, and rational. They are intellectual.
2. *Economic* individuals are primarily oriented toward what is useful. They are interested in the practical affairs of the business world; in the production, marketing, and consumption of goods; in the use of economic resources; and in the accumulation of tangible wealth. They are thoroughly “practical.”
3. *Aesthetic* persons find their chief interests in the artistic aspects of life, although they need not be creative artists. They value form and harmony. They view experience in terms of grace, symmetry, or harmony. Each single event is savored for its own sake.
4. *Social* individuals essentially value love of people. They value people as ends, and tend to be kind, sympathetic, and unselfish. They find those who have strong theoretical, economic, and aesthetic orientations rather cold. They regard love (i.e., the altruistic or philanthropic aspect of love) as the most important component of human relationships.
5. *Political* persons are characteristically oriented toward power, not necessarily in politics, but in whatever area they function. Most leaders have a high

power orientation. Competition plays a large role in all life, and many writers have regarded power as the most universal drive. For some, this motive is uppermost, driving them to seek personal power, influence, and recognition.

6. *Religious* people are those whose mental structure is permanently directed to the creation of the highest and absolutely satisfying value experience. The dominant value for them is unity. They seek to relate themselves to the universe in a meaningful way and have a mystical orientation.<sup>14</sup>

Using these six value orientations, a questionnaire distributed to high-level U.S. executives attending the Advanced Management Program at Harvard Business School resulted in the following conclusions:<sup>15</sup> The major orientation of business managers is a combination of economic, theoretical, and political values. The economic and political orientations are clearly in line with our stereotypes of businesspeople. High-level executives need to have theories and cognitive and rational approaches to their work in order to satisfy their economic and political values. They work with and through others; they have to explain, teach, express, be explicit and rational. They also have to be abstract, since they are removed from direct operations and have the function of integrating human and material resources.

These three values—economic, political, and theoretical—are based on averages, but they do suggest that the values of business executives differ from the

values of people in other professions (e.g., ministers). These values also affect their thinking about corporate strategy.

### **Business Morals**

In addition to the growing body of information on ethics and values, researchers are also looking at the moral imperatives and perspectives on human inter-relatedness which underlie their moral judgments. They conclude that it is not only our behavior but also the underlying rationale for that behavior that reflects our level of moral development. Thus, Lawrence Kohlberg's theses of moral stages which proceed from concrete egocentrism to abstract relativism may provide us insight for the development of business morals.<sup>16</sup>

#### **The Preconventional Level**

At the first level, people are responsive to cultural rules and labels of good and bad, right and wrong. However, they interpret these labels by the physical or the hedonistic consequences of action (i.e., punishment, reward, exchange of favors) or by the physical power of those who make the rules. Thus, their behavior is motivated by biological and social impulses (i.e., consequences). There are two stages at this premoral or preconventional level

Stage 1: *The punishment-and-obedience orientation.* The physical consequences of action determine what is right and wrong or good and bad, regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference

to power are valued in their own right.

Stage 2. *The instrumental-relativist orientation*. Right action is that which satisfies one's own needs and occasionally those of others. "Fairness" is interpreted in a physical, pragmatic way (e.g., "an eye for an eye" or "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours"). Motivation is the same as Stage 1, but reciprocity of human relations are not viewed from out of loyalty, gratitude, or justice.

### Conventional Level

The second level of morality has a conformity orientation—conformity to personal expectations and social order, loyalty to it, active maintenance of that order, and identification with the persons or group involved in it. Thus, at the conventional level, maintaining the expectations of one's family, group, or nation is seen as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences. There are also two stages at this level.

Stage 3: *The interpersonal concordance or "good boy-nice girl" orientation*. Good behavior is that which pleases or is approved of by one's reference group. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is "natural" behavior. One earns approval by being "nice;" that is, behavior is frequently judged by one's intention.

Stage 4: *The "law and order" orientation*. Right behavior respects authority, fixed rules, and maintenance of the social order; it consists of doing one's duty.

### **Postconventional level**

At the third level—postconventional, autonomous, or principled level—there is a clear attempt to define moral values. These principles have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups or persons holding them and apart from one's own identification with these groups. This is the highest level of moral development and emphasizes the idea of negotiated contracts between and among people. It likewise has two stages.

Stage 5: *The social-contract, legalistic orientation.* Right actions tend to be defined in terms of general individual standards (generally with utilitarian overtones) which have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. "Right" and "wrong" are relative. Aside from what is constitutionally and democratically agreed upon, right is a matter of personal "values" and "opinions." The result is an emphasis upon the "legal point of view," but with an emphasis upon the possibility of changing law in terms of rational considerations of social utility. Outside the legal realm, free agreement and contract is the binding element of obligation. Therefore, consensus agreements—contracts—are essential and reasonable. This is the "official" morality of the American government and constitution.

Stage 6: *The universal-ethical-principle orientation.* Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen *ethical principles* appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality, and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical; action is based

on deep respect and regard for individual rights and equality (e.g., “Do unto others . . .”). At heart, these are the universal principles of *justice*, of the *reciprocity* and *equality* of human *rights*, and of respect for the dignity of human beings and *individual persons*.

### Conclusion

Now that we have spent considerable time trying to define the terms “ethics,” “values,” and “morals,” let’s try to put a few things in perspective before proceeding. First, it is very common for us to speak of “business’ ethics, values, and morals; of “Christian” ethics, values, and morals; or “American” ethics, values, and morals, etc. Is there really a difference among business/Christian/American ethics, values, and morals? Or is there an ethic that governs all relationships whether they are business, religious, or cultural? Second, close scrutiny of American business organizations reveals that the majority of them function at the second level of moral development (i.e., the conventional level) or below. Thus, most people, although intellectually capable of doing better, do not develop into a third-level person with regard to issues on moral judgment. Perhaps that is why managers continue to meet so many ethical dilemmas, or why we hear so much about the lack of ethics in the world of business. Third, with a renewed emphasis on ethics in the corporate boardrooms, is there a way by which we can get businesspeople to consider what the Bible has to say on the subject of ethics and social responsibility? And if we could get them to listen, would this solve most of the ethical pro-

blems in American business?

### **Ethical Dilemmas For Managers**

To illustrate how a moral quandary or ethical dilemma in business can surface, consider the following story.<sup>17</sup> Two partners took over a faltering stock brokerage firm 15 years ago that had five sales people. With the partners' business knowledge and talent, the brokerage firm became an international investment house with offices throughout the U.S. and Europe and nearly 1000 employees. The stock market was healthy, profits were high, and they had most of life's luxuries. Things seemingly couldn't be better. Then in 1974 the stock market took a nose dive. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) imposed a New Capital Rule on all brokerage firms requiring them to declare each month their liquid assets and their liabilities and to order their sales people to stop selling the moment the former dropped below a specified percentage of the latter.

Suddenly the two partners were faced with an ethical choice. Their liquid assets dropped below their liabilities to a level that required them to report to the SEC. But one of the partners told himself that the condition was only temporary: "You have a decision to make. Do you send the telegram? Do you inform your hundreds of sales people and all your employees? Or do you change one number just to make sure you fall in line with the requirements set forth by the SEC?"

He rationalized that next month things would get better, so it was okay to cheat this month. Well, next

month the market dipped lower; and when his SEC report was due, he changed the company's figures again. "Before you know it," he said, "you've changed a number and a number and a number and a number and the lie that started so innocently gets bigger. Then it comes to the end of the month and you know that if you can make a three look like an eight it may mean the difference between staying open one more month. You're almost forced to take that chance because if you don't you know that fifteen years of work are down the drain."

Finally, this lie became so big that the partners blew the whistle on themselves. And both are now serving time in Allenwood Prison in Pennsylvania. They didn't consider themselves convicts or criminals. Yet they're still not sure that if faced with the same set of circumstances again they wouldn't make the same unethical choices. As one of the partners said, "That's a tough question to answer. I'd like to think that I wouldn't violate the law, but I don't really know. I don't think a lot of guys really know for sure."

### **Managerial Quandaries**

Every day someone in business faces similar ethical and moral dilemmas. Do they cheat to stay in business one more day, or do they tell the truth and go out of business? Every day someone in a responsible corporate position discovers certain company policies are socially injurious. What can he or she do about it without jeopardizing her or his job? Every day someone compromises their principles. Why do millions of people

feel constrained to say “yes” to their bosses when the secretly believe “no”?

Several attempts have been made to catalog the ethical dilemmas managers face every day. For example, one writer has distilled these potential problems to three: dilemmas of profit, dilemmas of human relationships, and dilemmas of top management.<sup>18</sup>

### **Profit**

Businesses exist to make profit, but there are good ways and bad ways of making profits. The classical view of profit saw it as the sole end of business. Now that view has changed. Society expects its interests to be considered as well as business' self-interest. In the 1961 HBR study referred to earlier, 76 percent of the respondents said there was a conflict between their role as a profit-oriented business person and an ethical person. However, by 1976 only 59 percent reported such conflicts. This decrease of 19 percentage points could lead us to believe there is a corresponding decrease in internal pressure for profit.

### **Human Relationships**

Dilemmas of human relationships have to do with the management of people and other non-financial issues. The major propositions suggested in this concern for human relationships are three: a belief in people as the source of creativity, a belief in “belongingness” as the ultimate need of the individual, and a belief in the application of social science to achieve this belongingness.<sup>19</sup> Managers need to see that people and

organizations are not in perpetual conflict. They are able to exist in some degree of mutual trust and harmony. Wholehearted dedication and loyalty to an organization or an individual superior within an organization must be tempered by ethical and social responsibilities to one's fellow humans. Hierarchy, lust for power, and cold commercialism must not downgrade the relationships of those within the organization. Superiors should not try to create a conforming oneness in the organization; rather, it must allow for creative expressions of individuality.

### **Top Management**

Upper-level managers face ethical dilemmas regarding policies, strategies, and tactics. For example, how does one deal fairly and honestly with badly produced merchandise, dangerous pollution, excessive costs, discrimination, low quality control, etc.? Each of these items is a potential outcome of an emphasis on increased productivity. Thus, if top management increases production, while at the same time decreasing quality, they ultimately will fail. Policies, strategies, and tactics which encourage higher productivity as measurements of loyalty, motivation, confidence, or trust dissipate the valuable human assets of the organization.

### **Other Managerial Problems**

The above are only three dilemmas, but they are rather pervasive—profits, human relationships, and top management. But there are other problems as well. For example, another author suggests four major relation-

ships that pose problems in business ethics: relationship of the firm to the employee, relationship of the employee to the firm, relationship of the firm to other economic agents, and relationship of the firm to non-business groups.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Organization and the Employee**

The relationship of an organization to an employee can be viewed from three vantage points: hiring and firing, wages and working conditions, and private lives vs. working lives.<sup>21</sup> First, the ethics of hiring deal with the basic issues of discrimination according to race, color, creed, religion, sex, and national origin. There are related issues of job qualifications unrelated to the job, preferential treatment on the job, nepotism, and promoting by seniority instead of merit. The ethics of firing require an examination of just cause and due process. For example, managers should not fire someone on a whim. If an employee is to be dismissed for a reduction in productivity, violation of discipline, negligence, frequent illness, or prolonged absenteeism, the manager needs to make an objective evaluation (show "just cause") of the situation. Then the manager must follow the exact ("due") process stipulated in the policy manual for dismissing someone.

A second concern is wages and working conditions. The ethical question is: Is the manager paying a just wage and providing decent working conditions and stable employment? Work should provide a sense of fulfillment to employees. If so, they frequently experience satisfaction on the job. Managers who watch

for fulfillment and who do not become distorted in their perceptions of the needs and rights of others, or by selfishness and a narrow view of their own management functions, should be able to provide job satisfaction for employees.

The third view toward organizations and employees deals with the sensitive area of privacy on and off the job. That is, where does one's company life end? To illustrate, how do you respond to the following questions:

1. Does an organization have a right to demand that workers contribute to the Community Chest? United Way?
2. Does an organization have a right to force employees into civic activities?
3. Can an organization ethically limit the political activity of employees?
4. Is it ethical to impose personality and lie detector tests and to "bug" the rest room?<sup>22</sup>

The right to privacy is valued at a higher premium by Americans than ever before. Because of this, employees resent (often with force) the intrusion of the company on "their" time.

### **The Employee and the Organization**

The second ethical dilemma turns the first one (the organization and the employee) around—the employee and the organization. The three areas dealt with in these relationships include fiduciary relations and conflicts of interests, secrecy and espionage, and honesty and expense accounts.<sup>23</sup>

First, possible fiduciary relations and conflicts of interest raise the question of “an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay.” For example, are employees giving an organization the proper amount of time, energy, and intelligence if they are moonlighting? Is there a conflict of interest if they engage in bribery, extortion, and gifts? What about payola?

