

**God Calls  
Us  
to Maturity  
not  
Perfection**

**by**

*Wilbur S. Johnson  
Ashland, Kansas*

## **Books by Wilbur Johnson**

**Faith Alive in Heart, Home and Church 1989**

**Build My People 1991**

**Take Charge of Life 1994**

**Jesus in the Holy Land and Egypt Sand 1996**

**Rhymes for the Times (Poems) 1996**

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# *Please Meet the Author*

*by Chuck Thomas*

"Have you ever met someone that you felt, from the moment you met, you have known for a life time? It feels like they have been in your life forever. There seems to be an immediate "connection." As you develop a closer relationship, you discover that you and the other person think a lot alike. That was the feeling I got the first time I met Wilbur Johnson and then later Imalee. Wilbur and Imalee Johnson have been an inspiration to me since the first time I met them. One of the first people I met when I enrolled at Midwest Christian College, in January of 1951, was Wilbur Johnson.

Some years later my family and I were ministering to the Meade Christian Church in Meade, KS. I learned that Wilbur and his family were ministering to the Christian Church in Minneola, Ks. We began to visit often and got acquainted with Wilbur, Imalee and their five children and came to appreciate their love and commitment to ministering to people. We were both involved in the Ashland Christian Service Camp at Ashland, KS for several years.

Brother Wilbur developed a study on Dealing With The Devil and a study guide on The Holy Spirit Applied. I had the opportunity to schedule several meetings with Wilbur and Imalee in the following years and was impressed with the simple, yet powerful manner Wilbur taught and preached. He was one of the first to use very colorful charts and study guides. I have used his study materials a number of times and have found them to be very effective as teaching tools.

We invited Wilbur and Imalee to hold a meeting at the Cushing Christian Church in Cushing, OK. While there



Wilbur need additional printed material for his study series. The church had an A.B. Dick offset press and a plate burner, so we started on the project of printing the needed materials. About half way through the project, the press began to do all kinds of odd things. After washing the cylinders several times, Wilbur suggested that we have a prayer session and ask the Lord to "fix the press" and at the same time build a hedge of protection around us to prevent Satan from invading the area. We started the press again and it worked perfectly. I soon discovered that this reliance upon the Lord was a regular experience for Brother Wilbur and that he spent time every morning praying for his family, travel, meetings and a closer walk with the Master. After following his example, it became obvious that this process had tremendous power and I continue to practice the process each day.

One of the most impressive aspects of my relationship with Wilbur and Imalee, is their ability to "wait on the Lord." I have observed the Lord providing their needs physically, financially, spiritually and in fact every need in their lives. It has been a real blessing to share with them on special occasions and to keep contact through e-mail with their lives and family. I really relate to Brother Wilbur's statement, "The Lord can use any crooked stick to accomplish his Will if they are available." I'm not too sure how much of a "crooked stick" Wilbur and Imalee are, but the Lord has certainly used them."

*\*Charles "Chuck" Thomas ~ Tulsa, Oklahoma*

\*Bro. Chuck Thomas has been a special friend of mine for over fifty years. I'll not repeat what he said above about our meetings, labors together and fellowship across the years. For

many years now Chuck as served as a Director of our Faith Alive Days ministry, prayed with and for us, shares monetary gifts including a Compaq computer a few years ago.

*"Singing I Go"* is the name of a beautiful song suggesting we sing while traveling our Road of Life. Chuck Thomas is a Brother who *sings* for Jesus all along his way--always sharing, teaching, preaching, living helping others as a Minister, husband, father of four children, Church elder, Youth worker, Bible Teacher, certified by the State of Oklahoma as a Substance, Alcohol and Abuse Counselor. He holds an A.B. degree from Midwest Christian College of Oklahoma City and a B.S. degree in science from O.S.U.

His attitude of "Bloom where you are Planted" advances him from a bud to a bloom of beauty. The words of this old hymn sum up Chuck's Helpfulness.

*"Somebody did a golden deed, Proving himself a friend in need;  
Somebody sang a cheerful song, Bright'ning the sky the whole  
day long,  
(That) was somebody (Chuck)! (That) was somebody  
(Chuck)!"*

*"Somebody make a loving gift, Cheerfully tried a load to lift;  
Somebody's work bore joy and peace, Surely his life shall never  
cease,  
(That) was somebody (Chuck)! (That) was somebody  
(Chuck)!"*

by W.S. Weeden and adapted by Wilbur Johnson

*With deepest gratitude -- Wilbur S. Johnson*

# *Maturity Menu*

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**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AT THE END OF EACH CHAPTER**  
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# **Quotes worthy of note**

**"Growing old is inevitable, maturing is optional." Jewel Diamond  
Taylor**

**"We cannot control our circumstances but we can learn control over  
our response, and that is maturing. When we make the right  
decisions in the difficult times of living then we are maturing." Joel  
Osteen**

**"Life is what happens to you while you are making other plans.  
Maturity is what happens to you while you are\ living and  
experiencing trails." Art Linkletter**

**Those who desire to pursue this ...atter of maturity will find much  
help in my study book The Holv Spirit Applied" which is available  
from our office at Box 146, Ashland, Kansas 67831 . e-mail  
johnson2@ucom.net or Phone 620 - 635 - 2826**

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Other translations used will be designated as follows:

NKJ - New King James Version  
ASV - American Standard Version  
KJV - King James Version  
LB - Living Bible

**Hereafter, in this book, all special markings of italics, underlining,  
or all-caps in Scripture verses are mine.**

# **-- Introduction --**

## **Meant to be read**

**In the first three chapters of this book I discuss the meaning/definition of maturity, and in chapters four through eight some of the tools we can use to mature.**

The bottom line of maturity vss perfection is contained in the following conversation:

As I sat drinking coffee with Charley Monroe at Bricks Cafe in Arkansas City, Kansas our conversation went like this:

WSJ -- "Charley are you perfect?"

Charley: "I try to be"

WSJ-- "Well, what keeps you from being perfect?"

Charley: "Sin keeps me from being perfect. We all sin you know."

So, there we have it in a nutshell. People like you and I and Charley try for perfection; but, it is not possible for we all sin. And the "trying" aspects become impossible as with various devices of religion and subterfuges (sometimes they are the same) we strive vainly to be 100% perfect. But only maturity is possible, and that is all God requires.



## **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection**

### **CHAPTER 1**

## **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection**

"Your little girl is dead, but you'll always have a little daughter with blond curls and a beautiful smile," said the well intentioned lady trying to comfort the parents; but, the words had a hollow ring, and have echoed in my soul across the years. The hollow sound of the words struck home much when our eighteen year old son was killed in a car wreck, and again when our little handicapped daughter died. Then, I knew why the words seemed so hollow. I did not Want an eighteen year old son or a little girl the rest of my days. I wanted a mature son and a grown up daughter.

So, it is with God, our heavenly Father--He does not want us to be babies or adolescents all our days; but, mature saints growing into the likeness of Christ.

### **Maturity Means to Let Go, then Grow**

**"Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the**

resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment."

Hebrews 6:1-2 (NIV)

## First Principles

In the above Scripture, we have the apostle's advice to the Hebrews-- that they should grow up from a state of childhood to the fullness of the stature of the mature man in Christ. He declares he is willing to assist them in their spiritual progress; and, for their greater encouragement, he puts himself with them: "**let us press on**" Hebrews 6:2 Here observe, in order to grow, Christians must leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. How must they leave them? They must not lose them, they must not despise them, they must not forget them. They must lay them up in their hearts, as the foundation of all their profession and expectation; but they must not rest and stay in them, they must not be always laying the foundation, they must go on, and build upon it.

The apostle mentions several foundation-principles, which must be well laid at first, and then built upon; neither his time nor theirs must be spent in laying these foundations over and over again. These foundations are six:--

1. Repentance from dead works, that is, conversion and regeneration, repentance from a spiritually dead state and course; as if he had said, "Take care that you return not to sin again, for then you must have the foundation laid again."

2. Faith towards God, a firm belief of the existence of God, of his nature, attributes, and the whole mind and will of God as revealed in his word, particularly what relates to the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The doctrine of baptisms, that is, of being baptized by a minister of Christ with water, in the name of the Father, and of the



Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the initiating sign or seal of the covenant of grace. (Matthew 28:19) This ordinance of baptism is a foundation to be rightly laid, and daily remembered, but not repeated.

4. Laying on of hands, means the ordination of persons to the ministerial office, who are duly qualified for it and inclined to it; and this by fasting and prayer, with laying on of the hands of the Elders (I Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6) and this is to be done but once.

5. The resurrection of the dead, that is of the raising of the body in the resurrection (I Corinthians 15); and its reunion with our soul.

6. Eternal judgment, determining the state of both soul and body at the last day, the wicked to everlasting punishment, the righteous to life eternal. (Matthew 7:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:9)

These are the great foundation-principles which ministers should clearly and convincingly unfold, and closely apply. In these, the people should be well instructed and established, and from these they must never depart; without these, the other parts of religion have no foundation to support them.

It is this need to face the truth about maturity and deal with the enemies of maturity on the other hand, that I direct our thinking

## **IDEALISM vss MATURITY**

"People kept telling me over and over across the years, 'You've got to be perfect, and there is no room to slide'," said Bill from his hospital bed. He continued, "So here I am an alcoholic, have killed a man which no one knows about, and there is no place to hide."

Bill's words bit deep into my heart for the church had taught me

that I must be perfect and real life soon taught me that is impossible. I found a place to hide in a subterfuge --religious idealism, which is treating truth as an abstract theory, and not facing reality.

**Idealism**, the dictionary asserts is the "imaginative treatment that seeks to show an author's or artists conception of perfection." While the dictionary says **realism** is "to be concerned with acts in accordance with actual facts, rather than ideals, feelings and imagined perfection."

With me *idealism* started after I received Christ, then came baptism by immersion, communion every Sunday, live a perfect life, wear the right name, have the right church government and tithe. These truths would be my *menu* for the next 25 years and as a young Christian Church preacher I preached the same to my audience. Didn't the Lord teach me anymore? Yes, but my *security blanket of idealism* made me feel very religious. My growth towards maturity was stymied by *idealism*; but, I was too busy studying the Bible in Bible College and preaching, to do whatever He told me. I was starving and church folk starved right along with me.

Michael J. Fox, youthful actor, says: **"I am careful not to confuse excellence with perfection. Excellence I can reach; perfection is God's business."** from page 13 of Reader's Digest, February, 1998.

Ideals are certainly laudable, but *idealism* is ideals gone to seed. Jesus drove the moneychangers from the Temple and his disciples said "Zeal (idealism) for your house has eaten (You) up." John 2:17 NKJ They were wrong about Jesus but that is exactly the way *idealism* works. A person becomes a proponent of an isolated truth and their advocacy of it stretches the truth out of shape.

***Idealism*** is an ever so subtle enemy of Christianity for it comes in

like the soldiers who hid in the famed Wooden Horse of Troy in the Trojan War.

***Idealism*** comes in philosophical shades: first there is simple *idealism* which changes our focus from Jesus to doctrine, (John 5:39-40) next, it grows into ***perfectionism*** which is zeal "gone to seed" causing us to concentrate on particular doctrine. This is followed by an attitude of ultra superiority towards others in relation to certain truth-- ***pharisaism***.

Idealism vss realism is well illustrated in a City wide Revival in Arkansas City, Kansas. The *realism* of this revival reached 3000+ per night, while revivals by local churches promoting *idealism* reached a few dozen or at most two or three score. WHY?

I conclude the difference is contained in the words "realism" and "idealism". The churches in Arkansas City, and there were 49 of them in 1976 when we moved here, are possessed or plagued with "idealism" which the dictionary says "is the envisioning of things as they should be or wished to be rather than as they are...Capable of existing as a mental concept giving imaginative treatment to subject matter in accordance with preconceived standards of perfection as opposed to realism."

***"Realism"*** the dictionary says is "to be concerned with acts in accordance with actual facts rather than ideals, feelings and imagined perfection.

So, while religion talks about "idealism," people live their lives in the valleys and often gutters of realism and there is a great gulf between the two.

Idealistic religion talks about "perfect people", "perfect marriages", "perfect lives," etc. when in reality these do not exist on our Planet Earth or in the Bible. Religion across America while teaching on one

hand the fallacy of "*if it feels good, do it*," has on the other hand been overcome with that very philosophy in their buildings and services. Just this week on the front page of the "The Daily Oklahoman" of Oklahoma City a picture and article reported a church in Edmond, Oklahoma erecting a \$400,000. cross on their front lawn. So, plush seats, thick carpet, just right soothing organ music, QUIETNESS please!, plush robed choirs, color coordination and often people discrimination, with preachers who have all the right titles and say just the right words to soothe, fulfill all the niceties of realism but souls go away as they came--hungry and thirsty. And, yet some wonder why the crowds don't show up.

So, the City wide revival here in two services per night reached thousands of people (2/3 youth and 1/3 adults) seated on hard metal chairs in the Cowley County Tiger Gymnasium who came back night after night because of the realism in the testimonies about life as it used to be, and how life is different now because of Christ. These realistic life testimonies were shared in a straightforward manner by volunteer performers who also shared feats of skate boarding, roller blading, special dances and high drama. The short pithy "sermons" hit the point from the beginning to the end and did it quickly. The message from one service which called many scores of people forward was this:

- 1. If you go with sin, it always take you farther than you ever planned to go;**
- 2. Sin always keeps you longer than you intended to stay;**
- 3. Sin always costs you more than you can ever pay', and**
- 4. Sin's harvest is always more than you have sown.**

**(Galatians 6:7,8)**

**A realistic church** concerns itself with people and their needs. Over and over again the first century church manual called "The New Testament" tells us God is like a shepherd loving and seeking His lambs wherever they are. Accepting them as they are and living with and loving them until their wounds are bound up and they can follow The Great Shepherd of the Sheep--Jesus.

Peter was a *realist*, a person concerned with real things and practical matters.

He said some great things "*Thou art the Christ*" Matthew 16:16; "*Lord, if it's you, tell me to come to you on the water.*" Matthew 14:28;

He said and did some wrong things: "*Peter took (Jesus) aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never Lord! This shall not happen to you!'*" Matthew 16:22; "*Peter said to Jesus 'Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters-- one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.'*" Matthew 17:4 and "*Peter replied, 'Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will.'*" Matthew 26:33

Peter was a realist as he faced the vicissitudes of life. He often failed but was a real man in that he knew how to get back up and go on. Such as was the case when he denied Christ three times at the Judgment of Jesus; yet, the record says "*And he went outside and wept bitterly.*" Matthew 26:75 And the Record reveals he went on living and serving for the best was yet to be--John 21:15; Luke 24:9-12; I Corinthians 15:3-5; Acts 1:13,14; Acts 2:14-47.

**A realist knows** they are not 100% perfect even as Peter asserted: "*When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees, 'Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man!'*" Luke 5:8 But, a *realist* faces their sins and failures, makes no attempt to cover up by subterfuges--rationalization, self-justification; he repents, learns from the mistakes

and presses on as Peter said: "*Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,*" I Peter 2:1,2 (NIV)

## Perfectionism is the next enemy

A facet of *idealism* is *perfectionism* which is a very strange enemy to maturity. It hooks onto "*idealism*" and pushes us on to what seems like a noble goal. Scriptures readily springs into our minds and we are off and running. Doesn't the Word say?, "Be **perfect**, therefore, as your heavenly Father is **perfect**." Matthew 5:48 NIV The answer is, No! the Word does not say "100% **perfect**." "**Perfect**" is an inadequate word to translate the Greek word "teleois." The Greek is very clear---and it may be translated *complete, fully grown, mature*, so it reads "Be (*complete / fully grown / mature*), as your heavenly Father is (*complete / fully grown*)."

Our English understanding of the word "perfect - perfection" makes the total difference, so I made a survey of a number of Bible students as to what was the first word, or thought which comes to mind when they hear the word "perfect or perfection". 75% of those responding believed *perfection* equals "one hundred percent, flawless, sinless, without fault."

A minister of the First Methodist Church of Wichita, Kansas made a very keen observation about perfectionism.

"I need to focus on what God wants for my life. In a book, Entertaining Angels, the author says 'whether it be for riches or thinness, for fitness or knowledge or people and pleasure one by one.

This idea of *one hundred percent perfection* in this life becomes an addiction like cocaine. That my friends is what society's idea of *perfection* can do to us. It can cut us off from people and God and begin to cut us off from our true selves.' Jesus does not want us to live this kind of life." Sunday, August 13, 2000,

One of the marks of *perfectionism* is our focus on the doctrinal error of others with no attention given to our own need for correction - growth. (Luke 6:41,42) The following story illustrates this problem:

A serviceman wrote about a bit of unintended comedy during a company inspection at the Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama, the U.S. Army's guided missile school.

The inspection was being conducted by a full colonel. Everything had gone smoothly, until the officer came to the man standing just next to the soldier who recalled the incident.

The colonel stopped, looked the man up and down and snapped, "Button that pocket, trooper!"

The soldier, more than a little rattled, stammered, "Right now, sir? "Of course, right now" was the reply.

Whereupon the soldier very carefully reached out and buttoned the flap on the Colonel's shirt pocket.

For some reason peculiar to our human nature, it is always easier to see the unbuttoned pockets of others than it is to see our own. Splinters in other people's eyes seem to be more obvious than planks in our own eyes. (Matthew 7:3)

*Perfectionism* begins to confess superiority toward others as this type of person begins to believe and teach that their way of thinking is superior to other folks. Just so, I began to believe and teach people about a *perfect church on earth, perfect marriages, perfect*

*homes, a perfect life, perfect worship, perfect people, perfect qualifications for church leaders.* There were plenty of proof texts and I used them profusely.

A facet of *idealism* is *perfectionism*. **Judas** was adept as are all *perfectionists* in covering up their deficiency with religion, even specific doctrine.

We see this clearly illustrated in Judas's life at least three times -- the Washing of Jesus' feet, the Last Supper and the Kiss of Betrayal.

### **Washing of Jesus Feet**

**"Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. '[It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.'"**

John 12:3-8

The Scripture says Judas was a thief, and a particular kind of thief--an embezzler. (John 12:6) My study of embezzlers gives insight about the *perfectionism* of Judas. There are five general characteristics of embezzlers:

1. Embezzlers intend to replace the stolen funds.

The probable reason Judas conspired to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of



silver was to return some of the funds he had removed from the money bag so as to salve his conscience and have funds for the Passover feast.

2. Embezzlers are always fearful of being caught.

As treasurer for the disciples Judas would need extra funds to procure a lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, wine and a gift to the poor. (See John 13:29)

3. Embezzlers often spend their embezzled funds on others.

Rationalization and self justification are characteristics of perfectionists-embezzlers. It is a type of Robin Hood philosophy--take from the rich and give to the poor--and the rationale is that makes it right.

4. Embezzlers are most often religious. A survey a few years ago revealed 88% of embezzlers in the U.S.A. are church members. Judas of course was one of Jesus twelve disciples,

5. Embezzlers are often suicidal. Caught and seeing there is no way out they often take their own life rather than face up to the reality of guilt and shame. So, Judas committed suicide. (Matthew 27:5) And, *perfectionist* often commit some kind of suicide --spiritual, moral, physical, etc.

## THE LAST SUPPER

*Perfectionists* often have a twinge of conscience, especially in the interest of seeking to know if anyone has found them out.

"So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover. When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to

say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. "The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" Matt 26:19-30

At the Last Supper "Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. John 13:26-30 (NIV)

### THE KISS OF BETRAYAL

After an exhaustive study of Judas many years ago, I concluded that Judas was a *perfectionist* and *rationalized* he could *have his cake and eat it too*.

He heard Jesus preach that He would be King of Israel (John 1:49; John 12:13), and concluded that by kissing Him, Jesus would declare Himself King, wipe out the mob and arresting officers, take over Israel-- all would be well, and Judas could keep the 30 pieces of silver.

*"While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked*

**him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?" Luke 22:47,48**

It has been said "the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry" and this is most often true with a perfectionist and so with Judas.

**"When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood." "What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility." So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself." Matthew 27:3-5 (NIV)**

Please know the Bible teaches us much about the above matters, but not in the interest of "one hundred percent perfection." The purpose of God's word and His Holy Spirit within us is to produce mature disciples, so as we follow Jesus we can lead others to know Him. (James 1:4) JESUS is the only perfect one and came into this world to save us out of and from our imperfection.

## **The Mystery of Maturity**

**"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us," Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)**

To suggest spiritual maturity is attained by works and self effort is a contradiction. We do not reach spiritual maturity by striving anymore than we increase our physical stature by hanging up side down so our legs will grow longer. We increase in *spiritual*

**maturity** by recognizing that Jesus by His blessed Holy Spirit --"according to his power ... is at work within us." Galatians 3:20

All the growth in my life which can be called *maturity* came when I gave up the subterfuges of *idealism and perfectionism*, quit striving and cast myself upon the Lord and His blessed Holy Spirit.

Here is a simple story out of the Dirty Thirties which taught and continues to underscore for me a most important lesson about life.

It started out a normal sunny Sunday in June. We milked the cows, ate breakfast and prepared chickens for dinner, then we ate at high noon which was our custom. It was about 1 o'clock when dark clouds appeared in the southwest creating an intense darkness. Mother said, "There's a storm coming and we need to do some things:

1. Get the chickens in." This proved to be a herculean task for besides the 200 baby chicks in a pen, we had six or seven hens with broods of baby chicks roaming freely. The hens and chicks usually found their way to the chicken house when darkness came on gradually as the sun set.

But, when darkness came on suddenly the hens simply squatted down where they were, called their chicks in under their body and wings and were ready to sleep. Mother said: "We can't leave them where they are for they will suffocate from the blowing dirt." So, we gathered them up in bushel peach baskets and basket by basket carried hen and chicks to the chicken house. I asked mother, "Aren't we going to church and Sunday School this afternoon?"

Mother said: "No. We must get in out of the storm.

2. Close the garage door, get in the house quickly."

3. Now, close the doors and windows,

#### 4. and PRAY!

The raging dust storm struck suddenly with fury creating intense darkness. Our time was consumed with hanging wet towels, gunny sacks and blankets over the windows to catch some of the blowing dust and praying. The storm continued to blow and the dust made it hard to breathe, but by midnight it blew itself out and we milked the cows, ate the latest supper we had ever eaten, then, after shaking the dust out of our bed sheets and pillows we slept in peace.

The storm left an indelible lesson etched on my soul which can be stated in one sentence. "When inadequacy appears within me I am reminded to look to the Lord -- **submit and pray**, for beneath the wings of the storms, God rides." **And in a nutshell that is the *food* maturity feeds on.**

"But he gives us more grace". That is why Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. .... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." James 4:6-10 (NIV)

## CONCLUSION

"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made (*mature*) but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining

toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are *mature* should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you." Philippians 3:10-15

## **"Perfect People"**

If God could only use perfect people  
He never could use anyone at all.  
If God could only choose perfect people  
No one would ever hear His call.  
So don't give up! Don't look back!  
Though you stumble and so quickly fall.  
For if God could only use Perfect People  
He never would have anyone at all.

If we could somehow be Perfect People  
Jesus would never had to die  
If somehow we could be Perfect People  
His whole life on earth was just a lie.  
Yet, He died and bore our sin  
For a price His blood alone could buy.  
If we could ever be perfect people  
Jesus would never had to die.

All our strength we need to spend  
On doing His will

Though we try and sometimes fail  
We are His children still  
He loves us still.

### **MY PRAYER FOR YOU**

**"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you (*mature*) in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Hebrews 13:20-21 (KJV)**

### **Notes**

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

### **Chapter 1 - "JESUS CALLS US TO MATURITY, NOT PERFECTION"**

- 1. In Hebrews 6:1-2 what is the apostle Paul's advise to the Hebrews?**
- 2. How many foundation-principles did the apostle Paul mention?**
- 3. Name the foundation-principles.**
- 4. What is the dictionary definition of idealism?**
- 5. What is the dictionary definition of realism?**
- 6. What is perfectionism?**
- 7. What is realism?**
- 8. With what does a realistic church concern itself?**
- 9. How may the Greek word "perfect" be defined?**
- 10. What is one of the marks of perfectionism?**



**11. What kind of a thief does the Scripture say Judas was?**

**12. List the five (5) general characteristics of embezzlers.**

**13. What is the purpose of God's word and His Holy Spirit within us?**

**14. To suggest spiritual maturity is attained by works and self effort is what?**

**15. In Philippians 3:10-15 the apostle Paul says he wants to "know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, become like him in His death." What did Paul hope to attain?**

# **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection**

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Goal of Maturity**

**Maturity is not reached by a single bound,  
But we climb the ladder round by round.**

**from a poem by wilbur johnson - 2/23/01**

Paul speaks of the goal of *maturity* in Philippians 3:12

**"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have  
already been made (mature), but I press on to take hold  
of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."**

**For the most part maturing is a matter of making proper  
response to the challenges and opportunities of life.**

In my poem "**Round by Round**" I suggest"  
How shall I climb this ladder to reach the top?  
By religion, good works and busy stuff?  
All such striving is never enough.  
"Neglect my neighbor and serve God."  
Is this the way to mature my piece of sod?  
Look in books and search, and search.  
Will only leave me in a lurch.

Here is the Master builder's plan:

The rungs of serving lead me up;  
Well used, they mature me to sup.  
People are the side rails which hold the rungs;  
A blessed privilege to be among;  
I'll seek and serve them in life's strife.  
For they are a part of the ladder of life.

So, I climb the ladder round by round.  
Still climbing, at last, let me be found.  
by wilbur johnson - 2/23/01

***Rungs and side rails -- serving people -- are held together by the glue of truth. Let us seek the GOAL of maturity, which is to follow in His steps.***

"To this you were called, because **Christ** suffered for you,  
**leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps.**" I  
Peter 2:21

In the old hymn, "I would Be Like Jesus" Bentley Aceley speaks  
of the goal of maturity.

### **I WOULD BE LIKE JESUS**

Earthly pleasures vainly call me; I would be like Jesus,  
Nothing worldly shall enthrall me; I would be like Jesus.  
He has broken ev'ry fetter, I would be like Jesus;  
That my soul may serve Him better, I would be like Jesus.

All the way from earth to Glory, I would be like Jesus;  
Telling o'er and o'er the story, I would be like Jesus.

That in Heaven He may meet me, I would be like Jesus;  
That His words "Well done" may greet me, I would be like Jesus.

**The goal of Jesu's ministry was LOVE and PEOPLE** even as John 3:16,17 assert:

**"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:16,17 (NKJ)**

**Opportunities to mature** are all about us and most often occurs as we wait for something special, big or religious to happen.

**Many seek maturity in the religious matters** of hymn singing, giving, studying the Bible, sacrament of communion, and listening to preachers. Religious matters, like all acts, offer an opportunity for maturing; yet, the "pure **religion**\*" named in the Scripture, is often given second place. Please know that the Greek record shows this word for "religion" ("threskia") is one of seven Greek words for "worship". So, when translated James 3:16,17 reads:

**"If anyone considers himself \*worshipping and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his \*worship is worthless. \*Worship that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:26,27 (NIV)**

People are important as Jon Moore relates: "During my second month of nursing school, our professor gave us a Pop quiz.

I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the

questions, until I read the last one: 'What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?' Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50s, but how would I know her name? I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank.

Before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade. Absolutely, said the professor. "In your careers you will meet many people. All are significant. Learn their first name. They deserve your attention and care, at least smile and say hello". I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy."

The Bible is replete with examples illustrating the importance of **taking time to notice and love people.**

Jesus was on his way to teach an expectant crowd when a man named Jairus stopped him asking that He take a detour and come to his house for his twelve year old daughter was dying. Always interested in individuals, Jesus accepts the invitation; but, in the jostling crowd somebody touched Him. His disciples were perplexed that Jesus even mentions such a matter because the crowd is jostling him, a little girl is dying and **Jesus takes time** to find out who touched him, so a woman with an "issue of blood" is made whole. Meanwhile the little girl has died, so what's the use of proceeding to Jarius' house?

**"Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. And a woman was there who had been subject**

to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened." Luke 8:40-56

So, Jesus takes time to *touch* individuals, and let us take note that people are *touching* each of us all the time.

### ***BE A VIP\* SOMEBODY***

We are more than just a Anybody!

We can be a VIP Somebody!

If we speak as we go-- kind words--  
We can be a useful Somebody!  
Listen to people as we pass along  
And be a wanted Somebody!  
Smile to those we meet-- no reason-- just smile.  
And be a cheering Somebody!  
Pray for those we converse with in the day.  
And be a maturing Somebody on the Way!  
Share Jesus when God bids us speak,  
And you'll be a VIP Somebody!  
Weep with a weak, fallen anybody,  
And we'll be a maturing Somebody!  
Have faith in others when many don't,  
And, be a Somebody rare!  
Stop being just anybody!  
Mature into a special Somebody!

("VIP") Very important Person

*by wilbur johnson - 2/18/01*

**Many times interruptions on our *road of life* are God's opportunity for ministering to people.** In Mark 19:10-17 Jesus is preaching and a man interrupts the service as he is let down through the roof on a stretcher by four friends. He is ministered to as his sins are forgiven. The crippled man takes up his mat and goes home.

While I was sharing a revival message in the Salina (Kansas) Christian Church on the subject of "Practicing the Presence of Jesus." A man in a black over coat raised his hand. I recognized him, and he said "I used to be a Preacher but not anymore." He sat down. I continued. After a few minutes his hand went up again. Then he said. "I grew up in a Christian home but nobody loved me."

He sat down. I assured him of God's love and mine and continued speaking. A third time his hand went up requesting to speak. "I used to come to church all the time but nobody cared about me as I wore poor clothing." He sat down. At this point one of the deacons came and took the man by the arm and ushered him to the back.

After the service was over, I inquired about the man. "Did you get to counsel and pray with him?" The deacon gave me a look of blank stare and amazement, and said, "Counsel - Pray? That man was disturbing the service, and I ushered him to the door."

Who was the stranger in the black coat? Possibly an angel, or perhaps God's person to be ministered to that night.

Many of Jesus' miracles and dissertations came about as the result of interruptions,. Consider---\*

\* Mark 10:10-17 - Jesus is very busy and His disciples are sure he cannot be bothered with some Little Children; but, Jesus rebukes His disciples and blesses the Children.

We need to allow people opportunities to be an occasion for maturing.

The "Jesus Movement" of the late sixties and seventies brought opportunities to minister to *strange* individuals such as John. He had wild hair, wore a T-shirt with holes in it, jeans and no shoes. This was literally his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He is brilliant. Kinda eccentric and very, very bright. He became a Christian while attending college.

Across the street from the campus was a well-dressed, very conservative church. They want to develop a ministry to the students, but are not sure how to go about it. One day John decides to go there. He walks in with jeans, his T-shirt, no shoes and wild hair. The service has already started and so John starts down the aisle



looking for a seat. The church is completely packed and he can't find a seat. By now people are looking a bit uncomfortable, but no one says anything. John gets closer and closer and closer to the pulpit and when he realizes there are no seats, he just squats down right on the carpet. (Although perfectly acceptable behavior at a college fellowship, trust me, this had never happened in this church before!) By now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick. About this time, the minister realizes that at the back of the church, a deacon is slowly making his way toward John. Now the deacon is in his eighties, has silver-gray hair, a three-piece suit, and a pocket watch. A godly man, very elegant, very dignified, very courtly. He walks with a cane and as he starts walking toward this boy, everyone is saying to themselves, "You can't blame him for what he's going to do. How can you expect a man of his age and of his background to understand some college kid on the floor?" It takes a long time for the man to reach the boy. The church is utterly silent except for the clicking of the man's cane. All eyes are focused on him. You can't even hear anyone breathing. The people are thinking, "The minister can't even preach the sermon until the deacon does what he has to do."