Second, the ethics of secrecy and espionage raise some interesting questions. What do I know that I should tell and shouldn’t tell? How should I handle “insider” information? What obligation do I have to a former employer who is now a competitor? Is it alright to buy information from others? Is it wrong to hire away an employee from a competitor to obtain certain information? You and I could probably agree that the use of bribery, theft, trespass, and fraud are unethical, but there are many others who see all these questions in shades of gray.

The third ethical issue of the relationship between employees and organizations deals with honesty and expense accounts. Petty theft now costs American businesses \$3-5 billion yearly. The issue is, of course, stealing, but it is also one of lying. Not only do some people take what belongs to someone else, but also they imply (in written or oral form) they didn’t.

### **The Organization and Other Economic Agents**

The relationship between an organization and its economic agents consists of customers, competitors, stockholders, dealers, and suppliers.<sup>24</sup> The concern for the relationship with customers is, first, one of health

and safety. That is, business should not willfully bring harm to a customer. Instead, it has an obligation to warn of danger and remedy defects in products. This is true not only of food and drugs but also of firearms and other lethal weapons. Second, business must be concerned for providing adequate information so they cannot be accused of fraud, lying, and deception. Full disclosure of information is a right of customers in sales and credit so they will have a basis for deciding whether to buy, charge, or look elsewhere. Third, business must show some concern for its prices—fair, not fixed—and avoid discriminatory pricing.

Concerns for relationships with competitors involves conspiracy, theft, bribery, and general dishonesty. That is, competition takes the direction of destroying the competitor (e.g., price cutting) rather than serving the consumer. Similar concerns could be raised for relationships with stockholders, dealers, and suppliers. For example: What are the obligations of management to its stockholders? to speculative ventures where stock is real risk capital? to a holding company and vice versa? How should a buyer use various positions to obtain special prices, finances, and contributions from a supplier? What should be done when dealers don't live up to their contracts? There do not seem to be many easy solutions or answers to these questions.

### **The Organization and Non-Business Groups**

There is also a relationship to think about between business and non-economic groups such as the union, the local community, and the world as a whole.<sup>25</sup>

Unions have become a necessity in U.S. businesses, but there are many instances of power abuse on both sides of the bargaining table. There do not seem to be many guidelines, unfortunately, which govern union-management relationships. To some extent this has been true regarding an organization's social responsibility to a community, the state, the nation, or the world. business seems to have the techniques and knowledges necessary to solve many of the ethical and social dilemmas in their dealings, but they have been reluctant to rise to the challenge. Thus, unethical practices proliferate.

### **Conclusion**

Business people have always faced ethical and moral quandaries. However, these dilemmas seem more pronounced in the 1980s. We hear more than ever before about inferior product quality, lack of concern for workers' health and safety, mishandling of corporate pension funds, and the myriad other unethical dealing suggested above. "What's a manager to do?" is a legitimate question for people in administrative positions to ask.

In fact, there are a number of related questions to be answered by managers seeking a higher plane of business relationships. Specifically: What are the sources of business values? Why try to be ethical? How can one make moral decisions? Some answers to these questions are suggested in the next section.

### **Why Managers Behave Ethically or Unethically**

What causes someone to behave ethically and so-

meone else in the same situation to behave unethically? There apparently are many managers who can plan, set long-range goals, and make technical decisions who do not have philosophical and character values as an ethical foundation. Yet, if a manager does not abide by some ethical norm, unpleasant consequences will follow.

### What are the Sources of Business Values?

There are at least five principle factors which influence people's business values: religion, philosophy, culture, law, and profession.<sup>26</sup> The first source, *religion*, defines our conception of what is right and wrong (e.g., the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount). All the major religions, in fact, emphasize the responsibility of people to act in a way that contributes to the general welfare of others, that relates their over-all goals to eternal values. The moral *philosophy* of church leaders like Augustine and Aquinas, secular philosophers like Spinoza and Kant, and economists like Bentham, Mill, and Locke also have shaped our thinking. Some of their ideas about proper relationships between people and God, about "goodness," and pain and pleasure are still guides to contemporary action.

Third, *culture* likewise influences business ethos. Civilization is a culture that transmits values, rules, and standards. And business is a subculture of civilization. It faces difficult ethical problems because of a changing cultural climate. As civilization has moved from the hunting stage of human development to the agricultural

stage to the industrial stage, businesses have undergone similar changes. Thus, to a degree it is possible to say business is on the cutting edge of cultural change. Yet, because of the rapidity of change (i.e., discontinuity) it becomes less clear for many business people to define adequate standards of morality. Occasionally the law can help in these situations, but not always. The *law*, for example, establishes standards of ethics for society, but law is just a codification of the customs, ideas, and beliefs society wants to preserve and enforce. When laws change, they can cause ethical standards to change.

There are instances where the law is not clear. Managers are faced with a gray area to interpret. A vivid example of this is the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977. The law specifically outlaws "foreign gifts or bribes to any foreign official, political candidate, or party paid by domestic concerns—defined as U.S. corporations, partnerships, or individual representatives of same—for purposes of inducing them to influence their government to assist the giver in obtaining or retaining business." Violation of the act is five years in jail and a \$1 million corporate fine. However, there are two significant loopholes to add to a manager's ethical dilemma.<sup>27</sup> One is the definition in the act of "foreign official." According to the act, a foreign official is one whose duties are essentially ministerial or clerical. Thus, it is permissible to pay money to them but not to their boss. However, who is to guarantee they will not pass the bribe to the boss? A second loophole is the exclusion of foreign extortion from coverage. That is, if a foreign official says, "Pay me or I'll put you out of business in

this country,” this statement could be interpreted as permissible extortion payment and not a bribe. Thus, some managers have started going to the Justice Department to report the demand for “extortion” before they make the payment.

Finally, one’s chosen profession usually has some *code of conduct* to which it adheres (e.g., the “Affirmative Ethical Principle” of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants; the “Television Code of Ethics” of the National Association of Broadcasters). Such codes may be short or long, simple or elaborate, vague or specific. In the long run such a set of ethical standards should increase the quality of management talent at the top of the organization. However, enforcement of such codes is an almost impossible task.

### **Why Try To Be Ethical?**

With this understanding of what are the sources for building an ethical, moral, and value foundation, let’s consider another question: Why try to be ethical? That is, why should one try to live up to some moral standard? Three reasons seem to stand out.<sup>28</sup> First, ethical behavior enhances success. If one person behaves ethically, others will follow this behavior pattern and do likewise. Also, there is evidence that ethical behavior will eventually overtake unethical opponents. Second, good ethical behavior reaps rewards because employees prefer to work for an ethical manager. In addition, (a) a good reputation attracts business, (b) consistent behavior is valued by customers and employees, and (c) customers repeat sales with businesses recognized for

ethical behavior. Third, unpleasant consequences follow unethical practices by managers (e.g., fines, jail sentences, social condemnation, disappearing customers, etc.). Good ethics seem to pay dividends for those willing to make high ethical decisions and abide by them.

### **How Can One Make Moral Decisions?**

One of the ideas suggested in this paper is: Moral decision making is a problem for many people. A reason is that there is a gap between what is and what should be, between reality and theory, between practice and statement. How does one decide what is ethical? Just because one wants to make moral decisions and act ethically does not mean she or he will. Most people can separate what is absolutely right from what is absolutely wrong. However, they often shove the ethically difficult question in the gray area. Three approaches are available to determine what is right or wrong in a certain situation.

### **A Three-Stage Decision Model**

The first approach is a three-stage decision model which provides managers with a (somewhat abstract but) systematic approach to ethical decisions.<sup>29</sup> For example, first, managers should develop an understanding of "general ethical principles" (e.g. maximize value and minimize disvalue; human life is more precious than animal life; persons and institutions should be just and honest in their dealings; basic desires must be decided before desires for luxuries; etc.). Second, after studying

the general ethical principles, managers should derive “applied or middle ethical principles.” These model principles will polish the broader ones (e.g., greater power requires greater responsibility; obedience to authority is demanded). Finally, managers must apply these model principles to specific circumstances; that is, they must practice them in the business environment. If managers will incorporate the three-stage model into their decision-making framework, it will help them sort out priorities and commit themselves to a stand on certain issues.

### **Twelve Questions for Making a Business Decision**

A second approach to pragmatically test the ethical content of everyday decisions in business and other organizational settings comes in the form of twelve questions.

1. Have you defined the problem accurately?
2. How would you define the problem if you stood on the other side of the fence?
3. How did this situation occur in the first place?
4. To whom and to what do you give your loyalty as a person and as a member of the corporation?
5. What is your intention in making this decision?
6. How does this intention compare with the probable results?
7. Whom could your decision or action injure?
8. Can you discuss the problem with the affected parties before you make your decision?
9. Are you confident that your position will be as valid over a long period of time as it seems now?

10. Could you disclose without qualm your decision or action to your boss, you CEO, the board of directors, your family, society as a whole?

11. What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? misunderstood?

12. Under what conditions would you allow exceptions to your stand?<sup>30</sup>

Although these twelve questions do not ask the meaning of “good” or whether the result is “just,” they do articulate an idea of the responsibilities involved and lay them open for examination. Also, they offer managers a practical way to explore the gap that sometimes exists between their personal ethic and their corporate ethic.

### A Four-Way Test

The third approach to determining right from wrong is an elemental and practical four-way test. Consistent practice of this method will help managers develop a habit for telling the truth and trying to be ethical.

(1) Look at the *community* in which you live and the society in general. What is the normal behavior in this society? Relate your question to this normative standard of conduct. How does it fit the social norms that reflect the ethical principles society has developed as its core guidelines? (2) Now, consider your question again and think about the *laws* of your community, of your state, and of your nation. How does your question satisfy the laws? (3) Then search out an answer from your conscience. No one knows exactly what a conscience is, but everyone seems to have one. Sometimes the door to your *conscience* may

not have been opened in such a long time that you'll need to pry it open. But do it, and see how your question fits your conscience. (4) There is still one more step. Most people believe in *God*, but if you don't, imagine there is a God—ask Him your question. He may only give you a hint as to what you should do, but ask Him anyway. Since this is a private exercise, and none of these steps costs you anything, you might as well go the whole way if you really want to know what is ethical. . . .<sup>31</sup>

This approach requires some time, but it also encourages thought and effort. It recognizes the fact there is a higher ethical being in this world who just might have some ideas on what constitutes ethical behavior.

### **Conclusion**

This section has presented a number of guidelines to consider in structuring an ethical foundation. First, you were reminded of factors which influence your values—religion, philosophy, culture, law, and codes of conduct. Then you were encouraged to be ethical because it yields rewards. Finally, you were provided with guidelines on how to make moral decisions; e.g., a three-stage model, twelve questions, and a four-way test. A recognition of the role God plays in moral development was beginning to emerge. This emergence of a Supreme Being and His interest in societal and business ethics is discussed below.

### **Foundations For Social/Ethical Behavior**

It is possible to become so ingrained with a concern

for business ethics that one concentrates on what modern-day advocates have to say on social behavior not on what God has to say. And we have spent considerable time trying to picture the reasons for and results of ethical bankruptcy from a somewhat secular viewpoint. So let's turn our attention now to some Biblical sources to help us see how various ethical principles of the last 300 years stack up against God's principles. We will begin with the Old Testament and its concern for social justice.

### **The Old Testament Concern For Social Justice**

God's Concern for the way people treat one another is evident in the Law of Moses, especially the way the rich and those in power treat the underprivileged (e.g. Ex. 22:22-24). God is concerned about the needs and cares of his people. Certainly there are social differences between the rich and poor, but they were both created in God's image (Gen. 1:27; Prov. 22:2). Thus, there is a need for mutual respect and kindness in the way they treat one another. Neither is to gouge the other in their personal or business relationships. The implication from Old Testament scripture is that God deals fairly and justly with his people, and they should do the same to one another, to their neighbors and slaves (Deut. 5:13-15, 10:18-19, 15:12-15).

Of course, it is obvious from reading the Old Testament that the Israelites did not deal with their fellow humans as God dealt with them. Their attitudes were often less than Godlike. The wicked plotted against the righteous, the rich against the poor, and the privileged

against the underprivileged. Judges took bribes and violent men planned wars. The evil intent of those who plot against others is still a concern today, and God's position on social injustice is just as clear in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament.

### **Social Injustice**

Social injustice manifested itself in a variety of ways—economically and politically, but the principles now and then are the same. The following examples illustrate this point.<sup>32</sup>

First, in the Old Testament it was common practice for a rich man to bring false charges against a poor man to destroy his reputation in order to seize his property and possessions (Ex. 23:1-3, 6-8; I Kgs. 21:1-16). Today it is possible for an employer to receive an accusation from a financial supporter against an employee and fire the employee without investigating the truthfulness of the accusation.

Second, in the Old Testament it was not uncommon to sell fraudulent measures and qualities of merchandise at excessive prices to unsuspecting customers (Amos 8:5-6). Today there are a number of instances of automobile repair shops overcharging out-of-town customers whose cars break down.

Third, in the Old Testament it was permissible if a rich man loaned money to a poor man, who failed to repay the debt within the agreed-on time period, to confiscate the poor man's property and possessions and sell him into slavery in order to retrieve the money (Amos 2:6-7; 4:1; 5:11). Today a banker can seize someone's

home or property if that person cannot repay the money borrowed from the bank.

Finally, in the Old Testament if a prophet predicted the overthrow of a kingdom because those in position of power took advantage of the poor and helpless, he might be accused of conspiring against the King and be thrown in jail or driven out of the country (I Kgs. 22:1-12; Amos 7:7-17). It wasn't many years ago that if a white preacher spoke out against injustices toward blacks, he would be instructed to either quit preaching or find another pulpit.

### **Social Justice**

It is clear from the above few references that God is concerned about social injustices. He desires his people to be righteous and to do what is lawful and right to those with whom they come in contact (Ezek. 18:5-9). For example:

The magnitude and unanimity of the teaching in the various portions of the Old Testament (the legal material, the narratives, the prophetic literature, the psalms, and the wisdom literature) on man's responsibility to his fellowman are overwhelming and incontrovertible. The matter of social justice is not peripheral in the Old Testament (or in the New, for that matter), but a vital and indispensable part of "religion." Biblically speaking, it would be unthinkable for a man who professes to love and honor God to deliberately neglect or mistreat one of his fellows. Social justice is central to biblical "religion." For a succinct summation of the Old Testament

teaching on social ethics, one could hardly improve on the New Testament text, James 1:27: "The kind of religion which is without stain or fault in the sight of God our Father is this: to go to the help of orphans and widows in their distress and keep oneself untarnished by the world."(NEB).<sup>33</sup>

How does this same concern for ethical dealings in one's business and personal life continue in the New Testament? How does it manifest itself in the teaching of Jesus and the early church?

### **The New Testament Concern For Ethics**

In the New Testament it is not as easy a task as it was in the Old Testament to derive a specific code of moral behavior. God's people are summoned to conduct themselves "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27), but there are no attempts to legislate as one finds in the Law of Moses. However, there is a very profound sense in which the New Testament is a book of ethical teachings.

### **Jesus' Sermon on the Mount**

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7), for example, could be viewed as *the* ethical framework for followers of Jesus Christ. He teaches against murder, divorce, oaths, and retaliation. He exhorts his disciples to be the salt of earth, to give to the needy, to pray and fast, and to lay up treasures in heaven. He cautions against worrying and judging others. Each of these areas is a call to a new lifestyle, a higher ethical plane. The Sermon on the Mount is a call for a righteousness that "surpasses

that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law” (Matt. 5:20); it is a call to be perfect “as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt. 4:48; ref. I Cor. 13:11).

Thus, a radical new attitude is called for by Jesus. While the Law of Moses essentially mandated an external ethical action, the new law called for an internal ethical change. Love was to be the motivating force that would compel ethical behavior—the love of God, neighbor, and enemy. And that love was to be directed toward all people, even “the least of these brothers of mine” (Matt. 25:40).

### **Paul’s Ethical Lists**

Later, Paul would echo these ethical teachings of Jesus. Paul recognized that it was God’s righteousness that allowed one to become ethical. Disciples were called on to become what God made them to be (Phil. 3:16), to live a new life (Rom. 6:4), to “become slaves to righteousness” (Rom. 6:18), and to offer their “bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God” (Rom. 12:2). Although Paul never legislated the moral life, he frequently included ethical lists of behavior in his writings to urge his readers on to a more ethical lifestyle. For example, his rules for Christian households (Col. 3:18-4:1), for wives and husbands (Eph. 5:22-33), for children and parents (Eph. 6:1-4), and for slaves and masters (Eph. 6:5-9) are essentially codes of behavior. He also provided various lists of vices, or unethical behaviors to avoid (I Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5) and virtues, or ethical behavior to adopt (Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:8-20; Col. 3:8-17).

Paul's readers were encouraged to take on a new shape of Christian morality and to develop qualities not highly regarded at that time by the Greeks and others.

Paul does not call on individuals to develop virtues after the fashions of a Greek philosopher. Instead, he calls on them, as members of the corporate body "not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think" (Rom. 12:3; cf. Phil. 2:3). This advice is apparently the key to the moral life as envisioned by Paul, for he proceeds to describe a lifestyle for a community. It involves genuine love (*agape*, Rom. 12:9), honor towards fellow members of the community (Rom. 12:10), responsibility for the financial need of others, hospitality (Rom. 12:13), and the practice of non-resistance to others (Rom. 12:17-21).<sup>34</sup>

Paul also introduced to his readers an idea of submission and humility, another radical idea to the Greeks. Peter echos this same call for subjection to his readers.

### **Peter's Call for Submission**

Peter had seen first-hand the need for submission and humility to others through such activities as paying the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27) and washing feet (John 13:1-17). Later he would exhort Christians to submit to rulers and masters (1 Pet. 2:13-25), wives to husbands (1 Pet. 3:1-6), husbands to wives (1 Pet. 3:7), and young men to older men (1 Pet. 5:5-7). This idea of subjection is important because it entails an ethic of responsibility for our actions toward others and demonstrates our love and respect for God's creations.

### **Conclusion**

If we accept the idea that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, then his concerns for people and their personal, religious, and business relationships are unchanging. If He was interested in His people's lives in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, He is still interested in the actions of His people in 1983. His concern for social justice, moral development, and high ethics is constant. We have seen a number of instances where people violate His suggested codes of behavior, but this does not nullify his demands or wishes. God is interested in our economics and politics, our laws and our judges, our treatment and mistreatment of our neighbors, our professions and our actions. He is concerned about my actions in the light as well as in the dark. He calls for love, respect, and compassion; but he makes no demands on my ethical behavior. I am free to choose my course of action; but I am also accountable for what I do. There are no legislated laws of love, only opportunities to serve as His Son served, to obey as His Son obeyed. We love, serve, and obey because of Jesus' example, because we have received a love with higher meaning than the love of our earthly ties, and because we want to be partakers of that heavenly kingdom. Thus, we may conclude that if business and religion don't mix, then business people and heaven don't mix. So let us close by establishing some final principles and ethical conduct and by suggesting some ways to manage ethical behavior.

### **Managing Business Ethics**

We have catalogued a number of principles thus far for use by people in business. There are other common ethical guidelines to which individuals may subscribe that should be mentioned. Some of these principles may overlap, conflict, or suggest different courses of action. And people may subscribe to one or more of these principles. Each, however, has been an enduring guideline.

### **Principles Of Ethical Conduct**

The last 2000 years have yielded at least 14 different principles of ethical conduct to which an individual may subscribe. These principles are used not only for codes of behavior but also can be used as simple decision rules.

1. *The Categorical Imperative*—One should not adopt principles of action unless they can, without inconsistency, be adopted by everyone else.
2. *The Conventional Ethic*—Individuals should act to further their self-interests so long as they do not violate the law.
3. *The Disclosure Rule*—When faced with an ethical dilemma, a manager should ask how it would feel to see the thinking and details of the decision disclosed to a wide audience.
4. *The Golden Rule*—Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
5. *The Hedonist Ethic*—There are no universal or absolute moral principles; i.e., if it feels good, do it.

6. *The Intuition Ethic*—What is Good is undefinable and simply understood. People are endowed with a kind of moral sense with which they can apprehend right and wrong.
7. *The Market Ethic*—Selfish actions in the marketplace are virtuous because they contribute to efficient operation of the economy. This efficient operation is, in turn, responsible for the higher good of prosperity and optimum use of resources.
8. *The Means-End Ethic*—Worthwhile ends justify efficient means; when ends are of overriding importance or virtue, unscrupulous means may be employed to reach them.
9. *The Might-Equals-Right Ethic*—What is ethical is what an individual has the strength and power to accomplish.
10. *The Organizational Ethic*—Be loyal to the organization; subordinate wills and needs.
11. *The Principle of Proportionality*—I am responsible for whatever I will as a means or an end. If both the means and the end I am willing are good in and of themselves, I may ethically permit or risk the foreseen but un-willed side effects if, and only if, I have a proportionate reason for doing so.
12. *The Professional Ethic*—You should do only that which can be explained before a committee of your peers.
13. *The Revelation Ethic*—Through prayer or

other appeal to transcendent beings and forces, answers are given to individual minds.

14. *The Utilitarian Principle*—The greatest good for the greatest number; maximize pleasure and reduce pain in groups.<sup>35</sup>

Whether these principles of ethical conduct are appropriate guidelines for business ethics in the 1980s was the subject of a 1982 purposive study by the author of one-third of the *Fortune* companies. The executives of these institutions were asked what a decision-maker should do when faced with a moral choice. The results are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I  
WHEN FACED WITH A MORAL CHOICE, A  
DECISION-MAKER SHOULD:

Yes	No	?	No	
73.08	7.69	15.39	3.85	1. act in a way he or she believes is right and just for any other person in a similar situation.
	96.15	3.85		2. bluff (lie) and take advantage of all legal opportunities and widespread practices or customs.
65.39	15.39	19.23		3. ask how it would feel to see the thinking and details of the decision disclosed to a wide audience (newspaper or television).
80.77	15.39	3.85		4. look at the problem from the position of another party affected by the decision and try to determine what response the other person would expect as virtuous.

84.62	15.39			5.	Do whatever she or he finds to be in their own self-interest.
46.15	23.08	26.92	3.85	6.	go with his or her "gut feeling" or what she or he understands to be right in a given situation.
84.62	15.39			7.	take selfish actions and be motivated by personal gains in business dealings.
46.15	34.62	19.23		8.	ask whether some overall good—such as the survival of a country or business—justifies any moral transgression.
3.85	96.15			9.	seize what advantage he or she is strong enough to take without respect to ordinary social conventions and laws.
61.54	11.54	26.92		10.	ask whether actions are consistent with organizational goals and do what is good for the organization.
19.23	34.62	46.15		11.	do whatever she or he wills if there is a proportionate reason for doing so.
30.08	53.85	15.39		12.	do only that which can be explained before a committee of his or her peers.
15.39	61.54	23.08		13.	should pray, meditate, or otherwise commune with a superior force or being.
38.46	30.77	26.92	3.85	14.	determine whether the harm in an action is outweighed by the good (i.e., maximize pleasure and reduce pain).

Percentage of responses may not add up to 100 percent because of a rounding error.

It is clear from this study (based on 60 percent and higher response rates from participants) that *Fortune* 500 executives think managers *should not* (a) bluff (lie) and take advantage of all legal opportunities and widespread practices or customs, (b) seize what advantage he or she is strong enough to take without respect to ordinary social conventions and laws, (c) do whatever she or he finds to be in their own self-interest, (d) take selfish actions and be motivated by personal gains in business dealings, or (e) pray, meditate, or otherwise commune with a superior force or being. We could easily agree with their conclusions on the first four "don'ts," but the last one raises some doubts as to the logical rejection of prayer.

A manager *should* (a) look at the problem from the position of another party affected by the decision and try to determine what response the other person would expect as most virtuous, (b) act in a way he or she believes is right and just for any other person in a similar situation, (c) ask how it would feel to see the thinking and details of the decision disclosed to a wide audience (e.g., printed in newspaper or reported on national television), and (d) ask whether actions are consistent with organizational goals and do what is good for the organization. Again, we probably could agree with these conclusions. At least they appear to be logical "dos." There is a major concern exhibited for others involved in the ethical decision.

Those guidelines for business ethics on which managers are apparently ambivalent or undecided include (a) doing whatever she or he wills if there is a pro-

portionate reason for doing so, (b) going with his or her “gut feeling” or what she or he understands to be right in a given situation, (c) determining whether the harm in an action is outweighed by the good (i.e., maximize pleasure and reduce pain), (d) asking whether some overall good—such as the survival of a country or business—justifies any moral transgression, and (e) doing only that which can be explained before a committee of his or her peers. We perhaps could wonder why indecision occurs on these items when several of them seem closely related to the “dos” on the list. What would it take to push one of these items into one of the other categories?

One of the interesting items from Table I (from our perspective) is why over 60 percent of those managers do not recommend praying, meditating, or otherwise communing with God about decisions, and why another 23 percent do not apparently know the answer to this question. The life of every great leader in the Bible was forged through prayer (e.g., Moses, Nehemiah, Jesus, Paul, etc.) Thus, it is worthwhile to note how far people have drifted from contact with God. Perhaps there is still a mass adoption of the philosophy that business and religion do not mix. If that is true, it is no wonder that unethical practices abound and that people can't make wise, moral choices.