And now they see this elderly man drop his cane on the floor. and with great difficulty he lowers himself and sits down next to John and worships with him so he won't be alone. Everyone chokes up with emotion. When the minister gains control he says, **"What I'm about to preach, you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget."** Author unknown - Shared by Rocky Woolery

The old man was demonstrating maturity. The congregation was learning.

\* Jesus is teaching in the Temple and a woman caught in the act of adultery is brought before him for judgment so she can be stoned. (John 8:2-12) The accusers suppose that the center stage of action (ministry) will be the woman. The stage changes and her accusers become the ones who are ministered to, and the Woman is told "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more."

\* A teaching service is interrupted as the people are hungry. Jesus feeds 5000. Now, which had the greater lesson? What he was teaching, or the miracle of loaves and fishes?

Monetary value should not be our chief concern; but, in not taking time for **persons** we not only forfeit an opportunity which will help us to mature, but often give up hidden blessings such as this true story illustrates.

The President of Harvard made a mistake by prejudging people and it cost him dearly.

A lady in a faded gingham dress and her husband, dressed in a homespun threadbare suit, stepped off the train in Boston, and walked timidly without an appointment into the President's outer office. The secretary could tell in a moment that such backwoods, country hicks had no business at Harvard and probably didn't even deserve to be in Cambridge. She frowned. "We want to see the president," the man said softly.

"He'll be busy all day," the secretary snapped. "We'll wait," the lady replied.

For hours, the secretary ignored them, hoping that the couple would finally become discouraged and go away. They didn't. And the secretary grew frustrated and finally decided to disturb the president, even though it was a chore she always regretted to do. "Maybe if they just see you for a few minutes, they'll leave," she told

him. And he sighed in exasperation and nodded. Someone of his importance obviously didn't have the time to spend with them, but her detested gingham dresses and homespun suits cluttering up his outer office. The president, stern-faced with dignity strutted toward the couple.

The lady told him "We had a son that attended Harvard for one year. He loved Harvard. He was happy here. But about a year ago, he was accidentally killed. And my husband and I would like to erect a memorial to him, somewhere on the campus." The president wasn't touched; he was shocked. "Madam," he said gruffly, "We can't put up a statue for every person who attended Harvard and died. If we did this the place would look like a cemetery." "Oh, no, " the lady explained quickly, "We don't want to erect a statue. We thought we would like to give a building to Harvard. The president rolled his eyes. He glanced at the gingham dress And homespun suit, then exclaimed, "A building! Do you have any earthly idea how much a building costs? We have over seven and a half million dollars in the physical plant at Harvard."

For a moment the lady was silent. The president was pleased. He could get rid of them now. And the lady turned to her husband and said quietly, "Is that all it costs to start a University? Why don't we just start our own?"

Her husband nodded. The president's face wilted in confusion and bewilderment. And Mr. and Mrs. Leland Stanford walked away, traveled to Palo Alto, California, where they established the University that bears their name, a memorial to a son that Harvard was not important enough to care about.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a man of much learning, stated a main ingredient in our maturing in life when he wrote:

**"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve others."**

**\* Other Bible incidents which became the focal point of greater lessons** include...demons cast out, a man's withered hand healed, the blind man of Jericho, raising of Lazarus, woman healed on the Sabbath, healing of man born blind, demoniac boy healed, etc. Will we learn a life lesson from these? The lessons being opportunities for ministry are about us, and will assist us greatly in maturing if we take time to love people, and give heed to their needs.

Perhaps the greatest enemy of maturity is to settle back on our laurels, and fail to *soar where the eagles fly*. **Paul was ever mindful of the ongoing need to move on from the past, seize the present and press for the goal.**

**"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it (maturity). But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things." Philipians 3:13,14 (NIV)**

# **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

## **Chapter 2 - "THE GOAL OF MATURITY"**

- 1. In Philippians 3:12 what does Paul say is the goal of maturity?**
- 2. What is maturing a matter of?**
- 3. In the old hymn, "I Would Be Like Jesus" what does Bentley Aceley say is the goal of maturity?**
- 4. When do opportunities to mature most often occur?**
- 5. What did Jesus tell those who were mourning the death of Jairus' daughter when they said, "Don't bother the teacher any more.?"**
- 6. What are many times interruptions on our road of life?**
- 7. In Mark 10:10-17 the disciples are sure Jesus cannot be bothered with some little children. What did Jesus say?**
- 8. In the story by Rocky Woolery, what was the old man demonstrating?**
- 9. In John 8:2-12, who become the center of the stage and become the ones who are ministered to?**
- 10. What did the President of Harvard do that cost him dearly?**

**11. What did Dr. Albert Schweitzer state as a main in our maturing in life?**

**12. What is the greatest enemy of maturity?**

## **Notes**

## **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity Not Perfection**

### **CHAPTER 3**

## **Maturity: What God Requires?**

### **LIFE QUIZ**

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade's worth of World Series winners.  
How did you do?

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners. God does not require us to remember the above trivia but He does require certain factors for us to mature.

### **What Does The Lord Require of us?**

**"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:6-8**

"Micah's words are a preview of Jesus' words to love God and love your neighbor as yourself, plus the Golden

Rule, amplified by Matthew 7.

It is a kinder and gentler summary of what the Ten Commandments are intended to do. This verse goes to the heart of the matter of "Maturity". God wants us to live a righteous life, enhancing the lives of our fellow man while developing our own spirituality. He isn't demanding perfection in the sense of blind obedience to a bunch of seemingly arbitrary laws that set an unattainable standard for behavior. What he wants is for us to make good use of our individual talents and time on earth. One of the ways we glorify God is to take good care of His earth and people. A good example is Jesus healing on the Sabbath and rebuking those who rebuked him for healing on the day of rest."

*Larry Cloutman*

Larry Cloutman, of Lawrence, Kansas is my good friend of 40 plus years and co-editor of this book..

I heard a well known preacher, Gerald Mann, say--"*When I was just a lad, the Lord said to me--'In your life and living, Keep it simple.'* Later in life as I was called to preach, the Lord again said to me--'*Gerald, keep it simple.*'" Bro. Mann's attitude and practice in life of keeping it simple gives us a chief clue in answering Micah's query. **"What does the Lord require of you."** With great simplicity Micah suggests in simple words, that the Lord's requirements are not nearly as much as we suppose. Too many answer this by turning Jesus' teaching into a second set of laws.

After we sort through the philosophies of men, the Old Testament Law, the Talmud, the reasoning of the Church Fathers, the anathemas of modern day Pharisees and pronouncements by 20th.



century Legalists, we still must ask and answer the age old question--"What does the Lord require of me?" Some answer --Just do what the Bible says.

However, this is too simplistic as all the above groups make some appeal to the Bible. Micah answered the question in plain words--

**"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:6-8**

I could easily *muddy the waters* with too much human reasoning concerning Micah's statement about what the Lord requires. So, our consideration in this chapter will primarily center around illustrating what the Prophet, Micah, said so very well.

**"Act justly ... love mercy ... walk humbly with your God."  
Micah 6:8**

Either the ancient Hebrews thought backwards or we do? It was the practice of the ancient Hebrew writers to state certain propositions: example-- 1. 2. 3., then expound them in a 3. 2. 1. order. We do just the opposite, so we will consider Micah's answer in Hebrew fashion as follows:

- 1. walk humbly with your God**
- 2. love mercy and**
- 3. act justly**

**"He has showed you, O man, what is good?"  
Micah 6:6**

Micah the prophet declares *"I am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord . . . to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin."* But his ministry was far more than a ministry of denunciation. His

message was also constructive. In fact, this man was inspired to define for us the will of God, both for the individual and the world, with a beautiful simplicity surpassing that of any other prophet of the Old Testament. In truth, it is doubtful if any man in all the centuries since that far-off day has improved on Micah's statement as to what God requires of man. Here in a few words, yet mighty, Micah answers the question of the ages. **"And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."**  
**Micah 6:6-8**

In other words, **what is necessary to please God?** In answering Micah passes by ritual, he passes by sacrifice, which was a fundamental part of the worship of that day, to give this simple and profound answer. "What does the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" How beautifully simple! A child can understand it. How vastly profound! The wisest of men cannot run past it. There is a word for every man in every age. Often religion seems a vague and unreal something. But not so is the religion of this prophet. Here is a religion that fits into life as we know it and live it.

## **I - Walk humbly with God**

**"walk humbly with your God, love mercy, and do justice"** (Micah 6:8)

To some, being **HUMBLE** before God will seem unnecessary and unreal. To be just and kind, is that not enough? That is a religion that the man of the street feels he can get his teeth into. But walking with God in **HUMILITY**. Why is that necessary?

Humility is not something we write home about so-to-speak, but it happens to us while on our journey of living. It is the first step in

seeking God, and most often occurs when we are unaware of what is taking place.

Acting in humility has for the most part come naturally to me. As illustrated by an incident out of the past. Some fifty years ago this country boy from the Gyp Hills southwest of Medicine Lodge, Kansas was contemplating the call of God upon my life. I knelt by a creek fed from springs in the hills, and simply prayed: **"God, like Solomon of old 'I am but as a little child, really just a crooked stick from the Kansas prairie, I know not how to go out or come in', but if You will show me the Way, I'll try to follow."** (I Kings 3:7) He did and I have moved down the path marked with His footprints, it has been a good journey for me as I move on, as the late Don DeWalt often said-- *"I'm happy on my way to Heaven."*

So, I bowed myself before my Maker and He lifted me up and led me on.

**"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."** I Peter 5:6,7

What does it mean to be humble? A genuine "acid test" of a humility is-- What do we do when called to wait upon the Lord.?

**A humble soul waits upon the Lord by turning to Him.**

This was vividly illustrated when the Lord indicated a move for us from Arkansas City to a place of His choosing, and while we have sought to follow God in a "faith walk" several hundred times, yet, so soon we forget. One more time the Lord taught us to walk by faith, not sight. I prayed what is known as the "Prayer of Jabez":

**"And Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, 'Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!' So God granted him what he**

requested." I Chronicles 4:10

And, God acted quickly indicating we should seek a new "home base" of operation for our *Faith Alive Days ministry*. We prayed and looked, but He did not lead us to a living place in Arkansas City, not in Winfield, not in Minneola, but in Ashland, Kansas, 175 miles west. That guidance is a glory story with the Lord sending old time friends, Bob and Marge Hoskins of Lafayette, Indiana to visit us in Arkansas City, Kansas. Having sold hundreds of houses as Realtors across many years the Lord gave us invaluable guidance through them. We thanked them and the Lord with great rejoicing! Bob Davis, Bible College classmate of fifty years ago, now living in Ashland played a pivotal part calling our attention to certain houses.

Now, with a new home base location it was obvious we must sell our Arkansas City house. How could we forget so soon the everlasting guidance words of Proverbs 3:5,6? --"**Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.**" But, we did and *leaning on our own understanding* we sought out a Real Estate firm and signed a three month contract with them to sell our house. They showed it to many prospective customers and finally the Cowley County Junior College signed a contract to buy our house. Our Realtor, Carol Daulton, mis-steered us to sign a contract for \$7,500. less than what the house was appraised for with no earnest money, because she said "with the Junior College it is a done deal, they will write a check." They backed out and we were left "holding the bag." Finally *our own understanding contract* expired at the end of December.

Now, we decided to "***Trust in the LORD with all our heart,***" by "hiring God as our Realtor". We placed a sign--"HOUSE FOR

SALE BY OWNER"-- in the yard at 419 North B street.

When we put the yard sign up Roger Day, preacher friend of Highmore, SD, wrote us on January 8th.

"Like I said..look for a quick change from **"FOR SALE by OWNER"** to **"SOLD BY GOD THE GREAT REALTOR"** to replace that sign rather quickly. Amen and Amen in Jesus' Name" -- Roger Day

A long time neighbor, Lyn Myer and an old time friend Charley Monroe, served as our local representatives to show the house to interested people. They showed the house more times in three weeks than the professional Realtor had in three months.

So, on January 15th. Todd and Connie Byers made an offer and we agreed to sell our house for \$47,000. Interesting is the fact that two others wanted to buy the house: The First Baptist Church youth minister was ready to write us a check, and on January 19th., Alvin Moulton was ready to move into our house almost by force as he had sold his house, and the person who was to sell him a house had backed out on the deal, so he was "up a creek without a paddle."

In February we signed the "Closing papers" with the Byers and our house was SOLD, but **GOD DID IT HIS WAY.**

**So, once again, when we are "backed into a corner" in life, WHAT WE DO demonstrates our humility or lack of the same to wait upon the Lord.**

Finally, humility maintains our fellowship with God because He knows that it is only as we walk with Him, we are *just and kind* as well illustrated by a lovely little brook. It is singing its way to the sea. But the spring far up yonder among the rugged hills, I care nothing about at all. Yet unless we have the spring we cannot have the lovely stream that flows from it. *Humility* is the origin of the

*spring* and ***justice and mercy*** at their best flow out of this lovely *spring*. When this *hidden spring* dries up the stream flowing out which emits ***mercy and justice*** slackens and disappears.

As I pore over the testimony of Bob Davis, it comes clear to me that *humility* is the factor that brought my Brother back to the Lord. Here are his own words:

"Dear Friends,

In response to Wilbur Johnson's request for "testimonies," I submit the following with a very grateful heart. All of my family has been faithful in their Christian walk throughout the years, but I took a 35 year detour into a "far country," so to speak. During that time I left music, which was once so important to me, completely out of my life, and busied myself in the secular world of academia. I taught college German for 14 years; took care of my invalid father for four years; worked at Boeing for 14 years, and retired in November of 1992. In 1989 the "prodigal son returned home. Influences from three different directions caused me to take a serious look at where I was going, and it was a scary picture. There was no way my life in the secular humanistic world of liberal education, and later in industry, could be reconciled to biblical teaching. The Holy Spirit had been *leaning heavily* on me since 1978, but it wasn't until 1989 that I stopped resisting, and gave in to the *tugging and nudging* of the Holy Spirit. I decided that however many years there were left in this old curmudgeon's life, they would belong to Christ, and the Holy Spirit would be in charge of every day from that time on! That was the greatest year of my life, I have never been happier. Of course, I lost some "friends" by taking this step, and I returned to music,

too! It was like beginning all over again after all those years. I am just thankful for God's mercy and patience. Aside from the Bible, one of the greatest blessings and helps for me is Wilbur Johnson's book FAITH ALIVE IN HEART, HOME, AND CHURCH. I constantly refer to it. His other books are good, too, especially TAKING CHARGE OF LIFE, but FAITH ALIVE has been the greatest blessing."

*In Christian Love, Bob Davis*

*Ashtland, Kansas*

Of interest to me are the words of Bob Davis about his family:

"My immediate family consists of one brother, Bill Davis, of Wichita, and one sister, Dorothy L. Baker, of Bartlesville, Oklahoma. I do enjoy my brother's family of five kids and nine grandchildren, and my sister's family of two daughters, four grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. My sister's oldest daughter, Glennie, and her husband, Clark Tanner, went to Manhattan Christian College. They have been in Beaverton, Oregon, the past sixteen years where he is senior minister of the Beaverton Christian Church. My brother's youngest daughter, Sandi, and her husband, Jud Weece, went to Ozark Christian College, and he is with Campus Ministries at the University of Missouri in Columbia." (B.D.)

Micah raises the question as to whether works alone is what God requires?

His words are, "burnt offerings", "calves a year old", "thousands of rams," or "rivers of oil" is that the **good thing the Lord wants?**

Speaking for God, Micah responds to this question in the very

next verse:

What man supposes is cited in vss Micah 6:6,7

"With what shall I come before the LORD and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:6-8 (NIV)

Church busy work, much religious activity, good works alone, asceticism, and outward piety will not mature us in Christ. What then ought to be my resolution for today? I ought to resolve to humble myself before God in order to live in fellowship with Him. I can do nothing less than this and be a real Christian. I can do nothing bigger than this, however great my gifts. I can begin in the here and now by an inward dedication to my Lord. I ought to do this in the realization that the closer I get to God, the more *just and merciful* I shall become. I can make no higher resolution than this.

## II -- LOVE MERCY

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:6-8

God not only asks that we be *humble*, but also that we love mercy and justice. (Micah 6:8)

*Mercy* is love in action. Galatians 5:22 names "*long-suffering ... goodness...and gentleness* " as *fruits of the Spirit*. Kindness is a child of love-- "*Love suffers long, and is kind.*" I Corinthians 13:4.



Merely to be kind does not sound very heroic, yet nothing will do more to sweeten life and to change a human desert into a garden than plain, everyday mercy- kindness. Acts 10:38

Mike Hylton, a long time friend of mine, wrote that "kindness" expresses his purpose in life:

"Your query as to *"The purpose of my life"* reminds me of a song that friends of mine, J.D. Sumner and The Stamps Quartet, sang *"If I Can Help Somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain..."* I have used this song as a basis in my life for many years. Having worked in the funeral business for over 20 years, I have worked with hundreds of families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Of course there are no two families alike nor in the family are there two people alike, and during the grief process every emotion possible comes out.

Through the years, people have said being a funeral director is "a ministry". Giving comfort and peace of mind to a family upon the loss of a loved one is very hard to do. I have always disliked the *Nineties term* "care givers" used to identify members of the funeral profession.

When the telephone rings with a death call you never know what to expect but, must be prepared to handle any situation that comes your way, and to realize that this family has called upon you with trust to handle the most difficult situation they will ever have to deal with.

We, in the funeral business sometimes are called cold-hearted - far from the truth there are many times we are troubled by the death of a child, friend or family member, especially when working in your home town or a small

community. To me, if you can go through your career being cold-hearted and never become emotional either publicly or privately then this business is not for you.

Many have said to a funeral director, "I couldn't do your job" - but it is of great comfort to ourselves to have a family comment on how smooth everything went, how nice their loved one looked and how glad they called upon us and, yes believe it or not the funeral business like any other business is competitive.

When you are called to the scene of an auto accident that has claimed the life of a teen age girl two weeks after her high school graduation, doing what she learned at S.A.D.D. and was giving a teenage boy (whom she did not know) a ride home because he was drunk - she herself has a tire blow and is killed instantly while the young man survives - you are faced with grief of many faces: her parents who have just lost a daughter with so many hope and dreams; her younger sister looking forward to a life time together; her friends realizing that life is short and that death can come truly like a thief in the night; a community shocked and angered how an innocent life was lost; and then your own as you see the trauma of this young person, knowing the family has put faith in you to allow them to see their child one last time, arrange a final tribute for someone they never dreamed of having to bury and realize that for the next several days, everyone of these faces of grief are going to stare you in the face and ask you "Why did this have to happen?".

Then you answer the call upon the death of an Alzheimer patient - whom the family felt had died several years before when being placed in a nursing home never to recognize them again-while the grief is there for their loss, a great

since of relief is also there for their loved one and also for themselves.

Of course we as Christians are told that death is something to look forward to when we are called home to be with our Lord and Savior as well as being reunited with those who have gone before us. In teaching my son about what I did for a job in a way a youngster could understand - I told him that when a person dies they are brought to the funeral home and put in a box to go see Jesus - which was something he could understand.

So what is my purpose in life, a very good question Wilbur. For now I pray that my living shall not be in vain as I help people along the Way."

*Yours in Christ, Mike Hylton,*

*Arkansas City, Kansas*

**Kindness is also Godlike for God is infinitely kind. This the Bible tells us again and again. But we receive our greatest assurance of God's kindness when we see Jesus.**

**"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:32**

Luke sums up Jesus' life in a single beautiful sentence by saying that **"he went about doing good."** Acts 10:38 That is just another way of saying that He went about **being kind.**

The **field for the exercise of kindness** is everywhere. There is seldom a day so uneventful that we do not have an opportunity to employ it.

Kindness is needed everywhere, but the closer our relationships to

each other, the more it is needed. We come closer together in the home than anywhere else; therefore, there is no better place for the practicing of kindness than among the folks with whom we live day by day. Yet, I have known a few people who were more kindly and gracious everywhere else than in their own homes. Kindness enriches both the giver and the receiver. It makes living together easier. It saves from what is often the sharpest pang of separation when the one we love reaches the end of the journey. It was my painful duty to conduct a funeral sometime ago where the grief of the bereaved was unusually bitter. I knew the situation well enough to be confident that the sharpest pain of that grief grew out of the memory of unkindness.

Jim Sumner, a long time friend, wrote me these words about the importance of *kindness*.

"One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books, and I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends Saturday afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on. As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw a terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him, so, I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses.

I saw a tear in his eye as I handed him his glasses, so I said, "*Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives.*" He

looked at me and said, "*Hey thanks!*" with a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I had never hung out with a private school kid before.

We talked all the way home, and I carried his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said yes. We hung-out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same. Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, "*Boy, you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!*" He just laughed and handed me half the books. Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were Seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak. Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses.

He had more dates than I had and all the girls loved him. Boy, sometimes I was jealous. Today was one of those days I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I

smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. "Thanks," he said. As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began. "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach...but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story." I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. "Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize it's depth. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse. God puts us all in each other's lives to impact one another in some way, perhaps just an act of kindness.. Look for God in others."

*Jim Sumner,*

*Siloam Springs, Arkansas.*

One day Jesus told the story of a man whom the whole world had agreed to call good. Why have all men in every age reached the same decision regarding this Samaritan? (Luke 10:33)

We have only one view of his face, one single snapshot. But this shows him in what we regard as a typical pose. In this one picture he

is doing an act of kindness; hence we call him good. But the fact that kindness is always good does not mean that it is goody-goody. Kindness sometimes has to wound. When a surgeon is called to see a patient with an acute attack of appendicitis, the easiest way out might be repeated shots of morphine. But out of real kindness he resorts to the knife. Kindness, whether its face seems harsh or gentle, is always love in action.

**Kindness is a great luxury.** But it is far more than a luxury, it is a necessity.

Jesus named the very important matters in life when he said:

**"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone." Matthew 23:23**

Jesus told the story of a certain rich man who lifted up his eyes in Hades. This was the case not because he had committed a crime. It was the case because he had not had enough kindness to make him willing to help a beggar who lay at his very gate. In the picture that Jesus gave of the final judgment, there were some who received no welcome but were turned away. Why? They were so devoid of kindness that their presence would have changed any kind of heaven into a hell. (Matthew 25:34-46) No place can be heavenly where hearts are unkind. But there were others who were made welcome. This was the case because they were so full of "the milk of human kindness" that, had they been sent into hell, they would have changed it into heaven. Kindness is a necessity.

When people do *kindness*, not because they are required or asked to, it is most noteworthy. Here is a true story of *love and kindness*

extended in a beautiful way by friends of many long years, Carl and Gina German.

"Children are a blessing from God." That phrase is one that we hear regularly, but do we really know what it entails? I feel that Carl and I have a really clear view of what that phrase really means! We had tried for many years, through different avenues to have children, and when we were unsuccessful, we were "willing to accept" that it was God's will that we be childless. But once this acceptance took place, God was able to work in our lives. Through a dear saint in our congregation in Dodge City, Hazel Burghardt, we learned of the *Home of God's Love* in Lo-Tung, Taiwan. We began the process of working on an adoption through them, only to be devastated by the "loss" of the little girl that we were working on, to her grandparents.

"A little less than a year later, we were notified that another baby girl had become available for adoption, and they would start the paper work on her as soon as they heard from us. We learned of **Luda Yan (Erika)** when she was three months old. The paper work for an adoption out of China is grueling. For one thing, you have a week to two weeks mail time each way, besides the time it takes for each process. The paper work had been going fairly smoothly, and we were very hopeful that we would have little **Erika** in our home soon, but it was not to be. There was a sudden stand still on their end, as the mother lost her signature chop (a must for signing any legal papers) and the head of the household, the grand- father, had no intention of cooperating. This dragged on for many weeks, and finally, the Skiles ( the missionaries who run the home) told us that if this fell through, that they would take it as God's will that we not have a child through



them, and would not try again. We were devastated! We went to church that Sunday and told the congregation about what was going on. That morning, they held a special prayer session on our behalf. Many prayers and many tears were shared that day. Still we didn't hear, until about two weeks later, we got a phone call that the papers on their end had begun to move!!!! When I relayed the story of the prayer meeting, we checked the dates, (Taiwan is 14 hours different) and found that that was the very day that the papers on their end began to move!!!! God is faithful, and we got **Erika** on November 6, 1984. Praise The Lord.

"We also have a boy who is Cambodian, who is also an answer to prayer. His biological mother was a refugee from the camps in Thailand (a horror story in itself) living in the refugee settlement in Colombia, Missouri. She went to the village witch doctor, and tried to abort the baby when she was three months pregnant. But God knew the wonderful little boy that she was carrying and the family in Kansas that would be touched by his addition to their home, so the potion that he gave her, failed.

"The paper work to get a baby across State lines from Missouri to Kansas is almost as bad as getting one from overseas. The "Interstate Compact Act" makes it very difficult, but God is always in control, and **Ty (Christopher Ty)** came to live with us at age of five days. He is now 16 years old, and a true blessing.

Children are truly a blessing from God and we rejoiced to extend our kindness to him and Erika." Amen

*Gina (Hickerson) and Carl German,*

*Mayfield, Kansas.*

### III - To act justly--

"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? **To act justly.....**" Micah 6:8

The last of the three requirements of God says Micah is to **"do justice"** also translated **"righteousness."** Justice is the practice of what is right and just. The word specifies what is right, not only as measured by a code of law, but also by what makes for right relationships as well as harmony and peace.

The English term justice has a strong legal flavor. But the concept of justice in the Bible goes beyond the law courts to everyday life. The Bible speaks of "doing justice" (Psalm 82:3; Proverbs 21:3), whereas we speak of "getting justice." Doing justice is to maintain what is right or to set things right. Justice is done when honorable relations are maintained between husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, government and citizens, and man and God. Justice refers to brotherliness in spirit and action.

**What is it to act justly? *Justice is fair-mindedness in action.***  
**Just conduct is the outward expression of inward righteousness--honesty, and integrity.**

Such conduct is admired by every unwarped mind.

This being **just**, playing the game fairly, is to cover the whole circumference of life. It is to govern our play. When boys and girls play games, they are to play fairly. Anyone who cheats in a game is likely to cheat in matters of greater importance. The same is true of an adult. A certain humorous writer declares with more truth than humor that there are few sharper tests than that which comes to a golfer when his ball is in the rough and nobody is looking on but God.

HOW shall a Christian react to injustice?

Jesus gave us some plain instructions:

**"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 'But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 'that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.'" Matthew 5:43-45**

This true story of Carl Breshsear illustrates in a beautiful way a proper response to injustice. This synopsis is taken from the great movie--"Men of Honor."

In this Naval story the **Master Chief, Billy Sunday** acted by Robert DeNiro-- said he was named after the preacher, Billy Sunday. ***"Mr. Billy Sunday preached God; but I am God's man.*** Carl was a black boy, son of a dirt farmer of Alabama."

The Chief and others made it next to impossible for Carl to stay in the U.S. Navy or advance as a diver. Black men were not much accepted in the late forties. All kinds of trickery, deceit, and guile by fellow ensigns and officers was used to put Carl down including an attempt to kill him by the Base Commander in a "final diving test" incident; but, as a simple, honest young man he prevailed with great tenacity and courage!

Overcoming almost impossible odds, Carl received many honor medals and high notice when he retrieved an atomic warhead from the ocean floor off the coast of Spain.

He was elevated to the rank of "Chief."

This is an apt illustration of the rewards and defeats of those who seek to be mighty in their own eyes, The scum on the waters of life eventually sinks to the bottom and is sucked down the drain, but the

just prevails. While below the water surface genuine life exists and often rises to greatness because of goodness fulfilling Jesus' statement -- *"The first shall be last and the last shall be first."*

**Justice** also has to do with our **business relationships**. It was a lack of **justice** between man and man that filled Micah with such hot indignation. As he looked about him, he saw "priests peddling oracles for money." He beheld so-called prophets who would pronounce a blessing if they were paid, but would curse if they were not. He saw judges accepting bribes. He saw powerful rich taking such advantage of the poor peasants that he accused them of stripping the hide off their flesh. That conception has come down to us, so today we speak of getting skinned in a trade. These plunderers were going even further. They were practicing cannibalism. This they were doing, not by actually eating the flesh of their victims, but by cheating them of the goods upon which life depended.

Micah said **"do justly"** (render justice to all men) which I understand references how I think and how I act about and towards my fellow man.

For that reason I have been most careful in searching out facts about certain members of the Arkansas City government and business community. We lived for twenty five years in Arkansas City, Kansas, a city where regrettably the City Commission is replete with injustice towards the electorate.

The "flood gate" for a multiplied number of injustices came with a giant flood on the Walnut River in November of 1998.

The flood waters rose swiftly much to the surprise of all as a new dike had been installed the prior summer. Although both Engineers and Builders told the Commissioners that if a hole was left where a

flood gate was supposed to be installed and the river flooded, the town would be flooded. They left the hole, big enough to drive a tank through. The River flooded! When it came to within one half block of our house, we were told to prepare to evacuate. Many of the hard working people in the "flood basin" were lower income people -- black, hispanic and white folk. Thousands of peoples lives were endangered, besides real estate worth millions of dollars was destroyed. The City Manager cleverly called a reporter down from the "Wichita Eagle" newspaper giving them false information about "the river snaking itself around the dike and coming through at an unexpected place." The false newspaper pictures showed an old dike with a hole in it. Only during "Noah's Flood" would it have been possible for the River do what the City Manager asserted.. The City Commission "thumbed their noses" at the populace and continued on in irresponsibility. Simple justice called for "I'm sorry" and resignations, but none of this ever came. It cost the tax payers millions of tax dollars to buy out some of the flooded property and settle a couple of lawsuits filed against the City. Through all this and multiplied other infractions of justice, there was one, "Daniel in the lion's den." Her name is **Becky Bruton**, a Christian lady who champions fairness and justice to all. Elected by a overwhelming majority she served as Mayor for two years but time and time again was beaten back and down by the City Manager, Commissioners and "The Traveler" newspaper.

For the most part the thousands of God fearing citizens of Arkansas City chose to react as Jesus said:

**"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate**

**you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:43-45**

This flooding of the Walnut River and the lack of Just response by the Commissioners opened the *floodgate* for a continuing raft of injustices.

Micah spelled out the evil of injustice when he wrote:

**"And I said: "Hear now,..... you rulers ..... is it not for you to know justice? You who hate good and love evil; who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones; Who also eat the flesh of My people, Flay their skin from them, break their bones, and chop them in pieces like meat for the pot, like flesh in the caldron." Micah 3:1-3**

Money was illegally taken from the City Treasury but the City Manager made arrangements so nothing was done.