### **Models Of Ethical Theories**

The above study confirms that there is no one universal code to which everyone subscribes. It also suggests that moral attitudes in the early 1980s are largely subjec-

tive. The preceding principles can probably be classified into one of three models—legalistic, antinomian, and situation.<sup>34</sup>

### **Legalistic Models**

Legalism seeks to solve all problems by adhering to absolute rules and regulations. The categorical imperative is an example of a legalistic model. It is derived from some assumed moral law that ignores personality. A Biblical example is the Torah, a code of over 600 regulations, and the Ten Commandments. The strength of legalism is a codified system that prescribes specific moral conduct for every situation. However, Jesus pointed out its weaknesses and futile approaches to ethical/moral behavior by suggesting that it does not deal with real human predicaments (Lk. 11:46). Thus legalism offers little assistance for the Christian manager who is seeking guidelines for making decisions. Also, to convert New Testament teachings into a legalistic system reveals a misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching, nullifies His death, and perverts the gospel of grace.

### **Antinomianism**

The opposite of legalism is antinomianism, which means "against law." It denies moral law. One makes decisions without reference to any principles or rules. Items number 2, 5, 7, and 9 in Table I might loosely be categorized as antinomianism. Thus, it is encouraging to note that these were items rejected by managers as decision-making bases. Other examples of antino-

mianism include existentialism and hedonism. Labeled in the late 1960s as “the new morality,” it suggested that people are free to do whatever their impulse dictates at the time. Thus, this theory was based purely on experience and does not provide any ethical content to assist managerial decision making.

### **The Situational Approach**

Somewhere between the extremes of legalism and antinomianism lies situationalism, or contextual ethics. The situational approach contends that the only law is love (*agape*) and that love must be applied in every situation. The heart of this theory suggests that the end justifies the means and is worthy of any expenditure. Capsule propositions of situationalism are:

1. Morals are made for men and women, not men and women for morals.
2. Situation ethics speaks out against any notion that anything is good or bad in and of itself intrinsically and as a kind of self-validating norm or principle of conduct.
3. Situation ethics denies that there is an objective moral order, whether its alleged objectivity is based on claims of scriptural authority, as in classical Protestantism, or natural law, as in classical Catholicism.
4. Situation ethics rejects any distinction between love and justice.
5. Situation ethics asserts that much of our conventional morality based on law and

- obedience to rules rather than upon love with its infinite elasticity, creativity and freedom, has been really immoral.
6. Situation ethics deliberately rejects all ethical codes and systems of conduct in favor of openness and elasticity on the ground that righteousness requires far more description and much less definition.
  7. Situation ethics makes individual freedom the first necessary ingredient of any authentic ethics.
  8. Situation ethics repudiates the moral rules and even moral principles as anything more than suggestive hints to serious and responsible decision makers.
  9. Situation ethics calls us to love people, not to love things; to use things, and not to use people.
  10. Sexual acts are not intrinsically good or evil, right or wrong.<sup>37</sup>

Some of the major ingredients of situation ethics—love, personalism, and contextualism—have much about them that appear truly Christian. However, it leaves a manager without any moral principles, with only an attempt to relate love to relative situations. Thus, it, like the other two theories, fails to present us with a true picture of Christian business ethics.

## **Level Where Business Ethics Can Be Improved**

If the ethic of Jesus Christ is *the* answer to our business moral dilemma, then it needs to be applied at not only the individual level but also at the organizational, societal, and international levels. Obviously, the place to start is at the individual level, and that is where we have concentrated much of this paper. The other levels will only be as ethical as the individuals in them. Yet there is a need for understanding these other three levels so that we might gain insight concerning how to improve all levels.

### **Organizational Level**

Although the individual can influence those around him or her, often that influence is not widespread throughout an organization, especially a large one. Thus, a manager with high ethical principles can affect the entire environment of an organization—business, government, industry, or education. Some of the major actions to be considered for managers have already been listed, but in addition to those general guidelines, managers should provide leadership in ethical behavior. In every decision and policy situation, top management has an opportunity to outline high ethical standards and conduct. To illustrate this point, the following are suggested ethical actions for top management:

1. Create clear and concise policies that define business ethics and conduct.

2. Select for employment only those people and firms whose character and ethics appear to be in keeping with corporate standards.
3. Promote people on the basis of performance and ethical conduct and beliefs.
4. Company personnel must feel the obligation and the opportunity to report irregularities in ethics or in accounting transactions.<sup>38</sup>

If such decisions and policies are not set at the top, little can be done at the bottom for upward influence. The majority of organizations in the U.S. are constructed in a pyramid shape. Thus, policies flow down, not up. The strength of an organization at the bottom is only as strong as the management at the top. To increase the ethical stance throughout an organization, top management should also set realistic objectives, establish codes of ethics, discipline violators of ethical standards, and train managers in business ethics.<sup>39</sup>

### **Societal Level**

At the societal level, business ethics is shaped primarily by our laws. Thus, it is business' responsibility to comply with the law. Such a response to the moral questions and the social policies of the day will directly affect the lives of all Americans. The stand that society takes on business issues such as sexual equality, discrimination and reverse discrimination, individual liberty, etc., will have far-reaching effects on all of us. However, for society to adopt Christian stands on cur-

rent morality issues, Christians must be active in getting society to listen to the Biblical format for ethical living.

### **International Level**

Consensus on what constitutes ethical or unethical behavior outside our national and cultural boundaries is difficult. What might be considered unethical in the U.S. could be considered an acceptable practice in another country. However, this should not encourage wholesale abandonment of high ethical principles. Such behavior does not encourage responsive and responsible conduct in other countries. A U.S. corporation operating in another country must recognize the autonomy of independent nations and attempt to function in such a way that both the corporation and the host nation will benefit mutually.

Citicorp is one example of a multinational business that has recognized the need for high ethical standards when operating in other countries. Their International Code of Conduct reads as follows:

1. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are guests in foreign countries. We must conduct ourselves accordingly. We recognize the right of governments to pass local legislation and our obligation to conform.
2. Under these circumstances, we also recognize that we can survive only if we are successful in demonstrating to the local

- authorities that our presence is beneficial.
3. We believe that every country must find its own way politically and economically. Sometimes we feel that local policies are wise; sometimes we do not. However, irrespective of our own views, we try to function as best we can under prevailing conditions.
  4. We have always felt free to discuss with local governments matters directly affecting our interests, but we recognize that they have final regulatory authority.

As corporations have multinational operations, they must work with a variety of environmental constraints in different nations. Can you imagine the type of world we might have if U.S. corporations were as concerned for high ethical influence on another nation's infrastructure as they are for high profits at any cost? Perhaps the world would be turned upside down again (Acts 17:6).

### **Conclusion**

What are we to conclude from all this discussion about business ethics? One conclusion is that there is often a critical distance between normal cultural/business values and Christians. Twentieth-century Christians have been shaped by the Christian story; they have accepted a changed life. Jesus has made a difference in their lifestyle. They have been freed from excessive self-concern, power-hunger, and egoism. They have adopted a life service which conforms to the model

of Jesus' life. They have put off old vices and put on new characteristics (Col. 3:5-17). That is why the ethical advice of the New Testament, although directed to an ancient culture, is used as the standard for shaping values long before a concrete ethical decision is faced. The Christian's mind has been renewed and now she or he has a character that allows them to make difficult decisions which are at variance with others' values.

Undoubtedly, we all face many ethical issues in the future on our jobs, in our schools, and in our communities. We will be presented with new decisions which will challenge us to look for moral and ethical insight. The Bible provides moral insight for those times by shaping our values and forming Christian character. But you can't be molded by the word if you aren't studying it. Guidelines for ethical behavior in life—business or personal—abound within the pages of the Bible. However, they aren't legislated; you have to accept them and let God's Spirit mold you in such a way that they are adopted voluntarily. Those who have been shaped by the Biblical story will find resources in God's Word for dealing with complex issues.

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# Life-Style Evangelism - Back to the Basics

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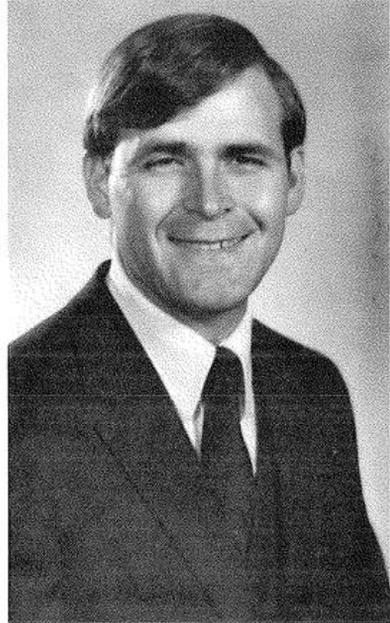
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Life-Style Evangelism is not a new term. For several years most of us have been aware of an emphasis on evangelism through friends, relatives, and other social and business relationships. In this class our first objec-

tive is to lay down a basis in Scripture for this style of outreach. Then, we examine the way in which a Christian enters the life of those around him in a redemptive way. Finally, we will make several suggestions as to how the leadership of the congregation acts to enhance the ability of the Body to minister to the lives of others through relationships. These are critical issues which must be taken together if the impact of our lives on the world is going to be what it should be. What is at stake here is a challenge to involve one's life-style in evangelism and to shape the life-style of the church in such a way that the church supports the spiritual development of the lives of the members.

### **I. Life-Style Evangelism in the New Testament Salvation-An Event in the Life of God and an Event in the Life of Man**

To begin the first section on the nature of evangelism in the New Testament, we'd like to begin in Matthew 16:13-20:

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do you say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." What about you, He asked, who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jona, for this was not revealed to you by man but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my

church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. And he warned his disciples not to tell anyone he was the Christ.

Jesus says he will build his church. His church will be built on bedrock statement that he is the Son of God. And yet, as he speaks, he speaks to the people around him and tells them that they are going to have a part in the building of his church. We need to examine what part we have in the building of the church. It would be good to begin with a broad structure and examine the building of the church as an event in the life of God and then the building of the church as an event in the life of man.

The building of the church is an event in the life of God. God exists. He is all the power there is—all the wisdom, all the insight, all the creativity. Out of all the possible options he had for his life he chose to create a world. In creating and populating the world, he knew he would watch the world, weep for the world, and someday save that world through the sending of his son. This salvation that we see around us is an event in the life of God. John 3:16 stands for us as a continuing testimony to the building of the church as an event in the life of God: “For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son...” As we see Jesus living and active in his ministry on the earth, we are reminded again that the building of the church is an event in the life of God. As Jesus begins his public ministry in the power of the Spirit (Luke

4:14), we see him reflecting the identity and the glory of the Father. The power of the Spirit is with Jesus as he conquers disease, demons and death. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are all deeply involved in this ministry of salvation. It all happened here on this earth as God in His fullness entered history for man's salvation. When Jesus prayed, He said, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It is important for us to realize that Jesus came from the realm in which God's will was always done into a realm in which God's will could be done.

As we look at the cross, we see the cross as an event in the life of God. On the cross, Jesus was made sin on our behalf (II Corinthians 5:21). There on the cross the completeness of all the promises of God were fulfilled in a complete sacrifice. In the darkness of the crucifixion, there is a confession that this cross is truly an event in the life of God.

Paul ends Second Corinthians by reminding the Corinthians brethren that what they're involved in in the church is not something men can create, but is a part of something that God has done. Paul says, "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (II Corinthians 13:14). Don't we really need to hear that? As we consider our life in the church, as we walk in the building, as we sit in the seats, as we share our times together in various forms of fellowship, as we study our Bibles and as we live in our communities, isn't it important for us to say that our life in the church is something

that God has done and is doing? The building of the church of Jesus Christ is an event in the life of God. It is a part of God's continuing ministry to mankind.

Now the church and the building of the church is also an event in the life of man. A man comes into the Body of Christ by an act of his own will obeying God's word. A man is challenged by God through the preaching of the word to turn from sin and commit himself to Jesus Christ through baptism into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel event described in I. Corinthians 15:1-3 is experienced by the one who comes to Christ. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are experienced by one who has been baptized into that death, burial and resurrection. When Christians find themselves in trouble, the apostle Paul will call them back to their beginning-to their birth place. In Romans 6, Paul takes the Romans back to the water, to the graveyard, to the resurrection place and reminds them that in their life there was an event in which their life began again. There was an event in which they handed over the title to their life to God and became slaves to righteousness rather than slaves of unrighteousness. The entry into Christ and his church is an event in the life of man.

As a person comes to Jesus and finds his life recreated in Jesus, the quality of his life changes. This change of life is an event in the life of man. Jesus speaks to his disciples of this qualitative change in the Sermon on the Mount when he tells them they are the light of the world, that they are salt. In a world of darkness, they are light. In a world of disease and bland, tasteless tex-

tures, they are salt. In another instance he speaks of the kingdom as leaven as that which is truly alive (Matthew 13:33). In I Peter 2:11-12, Peter describes Christians as individuals who prompt people to think in terms of God. The Christian has a quality of life that is very much different from the kind of life that a person lives when he's lost. The building of the church is an event in the life of man not only because entry into the church demands action in the life of man but also the life that is given to God demands of us that we allow the life that God creates to become visible in the world. We must allow our light to shine, our salt to be tasted, our leaven to function, our example to be seen. Being a Christian means acting as a Christian in the world.