State Law forbids the sale of alcoholic beverage on property constructed with tax moneys, but the City Commission passed a shifty Ordinance allowing such property to be used as an "Open Saloon" one week end a year.

The Hospital Administrator retired embezzling multi thousands of dollars. But, he was a relative of the City Manager and he sent word to to the County Attorney that his brother-in-law was not to be investigated or prosecuted. He wasn't!

Faith Alive Ministry was treated unjustly on a number of occasions by the Church. We contracted with a video firm owned and operated by a deacon of the Bible Christian Church. He agreed to make us a video master copy of the "Dealing With The Devil" seminar and one dozen saleable copies for a total of \$400. The finished bills was \$1,500. When I objected, their response was "Well, it just cost

more." Doesn't a man's word count for anything? Injustice won the day! What were we to do? I contacted the church preacher and he responded by saying, "Did they sign a contract?" The answer was no, but I had detailed notes which I reviewed with him and the Video firm. But, since his father-in-law was an Elder in the church and Board Chairman so nothing was done. Should we have gone to court? We reviewed I Corinthians 7 and let the matter rest. (Romans 12:19-21)

The above matters were just the "tip of the ice berg" as injustice after injustice was perpetrated against the people; but, injustice ruled the day. The City Manager was even charged before a sitting Grand Jury in Cowley County; but, the Foreman of that Jury was the County Attorney held under the evil sway of the City Manager. Fear won the day and no indictments were issued.

Perpetrators of injustice ought to consider Hebrews 10:30,31: "For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Micah's word is needed in every age. There is a pressing need for **justice between capital and labor**. We are concerned that the employer pay a **just wage**. We are also concerned, if we are **just**, that the employee do a **just day's work**. We need, **fairness** between buyer and seller— fairness on both sides of the counter. In fact, we are to handle the tools of our trade day by day as honestly and religiously as we handle the Communion cup on Sunday morning.

Our late President, Harry Truman, maintained a keen sense of justice expressed in his famous words, "*The buck stops here!*" This was well illustrated while we ministered at Minneola, Kansas. A

young man of the community engaged in promiscuous sex and fathered a baby. He stepped forward to say--"*I am the father! I love her! I'll marry her!*" That is justice, fairness at a very young age.

Jesus discusses another form of justice telling us we are to be **just in our judgments of one another.**

**"Judge not, that ye be not judged.**

**For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.**

**And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considers not the beam that is in thine own eye?**

**Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?**

**Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Matthew 7:1-5**

"Judge not," said Jesus. What does Jesus mean by this warning? I do not take it that he is forbidding our reaching a conclusion as to the degree of worth or worthlessness of the men and women with whom we have to do. Such conclusions are made necessary by our Lord's next command: **"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."** Matthew 7:6 We can follow out this command only by reaching some conclusion as to who is swinish and who is not. Our Lord said--"**Judge righteous judgment.**"

What then is Jesus forbidding? He is forbidding judgments that are harsh and unfair. According to the Greek word He is forbidding the passing of eternal judgment. He is forbidding those hasty criticisms born of ignorance or prejudice.

There is another field for the exercise of **justice** that comes close to all of us. Americans have a **race problem** that has been considerably aggravated in recent years. Southerners are naturally



resentful of the type of outside interference that seeks to erase by a wave of the hand difficulties which are the growth of centuries. But they must allow no kind of resentment to make them unfair. **Justice** is always needful, but it is never more needful than when we are dealing with those whom we have at a disadvantage, nor is it ever so beautiful as then.

I have been blessed in being "color blind" all my life in that the color of a persons skin evades my attention. In a Revival at Minneola, Kansas we called **Titus Solomon** of Ozark Bible College as our preaching evangelist. It was Tuesday before a deacon said to me--"Why did you call that nigger to be our Evangelist?" Immediately I castigated him about proper terms to refer to another race. True he was slightly black being from South Africa, but I had not noticed. He conducted one of the best week long revivals we ever had!

We ought to be **just** to the membership of the organizations of which we are a part. One organization of supreme importance to which we belong is the **home**. Now I know a home needs more than justice, but it certainly cannot get along with less. How many husbands and wives separate for lack of fair play? Some will not **play fair financially**. Some refuse to play fair in matters more intimate and personal. The husband who takes privileges that he would not allow his wife is a cheat. Not only does he cheat his wife, but he cheats himself, his children, and society.

How is man to **play fair with their children**. Every child has a right to be well-born. Every child has a right not only to a mother but to a father. All parents owe their children the right sort of training. Dr. Link, a noted psychologist, tells us that children who go to

Sunday school have a higher personality rating than those who do not. He tells us that children whose parents attend church have a higher personality rating than the children of parents who do not.

Our youngest daughter, Lisa, died in November of 1997 as a result of the carelessness of the Cowley County Developmental Service. Both their Manager, Marty, and a Nurse were responsible. They refused to discuss the matter and referenced us to their Social Rehabilitation Service (SRS) attorney. We employed an attorney for this solid case of negligence hoping to teach these people a lesson about justice and responsibility. Experts were sought and statements taken. All went well until our attorney paid a visit to the SRS attorney in Topeka. From that time on the case came to a screeching halt in a way that makes me suspect that our attorney had been bribed or coerced into dropping the case. There was no mercy in this grave injustice.

Is anger, rebellion a solution to the injustices which are cast upon us?

Art Linkletter's daughter had LSD placed in her drink at a party which caused her untimely death.

In an interview by Robert Schuller

**Mr. Linkletter says: "Is it true when this first happened you went through anger?"**

**Art Linkletter replied: "Oh yes! Denial! Anger! My daughter was from a wonderful Christian family. A great girl at the gateway of life-- nineteen, beautiful, talented. She didn't know LSD had been put in her drink and this party in Hollywood, and she leaped to her death from her apartment building. So it was a difficult thing to overcome.**

The second thing I had to overcome was the rage at the people who put the LSD in her drink, and the ones who were distributing the drugs and even the ones who were taking it. After a little while I realized the kids that I was saying "arrest them, put them in jail" were the victims. I am responsible towards my children and youth as a whole. I loved them and forgave them for what they were doing and began talking about rehabilitation.

I became active in Teen Challenge; traveled all over the country for David Wilkerson raising money to save such children."

So, Linkletter "overcame evil with good." (Romans 12:21)

I conclude with this simple story:

It was the last night of a revival at Christian Church in Guthrie, Oklahoma. The service was over and it was supper time. Our host said-- *"Well preacher now that you have spilled your guts all week long. What now?"* My response, which surely was by Divine revelation --*"My good Brother, our task is crystal clear--- "Fear God by doing justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God."* He remonstrated-- *"Is that all?"* I rejoined-- *"It is enough, for that will take us a life time."*

Now, we press on in our thinking in this book which will center around God's Tools for maturing us.

# **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

## **Chapter 3 - "MATURITY: GOD'S REQUIREMENTS"**

- 1. According to Micah 6:6-8, what does the Lord require of us?**
- 2. These verses go to the heart of "Maturity." What does God want us to do?**
- 3. When Gerald Mann was just a lad, what did the Lord say to him?**
- 4. According to author Johnson, in answering Micah God passes by what two things?**
- 5. What is the first step in seeking God?**
- 6. What do we do when called upon to wait upon the Lord?**
- 7. Where do we find the "Prayer of Jabez"?**
- 8. When the author Johnson placed a sign in the yard at 419 North B Street, what did Roger Day suggest he change it to?**
- 9. What maintains our fellowship with God?**
- 10. Micah raises the question as to whether works alone is**

**what God requires; what were his words?**

**11. Church busy work, much religious activity, good works alone, asceticism, and outward piety will not mature us in Christ. What then ought to be our resolution for today?**

**12. God not only asks that we be humble, but also that we do what?**

**13. What did Mike Hylton say was a basis in his life for many years?**

**14. We receive our greatest assurance of God's kindness when we do what?**

**15. How does Luke sum up Jesus' life in a single beautiful sentence?**

**16. Jim Sumner tells of the friendship that developed with Kyle. What did Kyle plan to do the day they first met?**

**17. When Jesus told the story of a man whom the whole world had agreed to call good, what is the one picture he gives in doing one act?**

**18. Kindness, whether its face seems harsh or gentle, is always what in action?**

**19. Jesus told the story of a certain rich man who lifted up**

- his eyes in Hades. What had he not done enough of to help a beggar who lay at his very gate?
20. What is the last of the three requirements of God for Micah to do?
21. What is the practice of what is right and just?
22. Doing justice is to maintain what?
23. According to Matthew 5:43-45, how shall a Christian react to injustice?
24. What was lacking between man and man that filled Micah with such hot indignation?
25. What evil did Micah spell out In Micah 3:1-3?
26. Perpetrators of injustice ought to consider what verse?
27. In what Scripture does Jesus discuss another form of justice telling us we are to be just in our judgments of one another?
28. Who was the evangelist at a revival in Minneola, Kansas, when a deacons said to brother Johnson, "Why did you call that nigger to be our Evangelist?"
29. What is the one organization of supreme importance to

**which we belong?**

**30. What two emotions did Mr. Art Linkletter say he had to confront when his daughter died?**

## **NOTES**

## **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection**

### **CHAPTER 4**

## **Faith is Maturity's Tool**

**One escaped Jewish prisoner to another:**

**"The war is almost over."**

**The other replies:**

**"No, the war is always!"**

**From a movie THE WAR - THE TRUCE**

Just so, our maturing by walking in faith is always in all our ways through all our days.

**We have the power to become**

**"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen." 2 Peter 3:18**

We've heard the fable of the eagle who was hatched among chickens and thought that he was a chicken until he heard the call of eagles and he redefined himself.

You've heard the fable of the swan who was hatched among ducks and thought he was an ugly duckling, until he saw a beautiful swan gliding by. And that swan looked at him and said, "You're not an ugly duckling, you're a little swan and pretty soon you're going to look



like me.” And he redefined himself.

John wrote--“**Jesus came into His own, and His own received Him not, but to as many as received Him, He gave the power to become children of God, even as many as believed on His name.**” John 1:11-12

**We have the power to become! What we HAVE BEEN, does not determine what we WILL BE in the future!**

It's time to redefine ourself by walking in faith. Myles Munroe has said, “To know the nature of a thing, ask the maker of the thing.” Let the maker of the thing, who knows the nature of the thing, the capacity and the ability of that thing, define that thing. And according to these considerations, no one has the right or the authority to define me, but God Himself for He said

**“Oh Lord, You have searched me and know me ...” “for you formed my inward parts and You covered me in my mother's womb ...” “My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed and in Your books they all were written the days fashioned for me when as yet there were none of them.”** Psalm 139

God loves us with an everlasting love! Read again what God says about us,

**“I am intimately acquainted with your thoughts. I think of you frequently and the thoughts I think for you are thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and to give you a hope.”** Jeremiah 29:11

In other words, God is saying if you will take hold of the future

with the chord of hope and the hands of faith, you can mature into God's likeness. What you desire and long for will come into your life. Accept God's definition of who you are. Too many people see themselves through the eyes of other people and they assume the role that others have assigned to them and they accept the value that others have placed on them. When God assigns a role to you, God gives you the ability to play that role. In Judges 6:12 the angels of the Lord found Gideon threshing wheat, hiding, afraid, inside a wine press. But the angel of the Lord said, "Gideon, Thou mighty man of valor, your role is mighty man of valor." Gideon said, "I can't play that role, I'm afraid, I'm hiding." But when God got through with Gideon, Gideon was a mighty man of valor and he had overcome the enemies of God.

Plain directions how we can walk by faith is spoken by Solomon.

**"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."**

**Proverbs 3:5,6**

## **Trust in the LORD with all your heart**

**HE OFTEN WAITS UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE.** We, or God allows us to paint ourselves into a corner so HE can get us out. Bible miracles are most often a result of people being in 'corners' and a miracle delivers them! Remember--

Jesus at the wedding feast in Cana? The 5000 hungry men fed with the small loaves and fishes? Peter walks on water. He starts to sink. Jesus delivers him? The Demoniac boy which Jesus' disciples could not heal? Malchus' ear which Peter cut off with his sword? And the

disciples fished all night and took nothing. Jesus simply says "Cast out on the other side of your boat"?

**God taught me to walk by faith** when I was twelve years old. The setting for this lesson of life was the cold Winter of 1944. The faith lesson was centered around a desperate need to find a hammer. My brother and I ran a trap line every winter to make spending money. We trapped and hunted with dogs the wild animals common to Mule Creek in the Gyp Hills of Barber County--skunks, opossums, coyotes and muskrats. These we skinned, stretched their hides and in due time shipped them off to Chicago for good money in return. I looked after the trap line while Oren attended High School in Medicine Lodge during the week. On this particular winter day I borrowed my Mother's hammer to drive the stakes in the ground or a nail in a tree that secured the chain to hold the trap. Please understand that there was an unwritten law in our house--**NOBODY EVER TAKES MAMA'S HAMMER**. I wanted this hammer as it had a handle made of hard wood which would not stick to my hands in the sub zero temperature.

When I returned to the house, Mother met me at the door with these words--"Wilbur, my hammer is missing. I am sure you took it". With chattering teeth from the extreme cold I replied, "I don't have it." I had not missed it until that moment and my reply was a true statement for I had lost it out on the trail. Mother admonished, "You go right back out there and get it and don't come home without it."

Back through falling snow and cold wind I tramped across the stubble of the wheat field and down the trail of traps. Results? No hammer. With numb toes, red ears and some tears, I searched the same ground again, more carefully this time. **NO HAMMER!**

In March of that year, I had accepted Jesus during a Revival at

our Union Chapel church. While I had listened to others walk by faith by praying yet, it was something the preacher did at funerals and in the church building. Up to this point my attempt at praying was to repeat The Lord's Prayer and the "Now I lay me down to sleep" prayer.

Now, in a 'corner" and out of a sense of sheer desperation and not religiosity, I knelt down in the high weeds along an old barbed wire fence around the wheat field. My first prayer was terribly simple--  
**"GOD, PLEASE HELP ME FIND THAT HAMMER!"**

So sudden was the answer that came into my mind, that I doubted it. The answer was this thought--***Look on the other side of the creek.*** I started to lean on my own understanding again, which up to this point had produced no hammer and near frozen toes, ears and fingers. I answered the answer by reasoning--There is no use in crossing the creek. We haven't had any traps over there this winter. So, I trudged back down the trail fighting the gnawing inner thought--Look on the other side of the creek. Results? NO HAMMER!

The winter storm was increasing and I had not found the hammer that stood between me and the warm wood stove back at the house. Stubbornly I answered the gnawing thought--Look on the other side of the creek--by marching down across the sandy creek bed, climbing the opposite bank and walking a dozen steps. There in the middle of the foot trail was a beautiful sight--MAMA'S HAMMER!

How did the hammer get there? Probably some opossum or coon that likes to get their teeth into wood, dragged it across the creek.

In that instant **I PRAYED! GOD ANSWERED, and I WALKED BY FAITH!** Joy so warmed me that I ran all the way home and was warm when I got there.

That incident changed my life and even now sixty years later as I write of it--tears come to my eyes. (Basic story taken from my first book--"Faith Alive in Heart, Home and Church" page 102,103.

Since we learn most about FAITH and PRAYER by acting, let us take that step and keep on walking!

### **He often waits until it is too late.**

"Jesus, Lazarus is sick" ... "he's not sick enough".

"Jesus, Lazarus is dead now" ... "he's not dead enough!"

"Jesus, Lazarus has been dead for four days, it is too late."

Jesus answers, "Yes, I sometimes wait until it is too late."

And then Jesus called Lazarus back to life again. (John 11)

### **Lean not on your own understanding. Proverbs 3:5**

#### **God Gives Us Impossible Challenges**

God always makes the role bigger than we are. He always places before us something that we cannot handle by ourselves. God always gives us a challenge that is impossible. He said to Gideon, "Can you win with thirty-two thousand?"

Gideon said, "Yes, it is possible."

And so He said, "Can you win with ten thousand?"

And Gideon answered, "Yes, it is possible."

And God said, "Well, can you win with three hundred?"

And Gideon said, "No, that's impossible, there are more than one hundred thousand of the enemy."

Then God says, "Go and do it in My power."

Although it seems impossible, God challenges us to forge ahead with faith. (Judges 6,7)

### **Lean not on your own understanding** Proverbs 3:5-6

Jesus in the wilderness waited until the multitude of five thousand had run out of food. There was not enough and then He multiplied two fish and five loaves and fed them all.

Countless are the times the Lord has allowed to teach me to lean on Him, and not my own understanding.

**IMALEE'S STROKE of June, 1991** was one of those times.

A week from the inception of her stroke Teresa, our doctor daughter and I took her to St. Francis Hospital, of Wichita, Kansas.

We met with Dr. Hered, a neurologist--brain surgeon. He told me that he would operate in the morning and vacuum the blood out.

Some QUESTIONS, Doctor before you operate:

1. Will Imalee end up a nursing home patient?

ANS: "I don't know."

2. What is the cost of this surgery? \$15,000. \$25,000.

He would not answer.

3. Doctor Hered will this effect Imalee's I.Q. or personality.

ANS: "Who can tell?"

Three things before you operate doctor:

#1. "I'm not a humanist. I do not worship the medical community."

#2. "I'm a Christian and I must have time to PRAY, THINK and talk to the Elders of the church."

#3. "My opinion at this moment is that we need to wait a little longer and see what God can do."

**WE WAITED ..... GOD ACTED!** No surgery and now ten plus years later--complete recovery!

## **God Always Provides the Miracle Margin**

God stands before us in our Goliath's, our Fiery furnaces, our Lions' dens, and unbeatable odds ... so we will rely on Him and so that no one can take His glory. And when you know how God operates, you'll stop worrying so much. You'll start walking by faith, you'll start giving glory, and you'll start giving praise to Almighty God.

The Apostle Paul learned the art of going through trouble and adversity ... he learned the art of going through storms and he said, **"I know how to be abased, I know how to abound, I know how to be full and to be hungry, I know how to abound and suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."**  
Philippians 4:12-13

**Any matter can be an act of faith when we--**

1. Willfully commit it to God and
2. lean not on our own understanding to make it happen; but,
3. look to and wait on God for the answer.

## **"Lean not on your own understanding," Proverbs 3:5**

One of life's most difficult tasks is learning TO LEAN NOT ON OUR OWN UNDERSTANDING after you have spent years learning to do just that. This unlearning for me was born out of many desperate situations.

One of the many crises out of which The Lord taught me to TRUST

ONLY HIM by N-O-T leaning on my own understanding occurred in January of 1979. My schedule called for a Faith Alive Revival to begin at Holly, Colorado on Sunday morning, January 14th.

On Saturday morning a car spinning its wheels awoke me with a start. A snow storm was beginning outside and already there was some four inches on the ground. What I did not know at that moment was that a quarter inch of ice lay beneath the snow. I hastened around and after a family prayer circle headed northwest by 9 o'clock. Ground Blizzard conditions existed between home and Wichita where the snow was hubcap deep. Our daughter, Rebecca, accompanied me as far as Wichita to catch a ride back to Manhattan Christian College. Leaving her with her grandparents, Raymon and Ina Barrick, I headed west down Highway 54. My courage decreased as the howling wind increased and the blowing snow began to produce whiteouts. At the west edge of Kingman, Kansas, I met with a barricade and a Patrolman that advised me the highway was closed, all travel discouraged. My spirit sank within me and I returned downtown to check on motels. Every motel had the same sad sign-- SORRY FOLKS. NO VACANCY. I called preacher, Terry Neidens, and told him "Terry, it will be impossible for me to arrive in Holly to begin the meeting Sunday morning. I am in the middle of a raging blizzard. Possibly I can get there by Sunday evening, but it may be Monday afternoon."

Terry said, "I never did think YOU could make it and now you won't for sure!" I hung up and drank a cup of coffee standing up as the cafe was wall-to-wall people. **The dilemma was clear: I couldn't stay there. I was not inclined to go back. The westward road was the only way.**

My OWN UNDERSTANDING died as I prayed "*Lord, it's your Revival 275 miles to the West. It's your storm and it's your road and I'm yours, too. Take charge!*"

I drove back out to the barricade and said to the Patrol, "Is travel on this road forbidden?" I know not why he said, "Do you have a Kansas driver's license and pay taxes in this State?" I responded, "Yes, Sir, I do."



He shouted through the howling wind and snow, "I can't forbid you to go around this barricade but all travel is discouraged." **I thanked him and drove around not only the barricade but MY OWN understanding** onto an ice-snow packed highway into the face of a ground blizzard. The barricade proved to be a blessing as it had the effect of providing me with a PRIVATE HIGHWAY with no traffic, which was a necessity as most of the highway to Pratt was a one-way path through the snow. The snow plows had left 20 foot high banks on each side and the high wind made drifts out of that. My job was simple: go slow, pray and sing to the Lord. So, I PRAISED the miles away arriving in Dodge City by 6 p.m. I called preacher Terry with a progress report. His only response was, "Y-O-U will not make it." The storm let up some and I drove through Garden City at 8:30 and into Syracuse by 9:30 and the lights of Holly shined dimly through the storm as my vehicle passed the City limit sign at 10:30. I pulled over to the curb for a few moments to give my broken spirit, my shattered OWN UNDERSTANDING, a little sympathy and THE LORD a lot more PRAISE!

Now consider this, in all those 350 miles from home not once did my car slip, spin, skid or slide, for beneath and all around had to be the unseen guiding presence of the Lord's Angels.

Yes, we started the meeting in 16 below 0 temperature and it was a VICTORY MEETING clear through Friday night!

Don't let people, nor circumstances, nor limits, nor handicaps, nor unlimited resources determine your destiny if you are down to nothing. **Remember nothing is where God started.** God came out of nowhere, because there was nowhere for Him to come from. God stepped out on nothing because there was nothing for Him to stand on. God spoke to nothing because there was nothing for Him to speak to, and God said, "Let there be..." and birds started flying, fish started swimming and the solar systems started twirling through

the vast universe that came out of the Word of God.

God, too, can speak to the nothingness, to the pain, to the deprivation of your existence and He can say, "Let there be ..."

**"In all your ways acknowledge him."** Proverbs 3:6

### **God Always Provides the Miracle Margin.**

**Remember** Paul, David and the giant, Goliath, the Three Men in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the Lion's den.

Jesus is ready to lift you out of your emotional, social and physical limitations so that you can rise up and walk. In Jesus Christ, there are no lame ducks.

**"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, and all things have become new."**

2 Corinthians 5:17

With Jesus Christ in our life we can go out and walk into our destiny. I see us in the future and we look much better than we look right now!

God has been thinking about you and God says, **"I know the thoughts that I think towards you.**

**Thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you a future and to give you hope."** Amen and Amen!

**"And he will direct your paths."** Proverbs 3:6

Directing life paths is God's special business! The Bible is replete with such examples--- Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Daniel, David and the Giant, and Paul. This list is barely the 'tip of the iceberg' of those God leads along the Way.

Proverbs 3:5,6 and Philippians 4:19 are promises of God which

Imalee and I have walked in by faith for some thirty years.

Here is a prayer, we face the day, the trip, the challenge with:

"Dear Lord, you know our needs and we are leaving this in Your hands. Be in charge of this day, need, event." He invites every soul to **look up to Him in faith** and **wait for His certain answers**.

My six books are filled with examples of how He answers in varied and beautiful ways. Here is one of the very recent ways:

***"the Lord provides for those he loves, while they are asleep." Psalm 127:2b (TEV)***

In strange ways the Lord supplies our needs. We may plan, suppose and wonder how will this need be met? More often than not the need is met in a way beyond our imagination.

Winter in the year of 2000 and 2001 made us wonder about paying our utility bills. Folks around us were reporting gas/electric bills increasing from 100 to 300 per cent. One Brother reported he was now paying \$600. and previously \$200. A neighbor next door lives in a house about the size of ours, and now pays \$1,000. per month. ***We waited and prayed.*** Then, came the good news that our electric/gas bill was up only 1% (one percent = \$15.. We thanked the Lord for his gas from the earth to cook our food and warm our house! Then, Imalee added up our yearly expense and we were delighted to learn our gas/electric bills had reduced \$200. from the previous year. WOW!

Saturday, January 20, 2001 was the day to have our Suburban greased and the oil changed in our Suburban. I checked in and ordered a yearly venture of a new air cleaner and wiper blades.

While waiting, I rambled through the "automotive Department of Wal-Mart." In a passing moment I noted a display which appeared to be advertising fire extinguishers. Not finding the tire pressure gauge, I

walked by the "fire extinguisher" display again, and noted the life like tongues of fire seemed to be producing heat. Looking closely I saw the flames were real and a real fire was starting. I summoned a clerk, who in turn called "CODE 3" and stock people appeared from everywhere with extinguishers. The fire was very real and the store Manager said "In just a matter of moments this would have been a bomb as the flames caused high pressure automotive cans to explode. We rejoiced at this unusual provision by the Lord.

Again He provided. We parked our Suburban at the Tulsa, Oklahoma airport while visiting our son, Galen and family in Logan, Ohio. When we returned the right hand bumper was bent back into the fender-well. Allstate Insurance had a firm make an estimate of \$859.00o. We had it repaired at a less expensive firm for \$232.00. An Allstate sent an inspector. Dennis was a fine Christian Brother with whom we shared one of our books--Faith Alive, and received an invitation to speak at their Church Senior Citizen group in Wichita. The inspector was glad we "made some extra money on the repair job!"

**Some may say--*"Well, these kind of things happen to you all the time."*** No, first time for a sequence of events like the above but **the bottom line is: HE DOES SUPPLY!**

**"And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19**

Jesus invites Peter to cast out his net on the other side of the boat. Peter explains that he has been out all night and caught nothing. Under normal circumstances, that would have been the end of the matter. "Too bad," he might have said, and walked away. And you probably would turn to your fishing mates and say, "What a screwball! Who does he think he is?"

Yet Peter had a completely different response. (Was it prompted

by something he heard Jesus say in His sermon?) Peter answered, **"Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."** Now there's a sense of adventure for you! There's a willingness to try something different!

You already know what happens next. **The catch of fish is so great that it threatens to sink the boat!** (Luke 5:1-6) More important, it's Simon Peter who gets hooked and becomes a faithful follower of Jesus. **All because he was willing to put out into the deep** as Jesus told him to.

If there is anything that is hard for any of us, it is making the extra effort to put out into the deep. **To stretch ourselves.** To be mentally and spiritually adventuresome.

Most of us are content with the mediocre, the ordinary, and the humdrum. Mind you, there is nothing wrong with lives that are busy working, taking care of children, going shopping, or going to school. Life can't always at every moment be a *boat full of fish*. Some days you throw out your line and nothing is biting.

But, it is always worth a try to accept the challenge--*fish* a little longer, *fish* a little deeper, *fish* at Jesus' invitation and see, perhaps if the *big catch* is waiting on just the other side of life's boat.

**"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5,6**

# **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

## **Chapter 4 - "FAITH: A GREAT TOOL IN MATURING"**

- 1. According to John 1:12-12, what do we have the power do?**
- 2. What plain directions for how we can walk by faith is spoken by Solomon?**
- 3. Where did author Johnson find "Mama's hammer"?**
- 4. God always makes what bigger than we are?**
- 5. How many soldiers did Gideon say were not enough to win the battle?**
- 6. What did God tell Gideon to go in?**
- 7. What three questions did author Johnson ask Dr. Hered?**
- 8. As a Christian, what did author Johnson tell Dr. Hered he must have time to do?**
- 9. In author Johnson's opinion, what did they need to do regarding operating on Imalee?**

- 10. Any matter can be an act of faith when we do what?**
- 11. When caught in a snow storm, what did author Johnson pray regarding the Revival in Holly, CO?**
- 12. What five things should we not allow to determine our destiny, if we are down to nothing?**
- 13. What is Jesus ready to do when we experience emotional, social and physical limitations?**
- 14. What does Proverbs 3:6 promise us?**
- 15. In the winter of 2000 and 2001, how much were the Johnson's electric/gas bill?**
- 16. Where was author Johnson when he discovered flames of a real fire starting?**
- 17. What does Philippians 4:19 promise us?**
- 18. How large was the catch of fish by Peter, when he obeyed Jesus?**
- 19. Any matter can be an act of faith when we do what three things?**
- 20. What does Proverbs 3:5,6 say to do?**

## **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection**

### **CHAPTER 5**

# **Love Matures Us to be God Like**

**Love matures when we know what it is.**

**Love matures when we love ourselves properly.**

**Love matures when we practice loving people  
who are like Lost sheep, Coins, Sons and Brothers**

**"(Jesus) answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all  
your heart and with all your soul and with all your  
strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your  
neighbor as yourself.'" Luke 10:27**

Mark Moore was just a newly married young preacher when he wrote these wise thoughts which define *love*.

"Valentine's Day is an appropriate day for reflecting on our love life. And I must confess that I have not lived up to my expectations. When Barbara and I were dating, I was such a gentleman, so suave, so debonair! And I was sure it would last.

I used to pick up her dirty dishes in the school cafeteria, now she has to pick up mine. I used to open her car door -- now, I just unlock it. I used to open the door for her -- now, I tell her to make sure she gets it shut on her way in. Now, I am not a total slob, but I must be honest and say that since the days of our impassioned



courtship there has been a decline in my chivalrous niceties.

True, the infatuation has faded; but I love my wife more today than the day we met or the day we were married. I have more reason to -- you see, I do not define love merely as a feeling or infatuation. **LOVE IS A COMMITMENT TO GIVE WHATEVER IT TAKES TO MEET ANOTHER'S NEED IN SPITE OF THE COST TO ME."**

"Harlandale Horizons" of the Harlandale Christian Church, San Antonio, Texas -- Vol. 1, No. 27, 2-11-87.

**Mark's definition of love** is most excellent. The greek words for *love*, which are often espoused as explaining *love*, provide no definition of the actual word, but only establish on what *level love operates*:

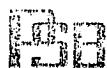
\**agape*--self giving love, John 3:16; I John 4:8

\**philo*--love of friend, parent, child

\**eros*--fleshly, sexual

But, what is love?

*Love* is much like a bank check. The following blank check is from a bank where we did business many years ago. It is a metaphor of what people falsely offer as *love*.



## Peoples State Bank

MINNEOLA, KANSAS, \_\_\_\_\_ 19 \_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_\_

PAY TO THE  
ORDER OF \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
DOLLARS

FOR \_\_\_\_\_  
UNPAID CHECK

**SAMPLE COPY**

Note: This check represents "head love,"-- a philosophy of good will

with no commitment.

Folk often use the word *love* in their communication, but follow up with no action.

To often *love* is defined in the garb of unselfishness.

C S. Lewis penned the following penetrating insight.

"If you asked twenty good men today what they thought was the highest of virtues, nineteen of them would reply, unselfishness. But, if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old, he would have replied, love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative ideal of unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point.

I do not think this is the Christian virtue of love. The thrill of Christian living is recognizing how much we gain because God loved us and how much both our fellows and we gain because we love our fellow man. Self-denial is never an end in itself in the Christian life; always, it is a means to the end of love and its gain."

John says *attitude + action = love*. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." I John 3:16-18 (NIV)


Note: The check is blank and not signed with the figure amount left open, thus fulfilling our definition "*Love is a commitment to give whatever it takes to meet another's need in spite of the cost to me.*"

So, the second part of John's above statement looks like this with my "check illustration:

**Peoples State Bank** 63-11261-1011

MINNEOLA, KANSAS, \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_ No. \_\_\_\_\_

PAY TO THE ORDER OF \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

FOR \_\_\_\_\_  *Wilbur A. Johnson* DOLLARS

**SAMPLE COPY**

**Wilbur & Imalee Johnson**  
P.O. Box 875 (316) 442-8342  
Arkansas City, Kansas 67005

A friend of mine named Paul received an automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On Christmas Eve when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. "Is this your car, Mister?" he asked. Paul nodded. "My brother gave it to me for Christmas." The boy was astounded. "You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy, I wish..." He hesitated. Of course Paul knew what he was going to wish for. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels. "I wish," the boy went on, "that I could be a brother like that." Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, then impulsively he added, "Would you like to take a ride in my automobile?" "Oh yes, I'd love that." After a short ride, the boy turned and with his eyes aglow, said, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?" Paul smiled a little. He thought he knew what the lad wanted. He wanted to show his neighbors that he could ride home in a big automobile. But Paul

was wrong again. "Will you stop where those two steps are?" the boy asked. He ran up the steps. Then in a little while Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car. "There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him a cent. And some day I'm gonna give you one just like it...then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about."

Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of his car. The shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

That Christmas Eve, Paul learned what Jesus meant when he had said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35

Shared by Dan Clark

### **How does love increase?**

In order to mature in love, we must *practice love*.

How do we become better ball players? Practice!

How do we become better musicians? Practice!

How do our muscles increase? Exercise/ Practice!

How do we become better artists? Practice!

How do we become better golfers? Practice!

How does our love increase? Practice!

Love comes from God and is developed in us by "practice" as Henry Drummond says so well.

"This is the supreme work to which we need to address ourselves in this world -- TO LEARN LOVE. Is life not full of

opportunities for learning Love? Every man and woman, every day has a thousand of them. The world is not a playground; it is a schoolroom. Life is not a holiday, but an education, and the one eternal lesson for us all is how better we can love. What makes a man a good cricketer? Practice. What makes a man a good artist, a good sculptor, a good musician? Practice. What makes a man a good linguist, a good stenographer? Practice. What makes a man a good man? Practice. Nothing else. There is nothing capricious about religion. We do not get the soul in different ways, under different laws, from those in which we get the body and mind. If a man does not exercise his arm, he develops no biceps muscle; and if a man does not exercise his soul, he acquires no muscle in his soul, no strength of character, no vigor of moral fiber, nor beauty of spiritual growth. Love is not a thing of enthusiastic emotion. It is a rich, strong, manly, vigorous expression of the whole round Christian character -- the Christ-like nature in its fullest development. And the constituents of this great character are only to be built up by ceaseless practice.

What was Christ doing in the carpenter's shop? Practicing. Though perfect, we read that He learned obedience, and grew in wisdom and in favor with God. Do not quarrel therefore with your lot in life. Do not complain of its never ceasing cares, its petty environment, the vexations you have to stand, the small and sordid souls you have to live and work with. Above all, do not resent temptation; do not be perplexed because it seems to thicken round you more and more, and ceases neither for effort nor for agony nor prayer. That is your practice. That is the practice which God appoints you; and it is having its work in making you patient, and humble, and generous, and unselfish, and kind, and courteous. Do not grudge the hand that is molding the still too shapeless image within you. It is growing more beautiful, though you see it not, and every touch of temptation may add to its perfection. Therefore, keep in the midst of life. Do not isolate yourself. Be among men, and among things, and among troubles, and difficulties, and obstacles.

You remember Goethe's words: 'Es bildet ein Talent sich in der Stille, Doch ein Charakter in dem Strom der Welt'. 'Talent develops itself in solitude; character in the stream of life.' Talent develops itself in solitude -- the talent of prayer, of faith, meditation and love, of seeing the unseen; Character grows in the stream of the world's life. That chiefly is where men are to learn love.'"

Taken from a 100+ year old book that I purchased for twenty-five cents from a Preacher's yard sale in Indiana -- "Addresses by Henry Drummond" -- Published, 1891 -- from "The Greatest Thing in the World," pp.49-53.

So, *Drummond says love matures as we "practice it in the stream of life."*

### **First, we must practice loving ourselves:**

"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. **And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'**" **Matthew 22:37-39**

In Jesus' statement, He clearly implies, that we should love ourselves. There is a self-love which is corrupt, and it must be put off and mortified; but there is a self-love which is natural, and the rule of the greatest duty, and it must be understood, for *loving others* depends upon our properly *loving ourselves*. We must love ourselves, that is, we must have a due regard for the dignity of our own natures, and a due concern for the welfare of our own souls and bodies.

*Love* begins at home, so to speak, as suggested by this amusing story.

A Texan and two northerners went to Alaska to hunt bear. In camp, the northerners started cleaning their guns and were ridiculed by the Texan.

"Why down Texas-way, we catch 'em with our bare hands"

'We'd like to see you get a big Kodiak bear without using a gun," replied his friends, whereupon the Texan started out empty-handed. Some time later his friends in the cabin heard him yelling. Looking out the window, they saw him running toward the cabin with a big Kodiak bear lumbering close behind him. "Open the door" the Texan yelled, so they did. The Texan stood aside and the bear ran right into the cabin. The Texan slammed the door shut and yelled, "You boys skin that one while I go git another one!"

So, our *practice of love* must begin at home.

Rosalind Rinker, author of books on Conversational Prayer, says:

"Folk lose sight of God's love and purpose for them:  
Nobody loves me, then God doesn't either,  
If God doesn't love me then nobody else does either,  
Result: You don't love yourself."

The following questions suggest wrong conclusions drawn from non love of yourself.

Who told you that someone else is better than you?  
Who told you that you are not good looking?  
Who told you that others are better than you?  
Who told you that you are not intelligent?  
Who told you that you are better than others?  
"Who told you that you were naked?" asks God of

Adam. Genesis 3:11"

Who asks the "who" questions? God did and does. HE knew that Adam became aware of his nakedness by his conscience as awakened by the Evil One and Adam's own willful act.

We wrongly conclude many matters about ourselves, and negative action follows, because we do not love ourselves.

We wrongly conclude **we are ugly**, so become shy, bashful, timid.

We wrongly conclude that **others are better than us**, so we recoil, shrink back.

We wrongly conclude we are **dumb, not intelligent**, so we become inadequate in living, marriage, etc.

We wrongly conclude **we are better than others**, so this opens the lid of Pandora's ancient box to many evils-- pride, conceit, egoism, narcissism, disdain, arrogance, haughtiness, insolence, superiority.

What is the antidote to self-acceptance, loving ourselves properly? The writer of Psalm 139:14-17 expressed it well:

**"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!" Psalm 139:14-17 (NIV)**

Simply pray-repeat these words: ***GOD MADE ME JUST AS I AM; THEREFORE I PRAISE-THANK HIM FOR MY WHOLE BEING--BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT-- AS I AM RIGHT NOW, AND WHAT HE MAKES ME TO BE IN THE FUTURE.*** Commit these words of Psalm 139 to memory and repeat them as often as negative NON-SELF LOVE comes to my mind. OBSERVE your attitude begin to change. I did and you can, too!

**Mature Love Reaches People who are like Lost Sheep, Lost Coins, Lost Sons, or Lost Older Brothers.**



Howard Clinebell said: "A man needs a sense of his own worth which will make it possible for him to feel that others have inherent worth, too."

So, when we properly **Love our self**, then the **Loving of others** follows.

When we love only those who are nice, and good, and shun those who are unattractive, plain or bad: is this really love?

In Luke 15 Jesus names four *practice fields* for maturing by loving people who are like *wayward sheep, lost coins, lost sons or lost elder brothers*. All of these involve the unattractive, plain and bad.

These four parables are really united into a single connected story by two words, **lost and love**. All four were **lost**, not necessarily those who have become wrecks and renegades, nor hopelessly doomed and dammed. They are rather those who are out of right relationship, and needed **love** to find and bring them back.

"Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.'" Luke 15:1-6  
Yes, Jesus told this parable to remind the religious people, *Pharisees, tax collectors, and sinners*, that people who are like lost sheep must be **loved, and sought** until they are redeemed.

## **Mature Love reaches People who are like Lost Sheep**

This sheep was not lost in the sense that it had fallen over some cliff, or been devoured by wild beasts. It was lost in that it was away from the shepherd and the flock. Losing the shepherd it had lost its guide. It had no sense of direction. It didn't know its way back to the fold. It gazed and grazed, eating a clump of green grass here, and then one over there, and the "grass on the other side of the fence looked more sumptuous" and had to be sampled. So, the lamb became lost in unsuspecting ways.

Like the sheep, people usually become lost in similar ways. They fall in love with the things of the world just as Demas did. "Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world." 2 Timothy 4:10. My barber of twenty five years is like this. He started smoking when in the Army. Continued on until his voice became raspy. He asked me if I loved him and if so, to pray. I did and I did! The VA Doctors said it was cancer. I prayed! He smoked. They operated and cut it out. I loved him still and prayed on, and he smoked on the sly. His talking was reduced to a whisper. But, I love him still, and pray for this *wandering sheep*.

*A search for truth sounds like a noble adventure; but, can lead to sheep becoming lost.* Various religious groups, including Herbert W. Armstrong's Plain Truth, Christian Science, Calvinism, Jehovah Witnesses, and the Mormons have tidbits of truth to offer, for unsuspecting *lambs*. A *lamb* will *nibble* at these facets of truth, and finds them *delicious*. Seeking *sheep* want more and their sequacious appetite is strengthened by these group leaders with Bible promises: "The truth shall set you free" John 8:32;

"My word is truth" John 17:17. So, the *lambs* are enticed and become *lost*. As did a lady in the church where I ministered at Minneola, Kansas. Bit by bit she studied the teachings of Plain Truth-- judgment, paradise, double Sabbath on the week of crucifixion, the Sabbath, etc. Eventually she slipped away from the church, her family and herself.

### **Like sheep, people wander away from their purpose in life.**

The purpose of sheep is to remain with the flock which provides protection and warmth, and wool for the owner. As a teenager I herded a flock of three hundred sheep by leading them out onto the prairie. There, all day long, my dog, horse and I kept them safe. One evening when the time came to take the herd to the big corral at the ranch house, as difficult as it is, I did a quick count, and it seemed one or two were missing. But, a quick visual search found nothing, and with the sun setting in the west, I took the herd home. However, the next morning I found the two missing sheep scattered over about a fourth of an acre where coyotes had devoured them. They made the mistake of wandering into a small ravine away from this shepherd and the flock.

Lester Hull was a *wandering sheep*. A college graduate, he fell into the habit of drinking vanilla. The alcohol gave him a 'high' and did not qualify him as a drinker of liquor. Lester lived down by the railroad tracks in Minneola, Kansas.

Folk shunned him and refused to sit by him at the cafe. They claimed he licked the catsup bottle and wiped his mouth on his shirt sleeve. I sought him out. We drank coffee, and I encouraged him to use our church library. Timidly he came to read and mostly to be in

out of the cold. We visited about many subjects--philosophy, temptation, religion, lust of the flesh, Jesus, sex, etc.. Finally we talked about Jesus and being saved from sin. Lester became a believer on a winter Friday morning of 1974 confessing his faith in Jesus. I buried him in baptism. A few years later he developed *vanilla sickness*. He asked me to help him move to a Care Home at Bucklin. He grew weaker and twice a week I drove over and took him for a ride in the country. Although he wet on my car seat, I loved him still, and he asked me to write out his Last Will and Testament. I did and he insisted our Faith Alive Ministry be one of the benefactors. His provision of \$42.50 for our ministry was very special. Soon he went home to be with Jesus and it was my privilege to conduct his memorial service. Love always wins if we give it enough time!

Love matures as we practice love towards people who are like *wandering sheep* some of the virtues named by Paul in I Corinthians 13--- **Love** is kind, **Love** is not easily provoked, **Love** thinks no evil, **Love** rejoices in truth not in iniquity, **Love** suffers long, **Love** bears all things, **Love** believes all things, **Love** hopes all things, **Love** endures all things.

While visiting our daughter, Rebecca, in Houston, Texas on the occasion of her triple major surgery, the church folks brought food each day for us and our granddaughter, Katie. One of those ladies was a Hispanic lady, Shenny Griffin. In the few minutes Shenny was there, she related how several years ago her husband left her with four children. Yet, she loved him. His brother was struck with Aids. His family rejected him, yet Jenny loved and cared for him. Her husband came back. She still loved him. They marry again. Jenny

was a Catholic. She became a Christian. Still, she loves the Catholic people, priests and pope. Her husband leaves again. They divorce, yet love goes on.

The parable about the *Lost Sheep* concludes with these words: "What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, **until he find it?**" Luke 15:4 KJV

**Love matures when we keep on loving and seeking wandering lambs until they are returned home.**

**Mature Love reaches People who are like *lost Coins***

**"Or what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, does not light a lamp, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she find it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost. Even so, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." Luke 15:8-10 (ASV)**

The record says the lady owned the coin and she lost it. The owner was responsible for the coin. Relationships die as love breaks down with a lack of forgiveness, understanding, and acceptance.

The world, more often than not, loves its own kind far more than the church. Neighbors, friends, coworkers sin, but they talk it out, ignore with understanding, manifest acceptance, and relationships go in; but, not so in the church. Usual practice in the church when a sin is public--silent judgment, followed by 'hot tongue' and 'cold

shoulder' treatment, then the 'casting out of the synagogue.'

In our Mount Zion country church near where we live, there are many fine people. Two families in particular became *lost like coins* to the congregation because of a breakdown in love. They are multi talented people and diligent workers for the Lord. Like all of us they had at least one problem, that of putting self forward in strong leadership. Their zeal conflicted with some of the leaders and by various means already named above they were forced out of the congregation. At the same time that their forward leadership was being rejected, there was adultery, lying, fornication, divorce and homo sexual activity being committed by others. Of course these latter sins were hid, so like dirt swept under a rug their sins were tolerated.

### **Mature Love Reaches People Who Are Like Lost Sons.**

I Corinthians spells out certain virtues of mature love which require us to love *people who are like tarnished/lost coins*. Love suffers long...Love bears all things...Love hopes all things...Love believes all things and Love endures all things. Thus, people who are like lost coins, can be redeemed if we are willing to practice *mature love*.

In Luke 15 are two more people types to be addressed: "*Lost sons and elder brothers*."

**Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there**

squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'

So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate." Luke 15:11-24

In this marvelous story Jesus reveals his attitude towards sinners. And remember his attitude is the attitude of God. How does Jesus feel about those who are lost? He makes it plain that he is the sinners friend. No man who came in contact with him ever doubted

that. The Scribes and Pharisees were indifferent to the lost, but he regarded them with infinite concern. He knows who are lost. He cannot be content as long as one lamb, one coin or one son is away from the fold. He is the supreme lover! His heart goes out to the whole world. But He does not love us in the mass; he loves us individually. Every man may sing with Paul, "He loved me and gave himself up for me." In Him every sinner has a friend.

These four stories contrasted shed beams of light about our Father and us. The SHEPHERD goes seeking the *lost lamb* and brings it back; the WOMAN sweeps and looks for *the coin* until it is found; with the *son away from home*, the FATHER waits at home until he returns; and with the *stay at home son*, as the song says "*He was there all the time.*"

These *away from home sons and daughters* who I have been blessed to meet will be forever kept fresh in my memory by what I dub as *their longing for Home and the longing for the touch of a hand on their hearts*. In a revival I was sharing, the preacher said, "We have a young man in the hospital. He has Aids and you do not need to feel obligated to visit him." "Let's go" I said. The hospital room was isolated and I was offered a gown, mask and gloves. I refused all three. In the room was a young man in his twenties who had been too long away from home in the far country of sin. Two nurses in white gowns, masks and gloves were there as I walked up to the lad's bed, and extended my hand. He hesitated, for obviously it had been a long time since a fellow human being dared to touch him. Finally he reached out a trembling hand.

I grasped that hand and said--"*My friend God loves you and I do too!*"

Yes he cried, then I laid my hand upon his head and we



prayed--*"Father, we all wander away from Home and later look back wishing we could go back. Thank you for Jesus who stands ready to lead and welcome us back. Bless this young man in body, soul and spirit. Have mercy upon him and help him to know you're still saying--Come home, come home, all you who are weary come home."* A-men. With breaking voice he said *"I want to go back home. Please help me."* As soon as I gathered my self together we visited, then prayed again with him repeating after me. *"Father, here I am in this far country reaping the results of my sin. I'm sorry and am happy to say, I still believe in Jesus and remember the day of my baptism. Please forgive me for my many sins. I am glad to know I'm still welcome at home."* A-men and A-men

What a day that was, but many years ago in sophisticated religion I would have gathered my robes about myself and passed on by. Mature love reaches these lost sons and daughters wherever we find them.

My heart often grows weary as I hear preachers damming the lost sons and daughters of this world into the pits of hell. It was with a heavy heart that I heard Vernon Richerson of Bible Christian Church of Ark. City preaching at our Mt. Zion country church on the subject of *"Am I my Brother's Keeper?"* (Genesis 4:9) He reiterated how Cain, Jezebel, the Rich Fool, and Judas were all in hell crying out--*Am I my brother's keeper.* The worst thing was, he seemed to delight in telling us over and over that these individuals were in hell. Four things are terribly wrong with this presentation:

1. No one is in hell yet, at least that is what the Bible says. (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:13-15) You see souls may now be in Hades much to my consternation, but not in Hell.
2. There is not one Bible verse without a twisted interpretation which indicates any one of

these, Cain, Jezebel, Rich Fool, or Judas is in hell. 3. Where is his compassion for someone who messed up in a big way? As John Wesley said about a drunk--"*There go I, but for the grace of God.*"

4. Wouldn't mature love reach far enough to pray--*God you can do all things, and You have created and love all your creation. Please, since with You all things are possible, save the lost sons and daughters of this world?*" My love has often prayed this prayer many times.

**While the son is away in the far country, what does mature love do at home? It waits with the knowledge of how this son has been trained.**

It addresses this *away from home son* not as the "Prodigal son," but a son away from home. True, the lad packed his suitcase, asked for his share of the inheritance and walked away from his Father into the far country. But, surely far too much has been made out of the son's involvement in good times, parties, and prostitutes and his end of feeding pigs. True this is the quagmire of many or most "prodigals"; but, it is not the reason Jesus related the story.

Having been in the "far country" myself I choose to call our attention to some very positive factors about this away from home lad.

1. He knew how to think and act, vs. 13,15,17,18;
2. He still remembered home and knew where it was, vs. 18;
3. He knew he wanted to be at home even as a servant, vs. 19
4. He knew how to get home, vs. 18a, 20a;
5. Sin and time left him a humble lad, vs. 17-21
6. He knew his sin was against his Father, vs. 18,21
7. He knew how to say "I'm sorry" vs. 18,19;
8. He knew how to accept forgiveness and how to forgive

himself vs. 22-24.

**Mature love has a chance to stand up tall when we meet these away from home lads of the world.**

WOW! What a man this lad of Luke 15 was! I have often met *him* on the highways and byways, in the houses and huts of life and like to ask this question--"My friend are your bags all packed? Are you ready to go to heaven?"

Mature love waits with the open arms of compassion to forgive and forget. (Luke 15:22-24)

**"Are your bags all packed? Are you ready to go?"**

**This question** I first heard asked by George Younce, bass singer of the Cathedral Quartet, in reference to being prepared for our eternal journey beyond this world.

**"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NKJ)**

Since that time I often use this question of the sons and daughters along Life's way. The replies are significant and give me a wide open door to speak for Jesus. -- \*

\* **The grave side service** was ended and I introduced my self to the young assistant funeral director from Laverne, Oklahoma inquiring--"***Matt, are your bags all packed? Are you ready to go?***" He replied-- "***Yes, where are we going.***" I said--"***Up up to meet God.***" He smiled and said-- "***Yes sir, I got ready long ago.***"

We shared our faith about living, and church a bit and went on our way rejoicing.

\* **Our meat butcher** at the Venture store here in Ashland is a fine hard working man. I asked him this inquiring question--"***Shorty,***

*are your bags all packed? Are you ready to go?"* With a special surprised grin he said *"Yes they are! Fifteen years ago I met Jesus my Engineer and got my ticket. I'm ready!" Bless you my friend"* I said. And we enjoyed a most pleasant conversation.

\* **Visiting a computer internet "Fellowship Chat Room"** I asked the question of a 14 year old lad down in Kentucky--*"Ty, are your bags all packed? Are you ready to go?"* There was silence as I waited for his instant typed message. Finally he typed--*"No, I'm afraid to die for I am lost and going to hell."* I inquired *"Do you Believe in God and the Bible as the Word of God?."* *"Yes, I do. My step father is a preacher,"* he said. I began to ask him about John 3:16 and Acts 2:38. We continued to chat. They do practice baptism (immersion). He claimed he is confused and our chats are ongoing.

\* **Jim Fellers**, a local young man in Ashland, responded with--*"Nope! I'm ready but taking no bags with me. I brought nothing into this world and am taking nothing out."*

The question and replies are so neat as I learn so much about human beings and we get to talk about eternal verities, becoming friends to talk more another day.

\* **Henry Umeodum** is from Nigeria, West Africa. We met in a chat room and I *drew him out*. He is a Philosophy major and is considering Theology as his Master major. He is a follower of Jesus and so hungry for Truth.

I am having a "picnic" as we visit about life there and here and share truths about God and the Bible. Our conversation is ongoing.

\* **Calvin McGonigle** is a local handy man who does mechanical-carpenter chores for us at such a cheap price it is a shame, but I don't complain and try to offer him a tip besides.

**"Calvin, are your bags all packed? Are you ready to go meet God?"** He remonstrated-- **"Nope, I'm not going."** I inquired--**"Well now what are you going to do when your number comes up?"** He said--**"I'm going around and start over."** Calvin and I have much more talking to do, but at least he's thinking.

\* I met **Do Dang Phuoc Tien of Vietnam** in a "chat room", drew him out to talk of High and Holy things. He is 18 years old and a University student. To that question-- **"Ti, are your bags all packed? Are you ready to go?"** he responded-- **"Life is difficult here and sure I want to go to heaven in some distant year."** When I Reminded him that Jesus loves and died for him. He began to cry in unbelief. So that ended our chat for that night; but, our conversation is ongoing, and progress is being made. Because of a 12 hour time difference he wants to talk at noon his time - midnight our time. Its worth sacrificing a few minutes for one of God's creation.

**Mature love waits with the knowledge that God is at work in the lives of away from home sons and daughters even in the far country.**

There are countless times in the Bible when God worked in unusual ways to call his sons and daughters back Home---*the voice in Eden* speaks to Adam; *the Prophet Nathan* appears to speak to David about a man stealing one little lamb; *a donkey* is prepared to speak to Balaam; *the still small voice* speaks to Elijah in a cave as he hides from Jezebel; *the Lord speaks to Jezebel- I kings 21:23*; *A rooster crows* to bring conviction to Peter; *A voice speaks to Saul on the Damascus road.* The Lord sometimes uses famines (Deuteronomy 32:18-28) and storms (Psalm 107:24-31) to point his children home.

**It is imperative that we wait at home with total acceptance of**

## **the away from home sons and daughters.**

Yellow with age is my newspaper clipping of the fifties which reveals the true story about a family at home as they wait for their son.

"At the close of the Korean war, there was a soldier-son of an aristocratic New England family. His parents had not heard from him for a long period of time; and they had become extremely anxious. Then one day they received a long-distance call from their son who had just landed in San Francisco and was on his way home. His parents were overjoyed to hear his voice and know he would soon be with them.

But the son said, "I have a buddy that I would like to bring home with me who has been badly wounded, in fact he has only one eye, one arm and one leg."

The mother began to stammer; "Well, of course, we would be glad to have your buddy come with you for a short visit."

"No, I don't mean for just a visit, I mean to make his home with us, he has no place else to go"

"We're sorry about your buddy, son," said the father, "but we have big plans for you and things to get done, we just couldn't possibly have anyone like that around here to take care of."

There was a click as the phone in San Francisco was hung up. The next day they received a wire from official sources that their son had jumped to his death from the window of a tall building. As if for consolation, they added that he had been badly wounded in the Korean situation and had "but one eye, one arm and one leg."

Will you let God mature your love so as to accept any and all *away from home sons and daughters* no matter what their condition. They may return as a smoker with lung cancer, a person with

syphilis, gonorrhea or aids.

**Mature love waits with heart felt hope. (Luke 15:20)**

His attitude toward his son and all the lost is one of boundless hope. Luther Burbank once said, "Every weed is a possible flower." What a marvelous confidence he had in the vegetable kingdom! The only reason that old burweed does not have its hands full of blossoms instead of full of cockleburs is because no man has cared enough to give it a chance. The only reason that sour dock is not sweet with the perfume of fragrant flowers is because everybody has passed it by as hopeless. And Jesus believed that every sinner was a possible saint, that every coward might become a hero, that every defeated man might stand up in moral and spiritual victory.

The Lord blessed me to pen the following poem which looks at the *away from home son* through the eyes of the waiting father.

**Just two days ago I saw the Father waiting on the porch  
Swinging to and fro in the old porch swing.  
Love was reaching down a path where eyes could not see.**

**Yesterday, I saw Him standing by the yard gate,  
Looking longingly down an empty path.  
He was hoping---*perhaps today My lad will come home.***

**Last evening I saw Him standing at the kitchen door.  
It was supper time, and a welcome home feast was prepared.  
An empty chair was at the table, set for a certain lad.**

**This morning I saw Him at the end of the lane.  
He spoke of an expected letter as He nailed a sign on the post:**

***"WELCOME HOME MY SON, COME ON IN!"***

**Now, it's high noon, and the waiting Father waits no more.  
I see Him running down the road as He calls His son by name.  
He peers thru shadows cast by clouds beneath the  
noonday sun.**

**I stand and watch as He crosses the creek.  
And seems to disappear down an ever empty road.  
Then there is a speck? an animal? a tree? his son!**

**Now, thunder rolls, it's quite dark for such an early hour.  
Suddenly the figure becomes clear on a distant hill.  
The Waiting Father has won and they hug with hope!**

***Willis S. Johnson***

on Father's Day 6/18/89 at Forth Smith, Arkansas.

Although the religious world talks about *tough love*, *limited love*, etc., yet the Bible knows no such designations. These statements allow the prodigals of life to slip through religious loop holes. Across fifty plus years I have heard folk assert:

"I would love him, b-u-t he is an ex-con."

"I can't love her, b-e-c-a-u-s-e she is a *street walker*."

"Well, you know he/she does have Aids, so I must protect myself."

"As long as she keeps the wrong company I cannot love her."

"You expect me to love Mormons? J.W.'s?"

"I cannot Love a person who keeps on sinning."

"Joe is a homosexual, so he is beyond my love."

The list is endless. The truth is that these who would limit their



love, not only lack *mature love*, but have no love at all.

**Hear again the what the Holy Spirit says in I Corinthians 13:  
*love is:***

**"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."**

Much of what parades as *love* in the church today **is not love** at all, but merely a "warm fuzzy feeling", or an "idea in the head" but not the heart, (I John 3:14-17).

Resolve now through prayer and a new commitment to be possessed with God's love. Here is a simple true story which challenges me to meet and pass the tests of love as I meet "*away from home people*."

"Every week in my growing up years we tuned in Pacific Garden Mission sponsored by Moody Bible Institute. I often heard stories about Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago and vowed if ever I went there, it was one place I wanted to visit.

In later years business took me to Chicago and after finding my hotel, the first place I went was downtown on the Loop to Pacific Garden Mission. As I walked up to the mission the door swung open and a little white haired lady stretched out her hand and said--"*Mister, in Jesus' Name come out of the night into Pacific*

*Garden Mission because Jesus loves you and I do, too."* I was going in anyway but this greeting was most unusual and heart warming. I sat in a simple chair with others and sang the simple old Gospel songs, then heard a soul searching message. When the altar call was done, I lingered, and the white haired lady who had greeted me so warmly asked if I knew Jesus. I did. She said, 'Would you like to hear my story as to why I am here?' I responded, "Yes, please tell me." She said: "Many years ago I lived with my husband on the North side of Chicago in a very expensive mansion. We owned a prosperous business, but he died and I was left alone. The days and nights became impossible for me, so I locked up the house and started walking down towards Lake Michigan as a place to end it all. Walking on the other side of the street I paused under the street light to read one last verse from my New Testament. When I finished, the night lights caused the Pacific Garden Mission sign to glimmer. The purple color intrigued me and I decided to hear one last sermon before leaving for eternity. I came in and the grand old songs warmed my heart and the message brought tears to my eyes and soon I answered the altar call. They baptized me in the very lake where I planned to end my life.

When it was all done and we were back at the mission, the director said--"Lady, do you need a job? We need someone to stand at the door and welcome people into the mission. You invite folk on the street into the Mission by opening the door, grasping their hand and telling them that Jesus loves them and you do, too, and please come in out of the night."

The lady said--"Well, I have never done this kind of thing before, but I'll try. But, it was almost too much for me and the next night the second person who came almost caused me to fail my duty."

"How was that," I asked. "It was night and I saw this little teen age girl coming down the sidewalk. She wore ragged clothes and her hair was unkempt. As she drew closer I secretly hoped she wouldn't come near the mission for my years of fine furs and clothes had not prepared me for this challenge. But, she seemed to be walking directly toward our door, so I swung open the door and said--'Little girl, come in out of the night because Jesus loves you and I do too.' The little girl looked at me out of her hollow eyes with a penetrating stare and said--'You don't love me.' *Yes, we do love you very much, I replied. The little girl answered --'If you really love me, then kiss me.'* I was sorely torn inside to answer with mere words for the girl seemed to reek of every sin of society. She had scabs on her arms and her face was unwashed, so I hesitated. The little lady paused for a long time, and Dee Shaffer could wait no longer, so he said: 'Little lady, don't stop now. What did you do?' The white haired lady with tears in her eyes continued--*I did what love had to do. I grabbed that little girl, kissed her on the face and arms and said little girl Jesus loves you very much and I do too, please come out of the night into Pacific Garden Mission.*" And, she did! In days to come she found Jesus to be her lover, too."

as shared by Dee Shaffer at the 1973 National Missionary Convention  
in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

## **Mature Love Reaches People Who Are Like Lost Older Brothers.**

"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing.

So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your

**father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'" Luke 15:15-32**

Matthew Henry in his comments suggests:

"In God's family. Those who are comparatively innocents seldom know how to be compassionate towards those who are manifestly penitents. The language of such we have here, in what the elder brother said (v. 29-30), and it is written for warning to those who by the grace of God are kept from scandalous sin, and kept in the way of virtue and sobriety, that they sin not after the similitude of this transgression. Let us observe the particulars of it. First, He boasted of himself and his own virtue and obedience. He had not only not run from his father's house, as his brother did, but had made himself as a servant in it, and had long done so:

Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment. Note, It is too common for those that are better than their neighbors to boast of it, yea, and to make their boast of it before God himself, as if he were indebted to them for it."