Being a Christian is an event in the life of a Christian also because in Jesus we become a part of his body. We're baptized by one Spirit into one body (I Corinthians 12:13). Our focus in our Christian life is a body-oriented and a body-actuated focus. We live our life together. The building of the church is a process that happens in lives lived in relationship with others. There are lives which draw no support to one another but those are not lives that should be found in the body. A part of what is experienced in a Christian life is the experience of an alive vibrant, growing body.

As we see Jesus coming into the world, we are made aware that the building of the church and the salvation of man is an event in the life of God. And as we see Christians moving toward God, responding to him daily as individuals who are a part of the body of Christ, we're certain the building of the church is also an event

in the life of man. Therefore, we should not be timid to ask of one another that we spend time considering how we together might continue to build the kingdom of God. For we must prepare ourselves as individuals and as congregations to be more and more the kind of people that Christ can use to spread his message in the world. We must pursue actively the building of that quality of life in ourselves that will allow the impact of our lives to build the knowledge of the kingdom of God in the world. As we introduce life-style evangelism, it's important to have this concept in mind: what we're about is not anything we've created for ourselves, but God is acting and now we act in response to him.

### **Light, Salt, and Leaven**

When we think of life-style evangelism in the New Testament, it's obvious we begin with Jesus. In Jesus, we see God's belief that a perfect message of salvation must be a message given in flesh. Jesus was called Immanuel which was translated, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). John writes that the Word became flesh and dwelled among us and he speaks of Jesus bringing a revelation of grace and truth. In Jesus, man had seen God (John 1:14-18). Now that's extremely significant because the message that would come from Jesus was to be a message that issued from authentic life. His life was not a life in retreat from the ugliness and the pain of life. Rather it was a life lived in close contact with the hurting, ugly edges of life. Jesus called for his disciples to follow him in that life-style. He sent out the twelve to do ministry (Matthew 10:5f). He sent out the seventy-

two to do ministry (Luke 10:1f). He sent them out so that they might expand and continue his ministry. At the end of Jesus' life Jesus paid the price, and in paying the price at the cross he said in action what he had said in words: The man who loves his life will lose it and the seed that would bear much fruit must fall to the ground and die (John 12:24,25). Jesus laid down that example in is life. If we're going to become involved in the life of Jesus, we must follow his example as we set about the task of building the church.

In the metaphors of light and salt in Matthew 5, and the comparison of the kingdom of heaven to leaven in Matthew 13, there are three different ways of looking at how Christians give themselves to Christian ministry. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are a light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

We are the salt. Jesus came into the world to bring people together so they could be salt to the world, be salt to heals its wounds, be salt to purify, be salt to flavor. As disciples, we become salty, salt-filled, salt-sharing disciples.

Jesus also speaks of his disciples as light. The one who is the Light of the World comes and says how his disciples are the light of the world. He says of them that they are a city set on a hill. He says of these people that they must never put their light under a bowl. In a time when the church feels very, very weak and when the church feels in decline, it is important for us to know that we are light of the world. If we're God's people and members of his church, baptized into Christ; if we live in that family relationship of the church; and if the Spirit of God lives in us, then we are the light of the world, and there is no other light. We're the salt of the earth, and there is not other salt. The church is meant to be a beacon. It can only be a beacon if the members of the church realize that they're the only light the world has. Some of us don't think too much of ourselves as Christians. Some of us don't think very much of our Christianity, but Jesus says that we are light and we are salt.

In Matthew 13, Jesus speaks of the kingdom in parables. He says that the kingdom is like leaven or yeast:

He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough" (Matthew 13:33).

That's what the kingdom is like. When the kingdom gets into people, I believe that is what the people of the kingdom are like. If we're going to talk about ourselves as salt and light, then from this context I feel very comfortable to speak of ourselves as life.

Yeast is alive. The yeast hidden in measures of flour is different from flour. The flour is not alive. The yeast is alive. As the yeast works in the dough soon everything feels its effect. That's the way life is. The life of God lives in our hearts. His life allows us to become life in the world so that in us the world can see the only true life there is.

From these passages in Matthew we can see that Jesus intended for Christians to embrace a new, powerful life-style - a life-style that would have as its very nature the example and offer of a better life to those around them.

As Christians follow Jesus, they take on the responsibility of the evangelistic life-style. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Those who would follow him will do the same. They will accept their responsibility as salt and light and life.

### **In the Letters: Living Among the Lost**

In Colossians 4, II Timothy 2, and in I Peter 2 and 3, there are passages which highlight the Christian's aim to be involved in evangelism in this life-style. It's important for us to have this Biblical basis as we consider life-style evangelism. Jesus had mentioned to his disciples that they were salt, light, leaven. Now with these passages we find the development of the idea of every-member evangelism. Paul says in Colossians 4:

Devote yourself to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open the door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be

wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone (Colossians 4:4-6).

In verses 5 and 6, Paul moves from a discussion of his own ministry to a discussion of a ministry for the brethren in Colossae to have for themselves. This ministry involves knowing how to deal with outsiders. Assumed here is the fact that outsiders are a part of a Christian's path of life. We are not allowed to live our lives in seclusion, divorced from people in the world. Jesus sent his disciples into the world, and in that same way we have been sent. In that same way, Paul knows the Colossian brethren have been sent into the world. Having been sent into the world, it is a necessary requirement that they be wise in the way they act toward those outsiders.

Life lived among those in the world is to be considered a life of opportunity. Often Christians who are living in the world feel sorry for themselves. The greater the contact with the world they have, the more despair they may express to their Christian neighbors. In Christ's life those who were lost and wandering were tremendous opportunities for him and objects of his love. In this passage Paul encourages the Colossian brethren to see people and events as opportunities for ministry. If that's true, then we ought to adopt that style of life for ourselves and not live in retreat, but look forward to every opportunity that we have as our life continues.

In verse 6, there is the mention of conversation. The Christian example is not just an example of behavior-silent action. It is also an example of conversation. The Christian is a verbal person. The word of God is a word message. The value changes that occur in a Christian's life that move him toward love and patience and kindness are values that can be expressed. The Christian lives in a world in which events are experienced. He reacts to those events. By his conversation a Christian allows those around him to see his values and his priorities and understand his hope and trust in God in a variety of circumstances. The Christian is supposed to be full of grace. He's supposed to be seasoned with salt, that everyone may have an answer from a Christian that is appropriate, beautiful, helpful.

It's obvious that the Colossian brethren are encouraged to have contact with the world. This kind of contact with the world is not a function of giftedness or of having a certain role in the body. There is no consideration here that there are some gifted to be wise in the way they are to act toward outsiders. There are some who are gifted in making the most of every opportunity. There are some who are called upon to let their conversation be full of grace and others are not required to do so. Life-style evangelism as seen in Colossians 4:5-6, is presented here to be within the job description of every Christian. Certain aspects of it may be more attractive to a Christian on the basis of his giftedness, but this kind of life is not optional, it is mandatory.

In II Timothy 2, Paul encourages Timothy: "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ

Jesus. And the things you've heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others'' (II Timothy 2:1,2). The on-going ministry of the church is the passing on of the message. Paul expects that Timothy will take what he has heard and give it to other men who will then teach others. That chain is to continue.

In I Peter, there are two passages which speak to the heart of the issue. In I Peter 2, after speaking of the people within the body of Christ as the chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, a people belonging to God, Peter says that all of this is true so that we might declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful light (I Peter 2:9). Having the responsibility and opportunity to declare the accomplishments of God, Christians must live a certain way in the world:

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day that he visits us (I Peter 2:11.12).

Here Peter sees a scenario in which the pagan who has no regard for God sees good lives of Christians around him and is persuaded by the power of that life that God is good. This person is transformed. Life-style evangelism has at its very core authentic behaviour rooted in faith and lived consistently in the world. It's obvious here that Peter reflects the concepts of light and salt and leaven. He walked with the Savior and learned

from him the priority of the visible consistent life.

In the next chapter, 1 Peter 3, Peter encourages the brethren to live in a way that would cause the people to inquire as to the nature of their life. He says there, beginning in verse 13:

Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." But in your hearts acknowledge Christ as the holy Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander (1 Peter 3:13-16).

It is a truly marvelous expression of Peter here that calls us to a responsible life-style which has as its result the questioning of the world regarding our hope. It is required of the Christian that he live more and more above fear and that Christ be acknowledged as Lord. When Christians live this way, there will be individuals in the world who will ask them to give the reason for the hope they have. The reason for the questioning is obviously the living out of the life of hope in a variety of circumstances: sickness, famine, disease and death. A Christian has a certain kind of response. His response is very much unlike the response of a person in the world who has no hope. Living on a completely different basis than the people in the world around us, causes those people in the world to ask questions. We must hear the

challenge to be a people who live lives that cause other people to ask questions regarding our hope.

There is also a comment in verse 16 which is extremely significant. It runs counter to much of our behavior in the past. The person who is deeply involved in life-style evangelism does not use religious questions to vindicate his own knowledge of scripture or to demonstrate that knowledge of scripture or to punish those who are outside Christ. The one who responds to the unbeliever who's asking the questions is to do so in gentleness and respect. The one who is committed to demonstrating the life of Jesus in his life and being evangelistic through his life-style will learn to deal gently with those who are in the world. It is not the Christian's intent to sever relationships on his own through a brutish response to honest questions from the world. May the Lord allow us the kind of graciousness which he had as he came to seek and save the lost. In these passages we are called to a life-style which by its very nature reaches into the world and attracts the lost to the Savior.

## **II. Entering the Lives of Others**

### **The Message**

Now as we enter the lives of the lost, we need to have in our minds a clear conception of what we're doing. We need to have a clear view regarding the message we're sharing. If in life-style evangelism we are outlining the kind of evangelism that everybody can do, then there must be a conception of the church that everybody can have. So there's a need to talk about the church and what it is that we're building when we, through the power of God, build the church. This is a statement with

regard to restoring undenominational Christianity.

There are three things that need to be said about life-style evangelism and the undenominational nature of the church. First, there needs to be something said about the name “Church of Christ.” Then there needs to be something said about the organic nature of the church.

In talking about the name “Church of Christ” and the way we use it, it’s important for us not to use the term “Church of Christ” in a donominational sense. From New Testament evidence, it’s obvious that the word “church” *ekklesia*, did not denote anything particularly religious. It’s a word that means assembly. Sometimes it’s an assembly of Christians, sometimes an assembled mob of people willing to do bodily harm to Christians (Acts 19:32). The word “church” says nothing in its essential root form about what the assembly is about. So it’s important to have modifying terms to tell what the church or the assembly is for. It is in this context that the use of modifiers for the church becomes extremely important. So what is the nature of the church as the word “church” is defined in the New Testament in speaking of God’s people?

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:2, “To the church of God in Corinth.” There is the assembly that is there because of God. There is an assembly that belongs to God. Here we can catch something of a definition. Here are people who are assembling, sitting together, being together, relating to one another like people do in a town meeting, like they might do in a mob, like they might do in some other way. But in this case the people are assembling together because of God. Why are they

together? Paul's introduction continues to clarify the nature of this assembly as he says: "to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy..." So here are people who are in the process of being made holy. They have been baptized into Jesus. They have obeyed Jesus. They have been forgiven and have received the gift of the Spirit of God in their lives so that the Spirit-powered sanctification process is ongoing. They are a church *of God*. They are described here in those terms.

In Romans 16:16, there is another phrase that we've repeated over and over again: "All the churches of Christ send greetings." This is not a group of churches with buildings and signs designating them Church of Christ, but these are assemblies that belong to Jesus. They are of Christ. It's at this point that we can understand that Jesus did not come in to the world to build a church with a particular name. He came into the world to build a people. Those people are of Christ. They are of God.

In 1 Thessalonians, the beginning passages are also interesting. As Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica he says, "To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:1). Now wouldn't it be interesting to be known as the church of the Thessalonians? Perhaps it would be interesting if out in front of one of the homes where one of the congregations met there was a sign that said: The Church of the Thessalonians Worships Here. What if we had out in front of our church building: The Church of North Dallas or The Church of South Abilene? In Hebrews 12, there is a reference to the church as the

church of the firstborn and firstborn is plural. It is not a reference to the firstborn one Jesus but to the firstborn ones referring to Christians. The church is described as the church of the Christians. This is like the language in 1 Thessalonians. There may have been many assemblies in Thessalonica: assemblies to judge art, train dogs, make laws. But there in Thessalonica Paul says that there is an assembly of Thessalonians who are “in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This assembly is defined by its relationship to God. Now, if we’re going to be properly understood by the world, then we must not be attached to one name for the church but be committed to the one saving relationship to Christ. We ought not to care whether the church building is labeled or not. We ought not to care whether the sign out front says the church of Christ or the church of God or the church of the Firstborn or the church of the Abilenians. The world is not much impressed with religion and religious labels. As Christians live in the world, it should be obvious to all that life is more than labels. If we’re going to train our members to allow their lives to be a constant testimony to Jesus, then we are going to have to teach and train them to overcome labels and to assert in their lives their relationship to Jesus Christ.