## **The *Stay at home Sons*" are often blind---\***

**His elder son/brother**, who I dub "*the stay at home boy*," was as they say "blind in one eye and couldn't see out of the other." vss 28-30. He is to be pitied above all others, for he was both blind to his own faults and unable to see any good in others including his own brother. How often today people, particularly church folk, do the same. In teaching a Bible lesson at Random Road Chapel of here in Arkansas City, Kansas, I inquired: "Peter denied Christ three times. How many of you have ever denied Christ? Judas betrayed Christ. How many of you have every betrayed Christ?" The answer was "O". Then, I asked " "How many of you have ever sinned?" Every hand went up. So I pointed out that sin is precisely a betrayal and denial of Christ and God. See Genesis 39:9; I Samuel 12:23; Psalm 78:17, 119:11; I Corinthians 8:12. Lord, open our *eyes* that we may see!

**This *stay at home son* was *disobedient in his spirit*** in not respecting his own father (the Father of us all) and the father of his brother, too. Vss. 29,30. His claim was, "*But when this son of yours....is come*". Was this his Father's son, and not his brother? Further, to add insult to injury he suggested, "*Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders.*"

He would not listen to love or reason.

No question remains in my mind he lied at least twice---the *away from home boy* was his brother, and to suggest that he never disobeyed his father is unreal. Wasn't he a normal boy? Was there in fact a person on earth who has never sinned? Remember, while this is a story, yet, Jesus told it and the language "*A certain man*" vs.

11, seems to suggest Jesus had in mind a particular father and two sons which he had observed in his earthly sojourn.

No doubt this *stay at home boy* was blinded by pride as are all people who suppose they are 100% perfect.

Had this *stay at home son* admitted publicly that this *just come home boy* was his brother what might people think? That he was a party to the sins in the far country? That he approved of leaving home?

So, today in the moral failure of President Bill Clinton, the American church faced one of its biggest challenges in the area of practical forgiveness. A Preacher who was counseling Mr. Clinton wrote many other Minister via e-mail--"Shall I forgive Mr. Clinton for his sin?" I wrote to ask if Bill had confessed his wrong and sought forgiveness? The reply was, "Oh yes, many times over!" I wrote back to say--"Considering what Jesus said in Matthew 18:21,22? and what he did for the woman at the Well and the Woman taken in adultery, what other choice do you have?" I'm not asking if the President's sin was wrong. That is a certain YES! **What did you do?**

Just so, the *away from home son/brother* had sinned, that is not the question. The question to be answered is--"Will I call him my "son/brother" when he returns from the far country?"

Many of my readers know I was sexually attacked in the Walnut Park of here several years ago. What would people think if I ever went back there again? Isn't it best to stay away from these *wandering sons of the world*? The answer is "NO!" for these *away from home sons* need to be witnessed to, and so I go. And, the opportunities to inquire--"Are your bags all packed? Are you ready to die?", and share copies of my books.

**This *stay at home son* could not / would not face his own shortcomings, so he focused on his brother's shortcomings. vs. 30.**

Probably the younger brother had not left home until he was 30 years of age as suggested by Jewish culture. So, what of all those years when the two boys played together? Worked together? Prayed together in Jewish upbringing?

This scenario is played out today when preachers/teachers condemn, *slam kick the 'butts'* of their audience. Almost without exception, they are trying to hide shortcomings of their own. A couple of national TV personalities in the nineties were unfortunate illustrations of the same matter. Just last Sunday at our Mt. Zion country church the preacher did this to us. All the sins of the Seven Church of Revelation were charged up to the Mt. Zion people. I came home and checked it out, and what a startling revelation. Of the 34 things asserted about these seven churches, only four (13%) were negative, while 30 (87%) were positive. How come we so often hear only the negative?

Preachers/teachers all too often play the part of the *elder brother(son)*, ignorantly I hope, and give the Devil and his angels too much publicity in their message/lesson by announcing what the Devil is doing in the world by reading the latest FBI crime report, abortion statistics. Please! Do not tell me what the enemy is doing and then *beat me over the head* with the same by way of some kind of twisted exhortation. Tell me what God is doing, what Jesus has done and the Holy Spirit is ready to do!

**Blinded by self, the *Stay at home son* was unable to rejoice with his Father when his brother came home. vss. 27,28**

The words of the *stay at home son* reflects the lad's real need. vss/

27,28. He needed to stop, look, listen, then act accordingly. (James 1:22-25) Preachers/Teachers who have backsliding/ slumbering people need to look in the mirror of self examination for a true revelation. After three years, a congregation/class begins to reflect clearly the image of the teacher/preacher--his/her love, desire, interests, hunger, hope, etc.

Four times I experienced this in fifty years of preaching. When the congregation where I was preaching/teaching begin to lag in winning souls, fruits of the Spirit, worship, away from home missions, love for youth, witnessing, giving, etc., I had only to begin the remedy by searching my heart, then kindly, yet firmly, sharing the Word in the lacking area, with perhaps a collective service program and soon the breach in the wall was under repair, and victory appeared!

### **How does mature love act towards the stay at home sons?**

My answer: Cautiously, slowly with no weapons beyond the Sword of the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit.

Jesus had an advantage over us in that while he taught these *stay at home sons*, Saducees and Pharisees, wherever they appeared ; yet, he was not required to *rub shoulders* with them every day. We are to wait like the winsome Father who waited for his *away from home son* and went out to meet both these sons on their own ground.

Perhaps a key phrase for us in reference to people who are like *lost sheep, coins, away from home* and *stay at home sons* is **PRACTICE LOVE NOW** as illustrated in this true story:

In a class I teach for adults, I gave the assignment to "go to someone you love, and tell them that you love them."



At the beginning of the next class, one of the students began by saying, "I was angry with you last week when you gave us this assignment. I didn't feel I had anyone to say those words to. But as I began driving home my conscience started talking. Then I knew exactly who I needed to say 'I love you' too. Five years ago, my father and I had a vicious disagreement and never really resolved it. We avoided seeing each other unless we absolutely had to at family gatherings. We hardly spoke. So by the time I got home, I had convinced myself I was going to tell my father I loved him.

"Just making that decision seemed to lift a heavy load off my chest.

"At 5:30, I was at my parents' house ringing the doorbell, praying that Dad would answer the door. I was afraid if Mom answered, I would chicken out and tell her instead. But as luck

would have it, Dad did answer the door. "I didn't waste any time - I took one step in the door and said,

'Dad, I just came over to tell you that I love you.' "It was as if a transformation came over my dad. Before my eyes his face softened, the wrinkles seemed to disappear and he began to cry. He reached out and hugged me and said, 'I love you too, son, but I've never been able to say it.'

"But that's not even my point. Two days after that visit, my dad had a heart attack and is in the hospital. I don't even know if he'll make it. "So my message to all of you is this: Don't wait to do the things you know need to be done. What if I had waited to tell my dad? Take the time to do what you need to do and do it now!" *Dennis E. Mannering*



# **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma

## **Chapter 5 - "LOVE MATURES US TO BE LIKE GOD"**

- 1. What is Mark Moore's definition of love?**
- 2. What did C. S. Lewis say nineteen (19) out of twenty (20) good men would say was the highest of virtues?**
- 3. What did C. S. Lewis say almost any of the great Christians of old would say was the highest of virtues?**
- 4. How is the love that comes from God developed in us?**
- 5. What did Jesus say was the second commandment?**
- 6. What is the antidote to self-acceptance?**
- 7. What did Howard Clinebell say will make it possible for a man to feel that others have inherent worth?**
- 8. What did Jesus tell the parable of the lost sheep to remind religious people?**
- 9. How does the apostle Paul say love matures?**
- 10. Who, more often than not, loves its own kind far more than the church?**

**11. In Luke 15:8-10, who was responsible for the lost coin?**

**12. Relationships die as love breaks down with a lack of**

\_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**13. In I Corinthians what virtues of mature love are listed?**

**14. What attitude does Jesus reveal towards sinners?**

**15. List the eight (8) positive factors about the "Prodigal son."**

**16. Mature love waits with the open arms of compassion to:**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**17. What does mature love wait with?**

**18. According to I Corinthians 13 love is: Lov suffers long**

\_\_\_\_\_; love does not \_\_\_\_\_; love does not  
\_\_\_\_\_, is not \_\_\_\_\_;  
does not \_\_\_\_\_, does not  
\_\_\_\_\_, is not  
\_\_\_\_\_, thinks \_\_\_\_\_; does not

\_\_\_\_\_, but rejoices in \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_; bears all \_\_\_\_\_, believes all  
\_\_\_\_\_, hopes all \_\_\_\_\_, endures all  
\_\_\_\_\_. Love \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**19. Matthew Henry suggests: "In God's family. Those who are comparatively innocents seldom know how to be:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_."

**20. What are the "Stay at home Sons"?**

**21. How did the "Stay at home Son" show he did not respect his own father?**

**22. How did the "Stay at home Son" demonstrate he could not / would not fact his own shortcomings?**

**23. Why was the "Stay at home Son" unable to rejoice with his Father when his brother came home?**

**24. What is the key phrase for us in reference to people who are like lost sheep, coins, away from home and stay at home sons?**

## **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection**

### **CHAPTER 6**

## **"Praise Leads to Maturity"**

Carl Sandburg tells the story about Abe Lincoln at the age of seven. One evening, Abe walked over to his cabin door and opened it. He looked up into the face of the full moon and said, "Mr. Moon, what do you see from way up there?"

Mr. Moon answered, "Abe, I see a calendar and it says 1816. I see eight million people in the United States of America. I see 16,000 covered wagons plodding slowly across the midwestern plains toward California. And, Abe, I see far to the west a wagon in the desert between two ridges of the Rocky Mountains. The wagon is broken, weeds are crawling in the spokes and there is an old dusty skeleton nearby with a pair of empty moccasins and some dry bones. I also see a sign that says, "The cowards never started!"

Troubles? Give God thanks! The very fact that you are facing troubles is a compliment to you--you had the courage to stick your neck out and try something. When you have this attitude toward troubles, they generally turn into blessings, compliments, or tributes. When trouble blocks the road and forces you to take a detour which, in turn, spares you from an accident, then trouble becomes a blessing.

When suffering forces you to unload excess baggage in your life

which you have not had the courage to get rid of before, then trouble is a blessing in disguise! Give God thanks when you face a problem, and you are maturing.

I do not always understand what is happening in my life, but I can thank God always that He is with me!

**A recipe for victory is established in the following story.**

A farmer owned a mule. The mule fell into a well, and the farmer wrung his hands and lamented his loss; but, concluded it was too expensive to hire a crane truck to pull it out. So, the farmer decided that mercy would best be shown by simply filling in the well with dirt known as "mercy killing". Shovel by shovel he buried the mule with dirt. The mule could have said--"**Oh, woe is me! I am doomed for destruction! Daddy mule never got any education and Mama Mule was a wild mare of the prairie. Brother Mule never amounted to anything, so I guess it is my lot to be buried alive!**". But, he had a thought of inspiration! Each time they threw in a shovel full of dirt, he just shook it off, stomped and stepped up. **Shake, stomp and step up....shake, stomp and step up....and in due time he walked out of the well in VICTORY!!!!**

**BORN TO WIN** is God's plan for us. "Born to Lose" is an expression advertised on the window of a Tattoo Parlor. I asked--"Does anyone ever have that tattooed on their body." He replied "Yes, but before they do it is tattooed on their 'mind'. Then I place it on their chest, arm or forehead." Just so, in learning to **PRAISE THE LORD** in our life, then the concept of "Born to win" must first be 'tattooed into our 'heart-mind'. We must willingly desire to be a **VICTOR**, then when positive or negative events come our way we are programmed to say, "Thank You Lord," which will be

our first response to life's vicissitudes.

**" Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."** Romans 8:35

**A "conqueror"** wins the battle; but, a **"more than conqueror"** wins the battle-war **plus** wins back everything the enemy has stolen providing we make a praise response to the vicissitudes which hound us daily. This is true of much in this life and ALL in the next life!

WE not only WIN THE WAR, but also win back from the enemy what he has stolen which may include ..... joy ... health ... hope .. time ... life ... things, etc.

**BECOMING VICTORS** requires a battle plan so-to-speak. It was so in 2 Chronicles 20---

**"Now all Judah, with their little ones, their wives, and their children, stood before the LORD.**

**14 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.**

**15 And he said, "Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's.**

**16 'Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of**



the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel.

17 'You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you."

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the LORD, worshiping the LORD.

19 Then the Levites of the children of the Kohathites and of the children of the Korahites stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with voices loud and high.

20 So they rose early in the morning and went out into the Wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper."

21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, for His mercy endures forever."

22 Now when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated.

23 For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another.

24 So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped.

25 When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on

the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much.

26 And on the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah until this day.

27 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had made them rejoice over their enemies.

28 So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the LORD.

29 And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel.

30 Then the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around." (NKJ) 2 Chronicles 20:13-30

Jesus said:

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." John 10:10

I learned life's "battle plan" for praise in my growing up years as I was taught by word and example to be thankful since God is in charge in life

In 1944 or 45 the price of wheat was fluctuating because of the War. We were ready to sell in August and wheat was \$1.98 per bushel. Mother said--"Tomorrow will be a better day." We waited and three days later wheat went to an unprecedented

\$5.03 per bushel at the Hardtner, Kansas elevator. That was the brighter day! We sold! Bought a new John Deere combine, and a farm in southeast Kansas.

So in life, if we will wait upon the Lord in trust and praise we gain! In the above incident we gained more than twice as much by doing as the donkey did--shake, stomp and step up.

In the last two verses of a memorial poem to my mother-Tempest Johnson 1901-1992 - Mother Taught Us What To Do. - I alluded to this teaching in,

**"Mother taught me what do when life's skies are gray:**

**Dirty thirties brought clouds of dirt:**

**Chickens Choked! Crops died, all from dirty  
black skies.**

**And this little boy cried when his kitten died.**

**But, Mother said: *We will wait and pray, work and  
hope, for there will be a better day  
tomorrow.***

**So, in later years when my son died.**

**I remembered what to do with gray skies.**

**And, now on a day like today when my skies have turned  
to gray because Mothers' gone away.**

**I remember what to do.**

**That gray skies are turned to gold**

**When I wait with hope and praise Him with  
words bold.**

**Then this turns my gray skies into a bright day!**

by Wilbur S. Johnson 7-24-92

We begin our VICTORY walk by acknowledging that God is in

charge by praising Him in the midst of the trials of life. This we do by praising Him as Paul said:

**"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" Ephesians 5:20 (KJV)**

So, we too may have VICTORY in all our days of living and serving if we will count our trials as JOY.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be *mature* and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:2-4 (NKJ)

**"Count it all joy when you fall into various trials,"**

The NKJ translates the phrase "*whenever you face trials of many kinds*" as "*when you fall into various trials*," This falling into trials are most often *holes on the Road of Life* which we *dig* by our careless living, sins, etc. This is a trait of man which started with Adam and Eve who *dug the first big hole*, and ever since people, have been *digging holes and falling into them*.

The trials, tests, tribulations which we often encounter occur as the King James translation asserts-- when we "*fall*" into them. That is, we dig a *hole* so-to-speak while traveling *life's road*, then inadvertently fall into it.

Such was the case with my brother-Oren, sisters-Patsy and Janet, and myself when we borrowed without permission my Dad's good lariat rope, used in the Spring cattle roundup. Throwing the rope over a sturdy elm tree limb we fastened it to a long-wide board notched at the ends. All four of us started to swing to and fro until the rope broke.

I had an ingenious idea of weaving the rope threads back together and carefully, applying glue, then wrapping it with some fine copper colored wire. This I did, and let it dry overnight. It seemed strong and I again engaged the swing board swinging to and fro; but, on the second "fro" I flew and my arm cracked. I had *dug my own hole* and fell into it.

It is my observation of life that most people come upon trials-tribulations, which are *holes* we have *dug* or assisted in *digging*.

Such was the case with Old Testament Joseph, one of 12 sons of Jacob. True, God gave Joseph the gift of interpreting dreams, and must have supplied the two dreams about the Sheaves of wheat and the Sun, Moon and Stars bowing down. He interpreted these to his brothers and represented himself as the one they bowed down to. I suggest after he saw his brothers become jealous when his father gave him the "Coat of many Colors," (Genesis 37:3) and noted their outrage at the first dream interpretation, that certainly sharing the second dream was *digging a hole* which he would *fall into* later. Sure enough, true to form, his brothers cast him into a literal hole-cistern-cave, then retrieved him in order to make a *fast buck* by selling him to a band of Ishmaelites. One *hole* followed another. Next came the *hole* of being sold as a slave, then being cast into prison.

David also *dug a hole*, then *fell* into it in the matter of adultery with Bathsheba, then lying about the whole matter the *hole got bigger and deeper*. (2 Samuel 11:3)

While there is grave danger on the on hand of people striving for 100% perfection, and reaping all the bad fruits of such an impossible venture; there is another grave danger and that is of choosing to

remain where we are, as we are, with little or no progress.

My brethren, **count it all joy** when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be *mature* and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:2-4 (NKJ)

## **"Count it all joy"**

So, James asserts that we are to **"Consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds."** He does not say trials are a joy but by faith as an act of our will we are to consider it all joy.

### **How do we learn to regard the trials of life as a matter of joy?**

Praising God is a matter of Spirit and self-discipline. Jesus gives us the recipe:

**"Then he said to them all: 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'." Luke 9:23 (NIV)**

Our greatest enemy to Praising God is "SELF". Self must be cast down, so Jesus says "I can of my own self do nothing," John 5:30 and again "deny self". Every act of disobedience and non obedience in the Bible has at its heart "SELF"-- Self-centeredness, SELF-assertion, SELF-glorification, and selfishness in a variety of forms. It was so with Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden and still reigns today.

\* Be willing to crucify self. Visualize this by drawing a parallel line (----)through the "I" of your ego which produces a

cross(+). Now you can declare--**"It is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives in me."** Galatians 2:20

\* Add up all your rights, then throw them away--

\* Calculate your earthly desires, then forget them--  
(Philippians 3:7,8)

\* Consider the importance of your earthly knowledge. Be sure it equals "0". (Proverbs 3:5; I Corinthians 1:25-27)

\* Begin to think of yourself as a slave--(Romans 6:22)

\* See yourself as crucified-- (Galatians 2:20)

This experience must be a daily attitude as Paul says

**"I die daily"** I Corinthians 15:31.

**"My heart is steadfast, O God, I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory! Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the dawn."** -Psalm 57:7,8

The attitude of gratitude releases the dynamic power that helps you survive. Gratitude also releases reviving power. You can find the power to start again when you feel like quitting. You can pick up the pieces and bounce back to make a comeback.

I fill my mind with thoughts of gratitude concerning God, the people I know and the circumstances that surround me!

Linda Dellenbach of Abbyville, Kansas shares an incident out of her life which illustrates facing life with the joy of trust and praise.

"February 22

**"Some trust in chariots (*chemotherapy*) and some in horses (*radiation*),  
but we will trust in the Lord our God."**

**Psalm 20:7 (*Italics, my application*)**

"In September when I was diagnosed with cancer I was just ready to start reading Job (I'm reading through the

Bible). I was reluctant to start reading there as it seemed like a downer to me, but Josh, our son, said he would read through Job with me which gave me a boost and I started.

"As usual, God knew what He was doing! The main blessings I received were:

1.. God is all wise and powerful. But sometimes we don't have a clue why He's doing what He's doing.

2. We need to be careful not to jump to conclusions why some one is suffering. Instead we need to listen to God for sensitivity on how to comfort that person.

3. God is really all we have. Keep focused on Him!

"Now I am reading through Psalms and its also been exactly what I need. It is a great book of praise to God, encouragement that God is with us, and the battle and victory are His. At first cancer thoughts invaded ny thoughts continuously. That was good, though as it forced me to pump God thoughts and scriptures in my mind in order to survive without major fear.

I have had a relatively easy time and I praise God for one little blessing that was big to me. Charity, God and I found a wig in which I feel comfortable.

I know-'vanity, vanity'. Smile! It is even equipped with a cowlick which I choose to see as an extra authentic touch.

"I will close with this thought and Scripture. *'May God arise and his enemies be scattered—'* Psalm 68:17 and *'The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of*



*thousands.'* Psalm 68:17. Because you belong to Him, your enemies are His enemies. So whatever manifested or sneaky enemies you are up against right now may they be scattered and soundly defeated in your life.

"I deeply appreciate the medical advances. One of those, the Zofran they have given me before each 'chemo'. I have had no nausea. Dr. Jennings, our oncologist, is very up on the latest and best treatment for breast cancer and has been in charge from the lumpectomy through the 'chemo and radiation. We have appreciated and felt good about his very personable and knowledgeable staff of nurses from the beginning. However our ultimate trust is and has to be in God who is really choreographing the life dance which I am in.

"I'm done with my treatment now and the nurse just told me how well I have done with Chemotherapy. She said Dr. Jennings remarked that I've done better with 'chemo' than anyone he's ever had as a patient. That's your prayers and the faithfulness of God!!!!

*Thanks again" - \*Linda Dellenbach - Abbyville, Kansas*

\*Linda her husband, Keith, have been special friends of ours since 1974 when they ministered at Greensburg, Kansas and we ministered down the road at Minneola. We have been blessed in getting to share Faith Alive Revivals where they ministered and Keith and Linda have given us high encouragement through application of the faith alive Bible principles, and counseled us in many ways. (See my second book Build My People, pp. 24,25, for a true story testimony of their Christian home.)

**What I want instead is your true thanks to God" Psalm 50:14  
NLB Give thanks instead of what," you may be thinking? Well,**

to be honest, there are a lot of things that we do that **if we took the time to give thanks to God instead of just going ahead and doing them, we would be a lot better off.** One thing I have been trying to practice is catching myself when I am about to say something to my wife or my children in a wrong frame of mind, and thanking God for them and how much they mean to me before I continue. It truly changes what comes out of my mouth. No telling how long it will take me to perfect it, but a start is better than nothing.

Scripture tells us to "get a grip on every thought that does not bring glory to God." (2 Corinthians 10:5) My version of casting down every imagination that exalts itself against the glory of God. **Well, I believe that giving thanks to God is one of the greatest weapons we have to help us to accomplish this.** In this Psalm, God says that He does not need much of anything that we have to offer Him. He has all the wealth, food, and possessions in the World. What He really desires is our true thanks. He desires that we pay our vows to Him. When we say we want Him to be Lord of our lives, He wants us to present ourselves to Him and allow Him to transform us.

He wants us to trust Him in times of trouble and promises to rescue us if we will. And when He does, He says that we will give Him glory for the great things He has done.

You see He wants to do great things for us so that we will give Him glory.

**There are many other areas in our lives where thanks to God will change everything.** Just imagine how it would change things if when our thoughts were nothing but negative we began to give thanks to God for what is good and wonderful and even for the good

plans we have not yet seen. It would renew our minds and refocus our attention. "Yes but that only lasts for so long," you may say. Well then start over when it wears off.

God never said that everything in our lives would be perfect. He said that He is perfect and He is perfectly willing to hear our prayers and answer us when we call. It takes an effort to keep our focus on His promises when we have the things of this world staring us in the face. That is why He says to think on things above. Think on the things that are above and beyond your circumstances. Think about the victory that God has promised. And of course, give thanks.

**Don't ignore what God promises as though they do not apply to what is happening right now.** He says that giving thanks is a sacrifice that truly honors Him and if we will keep His path He will reveal the salvation of God. (Psalm 50:23) Now there is something to give thanks for. **It has been my experience that this works every time. God never fails.** thoughts by Roger Day of Highmore, SD and edited by Wilbur Johnson

### **"Count it all joy"**

**'My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be *mature* and complete, lacking nothing.'**

**James 1:2-4 (NKJ)**

**The subject of "PRAISE" is often treated with two extremes:**

1. Ultra extreme of supposing that the phrase-- **"Praise the Lord"**(PTL)-- is p-r-a-i-s-e, and
2. substituting "P.T.L." for adoration of God. The phrase is simply an admonition to do it,

(Almost every reference in the Psalms-- 68:32; 86:12; 57:9; is not praise in and of itself, but an admonition to praise God. Both are inherently lacking in the church.

Many have grown adept at using the expression "**Praise the Lord**" in reference to the positive blessings which come their way, but have a total lacking on the other side of acknowledging Jesus is Lord by praising Him for the vicissitudes as well.

Too much praise is self centered rather than God centered. Most of our hymns are self/man/need centered. Examples of pure praise hymns are "How Great Thou Art," "Crown Him With Many Crowns." "Holy, Holy, Holy," "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

We are to take Up Our Cross with **PRAISE/JOY**-- Matthew 9:23 ; James 1:2

I have found it so in the midst of life's crises---\*

\* On the way to share a Faith Alive Revival in Ashland, Kansas as I was leaving Arkansas City, Kansas the brakes on my car locked up producing black smoke and causing the tires to skid. I pulled into a K-Mart parking lot and PRAISED THE LORD for these locked brakes. This unlocked the brakes, I drove on, and after that they never locked again..

\* In a ice storm, ground blizzard on the way to Holly, Colorado. PRAISING the Lord for and while driving on a "closed highway" through raging wind and snow the Lord brought me through the storm and safely to Holly.

\* When our Suburban and Trailer slid on black ice turning over

on the way to a Revival at Mooreland, Oklahoma-- PRAISE was our first response.

\* When our daughter was raped by a good friend, PRAISING GOD that He was in charge, was our first response.

Refusing to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord by praising Him results not only in no victory, but induces other negative factors as we discovered when our first born son, Lynn, died in a one car accident at age 18. Praising the Lord was at the bottom of my "Do List," so as six months passed I was filled with worry, bitterness, and regret. But, VICTORY won the day when I PRAISED THE LORD acknowledging that God was-is in charge of all incidents including accidents. (Romans 8:28)

I know a person whose life's events read much like Job of the Old Testament. He lost his wife to cancer but refused to PRAISE THE LORD, that is to assert "THY WILL BE DONE." In a critical skiing accident he injured his body resulting in loss of his profession. Yet, he would not say "THY WILL BE DONE." Next his house burned but still NO PRAISE to accept God's Will. Finally, he was involved in a car wreck, but still was unwilling to assert "GOD IS IN CHARGE--blessed be his name!" All the time his bitterness and rebellion towards self, others and life increased.

Maurine Moore of Ashland, Kansas came to visit and shared the following story of God's *fingerprints* in the life of her family over the years.

Maurine's brother, Dean, caught Polio at age 15. Totally paralyzed he could do nothing for himself except talk as his mind remained exceeding sharp. Don Rock, local minister at that time, came daily and assisted with Dean.

Through all his 33 years and vicissitudes his parents cared for him at home. Looking back, Maurine remarked, "**We were so thankful for it all! God's grace was more than sufficient!**"

### **The testing of your faith produces patience.**

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the **testing of your faith produces patience**. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be *mature* and complete, lacking nothing." James 1:2-4 (NKJ)

Allowing praise to mature us is not complicated like the story of the horse and its owner below. A man moved to a house and barn at the edge of town. He purchased a horse to live in the barn, but experienced grave difficulty in getting the horse into the barn for its ears were too long. He gets a saw and plans to saw out the top of the door so the horse can enter.

A neighbor seeing his plight comes over, sizes up the problem and suggests it be solved by digging a ditch under the door so the horse can walk in.

"Nope, it will never work" says the horse owner.

"Why not?" says the neighbor.

"Because it's the horse's ears that are too long, not its legs," asserts the owner.

Allowing *praise* to mature us is not a matter of changing life's events but adapting ourselves.

To do this we must receive more of God's grace.

**"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." James 4:6 KJV**

How can we receive more grace? Above James says God is the giver of "more grace" which makes possible our maturing.

"Charis," the Greek word for **grace**, means "*Divine favor, power freely given to undeserving people*" There are four senses of "grace" from the Greek word "*charis*." The one used here is

**"Enabling power"--**

"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble'." James 4:6

"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all." Acts 4:33

We are given the grace of *enabling power* in order to praise God for all events to mature us in Christ's likeness.

### ***How do we allow this patience to develop us?***

**"In everything give thanks," then what? I Thessalonians 5:18**

There is no doubt about it, we are to **GIVE THANKS FOR ALL THINGS**. (Ephesians 5:20; I Thessalonians 5:18; I Peter 2:9; Hebrews 13:15; Philippians 4:4; I Thessalonians 5:16; Ephesians 1:15,16; Colossians 3:17).

But, having followed the Divine instruction, **t-h-e-n what?** Do we lie down like a rug and let life run us over? Do we resign our future to fate and no change? Wisdom decrees that we **TAKE INVENTORY**, then **ACT!**

***"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom."*** Psalm 90:12

In direct relation to "trials" James says in chapter one:

**"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing**

of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." NIV

### Examples of the above ---\*

\* When our first-born son, Lynn, at age 18 left for glory out of a auto accident, it took one year for the Lord to make me willing to give thanks. I did, **t-h-e-n, wisdom prompted me to made a note** to never purchase another small car like an Opel Kadet which tips over easily having a very high center of gravity.

\* When our vehicle license plates were ordered revoked by the State of Kansas in 1977 due to a fluke computer entry by our insurance company, I thanked the Lord, **t-h-e-n wisdom taught me to make a note to change insurance companies.**

\* When a local video company promised me a master tape of the "Dealing With Devil" study seminar for \$600. but upon delivery charged me \$1,000. more.  
I informed the Preacher of the Bible Christian Church (BCC) where we were members as he was a member of our non-profit corporation. The elders of the church did nothing, so I thanked the Lord, **t-h-e-n, wisdom bid me** never to do business again with this



firm.

\* One of the elders of the BCC roofed our house and installed guttering. The roof leaked and the guttering was hung with roof straps lowering our property value several thousand dollars, and now the guttering and straps must be removed to install a new set of shingles. I thanked the Lord, **t-h-e-n**, **wisdom required me** to find another firm.

\* When an expert heart doctor "killed" my brother because his expertise gave him "tunnel vision" causing him to be unable to see my brother's problem was pneumonia and an aneurysm in the lung, not heart, I praised the Lord, **t-h-e-n** the **Lord bid me** to lessen my confidence in men and the fleshly mind.

\*An elder of BCC through careless driving allowed his vehicle to cross the center line of highway 15 on a trip to Wichita. He killed his own wife plus a best friend of mine and elder of BCC; also, maimed a young man in the other car and killed his soon bride to be. After the funerals, two years went by. I became able to **place the Lord in charge by praising Him**, **t-h-e-n**, **my wisdom took note** that this elder went out and bought a new car and married another wife. I checked with the young man who had been crippled for life and learned this elder had never written or called on this young Christian man to offer his understanding or assistance. The elder's insurance company insisted that a small pittance must be split three ways among the survivors, so I sought the counsel of the County Attorney and after study, he advised me the elder had

slipped through a loop hole in the law and no prosecution could take place. He could be held libel in a civil court. So, **wisdom decreed** that **I withdraw fellowship** from this man, which I did.

\* When our Suburban and trailer slid on "black ice" and turned over, by God's grace I was able to praise Him immediately. **T-h-e-n, wisdom decreed** that at much expense I have new brakes installed on the trailer.

\* Following a sexual assault incident on me in a local park, anonymous phone calls began to plague us between midnight and five in the morning. Sometimes the callers would harass us by hanging up when we answered; yet other times they would try to disguise voice and curse us. A careful study and investigation revealed that these were being made by at least two members of BCC. The Elders did nothing. **We thanked God. T-h-e-n, wisdom spoke,** telling us to obtain an unlisted number and isolate our old number to the office. **This we did and pressed on.**

\* Out of the park attack upon me hundreds responded with understanding and counsel. All of the counsel was good and well meant, but it became impossible to follow it all. When I chose to NOT follow the counsel of one brother and friend, he withdrew his support of Faith Alive Ministry plus our friendship and fellowship for some 30 years. We released the matter into God's hands by praising Him, **t-h-e-n, wisdom reminded us** that even Jesus had to learn obedience, rejection of friends and not to commit Himself to men. (John 2:24,25; Philippians 2:8)

\* We were "starving" for Bible preaching as we had been for 18 years. When I consulted the elders of BCC that the "wood, hay and stubble" preaching did not satisfy and pointed out to them that many other families, 72 individuals in all, had already left the church one by one over a dozen years saying the same thing, **they did nothing.** I thanked God since nothing happens by chance, and the Lord spoke through His Word to us-- **"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."** 2 Corinthians 6:17. **T-h-e-n** wisdom demanded we seek another church. **This we did**, finding a New Testament people in a Mount Zion Country church.

**PATIENCE** is the bottom line of GIVING THANKS FOR ALL THINGS, **t-h-e-n**, do **NOT** lie down like a rug for people to walk on, walk over and kick you about; but, listen closely for the VOICE OF WISDOM as God speaks out of His Word by His Spirit counseling you.

Paul states that PATIENCE is the fruit of trials/tribulations:

**"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;" Romans 5:3**

So over many years and as the result of facing many vicissitudes, I have learned *patience* to thank the Lord when I developed hiccups as we were preparing to attend Sunday services with our daughter, Rebecca, and grand daughter, Katie. As usual I tried all the self prescribed remedies--hold my breath, breathe into a sack, drink fluid slowly, drink some buttermilk, etc. Nothing worked. We started to drive the 32 miles to services, then suddenly it occurred to

me--**"Praise the Lord in all things!"** And, just as suddenly SELF reared its head to say "Why?" Spirit self answered, "Because in everything give thanks" (I Thessalonians 5:18). So with Rebecca driving, I leaned my head back and prayed-praised--**"Thank You Lord for these pesky hiccups. I'm thanking You for them because You told me to."** In a matter of moments the hiccups were gone and I thanked Him for that, too. Terribly simple? YES! But, the principle is the same in all of life--things LARGE and small.

### **LET GO OF SELF and Praise The Lord!**

And, what will patience do when when there is no rain!

Just this week a lady walking down our street here in Ashland greeted me saying, **"Are you the person who praised God for the drought and now its snowing."** My response, **"Well, yes for it is no secret what God can do."** Fifty or more people joined me in praising the Lord for the drought, and now we have moisture. **Blessed be His Name!"**

My sermon subject on Sunday, January 27th. was **"Practicing the Presence of God in the Present Tense"** at the Protection, Kansas Christian Church. At the conclusion I challenged the people by asking **if they would be willing to practice the presence of the Lord in the present tense by thanking Him (I Thess. 5:18) for the drought which has been on going for months.** 90% raised their hands. So, we PRAISED THE LORD for the drought, then thanked Him for the moisture which He would send. Now, three days later (January 30, 2002) we are in the midst of a Winter moisture storm --ice-sleet/snow--- 6 to 10 inches of snow on the level!

**We did what Job did--Job 1:19-21; Habakkuk did--3:17-19; Paul did--2 Cor. 12:7-10, and Jesus did!**

"But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have **My joy** fulfilled in themselves." John 17:13

"These things I have spoken to you, that **My joy** may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:11

**"looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."**  
Hebrews 12:2

God always honors His WORD and NAME!

## **Some PRAISE Suggestions**

1. Do NOT praise the Lord expecting something in return--health, finances, rain, snow, etc. Praise God for Who He is and His salvation.

2. Learn to praise the Lord for all things in life--both the big and small / positive and negative--Ephesians 5:20,  
I Thessalonians 5:18.

3. See my book Faith Alive in Hear and Home (red cover) pages 132-170. 7 Specific suggestions, pg. 167

**"that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing."**

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, **that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.**" James 1:2-4 (NKJ)

I heard a testimony by Ken Duncan, a world renowned

photographer from Australia, also, a devoted Christian Brother who said: "Nothing happens by chance. God has a divine destiny in all things!" It's a reality that the many adverse and good events in our family and this ministry and others have been allowed, not caused by the Lord, and He is using them for His glory and our good as prescribe by Paul--

**"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ....  
"Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." Romans 8:28, 37**

While writing my manuscripts for this book and the previous five the Lord has often interrupted my progress by requiring me to live out the theme under consideration one more time. So it has been with this chapter.

When suffering forces you to unload excess baggage in your life which you have not had the courage to get rid of before, then trouble is a blessing in disguise! Give God thanks when you face a problem!

I do not always understand what is happening in my life, but I can thank God always for He is with me! Leaving home here in Ashland, Kansas early Wednesday morning, (September 2, 2002) we planned to return the following day; but that one day venture turned into a near one week trial..

My MRI test at Dodge City was completed, and we were lunch guests of Mike Weece, then stayed over in a inexpensive motel, rested and prepared for a appointment with my neurologist the next day. We closed the day with our usual Family Altar and retired.

At 2 A.M. the *trial* began when I made a rush trip to the bathroom and discovered I was hemorrhaging. Imalee awakened, we prayed for

guidance and determined we must head for an ER, perhaps at Pratt--75 miles east. Calling our doctor--Wes Young in Ashland we apprised him of our dilemma and he advised us to go to Pratt where I had undergone a Scope test one week prior. Motor running we sat parked on the motel lot waiting for Dr. Wes to call. Imalee led in a prayer for guidance, angelic attendance and clear highways. The call came and with Imalee at the wheel we roared onto the highway. It seemed like a long journey and I felt the blood flowing onto the motel towel on the car seat. I began to Praise the Lord and asked only that His Will be done. At 4:30 A.M. we checked into the Pratt, Kansas ER.

It was at this time that I was aware of a covering of Strong Peace surrounding me as as Jesus promised:

**"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27**

Lying in the ER at Pratt as the 'bottom' dropped out of my blood pressure my body began to heave and sob. The ER doctor said--"We are losing him." A nurse said--"He's afraid." I responded-- "I am not afraid for 'God is my refuge and strength and underneath are the everlasting arms'. True my body was shaking inside which I suppose was a malfunction of something, or my flesh did not want to let go of my spirit. "They called the Hospital Chaplain and he ministered to Imalee. Imalee called our daughter, Rebecca, in Wichita and she came and they ministered to each other all that day. The head nurse asked if I had a "Living Will?" I said-- "My will is to live; but, we do have a Living Will paper out in our car." At this they began to stabilize me. Silently I continued to praise Jesus for being in charge.

Transferred to the ICU unit I was plugged into a double IV and hooked up to one of the heart/pressure/oxygen machines. Having determined I had lost much blood they began talk of procedures for a transfusion. I balked unless they would guarantee me no Aides or Syphilis in the plasma. They couldn't and Imalee signed the forms. However, suddenly the verticular hemorrhage stopped, my hemoglobin leveled out-- I was stabilizing. How was this possible? The Doctors and Nurses acknowledged they had done nothing to this point except make me comfortable. What can Angels do? God's mighty power was at work--WOW! I spent two days in ICU and two days in a regular room.

An hour went by-- Leona Messer of Ashland called members of her family engaging them in prayer; Imalee called Mike Ellington and Bob Davis of Ashland who engaged the Ashland Church prayer line and the E-Line Prayer Line for SOS prayer assistance.

The importance of Christian Brothers/Sisters visiting in the Hospital was emphasized to me as twenty ministers came to call-- Mike Ellington and Bob Davis were the first to come and pray.

On Saturday evening Bro. Tom Walters of Medicine Lodge came to call, encourage and pray followed by young Todd Walters of Medicine Lodge, a High School senior who came during a intermission of practice for a musical titled the "Titanic." He chose to come see me rather than eat supper."

Of all the 10 "professional preachers" who came to call on me in the Pratt Hospital....a top, "blue ribbon", "gold star" Brother was TODD WALTERS. Wow! Wish I had a video of his call---what he said, questions he asked, encouraging words and prayer prayed--made my corpuscles dance with glee!! Todd sure has the "touch of God's gift of ministering" on his life/heart! I still draw strength from



Todd and his call! All brought high encouragement. My Sisters Patsy Smith and Jan Prough kept touch as did our children Galen, Teresa and Rebecca. Keith Dellenbach of Abbyville, Kansas came and stayed all day Friday "feeding" my spirit with the Water and Bread of Life. He offered a "Word of Knowledge-Wisdom" saying the devil made a direct attack on my life seeking to write--"THE END" as the last words in this book--but the Lord grabbed the *devil's pin* away and stopped him from writing with the 'ink of my blood.' WOW! and PTL!

There is an expression--"It's not over until the fat lady sings"--and *she* has not yet sung for me.

Challenge yourself to mature in PRAISE by doing what Habakkuk did:

Israel was about to be sieged by the Nation of Assyria, and as Habakkuk looked at the situation he cried out:

**"When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops.**

**"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:**

**"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.**

**"The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments."**  
Habakkuk 3:16-19

Let us challenge our maturity to press onward by  
**thanking/ praising the Lord at the beginning of  
each day for all that is going to happen in that day.**

I conclude our thinking by calling attention to Praise in alphabet  
form:

**A** although things are not perfect  
**B** ecause of trials or pain  
**C** ontinue in thanksgiving  
**D** o not begin to blame  
**E** ven when the times are hard  
**F** ierce winds are bound to blow  
**G** od is forever able  
**H** old on to what you know  
**I** magine life without His love  
**J** oy would cease to be  
**K** eep thanking Him for all the things  
**L** ove imparts to thee  
**M** ove out of "Camp Complaining"  
**N** o weapon that is known  
**O** n earth can yield the power  
**P** raise can do alone  
**Q** uit looking at the future  
**R** edeem the time at hand

**S** tart every day with worship  
**T**o "thank" is a command  
**U** ntil we see Him coming  
**V** ictorious in the sky  
**W** e'll run the race with gratitude  
**X** alting God most high  
**Y** es, there will be good times and yes,  
some will be bad, but..  
**Z** ion waits in glory...where none  
are ever sad!

The attitude of PRAISE releases the dynamic power that helps you survive. Praise also releases reviving power. You can find the power to start again when you feel like quitting. You can pick up the pieces and bounce back to make a come back.

**"My heart is steadfast, O God, I will sing and give praise.  
Awake, My glory! Awake, lute and harp! I will awaken the  
dawn." -Psalm 57:7,8**

Since I discussed at length this vital subject of "Praise" in my first book, Faith Alive in Heart, Home and Church" pages 132-169. I want us to move up to a more mature level of praising - thanking God for the circumstances of our life. To consider shortening the time line which Francis Schaffer names in his book.

**"The shorter the time of our struggle to choose to give God praise in a particular circumstance, the greater our spiritual maturity."**

Francis Schaeffer, a prolific thinker-writer of the last century in his fine book--True Spirituality-1971.

The areas we run away from as we mature in life, we must eventually come back to deal with. before God will promote us to a new level of maturity. Allowing praise to mature us is not complicated like the story of the horse and its owner below.

A man moved to a house and barn at the edge of town. He purchased a horse to live in the barn, but experienced grave difficulty in getting the horse into the barn for its ears were too long. He gets a saw and plans to saw out the top of the door so the horse can enter. A neighbor seeing his plight comes over, sizes up the problem and suggests it be solved by digging a ditch under the door so the horse can walk in.

"Nope, it will never work" says the horse owner.

"Why not?" says the neighbor.

"Because it's the horse's ears that are too long, not its legs," asserts the owner.

Allowing *praise* to mature us is not a matter of changing life's events but adapting ourselves. To do this we must receive more of God's grace.

**"But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." James 4:6 (KJV)**

How can we receive more grace? Above James says God is the giver of "more grace" which makes possible our maturing.

"Charis," the Greek word for **grace**, means ***"Divine favor, power freely given to undeserving people"*** There are four senses of "grace" from the Greek word "*charis*." The one used here is

**Enabling power**"

***"But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble'." James***

4:6

*"And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all." Acts 4:33*

We are given the grace of *enabling power* in order to mature in Christ's likeness. **Praising the Lord** is a 'high water mark' of maturing.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma

### **Chapter 6 - "PRAISE TESTS OUR MATURITY"**

- 1. The very fact that you are facing troubles is what?**
- 2. What is God's plan for us?**
- 3. We may have VICTORY in all our days of living and serving if we do what?**
- 4. According to James 1:2-5, why should we "Count it all joy?"**
- 5. What does the attitude of gratitude release?**
- 6. According to Psalm 50:14, what does God want?**

- 7. What does 2 Corinthians 10:5 tell us?**
- 8. According to James 1:2-4, how do we become mature and complete?**
- 9. What did Wilbur Johnson do when the brakes on his car locked up while driving Arkansas City, Kansas to a Faith Alive Revival in Ashland, Kansas?**
- 10. What does the testing of your faith produce?**
- 11. The Greek word for grace is "Charis," which means what?**
- 12. What is the bottom line of giving thanks for all things?**
- 13. How did Wilbur Johnson apply 1 Thessalonians 5:18, when he developed hiccups while preparing to attend Sunday service with his daughter, Rebecca and grand daughter, Katie?**
- 14. How did the Protection Christian Church "Practice the Presence of God in the Present Tense?"**

**15. According to Romans 8:28, 37, how does God use adverse and good events to happen to us make us "more than conquerors"?**

**16. When Wilbur Johnson suffered hemorrhaging, what resulted in his ventricular hemorrhage stopping?**

**17. Of all the "professional preachers" who called on Wilbur in the Pratt Hospital, who was the top, "blue ribbon, "gold star" Brother?**

**18. How can we challenge our maturity?**

**19. What releases the dynamic power that helps you survive?**

**20. What does Francis Schaffer suggest shortens the time line in our spiritual maturity?**

## **Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection**

### **CHAPTER 7**

# **"Seeking-Finding-Accepting God's Will Matures Us"**

Because people will not seek and follow God's directions they often make a donkey of themselves much like Balaam in Number 22:21-31.

There is no need for any Child of God to be a "donkey." God is speaking all the time with many *voices* as I indicate in chapter 8 of my first book - Faith Alive in Heart, Home and Church where I note there are ten "voices" of God: *Nature, prayer, Bible, conscience, signs and wonders, events all about us, people, circumstances surrounding our lives, angels, dreams and Jesus*. Page 204 ff.

Not many really want to KNOW God's Will in specifics enough to seek HIS guidance by using a **"guidance covenant"**. It is significant that people want to relate to earth by touching, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, but to experience God on this level is unthinkable. Most are like the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. At first the Mountain thundered and there was lighting, then God spoke directly to the people and they were frightened. So, they told Moses to go upon the Mountain and hear what God had to say and report back. Thus, I perceive a large percentage of "Church people" are like this today--- **"Preacher, you find out what God's will is, then tell us."**



Unwillingness to *hear* the Lord when He "speaks" is perhaps the greatest hindrance in finding God's will. Man has had a severe hearing problem ever since Eden's gate was shut with Adam and Eve on the outside and God on the inside. It is a matter of some humor in Numbers 22:21-31 that a donkey could hear God speaking but Balaam was deaf and blind. It took a painful object lesson to convince Balaam to pay attention to the donkey.

Wouldn't it be nice like Jonah to have a compass-heading for God? To know at all times and in all circumstances where He can be found? But without a temple, or some sacred place or an exact location for His presence, how can one ever be certain that God is there or that he is listening?

This chapter will devote itself to assisting us in finding and following the Lord's Will through spiritual "show and tell" tools. Jesus called these "parables," heavenly truth demonstrated by an earthly meaning.

## **A simple formula for finding God's Will:**

**"Then he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' "Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'**

**"I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.'**

"So I say to you: 'ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.'

'For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened'." Luke 11:5-12 (NIV)

There we have it--"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."--a simple Divine plan for seeking, finding and accepting God's Will for our lives. Luke 11:9

## ASK

This word *ask* in the Greek language signifies *a simple use of the voice in making a petition*. (Luke 11:12) As we seek God's Will for ourselves the beginning point is yielding self to seek the leading of the Spirit-- Total openness to God's leading including prayer, perhaps fasting as Jesus said "When you fast..." Matthew 6:16.

A simple example of a "guidance-covenant" in today's world is Larry Wright's searching for a place to serve in his preaching ministry.

"I have been out of a regular pulpit since the end of April last year (1998). We had interviewed in at least 5 churches. We had to turn down two other churches who's compensation package was insufficient for us to survive on with a family of six. (One of them thought that they could get a preacher for \$1,000.00 a month plus Parsonage).

"During this whole process, we were basically considering one congregation at a time. As school started in September, we decided to "get by" however we could until spring. I sent out a bunch of resumes in January and had four churches call me the same week, three on the same night. .... In contrast to our first experiences last spring, summer and early fall when we were continually turned down, I now had four, (ultimately five churches when "Dearing, Kansas is included) that were expressing serious interest in me. Each of the congregations had good Christian people. My dilemma was, 'In the midst this whole process, **where does God want me to serve?**'

"This led me to a day of prayer and fasting on Friday. My prayer became specific. **"God, please show me where we are to serve. If it is Liberty, let them give me at least an 85% vote and preferably no negative votes at all. If it is not Liberty, make the vote decisively below that amount so I will know for sure.** . .... I received word Sunday night that Liberty (Missouri) vote was **86.67% in favor and there wasn't any negative votes.** The other 13.33% were blank ballots or ones that had question marks indicating that they did not feel they knew me well enough to be voting. I took this to be a double verification from God. 85+% AND zero NO votes. .... If I am asked to do the the Youth ministry at Liberty, the total compensation package will be close to \$38,000. . . . . Liberty,

Missouri does present some interesting challenges, as it is the only Independent Christian Church in a town of over 22,000 people and growing. Jeanette and I are both used to much smaller communities, so this will be a major change in our lives. The Church is only 25 to 30 years old and does still have a debt on their building. That also brings additional obstacles and challenges. I just hope that I am up to meeting all of these challenges. Only by God's strength. . . . .

"I request your prayers for strength as we enter into a challenging new ministry. ,..... Thanks again for all your wonderful prayers over many months.

*In Christian Love,*

*Larry and Jeanette Wright "*

Since the beginning of time God has chosen to give man guidance by communicating His Will through direct voice, answered prayer, signs, fleeces, wonders, etc. The earth itself is full of Divine directions (Romans 1:19, 20) and the heavens declare the glory of God. (Psalm 19:1) Israel of old after the Exodus beginning with the crossing of the Red Sea was guided by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. (Exodus 13:21) Jesus was introduced on the night of His birth by a sign. (Luke 2:12) Jesus ministry is replete with signs and wonders (Acts 2:22) as was the beginning of the Church. (Acts 2:17-20)

**IN SEEKING TO DETERMINE GOD'S WILL BY  
A GUIDANCE- COVENANT four things are  
essential:**

1. Total openness to God's leading---a clean heart (Psalm 24:4,5) prayer, perhaps fasting.
2. Prayerfully select something that when it happens you will know the Lord is "speaking."
3. Prayerfully select something you cannot manipulate.
4. Prayerfully select something the devil cannot manipulate.

A prime example of asking God to reveal His will through a guidance covenant is that of our son, Galen. On a lovely Spring day of 1974, Galen and I were walking home after the Sunday morning assembly. I asked where he would be attending college in the Fall?

He said, "God and I have a *deal going*. I'm doing what you preached--Just "trusting in the Lord with all my heart, not leaning on my own understanding, acknowledging Him in all my ways and knowing he will direct my paths like Solomon said." (Proverbs 3:5,6)

My interest thermometer shot up high for this principle of faith-living was new to me and I did not know very much about applying this truth.

I inquired. "Galen, just how is God going to do this?"

He responded by saying, "My agreement with the Lord is that the first college coach that asks me to play basketball will be the school I am to attend."

My heart sank for I wanted my son to go to a Bible College for at least a couple of years. Galen had a lot of basketball and track trophies and medals at home and I felt sure some Juco Coach would be there first.

Coach Comeaux of Midwest Christian College (MCC) in Oklahoma City drove 300 miles up to Minneola. He found Galen out in a pasture loading limbs on a wagon. The Coach said to him, "Galen, come play basketball for me at MCC this Fall."

Instantly Galen recognized this invitation as being an answer from the Lord in directing his path. He responded "Yes sir Coach, I'll be here this Fall! You can count on me.' So, he followed the Lord's leading and God also supplied the needed funds, and a wife for life.

The Bible is replete with examples of people covenanting with God for guidance and "His willing answers:".\*

- \* Genesis 24:1-27 - Procured a wife for Isaac

- \* Genesis 28:20-22 - Ladder to heaven .. Jacob's vow/fleece to God

- \* Genesis 30:32-43 - Jacobs' ringed and spotted goats.

- \* Exodus 33:13-23 - Special guidance for Moses

- \* Leviticus 9:6-24 - Guidance for the People.

- \* Numbers 17:1-8 - Guidance using 12 rods--one budded.

- \* Judges 6:15-22 - Numbers 17:1-8 -meat/broth/bread/fire commanded of God.

- \* Judges 6:36-40 - The word *fleece* is taken from Gideon's experience in which God provides directions by a piece of sheep wool--first wet, then dry when all else around was conversely dry then wet. (Judges 6,7)

- \* Judges 13:1-20 - Instructions on child rearing..fleece-Let the angel come back again, vs. 8.

- \* I Samuel 6:1-3 - Send gift with ark to know IF God sent the plagues.

- \* I Samuel 6:7-9 - If new cows pulling the ark crosses border they would know God sent the plague.

- \* I Samuel 12:16-18 - Samuel prays a fleece covenant.

Answer is in a storm.

- \* I Samuel 14:8-15 - Jonathan determines if God will bless them in battle.

\* I Samuel 14:36-45 - Lots cast to determine if Jonathan was guilty.

Guidance covenants can be simple or complex according to the person seeking God's Will. All covenants involve the following four items.

1. Believe God can direct people in living and serving!
2. Believe that God answers prayer!
3. Know God answer prayers in specifics!
4. Be assured God can/does perform miracles!

Jesus said God keeps a running census on the sparrows and has the hairs on our head numbered, so He can work through little or big matters. (Matthew 10:29,30) Remember, He made the earth and its contents out of the unseen atoms. (Hebrews 11:3)

When the Lord was ready to call us into our present Faith Alive Days ministry of revival and renewal it started with my engaging in a three day fast. My simple petition was *"Lord, show me what your will is for future days in my serving you."* The answer came quickly in a simple voice. As I rode my bicycle praising and praying He said to my spirit--*"Preacher, I am calling you to a larger ministry. Minneola will continue to be your home base for now. Wait for My instructions."* I did not have long to wait as that very week a letter from Bob Osburn, minister at Syracuse, Kansas arrived asking me to come and share a week long preaching and teaching Revival with the Brethren. I wrote right back saying there were many Evangelists in the Brotherhood and named a few who would do them a good job. Bob called me on the telephone saying it was not *other Evangelists* who the Elders wanted to come and preach, but me. So, about as reluctant as Jonah in the Bible (although Bless the Lord He spared me from being swallowed by a whale) I agreed to go. The Lord

blessed that first Faith Alive Revival in glorious ways and made this crooked stick guy from the Kansas prairie stand in amazement!

## SEEK

"Seek" in the Greek signifies to discover how to find or do something. In this chapter, I am using the word "fleece" from the Biblical record of Gideon in Judges 6:36-40. I define it as-- A thing, or event provided or acted upon by God so as to provide Divine directions for our lives; also referenced as a guidance covenant.

I grew up attending a country church, "Union Chapel", located southwest of Medicine Lodge, Kansas. The congregation was a group of down to earth people who tilled the soil and believed the Bible. If the Word said it, then that settled it, and we tried to live by it. As a teenager I entered Midwest Christian College in Oklahoma City and my professors were of the same vintage. Professor C.V. Dunn taught me Old Testament Survey reminding us that the Bible stories were examples for us to follow just as Paul said in I Corinthians 10:1-6.

**Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat;**

**And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples,...."**

Gideon's covenant-fleece (Numbers 22) was one more example to



be followed. We sought God's guidance concerning leaving a seven year ministry in Indiana and entering into a new labor at Minneola, Kansas.

My covenant for determining God's Will was:

*"Lord, if You will us to move from Indiana to Minneola, Kansas then cause the congregational vote to be 100%."* My housing Host for that mini Revival at Minneola was Roy and Blanche Barnes. Saturday night Roy told me the Board had voted to recommend to the congregation and inquired what percentage of a vote I would expect. When I told him that if the Lord wanted me there the vote would have to be 100%, he was disheartened saying that the congregation had never voted 100% on anything. When the vote was tallied on Sunday morning it was 100% yes! So, the Lord 'spoke'. We moved, and enjoyed a long fruitful ministry.

Not all are willing to seek and follow the Lord thus, "Fleeces are not logical" asserted, a Sunday School teacher at Random Road Chapel of Arkansas City, Kansas; "therefore, anyone who practices the same is suspect." That was supposed to settle the matter; however, it only served to stir my mind and spirit on two counts:

1. "logic" is a limited system of evaluation, and 2. "fleeces" are valid throughout the Bible.

**But, let it be noted that logic is a limited system of evaluation.**

God did not invent logic. It is a manmade system of reasoning and one of the many "children" of humanism, upon which many Bible professors, preachers, teachers and church members rely heavily. A history of "logic" reveals that "LOGIC is a field of study that deals chiefly with "arguments" for the evaluation of truth.

What difference does it make? Much! The Virgin Birth is not

logical! The atoning death of Jesus is not logical! Christ's resurrection is not logical! In fact, none of the Bible miracles is logical. Example: Turning water to wine or walking on water, healing the blind, etc. are not logical. It is wrong to subject the Bible, which is Truth inspired- revealed by God to any man made test including logic.

**" Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a fool so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness'; and again, 'The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.'" I Cor. 3:18-20>Psalm 94:11**

That which discourages people from the blessing of Divine direction is leaning on their own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5), and the weakness of their faith. But it is a reasonable demand that God makes in replete places throughout the Bible-- "Prove me now." Malachi 3:10 "Come and see," is an invitation that is offered often in the Gospels. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Jesus said, "Seek, and you shall find," Luke 11:9

We must first do the work of trusting Him which is our part, and then wait upon Him for the reward.

Elijah put the widow of Zarephath into this method when he said, "Make me a little cake first, and then prove me whether there shall not be enough afterwards for thee and thy son." 1 Kings 17:13

Seeking God's Will with a guidance covenant is really quite common. I heard **Dr. Robert Schuller, Sr.** of California tell how he used a guidance fleece in the early days of his ministry when the

Crystal Cathedral church was being established. The Lord answers loud and clear. **The late Don DeWalt** of Ozark Bible College, Joplin, Missouri revealed to me that his wife **Elsie** "fleeced" every prospective employee of their College Press Publishing company and their rate of hiring excellent employees was 100%. I heard Bro. Gene Appel speak at the Ozark Bible College Convention. He revealed the valid use of a fleece-guidance covenant in determining the Lord's Will whether to change his ministry from Las Vegas to the Willow Creek Church near Chicago.

## KNOCK

The word in the Greek language means to *knock and keep on knocking until the door opens*. (Luke 11:9) Williams New Testament and the Amplified translates the correct verbal tense of this verse--...*keep on asking...keep on seeking...keep on knocking*.

"The oil that is multiplied shall not be stayed as long as there are vessels to receive it," 2 Kings 4:6 NIV. God has blessings ready to bestow upon us, but, through the weakness of our faith and narrowness of our desires, we have not room to receive them.

Seeking God's directions with a guidance-covenant is a matter of faith and it only takes a "mustard seed" amount of faith to contact Him. (Luke 17:6)

At the end of our ministry at Minneola, Kansas--some thirty years ago-- we entered into our present ministry --"Faith Alive Day"-- seeking to be used of God to bring revival and renewal to churches and Christians everywhere. We started by using a **guidance fleece** to confirm the Lord's leading-- *Lord if you are calling us into this Faith Alive Days ministry, than let there be another invitation for a revival*

*during the week of the meeting at Syracuse."*

The Lord answered loud and clear. On Thursday of that week a long distance phone call from Havensville, Kansas via Howard and Kay Messer invited me to do a Faith Alive Revival and teaching seminar there the following month. I did and while at Havensville Christian Church two more invitations came from Soldier, and Rossville, Kansas. So, this ministry began and continues under God's Divine guidance.

Seeking and following the Will of God is a daily affair. Les Dubois shares an exciting testimony of how he sought God's Will and the Lord provided him a wife.

**"Brother Wilbur:**

**"A problem arises in my writing about God leading me to my wife,** and that is that God worked so many miracles to get Rosana back to Taiwan that I'm concerned to mention them all will cause this sequel to grow into a "chapter" size document. But I'll try to keep it concise at any rate.

"Your books have been encouraging to me as I seek to place my life wholly into God's hands, it has been difficult for lack of support and a lack of 'role models.'

What I mean by this is that it seems that a great number of people seem to place a lot of stock in the old adage 'God helps those who helps themselves.' Now I can allow some truth to this, but only to a certain degree. Faith WITHOUT works IS DEAD. 'Helping ourselves' is limited to accepting what God provides us with, to initiating the request (prayer) concerning what we desire of God, to trust Him to accomplish His Word and to fulfill His promises, and to

make good use of those things which He has entrusted us with.

"Now the lack of 'role models' is not entirely what I meant--obviously the world is full of people who trust God and who lay their lives before him--I guess I should rather say that there is a significant shortage of 'role mentors,' for lack of a better word; someone real, tangible (and of course in close daily proximity), and experienced, able and willing to coach me in the ways of 'stubborn and unconditional faith.'

"Lack of support is also keenly felt. In many churches I have heard person after person state their faith in God, but easily become disappointed when it's not played out in their lives. Instead of praying for the provision of a car, they pray God will bless their decision to take out a loan and buy a new car. Same for a house. Instead of asking God for wisdom to raise and instruct their children in the Lord, they ask God to keep them from getting sick as they work two or three jobs to pay for a private education. Instead of accepting the promise of "nothing happens apart from the will of the Father", they worry over which life, health, or auto insurance policy will give them the most coverage for the smallest deductible. Now, of course, none of these things in and of themselves are intrinsically 'bad'--rather it is our reliance upon them instead of God that makes them 'bad.' One of the worst (and most frustrating) assumptions that I have encountered deals somewhat with my 'fleece letter' that I am 'adding' to: the ideas of courtship and marriage. Far too often I have heard 'well-intentioned' friends introduce me to their 'female friends' and ask me 'What do you think of her?' (obviously this was before I was married). 'As long as both

of you are Christians, you shouldn't have any problems' is (was) the typical response to my preference to wait on God. Now that I have written this, I feel that my 'lack of support' statement was also a little off. There are a handful of people who support and encourage me to wholeheartedly seek God's face, so the support is not lacking at all. I guess that what I really mean here is a 'lack of understanding' by the general (Christian) populace at large. When I try to explain the great things God has been doing in my life, I get blank stares or confused looks--as if they don't really comprehend the immensity or the reality of what is happening. And the most frustrating of all is when I try to encourage someone else to 'put out a fleece,' they say that they understand that, they believe that, and that that is the way Christians should live--but that it doesn't really apply to 'their current situation.'