The second aspect of undenominational Christianity that must be established for life-style evangelism to carry the right message is the essential oneness of the church. The apostle Paul taught that there is only one church (Ephesians 4:4). Jesus promised to build his church, not many churches (Matthew 16:18). We must understand that that is still the case. There is only one

church. In the first century when a person believed in Jesus Christ and repented of his sins and was baptized into Christ, God added him to the church. God added him to the number of those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). That is still true. The church is composed of all of those people who have been baptized into Christ. There is only one church to which we can invite the world. We must invite the world to come out of that darkness, to come to faith in Jesus, to repent of sin, to be baptized into Christ and allow God to unite them with the one body, to give them that one spirit by which a person is baptized into the body. This is the clear, simple truth we are to carry and share.

The third major section presents the church as an organism. Much of what has been said about the church has been said in terms of structure and organization. It is possible to look at the church as an organization and use the organizational vocabulary. It is possible to have all kinds of committees and all kinds of functions.

On the other hand, it's possible to look at the church as something that God has created. This strikes more at the heart of what the New Testament teaches. Inspiration teaches that the church is a body. The church is a bride. The church is spoken of as a temple with living stones. There's a world of difference when one speaks of the church in terms of an organism, because if there's any structure it is pictured more as horizontal and relational rather than vertical and business-like. There is a vocabulary of life and service to others as opposed to a vocabulary of authority and territory and selfishness. As we look at methodology the church, the organism, is

in the world, knowing its purpose, having its God-given ministry. The church, as the organism, lives looking for opportunities to relate to people. The church, as an organism, calls for us in our evangelism to show people how to become involved in the body of Jesus rather than how to become involved in some kind of club or administrative hierarchy. What Jesus died to create is an organism. He died to create life. Now there is structure within the organism but that structure does not change the vital truth that the church is alive.

Now I believe that these basic principles are vital to life-style evangelism. If we're going to be freed to mirror the ministry of Jesus and to continue the ministry of Jesus, then we must not be tied up in artificial barriers of labels. We must be deeply committed to the church and know that there is no substitute for it. There may be many religious confederations, but there is only one church. That church is an organism. It is living and-breathing and alive.

### **The Sensitive Saint**

One of the challenges of life-style evangelism is the challenge of leaving oneself open to opportunities. Most of us have a knowledge that around us all the time are opportunities to do good and speak out on behalf of the Lord of which we are not even aware. We know that within our congregations there are people who are living and working every day with individuals who hurt and need a Savior. Yet because of fear, insensitivity, ignorance, etc., the Christian in that context does not become a minister of reconciliation in that setting. If

life-style evangelism is going to be enhanced in the congregation, there must be attention given to the living of the redemptive life. In this section we'd like to examine the sensitivity with which a Christian lives as he seeks to enter the lives of those around him in a redemptive way. In this section we'd like to talk about the sensitive saint. Another way of saying this would be to talk about the loving saint, because sensitivity is just an aspect of love when love gets busy.

When love is active it seeks ways to express itself. There are no insensitive loving people. But there may be people who want to know how to love and need to learn how to love. They need to grow in their sensitivity to others. There are several passages in the gospel of Luke which are appropriate in this context. In the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus says:

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others what you would have them do to you.

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even

‘sinners’ lend to ‘sinners,’ expecting to be paid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:27-36).

Now there is a clear mandate for disciples. As Christians, we are to embrace those values and standards. To do that in a responsible way, we have to see in these verses the demands that love makes on our life. There will be people around us all the time whose values we cannot appreciate, whose values we would not want, and whose behavior we would not imitate but whose lives we must dearly love.

Later in Luke 7:13, we see Jesus raising a widow’s son. Jesus watches the procession. “When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’” Jesus loves. He loves intensely, and in that intensity of love he brings himself in to the lives of others in a helpful way. Later, in Luke 10, Jesus will tell the story of the good samaritan. Here is a man who makes time for a loving act. Now in the words of Jesus and the examples of Jesus and the stories of Jesus, the message all comes clear. The one who would follow Jesus must be one who has time for people and is sensitive to their needs.

Life-style evangelism has at its core this relationship with people. For too long evangelism has been conceived of as an act of power when actually in the New Testament evangelism is seen as an exercise in weakness

on behalf of another to demonstrate the love, that concern of God. In life-style evangelism we need to imagine someone for whom we would be willing to die. We need to visualize an enemy, a knot head, a shallow person, an intransigent boss, a guy who can't do anything right, a person who says the wrong thing every time he opens his mouth. Visualize the kind of person who's hurt your feelings every time he's dealt with you in business. Will you die for this person? We need to understand that Jesus already has. Jesus has committed himself to meet anyone on their terms. He met us where we were in our darkness. Jesus became flesh that he might bring his perfection to where there was imperfection—his sinlessness where there was sin. He's still living with us now. If we're going to be responsible people, then there can be no one within the body of Christ with whom we would not sit down and wrestle out problems in our lives or theirs. If we're going to follow Jesus, there should be no one in the world outside of Christ, no matter what they're doing, with whom we would not share life. We must be present to be sensitive. We are freed by Jesus to be present in the hurting moments of life.

The sensitive saint has not only the ability to be present in feeling in the lives of others, but the sensitive saint also has a tremendous capacity to forgive. We need to live in the presence of the active working sin in the lives of people in the world. When we go into the world, we can't expect to live in the presence of anything else but sin. Righteous people must live in the presence of the ugliness and the death that sin brings. That is the place that God wants us to be. But we live in

hope, in hope that people would find in him relief from sin. If we are going to be involved in life-style evangelism, we must not only have the will to be in the world and to seek to understand the world but also have a heart willing to forgive the worldliness that has dominated a person's life as that person chooses to leave that way of life. The sensitive saint deals with the world on the basis of love. 1 Corinthians 13 teaches us that love is patient and kind. It teaches us also that love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. If we're going to be living a life that brings others to Jesus, we will live as people who will always hope for the best. We will have in ourselves the same kind of heart that the father had in Luke 15, when he waited on the prodigal. The father didn't care how long he'd been gone, how much money he'd spent, who he'd been with. What was important to the father was that the young man had come home. This unconditional love is always willing to be present. It is always willing to forgive.

To examine what this means for us practically, we might imagine various settings in which a Christian is able to exercise loving sensitivity to those around him in the world. You may be hearing someone at work saying that they're wondering what's going to make their life work. A sensitive saint hears in that somebody asking about Jesus. Some neighbor down the street says, "I don't know what I'm going to do with my children. I'm really having a problem with my children." A sensitive saint hears in that an opportunity for teaching. We're surrounded by individuals who are in all kinds of situations of need. They tell us of their needs. They send us

signals, but if we're not sensitive enough to their lives, we don't hear what they're saying. But if we're living life on a plane of unconditional love, we're free to unplug our ears and stop listening for just the things that affect us. We are able to unplug our ears from our ego-satisfying messages and are freed to plug into the wave lengths of life and pain in others. Now if we're going to have this kind of unconditional love that leads us to be sensitive to messages that people send us every day through their conversation and comments, then we're going to have to know that we must go beyond passive listening. Our listening cannot be casual. It must become active.

If we've made a promise in our minds to be present as a loving person, then what it finally comes down to in the sensitive saint is the understanding that ministering to the lost is going to cost us something in time. Time is the stuff in which our lives are made. It's going to cost us something in time to listen and to care. It's going to demand that we be interested enough to respond to what we're hearing in the world. If your next door neighbor comes in crying, and you're up to your arms in dirty dishes and runny-nosed kids, you can't say, "Well, Louise, can't you see I'm busy here? Honey, I know your husband has these big problems and you haven't had anything for your kids to eat in a month but, Louise, I've got problems too." That can't be a response. Louise has problems, and you've got to take the time for her. The church has got to be made up of people who will take the time and say, "Sit down, and let me get you some iced tea. Tell me what it feels like.

Tell me where it hurts. Help me to know what I can do to help.” We’re going to have to listen and care and take time before we get into any active phases of evangelism. We don’t need to have any magic words. We need to hear. Someone may tell us his wife is leaving him. We need to hear that hurt and share it and ask questions about how it feels. “What’s in your future? What do you think about tomorrow? What are you going to do with your children?” The sensitive saint is secure enough in his Savior and in his own future that he has time to sit with those who suffer and listen to them. He has time to let his heart be broken too, not to adopt their problems but to feel along beside them.

For a long time the church has not had much to say to people in crisis. Often we have related to the world only when the world has the presence of mind to ask religious questions. Well, there aren’t many religious questions any more. It was nice when there were, when all of the real heavy questions had to do with dotting i’s and crossing t’s in the Biblical text. But the questions now more and more have to do with the meaning of life. Is life worth living? What do I do with loneliness? Why am I alive and so alone? If I am so good, why am I single? If I am such a good person, why did my wife die? There are a lot of struggles in this world. What am I going to do with my children? What am I going to do with no job? What am I going to do with my life? What this world needs now is not saints filled with religious answers to religious questions. What the world needs now is sensitive saints who know a Savior who came to be deeply embroiled in life and didn’t stick with the

Rabbis but walked the streets, went to the gravesides and went to the sick wards and put his life on the line there for those who hurt. The sensitive saint will have the same time Jesus had—time to sit and suffer, to listen and to heal.

### **Presenting Jesus**

In this section we need to deal with the teaching side of life-style evangelism. Much of what goes on in life-style evangelism might be characterized by some as pre-evangelism. For my own purposes, I see those efforts which bring a person to ask questions concerning Christian values and questions concerning the nature of Christ as being efforts which are a part of evangelism. Still, it is acknowledged here that at some point, if evangelism is going to be genuine, then there must be a presentation of Jesus. In this section we would like to deal with how Jesus is presented.

One of the things about Jesus that we understand quickly through a survey of the gospels is that Jesus can present many different faces to the people around him, depending upon their need and their background. An overview of the four gospels themselves allows us to understand Jesus in several different ways. Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience. Mark wrote to a Roman audience. Luke wrote to a Greek audience. John wrote to the church. Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah—the fulfillment of prophecy. Mark presents the Son of God full of power. Luke presents the perfect man. John gives us several views of Jesus. These presentations of Jesus are not distortions of him at all. It is obvious from scrip-

ture that God deemed it proper for certain aspects of Jesus life in ministry to be highlighted to an audience in order to emphasize the way in which Jesus meets that particular audience's needs. We need to adopt this methodology in our own presentations of Jesus.

The first step is for us to identify that particular picture of Jesus which is most relevant to our own lives. We need to review our own background to see how the image of Jesus to which we were first attracted may have changed into the present conception of Jesus that we have in our life in the church. It may be for some of us that Matthew's image of Jesus as the Messiah is particularly compelling. For others of us the picture of Jesus as the Son of God, full of power in the gospel of Mark may be very helpful. In Luke, Jesus is presented as the perfect man. That may be very helpful in our day of humanism and the study of human spirit and potential. Many of us in the church have allowed our picture of Jesus to be influenced greatly by the gospel of John. Since John wrote the gospel to the church, that is entirely in order.

One of the things that I've done in recent months is use the gospel of John in home Bible studies. The first lesson is a review of John, chapter 1, and note all the names or titles of Christ. It is a stunning review for most with whom I have studied. Jesus is the Word in verse 1. He is the Lamb of God in verse 29. He is the Son of God in verse 34. He is the teacher in verse 38. He is the Messiah in verse 41. In verse 49, he is the King of Israel. In verse 51, he is the Son of man. In the gospels, and it seems to me especially in John 1, there is a statement

from scripture that Jesus comes in all the fullness of God and is not confined to any one title. He cannot be confined to any one category. No single image or name completely describes who Jesus is, but in those particular names and images of Christ there is a particular message and appeal made to meet various needs to man. There are those who would come to Jesus and need him to be Messiah, the answer to God's prophecies. There are others who need to see him as the Son of God. There are some who need to see him as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. Some need to know Jesus as teacher, as the Bread of Life, as the Good Shepherd, and the Resurrection, as the Way, the Truth, and the Light. In our own moments of suffering we think of Jesus on the cross. In other moments of our life what comes to the forefront is the emptiness of the tomb. There are many, many ways to look at Jesus.

As we allow these names and images of Jesus to wash over us, we are taken by the ways these various descriptions of Jesus affect our feelings in different ways. But what I want to suggest is that if there is any way the church will continue to be established upon the fact of the Sonship of Jesus Christ, and if there is any way in which the teaching of Jesus will continue to change the lives of individuals, then we must come to grips today with who Jesus is for ourselves. We must be able to put that into words. We must have a confession about Jesus. When the person sitting next to us in the assembly or on the job asks us about Jesus, we will be able to give a gospel according to ourselves. For this reason, the ministry of the church needs to lift Jesus up. The church

is not dead when preachers are able to preach mightily about Jesus. The church is not dead when Bible school teachers are able to tell the wonderful stories of Jesus. In the teaching and the preaching of Jesus, the members of the Body are given the insight into Jesus that enables them to carry the message of Jesus with them into jobs and other contacts with the world.