"Waiting those few short weeks for my parents (Richard and Karen DuBois of Minneola, Kansas) to receive my letter were the longest weeks of my life. The long and the short of it is that they had already been expecting this sort of thing, and had no qualms, no questions, and no apprehensions. Out of my entire family, I--the future groom--was the most surprised of all!

"Rosana had wanted to wait for my parents' response before she talked to her parents about it. They, too were encouraging and accepting of the situation. Truly it was God's hand--never before had I heard of two people 'spontaneously' deciding to get married and then having BOTH sets of parents not only being accepting of the situation but also commending them for their willingness to wait on God! Praise the Lord!

"God had carried us over hurdle number one--yet many still remained before we could reach the finish line.

"It was mid-April. Rosana's contract with her company was expiring and she would be returning to the Philippines. We set our wedding date for September 16th. the Mid-Autumn Festival.

"It's no an easy thing for Filipinos to pick up a visa to come to Taiwan on their own recognizance, so we knew that we would need to have a civil wedding in the Philippines so that that we would be legally married before applying for her visa to return to Taiwan.

"I made my first trip to the Philippines in June of '97 to get the ball rolling on our wedding, and to spend the weekend with Rosana's parents. Philippine law requires the couple to 'apply' for a marriage license (a 10-day process) before the "marriage certificate" can be issued. However,

I had a pleasant surprise; her father had spoken to the mayor (who can perform weddings) and had planned for us to be wed on the following morning! Then the ten-day license application could then be processed while I was back in Taiwan.

(This whole thing was not a simple procedure and I didn't need to take three months off of work just to wait on paperwork to be processed.)

"In July, I had a two week vacation, and once again I headed south. The license was finished, and after attending a mandatory "marriage seminar" we could pick up our marriage certificate. We then went to the Taiwan embassy and they declined our application, saying we lacked certain papers. So we spent the rest of the two weeks on a paper chase, getting these documents, notarizing those, applying

for a legal name change in her passport, etc., etc. Finally the two weeks was up and I needed to return to Taiwan--only one paper was lacking and the documents for her application would be complete. We both prayed that she would be able to follow me within the next week.

"The big day came; she took all the documents to the embassy and tendered her application. Two days later, she went to pick up her visa and passport, only to find that her application had not been approved. She managed to get an interview with the Deputy Secretary, who glanced at her application briefly, tossed it back down, and answered "No. It is impossible for you to even think about going back to Taiwan. I can not and will not approve it." Why? All the documents were in order, all the legalities and requirements were taken care of. My residence in Taiwan was there, our marriage certificate was there, everything was there. Nothing had been overlooked.

Why was she still not approved? Taiwanese law allows Filipinos to come ONE time to Taiwan to work for a period of between one and three years. Once they finish their contract, they are not allowed to legally enter Taiwan again UNLESS they are married to a Taiwanese National ("resident aliens" not included). This "resistance" is due to the fact that many residents of "certain" countries try to get a temporary visitor's visa to travel to Taiwan, then "break their visa" and attempt to work illegally. They assumed this was just another ploy to sneak back into the country. The case was closed; there was now not a single thing that any man could do that would permit Rosana to return to Taiwan.

"Rosana was now greatly discouraged, but we knew that God's will would be made clear. So we prayed: '**Lord, you**



**are the maker of heaven and earth; the one who build governments and knocks them down. Without you no one can stand, and with you no one can fail. If it is your will for us to stay in Taiwan for a while longer, then you and you alone will issue Rosana's visa. And if the visa cannot be issued, then we will know that it is your will for us to return to the States instead.'**

"But we truly felt that despite all the obstacles that we encountered, God still wanted us to remain in Taiwan, at least for a while. My parents had already purchased their tickets (God provided them with a *\*very\** good deal), and had already provided us with a place to hold the wedding and the wedding banquet. Upon my return to Taiwan, I continued in faith and ordered the wedding invitations and spoke with the "caterer" concerning what dishes we wanted and how many tables we were expecting.

(Banquets in China are calculated on a "per table" basis as opposed to "per person").

"Ted Skiles, one of our friends and a long-time missionary (30 years) here in Taiwan, offered to see what might be done. After several (very) long distance calls and a lot of bureaucratic run-around, God put him in contact with an officer in the embassy who was willing to take responsibility for us, if I could prove that my salary at the school was enough for the two of us to live on. The visa that he would issue would only be a visitor's visa, (as the resident visa could not be issued for the aforementioned reasons) but that it could easily be changed in Taiwan.

"So I went to the Philippines again, and met with the officer, who told us very quietly, that he was doing this thing, that he was sticking his neck out, only because the

man who recommended us had 'done so much for Taiwan.' Commendable logic, but we knew the real reason the visa had been approved! Praise the Lord!

The officer told Rosana to come pick up her passport and visa that afternoon, and then she would be free to go back to Taiwan. He also cautioned us that her resident visa must be applied for and approved within the two weeks limit of the visa or else she would risk over staying her visa and possible deportation. Furthermore, he instructed us, to complete the application in Taipei, we would need our Philippine marriage certificate authenticated by their embassy there in Manila, and that in order for them to do this, it must first be certified as being a "true and valid marriage contract" by the Department of Foreign Affairs there in Manila. We purchased a ticket for her to come to Taiwan and then I went back, as the certification and authentication would take a little while. Also, as she would be immigrating, she was required to apply for an immigration permit. Another minor matter, but one that was necessary for leaving the country.

At last, after almost five months of paperwork, praying, traveling back and forth, and standing in countless lines, Rosana entered Taiwan for the second time. This was on september 4th, and we were to be married "in the church" less than two weeks later!

And the Lord continued to blessed us--all that traveling and time off of work had used up most of the money that I had (with my human reasoning) set aside for our wedding and honeymoon--and God himself made us a present of a beautiful day (a semi-outdoor wedding) and provided enough money (called "wedding gifts" by some) to pay for the wedding, the banquet and most of the honeymoon! And

the blessings didn't stop there! Earlier I casually mentioned the "finish line"--actually the term "mile marker" would be more apt, as our lives didn't stop there. **God's work continues ever more abundantly in our lives as we strive to follow Him. Praise God for His faithfulness and for His concern for His children!**

Additionally, God has recently blessed us during the time of our son's birth a little over a week ago. Occasionally (during our engagement period) someone would ask us what we thought about "Family Planning" and were rather unenthusiastic about our response: 'If God wants us to have children, He will provide them AND the means to care for them; and if it isn't God's will to have them, then we'll be pleased with that, too. We're not going to tempt God, but we're not going to limit Him, either.' For the most part, the breath needed to say all that was wasted as it went over most heads, as evidenced by their replies: 'but what of the need to utilize birth control?' They couldn't comprehend that we relied on the most effective form of birth control in the universe. If we rely only upon our human reasoning, then it is possible that even abstention can be ineffective against the will of God (Isaiah 7:14).

When we discovered that Rosana was pregnant, we were eager to see what good the Lord would bring into our lives (mostly in terms of the child of course). We were concerned about the financial necessities surrounding pregnancy and delivery, as Rosana did not have health insurance (she was neither 'sponsored' by a local business, nor did we wish to pay astronomical amounts to get it ourselves when we knew that God would provide. Bev Skiles introduced us to a woman gynecologist and obstretician whose clinic was

located only about two blocks from our home. She had truly been placed there by God. A nearby location, a woman doctor (a RARE specimen in Taiwan) which made Rosana more comfortable, she spoke good English (another rarity) so that we could both easily understand everything, she translated the LaMaze classes into English for our benefit, and allowed me (the husband) into the delivery room during the birth (an unheard-of concept here in Taiwan), extra copies of the birth certificate, etc., etc., etc. When I finally worked up the courage to ask her what we could expect to pay for the delivery of the baby, Rosana's three day stay in the clinic, and all the surrounding "hospital expenses", she replied that because of Bev's introduction, she would give us a discount and charge us only NT\$15000 (about US\$430). As everyone has been made painfully aware, the economy in Asia has been tumbling, and our budget has been tight and trusting. However, we were able to save twelve thousand NT before the baby was born. But God took care of us again--he provided us not only with enough money to pay for the doctor, but gave us an extra three thousand NT (US\$120) that we expected to pay for the baby's circumcision.

Apparently there is only one doctor in our city (pop. 100,000 plus) who has the equipment necessary to perform that operation. Another acquaintance of Ted and Bev Skiles (and also a doctor) offered to borrow the equipment and to perform the procedure. On the day that we went to see him, he asked us if we would trust him. This seemed a strange way to open a conversation, but we agreed and he continued: 'my hospital does not have this equipment, and therefore has no way to bill for this procedure. If you registered with the hospital, it would be unfair for them to bill you, as you

would be paying them for something they cannot do. Therefore, if you TRUST me, I will volunteer to do it free of charge.' Of course we answered that "we trust God, and we trust that God will guide your hand--and there is no danger in doing that which God commands."

**Sometimes it IS hard to rely on God, but the fascinating thing is that the more I rely upon God, the more difficult it becomes to again rely upon human understanding.** In college, my faith was in human understanding, and I am still paying the price for that reasoning (student loans), but God in His mercy allows that thorn of my foolishness to remain in my side, while at the same time, He generously provides for us out of his boundless riches.

Praise the Lord! May our Father continue to bless your life and ministry,

*In X, les, Rosana and = AERYN Mikaiiah*

## **Guidance Covenants must be in accordance with God's Will**

(Romans 8:26-28)

**"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God."**

This promise of Romans 8:28 is beautiful, yet complex. I suggest the latter because of what Paul wrote about the promise in Romans 8:26,27.

1. At our best praying we do NOT really know what to pray for (8:28a)

2. Our simple or complex desires are translated by the Holy Spirit into groanings. (8:28b)

3. The Holy Spirit searches our hearts (to determine genuine motives), then makes intercession for us according to the will of God. 8:28c)

I suggest this is **WHY** Paul writes in I Thessalonians 5:18, "*in everything give thanks for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for YOU.*" The Will of God is often best determined for us when we *accept our status quo* with praise. It takes genuine heart motives to praise God for our present tense situation.

As I write this chapter just last night sleep eluded me. I tried all the usual remedies--pray, recite Scripture, warm milk, heating pad; yet at 4:30 A.M. still no sleep. At that point the Spirit in my spirit prompted me to practice

I Thessalonians 5:18. So, simply I began to thank God that I could not sleep. that I was weary with tossing and turning, etc. and, in a matter of moments I was asleep. "*Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.*" Psalm 37:4,5

**Determining the Lord's leading/will from a Covenant ('fleece').**

The greatest challenge is selecting an item for a "fleece-covenant" which God can and will speak through. Clearly once we have

established the premise we must wait upon the Lord to answer.

**1. DON'T PANIC--** God is never late; but, He doesn't always answer in 24 hours. We have experienced a number of crises in our Faith Alive Ministry-- including shortness of funds and lack of immediate revival appointment. Examples include the Social Security audit in the late seventies and the need for a travel trailer. We learned not to panic, and in due time( a few months) the Lord provided \$5,000., and a travel trailer which met our needs.

## **2. DON'T READ A COVENANT (FLEECE) TOO QUICKLY.**

I still remember the Fall of 1981 when on September 1st. we had only one Revival scheduled for the Fall. We prayed and reminded the Lord of our "Pillar of Fire and Cloud" covenant to indicate His leading for the ongoing of this Ministry.

On September 2nd. a phone call from Russ Johnson of Monahans, Texas scheduled a whole month of interim ministry plus two more meetings and the Fall was full.

In addition our automobile insurance company computer fluke causing the State of Kansas to believe that we were in default on our liability policy. The State informed us that since we had violated the Law our vehicle tags would be picked up by the Highway Patrol on or before December 31st. God didn't solve that dilemma in 30 minutes or days. We prayed fervently standing on our "Pillar of Fire and Cloud Covenant". God's promise that we *stood firmly on* was 2 Chronicles 20:15b--"*Thus says the LORD .... 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed.... for the battle is not yours, but God's.'*"

The lord took 90 days and it was within 24 hours of our tags being taken away when the miracle solution came--the State of Kansas changed their minds. . The crises passed and we praised the Lord and continued to drive our vehicles to and from revivals.

Learning and following God's will is a everyday necessity. When many people began to say to me some 16 years ago--"*You must write these Faith Alive events which illustrate Bible truths in a book.*" At first I objected, but the admonitions from many Brethren continued to "knock on my door." If such a venture was to be considered, I must be sure of the Lord's Will.

On this occasion I was prompted to use an incident out of Elisha's ministry as recorded in 2 Kings 6:4-6. A borrowed ax was being used to cut down a tree and the ax head fell into the Jordan River. The man using the ax was anxious and approached Elisha showing him the place where it fell. God worked through Elisha causing the ax head to *swim*. So, seeking God's will about writing a book I needed a green light for "Go," for I had no professional training in book writing and would have to lean heavy on the Holy Spirit for directions. Thus, I established a prayer covenant titled "Will the Ax Head Float?"-- "*Lord, show me Your will concerning the possibility of writing a book to Your glory and Your willingness to supply our needs. Please supply \$1,500. over and above our usual expense during June, July and August.*" Keep in mind that summer months are usually low income months. The covenant was established and I knew it would take a *little miracle* for this to happen. At the end of that three month period we rejoiced in God and I wrote to the Brethren these words---**GOD HAS SPOKEN! Covenant was for \$1,500. Received total \$2,005. I will begin writing!**

So the writing of Book one *Faith Alive in Heart, Home and*



Church" was begun, and the near 300 pages written and published in two years time.

### **3. ACCEPT WHAT THE LORD REVEALS**

Certainly not easy when the path before us is unknown and may be filled with pain. But, Jesus left us an example in seeking and following God's Will.

"..... Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Luke 2:42

Tom Milbern. pulpit Minister of the Boise City, Oklahoma Christian Church gave me permission to use his testimony as an example:

**"Well, you have more bleeding in your eyes.' Clinical words spoken unemotionally by a white-coated doctor. For me or you, scary words, hard words. Words that carry a load of doubt, anguish and dread. Words that make you stop and think.**

**"It's not that you're going to go blind or anything like that, this will clear up in two or three months said the doctor later. Comforting words. Hopeful words.**

**"But, how can it be? This is my body. I want to be cured! I have work to do, a life to live. Too many people have prayed for else. I can't be sick. God needs me well. I know, it's not life threatening, but it's still frightening and debilitating**

**"Does that mean I'll face this monster again? And again?**

**Will my thorn in the flesh be removed? Or not?**

**"God can still pull thorns--I believe that with all my heart! Some people do regain their health. We common-folks say they're cured. Praise God that more and more people return to health, to a normal life. Their disease is stamped out. So I'm asking God to remove my thorn!**

**"Sometimes the thorn stays. I know that too. The wisest thinkers cannot answer why. Does God want us to be sick? Is He trying to teach us some lesson? There is no answer. Maybe there is no reasons, only that we live in a dying world. None of us get out of it alive. How do you cope if the thorn stays?**

**"I also pray for God's sufficient graces, sufficient to deal with festured thorns. Grace to be calm when panic stalks my mind. Grace to do today's work Grace to face another treatment. Grace to take all offered hands or hugs. Grace to answer the thousandth question from another caring soul. Grace to laugh and love. Grace to clutch God as He clutches me. So far, I can report that God's grace is more than enough whatever twists may be in the road ahead, I believe that He will see me through. I'm counting on that, with or without thorns."**

Following is the Lord's beautiful counsel to finding God's Will.

**"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.**

***When you will call upon me and come and pray to me, then I will listen to you.***

**You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NIV)**

# **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

## **Chapter 7 - "AN EXERCISE IN MATURITY: SEEKING GOD'S WILL"**

- 1. Why do people often make a donkey of themselves, much like Balaam in Numbers 22:21-31?**
- 2. What is a simple Divine plan for seeking, finding and accepting God's Will for our lives?**
- 3. What did Larry Wright do when seeking where God wanted him to serve?**
- 4. What are four essential things in seeking to determine God's will by a guidance/covenant?**
  - 1.**
  - 2.**
  - 3.**
  - 4.**
- 5. In Matthew 10:29, 30, what does Jesus say God keeps a running census on?**
  - 1.**
  - 2.**
- 6. Judges 6:36-40 uses the word "fleece" to discover how to find or do something. How does Wilbur Johnson**

**define "fleece"?**

**7. How did Wilbur determine that the Lord's will was for them to move from Indiana to Minneola, Kansas?**

**8. What discourages people from the blessing of Divine direction?**

**Page 4, paragraph 9. Leaning on their own understanding and the weakness of their faith.**

**9. How does the Williams New Testament and the Amplified translate the correct verbal tense for Luke 11:9?**

**10. Seeking and following the Will of God is what?**

**11. What is the most frustrating of all when trying to encourage someone else to "put out a fleece."**

**12. Before the marriage of Les Dubois to Rosana, he stated that they finally reached what conclusion regarding them staying in Taiwan?**

**13. What is the fascinating thing that Les Dubois said in relying on God is?**

**14. According to Romans 8:26-27, how does the Sprit help our weaknesses.**

**15. What did Paul write about the promise in Romans 8:26, 22?**

**16. How did Wilbur Johnson get to sleep, after tossing and turning?**

**17. What are three things we need to practice when seeking the Lord's leading/will from a Covenant ("fleece")?**

- 1.**
- 2.**
- 3.**

**18. In the fall of 1981, how did Wilbur Johnson learn and follow God's will in a everyday necessity?**

**19. What is not easy when the path before us is**

**unknown and may be filled with pain?**

**20. What is the Lord's beautiful counsel to finding  
God's Will? (Jeremiah 29:11-13)**

**Notes**

## Jesus Calls Us To Maturity, Not Perfection

### CHAPTER 8

# WAITING UPON THE LORD MATURES US

"Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on Thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." Psalm 25:1-5

There are no "fast food" service lines on the road to maturity. We must *wait* upon the Lord as He seeks to mold us in His likeness.

Waiting is not man's *long suit of clothes*. Adam's curiosity and unwilling to wait upon the Lord caused him and us to be shut out of the Garden of Eden. And, each of us has taken our turn at the *apple tree* in the Garden of temptation. Still it must be declared that wisdom decrees when we wait upon the Lord we receive Heaven's best. Waiting is

a great tool which builds maturity into the fiber of our character.

Conversely, failure to "wait upon the Lord" is an indication of *lack of faith, doubt, presumption, overconfidence*, and too much *leaning on our own understanding*.

There is no theological treatise about "waiting," or special Hebrew or Greek word meaning attached to the word "wait". Actual-verbal waiting is the great need. So, this chapter will primarily be a composite of God's promises about waiting and examples of how those who waited were blessed.

## **What does "waiting" mean?**

Waiting means pausing for a short or a long period of time in seeking God's will/answer. God works for those who w-a-i-t for Him

**"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him." Isaiah 64:4 (NKJ)**

We were in the midst of a long drought on the Sunday I preached at the Protection, Kansas Christian Church. My subject was "Practicing the Presence of God in the Present Tense" -- in everything give thanks..." I Thessalonians 5:18 At the conclusion of the message I challenged the people asking if they would be willing to practice the presence of the Lord in the present tense by thanking Him for the drought which had been ongoing since Labor Day. 90% raised their hands. So, we waited upon the Lord praising Him for the drought, then thanked Him for the moisture which by faith we affirmed He would send. Three days later, on January 30, we were in the midst of moisture --ice-sleet/snow/rain.

We waited upon the Lord in praise and He worked for us, which is what Habakkuk did-- 3:17-19, Paul did--2 Cor. 12:7-10, Job did--Job 1:19-21, and Jesus did!

Roger Day, Minister at Highmore, South Dakota, expresses the need of allowing the Lord to mature us in our waiting.



**"But oh my dear children! I feel as if I am going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives." Galatians 4:19 NLT**

"We talk much about growing up in our faith. We know that as Christians it is important to become more and more like Christ. We read books, we pray, we strain, we go to conferences, and do all that we can imagine attempting to accomplish this feat. And, let's face it, we are often discouraged and feel like it will never happen. Many people just give up trying to grow and hope they can hang on.

"In this scripture, Paul gives us a little light from the Holy Spirit. He says he is laboring until Christ is fully developed in us. We are a dwelling place for Him. He is the one that is developing Himself in us. We need only be a place where He can develop. We are referred to as the body of Christ. We are the tents where He dwells. Perhaps a picture would be to compare us to the church building where we meet. It does not change unless we do something to it. The walls, carpet, size and etc. stay the same unless we do something in it to change it. The same can be said of us. We cannot change ourselves; waiting on Christ changes us.

"Now don't think that we do not play a role in the change. We have to be willing to be changed by waiting. As in the picture of the building, it never rebels. It is there in the same place. The doors will open. If you want to paint the walls, or tear out a wall, or stick more rooms in it, it will not complain; it is simply the building ready to be used.

"The same then goes for us. Our human attempts at goodness may be better than nothing, but they will never be what they could be if we wait on Christ to develop and work through us. It truly is a place of rest that God is calling us

to. He realizes that we are not able in our own strength to do anything, but with Christ all things are possible.

"That is why the Bible tells us to present ourselves as living sacrifices and be transformed by the renewing of our minds. (Romans 12:1,2) So many Christians have worn themselves out trying to find a pose that looks most like Jesus, when all the time they needed to simply wait on Him to develop in them. I would say every person desiring to grow in faith has done this at one time or another. But in another place the Spirit has said I have died and yet I live, but it is no longer me who lives but Christ lives in me.

"You see we don't form Him, if we do, then we try to transform Him into our image of how we want Him to be in us. The way God has planned is that He transforms us into the way He wants to be in us. We all have certain gifts that He will use, but it is He and not us who can best use them.

"So remember, you do not develop Him, He develops, and you become more like Him as you wait. You need only to be a willing habitation of the Holy Spirit of God."

Roger Day - Highmore, SD

## **GOD TAKES CARES OF US WHEN WE WAIT**

**"Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him." Isaiah 30:18**

I suggest this is the theme of the entire Bible-- God Cares for us when we wait upon Him. For forty years I have found "waiting upon the Lord" in trust, prayer and praise to be my most valuable living

asset.

Every night with my head on my pillow, I wait upon the Lord by praying--- *"Lord, cover this house, its contents, Imalee and I, the garage and all the Faith Alive stuff, our Suburban and Trailer, the trees, flowers, grass, birds and animals with your blood. Also, do the same for our neighbors, the Bryants, Gaudino, Wilsons and the widow Mary. And, Jesus, please assign special angels to guard us all through this night: Amen."*

So, on Sunday night September 3, 2000 a fierce wind storm struck Arkansas City accompanied by thunder and lightning, power lines fell, tree limbs were ripped off, b-u-t at our house and block not one twig was touched. How can it be? What else can I say other then. Hallelujah for the Lord's Blood and Angels applied because of *waiting in prayer!*

The next day all day long Labor Day all over town the tree saws whizzed and folk pulled limbs out of the street but not on our street. We rejoiced in His peace and power!

Surely one of the things that warms the heart of any mother and father is when their children emulate the same attributes.

Our fourth child--Rebecca--to our delight illustrates that simple concept with her life story:

Something old but forever new and true is this song title--"God will Take Care of Me". With strong tenacity Rebecca (Johnson) Moller affirms---"**God will Take Care of Me**".

\* Her husband, Robert Doyen, takes her out to dinner and together they buy new furniture for the first time in their marriage, then he announces that he wants a divorce. : Rebecca's response--"**God will Take Care of Me and Katie!**"

\* Rebecca needed gall bladder surgery in February of 1999.  
: Her retort--"**God will Take Care of Me!**"

\* Katie goes to the E.R. and **God took care of Katie!**"

\* Then, in October of that same year Rebecca sustained a heart attack which required six : hospital stays in eight months for the doctors to get it properly repaired. She remonstrated---"**God will Take Care of Me and Katie!**"

\* Now, two months after the last hospitalization with heart trouble, she has triple major surgery . And her oft affirmation of faith-- "**God will Take Care of Me**" **He did!** The Grace Christian Church and Cox family extended a monetary hand!

\* Katie goes to the E.R. with asthma attack!" **God was able!**

\* In March of this year, an eighteen wheeled truck-trailer tries to run over her mid size Saturn car. Her back and shoulder are seriously injured. So, she says--"**God will : Take Care of Me!**"

\* No job with Exxon Mobil for six weeks because of a company policy that does not allow her to work due to doctor prescribed pain medication. Salary stops and her car is repossessed, but Rebecca still waited on God--"**God will Take Care of Me.**"

\* Her rental landlord served her with an eviction notice--"Pay up \$750. or move." Rebecca asserts--"**I wait and God will Take Care of Me**" **He did!** Her lawyer firm advances her \$1,000. on the basis of winning her lawsuit against the : trucker's insurance company! By faith !

\* Now, time ticks by...another month approaches...bills due--Lawyer says no more advances unless she has surgery. This is

the week (April 23rd.) for the surgery experts to decide. Still, she affirms--"**By faith I wait, God will Take Care of Me!**"

\* A Court notice from State of Texas arrives in the mail over the weekend stating that she must appear in court as a witness in a criminal case of the State of Texas vss the truck driver which tried to run over her car. So, faith goes on--"**By faith God will take care of me,**" she affirms.

\* **God still takes care of Rebecca and Katie!** She won the lawsuit and now has a handsome responsible Christian husband--Lynn Moller.

*As told to her Father, Willbur Johnson*

This old hymn of the Faith--"**God Will Take Care of You**" -reminds us in a beautiful way of this truism.

**Vs. 1\*\*Be not dismayed whate'er betide,  
God will take care of you;  
Beneath His wings of love abide,  
God will take care of you.**

**Vs. 2\*\*Thro' days of toil when heart doth fail,  
God will take care of you;  
When dangers fierce your path assail,  
God will take care of you.**

**Vs. 3\*\*All you may need He will provide,  
God will take care of you;  
Nothing you ask will be denied,  
God will take care of you.**

**Vs. 4\*\*No matter what may be the test,  
God will take care of you,  
Lean, weary one, upon His breast,  
God will take care of you.**

**Chorus:: God will take care of you, Thro' ev'ry day,  
O'er all the way; He will take care of you, God will  
take care of you.**

(c) now in public domain by Civilla Martin and  
W. Stillman Martin

## **WAITING UPON GOD BRINGS GOD'S BEST**

**"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the  
desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust  
also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Rest in the LORD,  
and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him  
who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth  
wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath:  
fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.**

**For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the  
LORD, they shall inherit the earth."**

**Psalm 37:4-9 (KJV)**

In visiting Molech in the Holy Land near Jerusalem, an ancient place of human sacrifice, this hard question probed my mind--how could a loving God permit such a place of punishment and destruction? The most logical answer to that question takes us full circle back to child sacrifice and why and why *waiting* upon God is so very important.

Abraham indicates in every way possible that he believes Isaac will somehow be spared (if even by being brought back to life); and

possibly God never intended to let Abraham go through with the killing. It was a test of Abraham's commitment to God and his willingness to *wait* in implicit faith.

I'm not thinking here merely of those who laid their sons and daughters on the red-hot arms of Molech while the drums drowned out the children's terrified screams. Instead, I am thinking of the rather more disturbing story of God calling Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac on an altar. Because of the surprise ending when God stops Abraham at the last minute—we tend to forget the events leading up to the knife in Abraham's hand, poised to do that which we would quickly condemn the pagan for doing.

What can this possibly mean but that God could never have imagined people whose sensitivities were so callous as to be untouched by the cries of pain of their own children? That, apparently, was the very reason God chose child sacrifice as the ultimate test of Abraham's willing to *wait* in faith. No other test would ask so much dependence upon God's providence. To his eternal credit, Abraham's faith did not disappoint. "God will provide," was Abraham's answer to Isaac when he asked his father about the sacrificial lamb. And to this day, Moses wrote of that incident-- *"it is said, 'in the mountain God will provide' 'if we will wait in faith.*

*Some seed thoughts from "Meeting God in Holy Places" by F. LaGard Smith, Pgs 34-36*

"Waiting on the Lord" for directions is an every day matter so well illustrated by Joyce Sturdy of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

"I have been intending to write with an item of waiting on God for instruction. I have thought back many times

when Roy had to take early retirement and we advertised our home in Minneola with a realtor. We didn't even have any one interested, so we took that as our answer that we were to stay in Minneola. Two years later after Les got hurt and we were with him in OKC so much, we decided to put a sign out in our front yard and wait upon God again to see what we should do. During this time we got word that my sister's husband was in MD Anderson Hospital undergoing some tests for cancer so we went to be with them, not really praying about the sign in the front yard. We got home from Houston after finding out my sister's husband did have cancer and would have to return to MD Anderson Hospital in 3 weeks. We went home and the next morning there was an 83 year old lady knocking on our door wondering where we had been--she was wanting to buy our house. Before she even looked through all the house she said: "I really like it--you will sell it to me won't you?" We wanted her to realize how much yard there was and wondered if she would be able to take care of it without wearing her out, she still wanted to buy it. Then we had to begin looking in OKC for something to buy and couldn't find anything so Roy was looking in the Buyers Guide (a small paper sent out in the mail) and located these manufactured homes. We called and went to see them and fell in love with the one we purchased.

"Now we must wait on the Lord for a church home we visited several churches and found each one reaching out to us with so much Christian love it still felt like we were at home. It has been nearly 14 years since we made that big move and we have always felt it was God's answer to our waiting on Him"

*Good night, Joyce*



# **GOD PROVIDES WHEN WE WAIT UPON HIM**

**"These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. What You give them they gather in; you open Your hand, they are filled with good." Psalm 104:27,28**

The Bible is replete with living examples of God providing for all who waited upon Him. From His providing Abraham and Isaac a lamb for a sacrifice (Genesis 22:8), water from the Rock and Manna and Quail in the Wilderness (Exodus 16:15, 17:6), on to the Widow of Zarephath where He supplied a never empty meal barrel and cruse of oil (I Kings 17:13-16), and not to forget when five loaves and two fish were enough to feed the multitude with twelve baskets of leftovers (Matthew 14:17-20). And that grand promise to all who will wait upon Him--"And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

So it was with my friends of fifty plus years--Chuck and Anita Thomas:

"Living by Faith In January of 1952, we moved to Oklahoma City, OK, where I enrolled in Midwest Christian College. Our Sunday School Class, at Cincinnati Avenue Christian Church in Tulsa, OK, helped us make the move. Sandy was our only child at that time. I worked at a number of odd jobs, while attending classes. I was invited to help start a new congregation in Washita, OK. just out of Anadarko, OK. There was not church in the small community and the Community Center for the local Power Plant was available to hold meetings. We started meeting

for church services, but had little or no space for Sunday School. We soon were able to gain access to the old school building, which had an abundance of class rooms as well as the gym for the worship time. It was necessary for us to leave Oklahoma City at about 6:00 a.m. in order to get to Washita for the services. On one Sunday morning Anita prepared the last bit of rice and toast for our breakfast. There no more food in the house. I discovered that we had enough gas to get us to Washita, but not enough for the return trip. We prayed for safety for travel and a safe return and traveled to the services at Washita. The small group of about 40 to 50 people had been taking a "love offering" for us each Sunday. The offering ran from \$2.00 to \$20.00 each week. After the services, the folk asked us if they could take us out to eat in Anadarko. They paid for our meal, filled the gas tank, and gave us \$25.00 in cash. We praised the Lord all the way home. When we arrive in Oklahoma City, the lights were on in the living room. My heart skipped a beat and I wondered if someone had broken into our apartment. We rushed into the house and could barely get in the front door. There were boxes of groceries all over the living room floor and the land lady was waiting for us with an envelop with \$250.00 from our Sunday School class back in Tulsa. Not only did the Lord provide transportation money, but he filled our pantry to overflowing.