As we are able to define the ways the whole life of Jesus impacts our own life, we must not only appreciate that for ourselves but we must then grow on beyond that. If the primary assignment in the church is for us to come to know who Jesus is for ourselves in our life, then the secondary assignment is for us to listen carefully to those around us with sensitivity so that we might know what image of Jesus, what description of Jesus, is going to offer the greatest hope for them in their life. It may be in this day that there are so many broken families that to speak of the family of God may not be very helpful. One the other hand, it may be extremely helpful. This may be a day in which families are so fractured that to speak of Jesus as our elder brother or God as our Father isn't very helpful. It may be a day in which we know so little about what it means to be a Jew that to tell somebody that Jesus is the Messiah may not be very helpful. A part of the task in life-style evangelism is knowing the life condition of the neighbor or friend who is in the world in such a way that we're able to be sensitive to the way in which Jesus can minister in the life of that person. We must be familiar enough with the broad range of the ways Jesus presents himself that in a given situation we are able to go to the text and bring

out of that text the view of Jesus which speaks good news most clearly for our friend or neighbor. We must develop within ourselves the kind of evangelistic mobility and dexterity that allows us not to make Jesus something he isn't, but to allow him to become what he is: the Savior of the world who comes with the ability to be good news and salvation to men and women in every walk of life. We must learn the richness of the life of Jesus. We must learn the many ways to confess him so we will be able to reach into the world and bear testimony to the power and the majesty of his life.

In this section it has been made plain that life-style evangelism has one of its primary concerns that development of personal faith and the expression of personal faith. It has as its further requirement our growth in the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Jesus so we can move from our personal answers to become people who can share a broader range of the ministry of Jesus with the lost in the world.

### **Risking Relationships**

Much of what we've said about life-style evangelism has urged a creation of relationships with those who are lost. Those relationships are based on sensitivity and concern. Those relationships have as their beginning a supportive nature that tries in whatever way it can to be helpful and non-confrontational. However, at this point we must turn to one of the basic truths about life-style evangelism. The purpose of the Christian lifestyle is to evangelize. At the core of evangelism is a decision to be made about Jesus. That decision is a decision not only

for Jesus but against Satan and his world. This is a decision of crisis. It is not a decision to be made casually the way one might pick out a suit of clothes.

Often Christians have had two ways of dealing with people in the world. On the one hand, we could be confrontational. At whatever point we made contact with the world, there was an attitude of battle. We assumed resistance. We assumed the gospel would not be good news. In many cases we have beaten the world over the head with the gospel and used the Biblical text and our knowledge of Christ more as fuel for argument than for real evangelism. We have considered our evangelism an intrusion into the world and have used that intrusion in to the world as a basis for confrontation—rather high-handed, unsympathetic. On the other hand, we have learned how to live in the world among the lost in a spirit of detente. With this attitude, Christians are able to see the world and individuals in the world as having their own values and standards. We are able to adopt a “live-and-let-live” attitude with the world. In this situation there’s little conscious intent on our part to communicate our Christian life to those neighbors, friends, and business associates who are so regularly present in our circle of life. The problem is that neither one of these approaches to the world and the lost promotes any real understanding of Jesus. The confrontational attitude allows people no opportunity to see the love of God in our actions. There is no demonstration of the power of Jesus in our lives. In the other case the Christian lives a life that never prompts a question about Jesus and our faith in him.

The challenge for the Christian involved in allowing his life to be light and salt is the challenge to know at what point to inject a more direct teaching about Jesus into a relationship. At some point there is a need to risk a relationship. At some point the Christian knows that living alone as a passive example is not going to be enough to bring a person to knowledge of Jesus Christ, but eventually there will need to be some communication of the good news. There will need to be this communication of who Jesus is and how to obey him. When there is communication of who Jesus is, at that point the relationship is at risk. Jesus in Matthew 10, acknowledged this about his own ministry when he said, "Do not suppose that I've come to bring peace to the world. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Then Jesus goes on and describes various ways in which relationships might be shattered as people decide to become disciples and as they submit to the kingdom. We must understand that the relationships that we bring to life by being sensitive and caring are relationships that we eventually will put at risk through a gentle, perceptive, but clear testimony concerning Jesus Christ.

What we must be watchful for is the stumbling block. We must make sure that the stumbling block is Jesus and not ourselves. This stumbling block in a relationship must be Jesus and not our own insensitivity or ego. That's important. In this section we have introduced the concept of risk. When we create relationships, we do not settle into them in a comfortable way, but we remember that relationships are gifts of opportunity

allowing us to bear witness to the cross in the lives of others.

### **A Matter of the Will**

As we bring this major section on the personal challenge of life-style evangelism to a close, we must end by admitting that all of the words about life-style evangelism and all of the encouragement toward sensitivity is useless unless we decide to allow Christ to use us in this way. It comes down to a matter of our will. In Revelation 3, Christ speaks to the church in Laodicea:

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich, I’ve acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize you are wretched, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:15-16).

Here is a church which sees itself evidently to be self-sufficient yet not thoroughly worldly. But in this congregation there is enough self-sufficiency and enough richness that there is no longer that hot, burning dependence upon Jesus. Jesus says to the Laodicians, “You’re lukewarm and you sicken me.” Now what has happened in the Laodician church? Something has happened in the will of these people. Their decision to follow Jesus and live for him has been compromised. They’ve split their priorities. There’s something in the pursuit of business and success and ease that has compromised their will. They’re no longer standing for

Jesus in the world in the way in which he would have them stand. If Jesus were going to speak to the Laodician church and tell them about his harvest, he might say as he did in Matthew 9:35: "The harvest is plenty but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field." Jesus might say this in the presence of the Laodician church. He might ask them, "What of the harvest?" But from Christ's description of the church in Laodicia, it's obvious that you would find these individuals far from the harvest. It doesn't have to say it explicitly in the text. We know that these Christians are far from the harvest. It's a tragedy when God's people lose the will to do God's work.

We must be about our Father's business. When Jesus stood in the temple when he was twelve years old, he knew his Father's business was people. When Jesus went to be baptized at thirty, he knew his Father's business was people. When he went to the cross, he knew his Father's business was people. If we're going to follow that heritage, we're going to have to remember that God's business is people. There is a harvest, and the harvest is people. Satan is doing everything that he can do to keep us from seeing it. He is attempting to create a lukewarmness in us so that we will not be encouraged to enter into the harvest.

We're all aware of individuals within our congregations who can say, "I once was a teacher, I once was a personal worker, I once taught home Bible studies, I baptized a lot of people once but I don't do that anymore." The question is, who changed? Is all the

world saved? No. It was a matter of the will. The person got tired. He quit. He stopped. Perhaps the person said, "I'm going to let the younger people take over." Something happened in the will that cooled a person's sensitivity to ministry. If life-style evangelism is going to shape the way we're going to relate to the world, there's no room for that kind of tiredness. There is no room for that kind of wearying of the will.

We need to protect ourselves. It's entirely proper for a Christian to protect his decision that he's made regarding the priority of evangelism in his life. It is proper for the Christian to demand of every facet of his life that it contribute to his Christian life in some powerful way. Now we often see around us people adding things to their lives that detract from their ability to focus their will. There's something that the preacher or elder knows when a boat shows up in a member's driveway or a cabin is built in the mountains. Something is about to change. Often what changes is the priority on the harvest. There's a need for relaxation, but often with the pursuit of relaxation goes the view of the harvest.

Not only do our society's toys get in the way of our view of the harvest, but also our society's pace and pursuit. For many people there's tremendous satisfaction in the pursuit of things. Some people don't like to have things, but they like to pursue them. Some people don't care about having a lot of money. They just want to make more. Some people don't worry about having a high profile in the community, but they do want to have all the jobs they can get. For some, as long as there is any more insurance to be sold or wells to be pumped or

parts to be marketed, they are able to have this burning, driving fire in their lives that allows them to get motivated to do that work. Yet these same people can't get cranked up for the harvest. They do not allow their life that is lived so visibly in the world to have about it a testimony about Jesus. We must remember that Satan is out there. If he can get us tired enough, busy enough, greedy enough, distracted enough that we don't have time to relate to people as people, then he has eliminated our impact on society. If we go dashing through airports like O. J. Simpson or walk through our stores and offices looking only for things and not for souls, then what hope for harvest is there?

Now, if a person wants to buy a recreation vehicle or boat or cabin in the mountains, that's fine—if he can find a way to use it for people. It's okay to be a business man with fire and drive as long as in his business dealings, he remembers to be sensitive to the people whom his business allows him to touch. Evangelism in lifestyle is a matter of the will. It's a matter of remaining conscious of what the priorities are. There's no way a congregation can make enough block diagrams for evangelism to overcome selfishness in individual members. There's no way to organize enough church programs to overcome covetousness. We can't read enough books about the power of evangelism to overcome a tiredness in the membership. Jesus was not afraid to find a congregation and say, "You have grown lukewarm to the task." It's important for us to acknowledge that our commitment to evangelism is a matter of the will. As we lead congregations toward

evangelism as life-style, we must lead them to a vision of the harvest.

### **III. Life-Style Evangelism and the Local Church The People-Building Church**

The basic premise of this section is that the church is created to enhance the lives of individual Christians. In the fellowship there is a mutual kind of service in which each member is edified, each member is built up personally and built together with other Christians. For too long, I believe, the focus of the church has been on building programs when the real focus of the church is building people. Through the church God seeks to build people, and those people in turn come together to be the beautiful bride of Christ. Paul speaks to this very point:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).

It is with this aim that we are built as individuals. so we want to ask three major questions in this final section. First, what kind of congregation creates the kind of people who will be effective evangelists through their life-style? What is a people-making church? In the second section we will discuss what kind of leadership makes the kind of church that makes the right kind of people. In the third section, I will share some of the thinking

that has gone on at the University church in trying to bring the congregation organizationally to a position where life-style evangelism would be enhanced by the nature of the church's work.

What kind of church does create the kind of people who are able to be evangelistic in their life-style? If we are wanting to see a people-making church, perhaps we would begin at the beginning of the church. In Acts 2, we might ask what kind of people are being produced in the early church. What kind of fellowship is being produced? If we will hear the answers here and if we will examine what was going on in that first fellowship, then perhaps we will be moving along a bit toward finding out what makes a people-making church in our day. After Peter's sermon, Acts 2 continues:

Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:41-47).

There are four different aspects of the fellowship of the church in Jerusalem to be highlighted. These individuals are a learning people. They are a worshipping people. These individuals are a restored people. They are an evangelistic people. Now if you notice, most of these people are very healthy in the Lord. They are learning; they are worshipping; they are healing from their wounds in the world; and they are reaching out. The church that is going to be active in the world is going to need to highlight these four products to help people to be evangelistic in their life-style.

The first thing we would note in this passage is that these people are a learning people. The church that is going to be active in the world is going to have in it individuals who are devoted to the word of God. We have to be concerned here because we live in an age in which an individual has a lot of other options for what he puts in his head. There is television. There are movies. There are all kinds of things to read. Much is trash. There are many ways to fall in love with the world and never hear God's word. However, if we're wanting to send into the world people who are continuing to learn from God's word, then the church must be a learning place. The people-making church is a learning place. You may not be able to go to the cable television and find much about the word of God. The people in the world may not be able to find much good news in magazines, but you ought to be able to go to church and hear something from the word of God. Everything we're doing in education, everything that's oriented toward the needs of others, everything that is family-oriented, everything

that is marriage-oriented, everything that is youth-oriented, everything that is oriented toward the problems of people in mid-life, college students, everything needs to have to it the ring and the righteousness of God's word. It is not going to come from anywhere else. If the teaching of the word of God is ever stilled in the church, there will be no more people in the community sharing the word of God. Now it is an individual's responsibility to study the word. That's true. We all need a time for our individual reflections upon the word; but for the body of Christ to become a people who are continuing to grow in the word so that they will have a message for the world, the church must be a learning place.

Now the people in Acts 2 are also found to be a worshipping people. So the church must be a place where worship is going on. When you find Christians who are able to meet with glad and sincere hearts to praise God, then you have found Christians who are also going to be able to take that same joyfulness into the world and live it out in the presence of other people. This kind of continuing worship that is expressed when the body is together and then lived out on an everyday basis, is required if there is going to be an evangelistic life-style.

There seems to be a big hurdle to be jumped here, because often in what we do there is the dealing out of much frustration. Many of the people who are in our worship service come feeling guilty and leave feeling guiltier. Recently I've had people tell me that they have trouble worshipping God because when they are in the assembly they feel guilty. they feel convicted. They feel

afraid. They feel rejected. People are telling me they have no concept of grace, no concept of mercy, no concept of adequacy. If it's true, if all there is to worship is guilt and fear and the avoidance of the fire, then we have not truly become a worshipping people. For the church to send bouyant people into the world to face their jobs and responsibilities with gladness, we must be glad when we are together—sincere but joyful, glad because God has given us a great gift. The church must be a worshipping body of people. This doesn't mean the church service must be filled with gimmick, but if we come to worship with our faces all screwed up into a knot and if we sit through worship services sour, thinking we're sober, hoping that we're sincere, then we have missed worship a long, long way.

The people in Acts 2 had been in the shadow of the cross. They had been convicted. They had been forgiven. As they came together, they had a real motivation to worship. If we're conscious of sin and conscious of salvation, then we ought to be thrilled with the thought of being forgiven and overwhelmed at the very idea that God would dwell with us as his people and allow us to worship him in the fullness of our heart.

The church is also responsible for sending into the world people who are healed. There is regeneration taking place in the church. A part of this is the place where people are finding their new life in Christ. They've been raised from baptism in newness of life. They are a new creation. It is in the context of the church that they find out what that new life means. The church is a place where people are finding their gifts. It's a place where

people are finding their values. It's a place where people are learning how they are connected to one another. There is fellowship and in that fellowship there is the healing of relationships. There is the healing of old relationships and the creation of new ones. The church must be a place where a person belongs no matter who he was or how long he was down in the world. Remember Paul's words to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6. After listing some of the most repulsive behavior and declaring that people who practiced such things would not inherit the kingdom of God, Paul says, "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). The church is a healing place where there is real forgiveness from God and real forgiveness from other Christians. If there's going to be an evangelistic life-style, then the persons who are connected to the body of Christ must be able to go out into the world with the knowledge that they have been freed from sin and freed to ministry. In that context there is real joy as they become light, salt, and leaven in the world.

Fourthly, the church is a growing place. There is outreach. The picture of the church in Jerusalem is the picture of the church in which there is a general eagerness to share the good news. In Jerusalem they didn't have a committee of three people doing evangelism with three thousand others watching. At the core, right at it's very essence, the church is meant for evangelism. The church continues the ministry of Jesus. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). We

cannot expect his body to have any other priorities. As we relate to one another within the body of Christ, we do so knowing that there must be within the body a general feeling that the evangelistic work is the work of all and not just the work of some. Truly some people will have some unique gifts, but all of us live in the world in the presence of people who are lost. We have a tremendous responsibility.

So the church that produces the right kind of people is a church that is a learning place. It is a church that is a worshipping place. It is a church that is a healing place. It is a church that is an evangelistic place. As a congregation adds those key elements to its nature, the people who make up that church will be able to live out their evangelistic mandate in the world in a more complete way.

### **The Church-Building Leadership**

In the second area in this last section, we want to ask the question: “What kind of leadership does it take to create a congregation of people who are deeply involved in life-style evangelism?” Here we will suggest at least four areas that will be addressed by a church-making leadership. The church-making leadership leads with purpose. The church-making leadership leads gladly. The church-making leadership leads by equipping people for ministry. The church-making leadership leads with a clear example of what it means to be a Christian.

The church-making leadership will lead with purpose. There is a truth that if you don’t aim at anything, you

will hit it every time. Well, in congregations it is also apparent that the congregation's work often is done at random. It's a sad thing when the life in a congregation moves according to the last idea that somebody had. Often in a leadership, there is little attention given to where the congregation is going, there is little attention to what the objectives are in the life of the church. An eldership can become involved in putting out brush fires and forget the care for the forest. The leadership which is going to allow its people to grow toward life-style evangelism is going to have to have a clear view of what the priorities are in the Christian life and be able to express those clearly. The congregation will know in what direction it's moving. There will be an agenda for the congregation's ministries. Without this sense of purpose and direction a congregation experiences its life only in fragmented sections. There's little sense of growing together or of being built together. In the language of 1 Peter 5, where Peter refers to the elders as shepherds, we hear the encouragement to elders to lead. Leading requires not only maintenance but also requires direction and purpose. The leadership which allows a congregation to grow is going to be one which leads with purpose.

It's also necessary for a church-making congregation building leadership to lead gladly. Leaders in the Lord's church need to see themselves as being given a role by God for God's people. In Acts 20, where Paul speaks to the Ephesian brethren, in 1 Timothy 3, where Paul describes the qualifications for an elder and 1 Peter 5, where Peter gives his word of encouragement to elders

there is a confession that elders are a gift of God. If there's anything that we might do to enhance our quality leadership in the church, it might be to begin at this point. As members of the congregation, very often what we need to do is speak to our elders and say, "Men, you are called to a ministry. We don't want to fight you. We don't want to be at war with you. You have a role. It's a God-given role in this congregation. It's a God-designated role and through the life of this congregation God has given us you, as men, who will lead us in green pastures and beside still waters. You are called to lead us to ministry." The self-image of the elders is often very, very shaky and very, very troubled. The congregation needs to be conscious of that.

The elders need to heed the words of Peter with regard to serving gladly. "Be shepherds of God's flock under your care serving as overseers not because you must but because you are willing as God wants you to be" (1 Peter 5:2). The eldership which is able to create and lead a congregation of faithful people is an eldership who knows that it's doing God's work and God's will and does so gladly. This often means that an eldership will have to deal with stress. Anyone who shepherds sheep deals with stress. Sheep are a problem. In leading people there are kinds of stresses that occur in elderships which are unlike the stresses that are found anywhere else. But they are kinds of stresses that are vital to life and honorable. Stress is what makes kites fly and boats sail. Stress is natural in the life of an eldership. If an eldership can see itself as having a God-given role, then they can serve gladly and do a great deal of

good for the congregation. That gladness is infectious. People will be sent out into the world with gladness if the leaders lead joyfully.

Thirdly, the church-building leadership leads by equipping people for ministry. In II Timothy 2, and Ephesians 4, we have already noted that God's ministers have their place in the body to pass on the abilities and the tools of the ministry to other faithful people. It is really not enough for a church leader, preacher, elder, or teacher to stand back and look at the congregation and ask, "Why isn't someone doing something?" But the question which must be asked is, "What do I as a leader in God's Church do to equip people for ministry?" The challenge of equipping a congregation for ministry is one that is often not seriously considered. Most generally a leadership accepts people as they are and tries to use the talents the people already have—skills they have already developed—in ways that are appropriate in the congregation. This really doesn't match the Biblical model equipping for ministry.

In the life of Jesus, we see him bringing his apostles along very carefully by allowing them to observe his way of ministry and by allowing them a certain limited exercise of ministry in the sending out of the twelve and the sending out of the seventy-two. Jesus equipped them by allowing them to observe his practice and have his support through their apprenticeship. As the good shepherd, he stands as the model of how to equip the sheep for ministry. The elders of all congregations need to see not only what is available in the talent pool of a congregation, but go beyond to find those talents and

abilities that God has hidden in his people.

To the specific point of life-style evangelism, there is a certain equipping that can be done. It is possible to equip individuals of a congregation through various opportunities to become more sensitive to life situations. Classes in marriage and family relationships, classes on death and dying, classes on the challenges and pressures of our society can be very helpful in increasing the ability of members of the congregation to be sensitive to different life situations of those with whom they live in the world. It's also possible to lead in equipping by urging congregational activities to have within them the potential of evangelistic outreach. Individuals can be equipped to use those activities as opportunities for increased contact and dialogue with people in the world.

When an eldership focuses on equipping the saints for ministry, the eldership opens itself to an ongoing consideration of the conditions of the people in that community who are lost and the growing pool of talents that God gives in the Body. The elders must become allies of ministry by leading gladly as they move to equip the saints for more and more fruitful ministry.

Fourthly, an eldership that develops the congregation is an eldership that has learned the power of example. In Peter 5:3, Peter urges the elders not to be lords over their flocks but to be examples to the flock. Life-style evangelism as we've studied from the outset is not an alternative for the few, but it is the mandate given everyone who is in Christ. It is the requirement of everyone who is in Christ. This must be considered and implemented by the leadership. The men who lead con-

gregations are men who have grown in spiritual capacity and who model in their relationships with their family, their relationship with their work, and in their relationships with the lost, the ability to project into the world a positive image of who Christ is. I Timothy 3, teaches us that the elder is of good repute. His light has been shining in the community. His salt has been tasted. His leaven has been felt. In the community there is a positive attitude toward the leadership in the local church. This example of leading out in life-style evangelism is an example which in and of itself is a part of equipping the saints for ministry.

There is no way that a church is going to grow farther than it's leadership will lead. It will be rare for individuals to serve over a long period of time if they are not being led and fed by the leadership. So the church which becomes a learning place, a worshipping place, a healing place, and evangelistic place is a church that is led by leaders who serve with purpose. They serve with joy as they equip others for ministry. They offer to the flock a moving example of what Jesus means in the life of a man in contact with the world.

### **One Congregation's First Steps**

In this final section, I'd like to share with you some of the practical decisions and actions in the life of the University church which are moving us more toward an emphasis on life-style evangelism. In the beginning of our contact with the real concept as it's being stated here, I began with a six-week presentation that I took to different Bible classes. In that material there was an em-

phasis on the nature of the church, the nature of the Christian, and the nature of our ministry. We spent some time talking about the world. We spent some time challenging one another not to be afraid of the world but to enter it in confidence. Then we suggested that in the life of each person in those Bible classes there was a near neighbor, friend, or business associate with whom they already had some kind of relationship—a relationship of trust, a relationship built on advice or on mutual interests. The challenge was laid down to the class members to target one person or one couple and do everything over a period of six months that could be done to enhance that relationship. They were challenged to do everything they could do to strengthen the bond they had with the non-Christian. That might involve talking to them more often, being more sensitive, more available. It might involve having them in their home. It might involve inviting them to church, to Bible class or to a Bible class function like a picnic or retreat. These members of these Bible classes were encouraged not to think in terms of evangelizing the whole world but to think for a period of six months in terms of evangelizing that one person who was already a part of their circle of influence.

While this pilot project did not have 100% results, it was very, very encouraging. Several adults were baptized as a result of the concentrated effort in working relationships. Several of our high school age people were brought to Christ. I'm told other numbers of people were given a better image of what the church is about through the lives of Christians who chose to

direct their influence toward them in a concentrated way. There was no hint of a suggestion that a person could be brought from the world to Christ in just six months. Many people, at the end of the six months period, said they were going to continue building those relationships. It's our prayer that those relationships are still being built and fruit will be born to a greater extent in the future.

This experience in three or four different Bible classes encouraged us a great deal because this way of being evangelistic was something that was possible for everyone. It involved little expertise and seemed to reflect consistently a New Testament picture of what evangelism was meant to be. On that basis we moved to a higher level in the organizational structure of the University church to solidify our commitment to lifestyle evangelism as a true reflection of what Christian outreach was meant to be for every member within the congregation. To do this it was necessary to bring to the leadership of the congregation the concept of directing the congregation in a unified way toward outreach. The response of the eldership was most gratifying. The focus of the University church and the purpose of the University church is now stated as being "to continue the ministry of Jesus." Our elders and ministers wrestled with what continuing the ministry of Jesus meant practically in the life of the church. Out of that consideration three sub-priorities were developed. These are much like those points highlighted in previous sections above on the church that is able to build people. The three areas of growth in the University congregation

which demand attention if we are going to continue the ministry of Jesus were defined as (1) fellowship or body life, (2) equipping the saints for ministry and (3) evangelism. It is the intent of the leadership of the University church that everything that is done within the body be done to enhance the life that we have as a body, equip members for ministry, or lead us out in evangelism. Activities and programs which do not contribute to the life of the church in one of those three ways are activities that ought not to be done and probably will not be part of the University church life.

It is our constant prayer that as we continue the ministry of Jesus, it will be always before every member that we have our life together as a body so that we will be strong when we are in contact with the world. We equip each other for ministry so that we will have tools for dealing with those who are in the world. We raise up the priority of evangelism so we will not forget the harvest. The impact of the direction in which the University church is going has been most gratifying in the life of the University church members. Having a clearly stated purpose allows people to have a greater sense of unity. Knowing that there are priorities which mold and shape the direction in which we are going allows members, ministers, and other leaders in the church direction and stated goals to which the congregation can become accountable. The leadership seeks to become a church-building leadership so that the congregation can be a people-building congregation so that the people might be people who go into the world. It is a considerable task to focus a congregation's life on

everyday life-style evangelism. Yet it is the hope of the church. It is what the church was meant to do. It is what the church was meant to be: a body of people in Christ, carrying the message of salvation to the world in a day-to-day life that glorifies God and calls the world to notice and be moved by a human life that is reflecting the very life of God. Life-style evangelism is more than a catch phrase. I believe it is exactly what we are supposed to do as Christians.