"This is only one of a whole volume of events in our service to the Lord. We once made a trip to Family Week in the Kiamichi Mountains, one summer, with a limited amount of food, and 35 cents. We were gone for two weeks

and returned home with over \$35.00, winter coats for all four children and hearts full of love for the Lord."

*Your brother, because of Christ, Chuck Thomas*

## **Waiting on the Lord brings Strength and Healing**

Next to Psalm 23 and John 14, Isaiah 40:31 is an all time favorite.

**"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."  
Isaiah 40:31**

When I am willing to wait upon the Lord in time and prayer with faith to claim this blessed promise I have found strength, help and healing as have countless others like my friend Murl Winters..

"This year on September 20 my Mother, Carolyn Mather Winters, turned 95. She has learned to wait upon the Lord for His blessings. Some 47 years before she went to the altar in the Fifth and Peoria Assembly of God in Tulsa, OK. She had been to the Hertzler Clinic in Halstead, KS, also known as the Little Mayo's of the West. After many days of testing they told her there was nothing they could do for her. She had chronic leukemia. Having been sent home to die, she and my Dad were desperate to find hope. Our family was active in the local Methodist Church but had never thought of God being willing to heal anybody in the

present times. "Through a series of events they became aware of the testimony of others and finally went to the church in Tulsa after calling and asking the pastor, "Do you pray for the sick?" My Dad's testimony was that when she went up for prayer her breath smelled of sickness and her eyes had a sick look. After prayer she had neither although she felt nothing. He did not tell her what he had noticed but waited until they had driven back to our home in Kansas and then heard her exclaim that she could see a difference in the mirror! She gradually gained strength and later after graduating from Southwestern Bible Institute (now Southwestern Assemblies of God University) they both entered the ministry.

My Mother still enjoys praying for the sick and telling people about her Savior, Jesus Christ. Her address: Carolyn M. Winters, Maranatha Village Lodge Room 209, 233 E. Norton Road, Springfield, MO 65803

"Actually our family was doubly blessed because not too many months after my Mother was healed, my Dad was prayed for in a Foursquare Gospel Church in Parsons, KS and was healed of a badly enlarged heart. He was later used to pray for a number of people in various places as they testified and ministered."

*by Murl Winters*

Assistant Library Director Evangel University Library  
1111 N. Glenstone Ave. Springfield, MO

Linda Dellenbach of Abbyville, Kansas was blessed with healing as she waits upon the Lord for all that He can give. She articulates it like this:

"In September when I was diagnosed with cancer I was just ready to start reading Job (I'm reading through the Bible). I was reluctant to start reading there as it seemed like downer to me, but Josh, our son, said he would read through Job with me which gave me a boost and I started.

"As usual, God knew what He was doing! The main blessings I received were:

I.. God is all wise and powerful. But sometimes we don't have a clue why He's doing what He's doing."

**Psalm 20:7 *"Some trust in chariots (chemotherapy) and some in horses (radiation), but we will trust in the Lord our God." (Italics, my application)***

"Right now as I write, I am sitting at the Pratt hospital taking #6 of 8 chemotherapy treatments. I will only have two more and that seems reason to celebrate to me! Approximately one month after the last "chemo" which is scheduled for April fifth, radiation should start That will take a little over 7 weeks of 5 times a week and most that will be in Dodge City and then finish out with more intense 'zapping' at Hutchinson.

"I deeply appreciate the medical advances. One of those the Zofran they have given me before each 'chemo'. I have had no nausea . Dr. Jennings, our Oncologist, is very up on the latest and best treatment for breast cancer and has been in charge from the lumpectomy through the 'chemo and radiation. We have appreciated and felt good about his very personable and knowledgeable staff of nurses from the beginning. However our ultimate trust is and has to be in God who is really choreographing the life dance which I am in.

\*2. We need to be careful not to jump to conclusions why

some one is suffering. Instead we need to listen to God for sensitivity on how to comfort that person.

"3. God is really all we have. Wait and keep focused on Him!

Now I am reading through Psalms and its also been exactly what I need. It is a great book of praise to God, encouragement that God is with us, and the battle and victory are His. At first cancer thoughts invaded my thoughts continuously. That was good though, as it forced me to pump God thoughts and scriptures in my mind in order to survive without major fear.

"I have had a relatively easy time and I praise God for one little blessing that was big to me. Charity, God and I found a wig in which I feel comfortable. I know-vanity, vanity". Smile! It is even equipped with a cowlick which I choose to see as an extra authentic touch. ...

"This letter is two fold ~ I want to glorify the Lord, and I want to specifically thank you for your prayers and caring acts. I know you have prayed for me. I can feel it. You know the song "Onward Christian Soldiers"? I see the Church of God being that army marching out to war on my behalf against cancer through prayer and encouragement.

"I will close this thought and Scripture ."*May God arise and his enemies be scattered—*" Psalm 68:17 and "*The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands.*" Psalm 68:17. Because you belong to Him, your enemies are His enemies. So whatever manifested or sneaky enemies you are up against right now may they be scattered and soundly defeated in your life.

P. S. I'm done with my treatment now and the nurse just told me how well I have done with Chemotherapy. She said Dr.

Jennings remarked that I've done better with 'chemo' than anyone he's ever had as a patient. That's your prayers and the faithfulness of God!!!! Thanks again" - *Linda Dellenbach*

Linda and her husband, Keith, have been special friends of our since 1974 when they ministered at Greensburg, Kansas, and we were down the road at Minneola. We have been blessed in getting to share two Faith Alive Revivals where they ministered and Keith and Linda have given special application to the faith alive Bible principles.

## **Sometimes Long term waiting is essential**

**I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning-- yes, more than those who watch for the morning." Psalm 130:5,6 - (NKJ)**

Abraham and Sarah waited many decades for a son to be born. At last when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90 God arranged for the birth of Isaac.

Hannah waited for many barren years before Samuel was born (I Samuel 1).

The Nation of Israel waited four hundred and thirty to be delivered from Egypt. (Exodus 12:40)

A weary world waited for centuries but, "when the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son..." Galatians 4:4

Jackie Cloutman of Minnesota reveals the value of "waiting."

"Four years ago, while employed at the Mississippi State University Library, I lost the diamond out of my wedding ring set. The staff at my work place and my family knew of the loss and helped me search. And I prayed, asking the Lord to let the stone be found or provide for a new one in

His way and time.

"An unsaved friend at the library, David, told me he didn't believe in prayer and after a few days of watching for my diamond and stating that the Lord was going to help me, David challenged my belief saying it proved that prayer does not work. I would never agree with him. And shortly afterwards, our family moved to Minnesota for a job opportunity for my husband.

"Here is how the Lord worked it out:

"Today, I have a more beautiful diamond than before crowned into my wedding ring set and our daughter Veronica was blessed in her singing ministry!!

"Veronica sings with the Celebrant Singers who present gospel music concerts in the states and featuring ministry in foreign countries. The Lord and family and friends provide her finances for these trips.

"This past summer, while ministering in Central Park, New York City, a young man offered Veronica a beautiful diamond engagement ring saying he didn't want it anymore. This gift from the young man became a gift for Veronica's finances as my husband and I gave travel money to her in exchange for the ring which we then had crowned into my wedding set!

"What a glorious way to replace my diamond! Plus, the disappointed young man found a way to give up his pain making an offering to God's kingdom!

"My friend David was wrong about prayer. My God works everything together for good for those who love God and are the called according to His purposes!!!"

*Mrs. (Don) \*Jackie Cloutman - Minnesota- 11/4/2000*



(\*) We have known Don and Jackie Cloutman for 41+ years. They have been special friends in our Faith Alive Ministry as printers, encouragers, gift, and prayer supporters.

Often our human nature asks "WHY must we wait for long periods of time." The Israelites had to spend 40 years in the Wilderness to prepare themselves for the Promised Land.

**"When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, 'If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.' So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea." Exodus 13:17-18 (NIV)**

The concept that the *Promised Land* is always near, yet on the other hand, God leads us around by the desert road, has surfaced often across the years when my life seemed to offer so much of the dry desert, and long winding roads along with a few dead end ones. Yet, as Israel journeyed, and I have found it so, the Way is paved with many an oasis --a crossing place through the Red Seas of life, quail and manna when needed, water from the rocks, seen and unseen angels assisting, His guiding presence in a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day to point the Way, and always knowing that just over the next sand hill, deep valley or high mountain there will be the sight of the 'ole Jordan River, and when I get there, Joshua (Jesus) will lead the procession down to the waters and we will cross over on dry land to that beautiful Land of milk and honey. Then, the trumpets will sound and we will shout with all the saints of the ages that the walls have all fallen down forever and forever.

As the song says--

**"It pays to serve Jesus everyday, it pays every step of the way...**

**Though the pathway to glory may sometimes be drear,  
You can be happy each step of the way."**

FRANK FREED served America during the 2nd. World War in the European theater. He tells of his patrol of five men being behind German lines when the Germans decided to advance. Soon his patrol found themselves deep in enemy territory and became caught in the line of fire of American artillery. Three of his patrol, including his Captain and Lieutenant, were killed outright, and the fourth man was knocked unconscious. Frank's right arm was blown off above the wrist and the explosion twisted his leg so that his foot faced in the wrong direction. During this time he waited upon God aware that He was in charge. He began crawling toward the American lines passing German soldiers who saw him but did not shoot. Finally arriving at the American line he was picked up by a field ambulance and transported to a hospital.

Now, 54 years later on May 25, 1997, he told the above story on the "Hour of Power" TV program, and shared this poem which he wrote as an introduction to his book -- Breaking Free when I feel Trapped

### **BREAKING FREE**

I feel trapped in all the choices I wish I hadn't made.  
Still trapped in painful events where too long I have  
stayed.

I feel trapped in fear of all things that never came to be.

And trapped in angry feelings that I allowed to savage me.

Trapped in frantic secrets that I won't share.  
Still trapped in dark and gloomy thoughts which lead me to despair.

I feel trapped up until now by all the things above,  
But now I know my way out is to speak the truth in love.  
by Frank Freed of California

## **Persistent Every day waiting ought to be the norm.**

**Therefore the LORD will wait, that He may be gracious to you; and therefore He will be exalted, that He may have mercy on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him." Isaiah 30:18**

Kay Messer of Soldier, Kansas shares how the grace of God blesses her in the living present.

"Over the years I have read about, heard about, talked about, sang about God's grace. It is a theological principal on which all believers have some sort of understanding. God's grace is what I believe that God has done for YOU.....when I reach a point in my understanding of what God has done in regard to ME...it becomes the "amazing grace" that John Bunyan wrote about. God's grace has been extended to all mankind...but when it encompasses me...meets me as I walk this path of life.

In regard to God's grace at the time of dad's death.....I found it to be a sustaining grace that was the catalyst for strength and energy to handle the struggles, decisions, etc. that were coming from many directions.

I had strength of my own but needed the "strength of His Grace" to provide the sustaining power that was needed in the days, weeks, and months to come. Had I not been a believer I could not have made it through every encounter on my "own strength"....there are countless other people who do....but I would not have had the experience of this facet of God's love for me. Grace was very real for me at the time of Loren's birth.....I had no strength of my own in this encounter with God's grace I could actually feel the life flowing out of my body as the scripture "the life is in the blood" went through my mind. I knew that because of the hemorrhaging and loss of blood my life was gradually ebbing from me and there was nothing I could do about it. It was out of my hands. There was nothing in my "own strength" that I could do. Can't say that it was some sort of an "out of body" type of experience, but I was totally engulfed with a "sense" of overwhelming peace that no matter what the outcome-- life or death-- I was experiencing the grace of an amazing God and it was all in His hands, not in mine. All I could do was experience this facet of God's love for me. So, God's grace becomes "amazing grace".....when it covers me from life to death...from my strength to sustaining strength.....in all ways it is all sufficient.....flows through me in my struggles and washes over my sins it becomes "amazing" grace." *Kay Messer*

Howard and Kay Messer are 40+ year friends of ours blessing us with prayers, encouraging words and gifts days without end.

The late Buck Weaver of Topeka, Kansas shares a simple testimony how waiting upon the Lord to say "Help" brings great blessings.

"Ever since I was about three or four years old for some reason I became afraid of the dark. The unusual aspect of this situations was the years went by it didn't get better. I was ashamed of myself and therefore would not mention the situation to anyone. Years later my folks moved from the farm to Higginsville, Missouri. We attended church there. Dessa Coggins was leader and teacher of the young people there. She was well liked and coaxed her students to become Christians. M.L.Anson and I were baptized a year or so later. I was about 16 years old.

"When I was 17 I lived with my parents at the old Confederate Soldiers Home located 2.5 miles north of town. I was on the high school football team and every school day walked out to the football field for practice then back to the school to change my clothes. The road had hardly any traffic. But here I am on the football team and afraid of the dark. What was I afraid of? Mostly it was the sounds of the night that I couldn't identify. I suffered through several trips, then came the trip home that changed my life. As I walked along, the thought came to me to ASK FOR HELP. I had tried everything else. I simply waited upon Jesus and asked Him to remove my fear of the dark. I took a few more steps and realized that I was enjoying the walk. Even the night noises became something which I enjoyed.

It was hard for me to believe, as previously I was afraid something would fall on me out of the trees, and now the trees became beautiful. I had prayed and God changed my

life -changed my fear of the dark to many enjoyable things. At the time I was walking along the East side of the 90 acre Park which was a part of the Confederate Home property.

I had avoided the Park in the dark, but now I ran into it to enjoy a small lake which previously I had enjoyed only In the daytime. Many are the times I have thanked the Lord Jesus for that night when He took away my fear of all darkness.

"Since that time I started to work as a fireman and later a locomotive engineer for Santa Fe. I put in many years in the switch yards on the, you guessed it, the night shift, I'm a very happy person in His walk because I acknowledged Jesus. He goes on before me and with His help I follow."

*\*Buford Weaver, Topeka, Kansas*

(\*) I first met the delightful-dedicated "Buck" and Helen Weaver when preaching a Faith Alive Revival at Perry, Kansas.

Linda Gooch of Hugoton, Kansas shares these special words about waiting on the Lord day by day.

"I grew up in the Nazarene Church going to church every time the doors were open. We went to all the revival services, you name it and we were there. During college I attended Mid America Nazarene University. I was saved when I was about 8 years old and I was baptized April 15, 1972 on a Easter Sunday.

"In 1979, I married a man of my dreams and I had two wonderful children.

I strayed away from God -- looking at possessions, other things. Things that I try to forget and try to forgive myself for what I've done.

We were divorced in 1990 and it has been a struggle ever since, with the guilt and everything that went on.

I remarried in 1991 and I have a little blessing who is 3 years old. Believe me, I wasn't too excited about having a little one, after my other two children were in college right now. But the Lord truly forgives and forgets when we wait upon Him -- He has told me *that's why I died for you my child. You can lay those guilt feelings, bitterness, anger all at my feet, because I did this for you and I love you.* Grace, grace marvelous grace!

"Over the past few months, I've been so hungry for more of God. I've been praying *Lord I surrender my life to you totally and completely.* The Holy Spirit has completely enveloped me and I have had such a deep peace that I can't hardly express it. The Lord is truly wonderful...faithful and true. His grace does cover over a multitude of sin even when we don't deserve it. The Lord has given me such an excitement about sharing the word, and has given several opportunities for sharing what the Lord has done for me to others. Right now, my daughter, and son-in-law have totally surrendered there everything to God! What a blessing! My oldest son is studying music/youth ministry, To God be the Glory!

"I still have struggles, with myself, feelings of inadequacy, but when I wait upon Him, He gives me a hope and a future. He has picked up the broken pieces of my life and is arranging them to be the perfect vessel that He wants them to be.

I can't write this without having a lot of tears, but the Lord

truly does Love each one of us and it doesn't matter what we have done -- He doesn't want anyone to perish.

*I beseech you therefore brethren, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God, holy and acceptable, this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1,2"*

*For Christ - Linda Gooch*

Hugoton (Kansas) First Christian Church - Secretary

## **Living by Faith ought to be the norm**

**"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17**

This simple yet profound concept of waiting upon God in living by faith is the very concept which awakened Martin Luther to a new life and eventually The Reformation.

Martin Luther had been living by sight, by words, penances, and ritual. Upon reading Romans 1:17 *"The just shall live by faith."* he started a whole new life which eventually culminated in The Reformation.

Missionaries to Tibet-Burma, J. Russel Morse & Gertrude Morse, found waiting upon God in daily faith was a necessity.

They tell of many beautiful stories how the Holy Spirit led others through them to wait upon the Lord in living by faith. Their son, Eugene Morse, records in the February, 1974 Reader's Digest one of those stories titled--"Home to Hidden Valley."

Simply he said---The Communists were coming into the area to harass and capture the Christians. Bro. J. Russell Morse challenged



the people:

**"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him."** 2 Corinthians 2:14 The people responded and at midnight after prayer, five thousand started an impossible journey of many miles out of Tibet, around India and into Burma. Brother Morse supposed some would be lost along the way. The perilous path took them through lion country, deadly snakes, and much of the mountain trail required sliding sideways single file. There were many children and mothers with small babies plus elderly folk. They pushed on through wind, rain and mud and after many days arrived safely without the loss of one high in the Himalayan Mountains in a place called "Hidden Valley."

The experiences of the Morse family should not be unusual but the norm for our living, and would be if only we would wait and pray.

## **In silent times and night time HE provides**

**"The Lord provides for those he loves, while they are asleep."**

**Psalm 127:2b (TEV)**

Sometimes He supplies as He did this very week with the arrival of a \$500. check from a couple in a far away place. We have never heard of or met these folks, but marvel as we wait and pray while His hand opens to supply.

We may plan, suppose and wonder how needs will be met and directions provided. More often these hoped for blessings are met in ways beyond our imagination.

Saturday, January 20, 2001 was the day to have the oil and grease changed in our Suburban. I checked in and included a yearly

expensive venture for us of a new air cleaner and wiper blades on the list.

While waiting I rambled through the automotive Department of Wal-Mart. In a passing moment I noted a display which appeared to be advertising fire extinguishers. Not finding the tire pressure gauge I was seeking, I walked by the "fire extinguisher" display again, and noted the live tongues of fire seemed to be producing heat. Looking closely I saw the flames were real and a real fire was starting. I summoned a clerk, who in turn called "CODE 3" and stock people appeared from everywhere with extinguishers. The fire was very real and the store Manager said "In just a matter of moments this would have been a bomb as the flames caused high pressure automotive cans to explode. Our automotive bill that day was "on the house."

We parked our Suburban at the Tulsa, Oklahoma airport while visiting our son, Galen and family in Ohio. When we returned, the right rear bumper was bent back into the fender well. Allstate Insurance had a firm make an estimate of \$859.00. We had it repaired at a less expensive firm for \$232.00. An Allstate sent an inspector, Dennis, a fine Christian Brother with whom we shared one of our books--Faith Alive, and got an invitation to speak at their Church Senior Citizen group in Wichita.

Then, *out of the blue* with no explanation, Imalee's medi-gap insurance company sent us a check for \$400. We rejoice and pressed on knowing that the Lord was supplying.

Some may say--"*Well, these kind of things happen to you all the time.*"

No, first time for a sequence of events like these but the bottom line is: **HE DOES SUPPLY I-F WE WAIT IN FAITH!**

Imagine that you are in a little boat near a sandy beach. You throw out an anchor and pull on the rope until you feel the sandy shore slide underneath. Then you step out onto the shore. What have you done? Have you moved the shore to the boat? No, you've moved the boat to the shore.

That's what real waiting in prayer is ... not moving God to you in order to get something, but moving yourself closer to God in order to become something. Now you are close enough to listen to what He wants to say to you.

Too many people think of waiting and prayer as a panic-stricken plea to God, the all-powerful doctor, to get an immediate solution to their problem. Two-way prayer-waiting is much more. It involves listening to God as much as it does talking to God. God told the prophet Jeremiah, "Call to me and I will answer you." That's two-way prayer.

## IN CONCLUSION

We need to keep in mind the following truths as we seek to mature:

**1. WE WILL RECEIVE A BODY:** You may like it or hate it, but it will be yours for the entire period you're around. So, learn to like it and mature it.

**2. WE WILL RECEIVE LESSONS:** You are enrolled in a full-time informal school called life.

Each day in this school you will have the opportunity to learn lessons. Learn the lessons and you will mature.

**3. THERE ARE NO MISTAKES, ONLY LESSONS:** Maturity is a process of trial and error, experimentation. The "Failed" experiments are as much a part of the process as the experiment that ultimately matures us.

**4. A LESSON IS REPEATED UNTIL LEARNED:** A lesson will be presented to us in various forms until we have learned it. When you have learned it, you are maturing and can go on to the next lesson.

**5. LEARNING LESSONS DOES NOT END:** Maturity goes on to the end: There is no part of life that does not contain its lessons.

**6. "THERE" IS NO BETTER THAN "HERE":** When our "There" has become a "Here", we will simply obtain another "There" that will, again, look better than "Here"--that is a part of maturing.

**7. OTHERS ARE MERELY MIRRORS OF US:** You cannot love or hate something about another person unless it reflects to you something you love or hate about yourself. So, as we mature we will come to love all people.

**8. WHAT WE MAKE OF OUR LIFE IS UP TO US:** We have all the tools and resources we need. What we do with them is up to us. This will be maturity. The choice is ours.

**9. OUR ANSWERS LIE INSIDE US:** Our answers to life's

questions lie inside **and above** us. All we need to do is look up, listen, trust and follow Him.

**10. WE WILL FORGET ALL OF THIS** and what we have spoken of in these chapters unless we consistently stay focused on the reality that **Jesus is our goal and the contents of life our tools to mature us.**

**"I thank my God every time I remember you.**

**In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."**

**Philippians 1:3-6 (NIV)**

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

**by Chuck Thomas - Tulsa, Oklahoma**

### **Chapter 8 - "WAITING ON THE LORD!"**

**1. What did Adam's curiosity and unwillingness to wait upon the Lord cause?**

**2. God works for those who do what?**

- 3. What does Paul say the Holy Spirit is laboring in for?**
- 4. What is the theme of the entire Bible?**
- 5. In Psalm 37:4, we are told to delight ourselves in the Lord; and he shall give what?**
- 6. When Isaac asked his father about the sacrificial lamb, what was Abraham's answer?**
- 7. What is the grand promise to all who will wait upon Him?**
- 8. What does waiting on the Lord bring?**
- 9. Linda Dellenbach says, "God is all wise and powerful. But sometimes we....." Don't have what?**
- 10. Linda Dellenbach also said, We need to be careful not**

**to jump to conclusions why some one is suffering.  
Instead....." What do we need to do?**

**11. Sometimes long term waiting is what?**

**12. How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?**

**13. How old was Sarah when Isaac was born?**

**14. Why did the Israelites have to spend 40 years in the  
Wilderness?**

**15. Exodus 13:17-18 says that God did not lead the people  
on the road through the Philistine country, though that  
was shorter. Why did he do this?**

**16. What should the norm be for the Christian?**

**17. What should also be the norm for the Christian?**

**18. Psalm 127:2b tells us what?**

**19. What is real waiting in prayer?**

20. What is "two-way" prayer-waiting?



## **SUGGESTED ANSWERS**

### **to Discussion Questions**

#### **Chapter 1 - "MATURITY, NOT PERFECTION"**

1. In Hebrews 6:1-That they should grow up from a state of childhood to the fullness of the stature of the mature man in Christ.
2. Six
3. Foundation-principles. --- Repentance from dead work. Faith towards God. The doctrine of baptisms. Laying on of hands. The resurrection of the dead. Eternal judgment.
4. Imaginative treatment that seeks to show an author's or artist's conception of perfection.
5. To be concerned with acts in accordance with actual facts, rather than ideals, feelings and imagined perfection.
6. zeal gone to seed.
7. To be concerned with acts in accordance with actual facts rather than ideals, feelings and imagined perfection.
8. People and their needs.
9. Complete, fully grown, mature.
10. Focus on the doctrinal error of others with no attention given to our own need for correction/growth.
11. Embezzler.



12. 1. Intend to replace the stolen funds. 2. Embezzlers are always fearful of being caught. 3. Often spend their embezzled funds on others. 4. Are often religious. 5. Are often suicidal.
13. To produce mature disciples so as we follow Jesus we can lead others to know Him.
14. A contradiction.
15. In Philippians 3:10-15 To attain to the resurrection from the dead.

## **Chapter 2 - "GOAL OF MATURITY"**

1. "...I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me."
2. ...making proper response to the challenges and opportunities of life.
3. I WOULD BE LIKE JESUS
4. As we wait for something special, big or religious to happen.
5. "'Stop wailing,' Jesus said. She is not dead but asleep."
6. God's opportunity for ministering to people.
7. . Jesus rebuked His disciples and blessed the children.
8. Maturity.
9. The accusers.
10. Made a mistake by prejudging people.
11. "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve others."
12. To settle back on our laurels, and fail to soar where the eagles fly.

## **Chapter 3- "MATURITY: GOD'S REQUIREMENTS"**

1. **"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."**
2. **Write them--1, 2, 3, then expound them in a 3, 2, 1 order.**
3. **"...humble yourselves under the might hand of God...that He may exalt you in due time,"**
4. **1 Chronicles 4:10-- "Oh that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!"**
5. **"SOLD BY GOD the Great Realtor."**
6. **35 years.**
7. **Micah 6:6-8 -- Fear God...Do kindness ... Do justice....**
8. **"If I Can Help Somebody as I pass along, then my living shall not be in vain."**
9. **"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you."**
10. **"He went about doing good." Acts 10:38.**
11. **Love in action.**
12. **Unkind.**
13. **Micah 6:8-- "To act justly..."**
14. **Matthew 5:43-45: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."**
15. **Micah 3:1-3? The evil of injustice.**
16. **He reviewed 1 Corinthians 7 and let the matter rest.**
17. **"For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,'**

says the Lord." Hebrews 10:30, 31.

18. "Judge not, that ye be no judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall measured to you again."

19. Children who go to Sunday school have a higher personality rating than those who do not.

20. "The second thing I had to overcome was the rage at the people who put the LSD in her drink."

## **Chapter 4 - "FAITH: A GREAT TOOL OF MATURITY"**

1. power to become

2. Proverbs 3:5,6

3. On the other side of a creek in an animal path

4. the role

5. 300

6. "in My power"

7. 1. Will This surgery put Imalee in a Care Home?

2. Will this surgery effect Imalee's personality... 3. What will be the cost?

8. Time to think, pray and talk with church Elders.

9. "Wait a little longer and see what God can do."

10. 1. Commit a matter to God in prayer....2. Lean not on our own understanding....

3. Wait on God for the answer.

11. "Lord, it's Your Revival!"

12. People.... Circumstances....Limits....Handicaps...Our paths

13. Lift us up

14. He will direct our paths
15. \$200. month
16. Wal Mart
17. God will supply our need
18. So large it nearly sank the boat
19. See answer to Q. 10
20. 1. Trust in the Lord with all our heart....2. Acknowledge the Lord in all our ways.

## **Chapter 5**

### **"LOVE MATURES US TO BE LIKE GOD"**

1. "Love is a commitment to give whatever it takes to meet another's need in spite of the cost to me."
- 2 Unselfishness.
3. Love.
4. Practice.
5. "Love your neighbor as yourself."
6. Loving ourselves properly.
7. A man needs a sense of his own worth.
8. People who are like lost sheep must be loved, and sought until they are redeemed.
9. Love matures as we remember and practice some of virtues named in Corinthians 13.
10. The world.
11. The owner.
12. forgiveness, understanding, and acceptance.
13. Love suffers long. Love bears all things. Love hopes all things. Love believes all things. Love endures all things.
14. He makes it plain that He is the sinners friend.

15. 1) He knew how to think and act ... 2) He still remembered home and knew where it was 3) He knew he wanted to be home even as a servant .... 4) He knew how to get home... 5) Sin and time left him a humble lad ... 6) He knew his sin was against His Father ... 7) He knew how to say "I'm sorry" ... 8) He knew how to accept forgiveness and how to forgive himself (vss. 22-24)
16. forgive and forget.
17. heart felt hope.
18. I Corinthians 13 love suffers long....is kind ... does not envy ... does not parade ... is not puffed up ... does not behave rudely ... does not seek its own ... is not provoked ... thinks no evil ... does not rejoice in iniquity ... hopes all things ... endures all things ... love never fails.
19. "compassionate towards those who are manifestly penitents."
20. often blind.
21. He was disobedient in his spirit.
22. He focused on his brother's shortcomings.
23. He was blinded by self.
24. Practice love now.

## **Chapter 6**

### **"PRAISE TESTS OUR MATURITY"**

1. A compliment to you---you had the courage to stick your neck out and try something.
2. BORN TO WIN.
3. We will have VICTORY in all our living and serving if we will count our trials as JOY.
4. "testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have it perfect work, that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing."

5. The dynamic power that helps you survive.
6. "What I want instead is your true thanks to God."
7. . "...get a grip on every thought that does not bring glory to God."
8. "...count it all joy when you fall into various trials."
9. "PRAISED THE LORD for the locked brakes.
10. "...knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."
11. "Divine favor, power freely given to undeserving people."
12. Patience is the bottom line of giving thanks for all things.
13. "Praised the Lord in all things!"
14. They PRAISED THE LORD for the drought, than thanked Him for the moisture which He would send.
15. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who love us."
16. Many family and friends engaging in prayer.
17. Todd Walters who sure has the "touch of God's gift of ministering."
18. "By pressing onward by thanking/praising the Lord at the beginning of each day for all that is going to happen in that day."
19. The attitude of PRAISE!
20. "The shorter the time of our struggle to choose to give God praise in a particular circumstance, the greater our spiritual maturity."

## **Chapter 7**

### **"An Exercise in Maturity: Seeking God's Will"**

1. "Because people will not seek and follow God's directions."

2, Luke 11:9 . "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."

3. He spent a day of prayer and fasting.

4. 1) Total openness to God's leading---prayer, perhaps fasting.

2) Prayerfully select something that when it happens you will know the Lord is "speaking." 3) Prayerfully select something you cannot manipulate.

4) Prayerfully select something the devil cannot manipulate.

5. The sparrows and has the hairs on our head numbered.

6. "fleece"-- "A thing, or event provided or acted upon by God so as to provide Divine directions for our lives; also referenced as a guidance covenant."

7. "Lord, if You will us to move from Indiana to Minneola, Kansas then cause the congregational vote to be 100%.

8. Leaning on their own understanding and the weakness of their faith.

9. "...keep on asking keep on seeking...keep on knocking?

10. "A daily affair."

11. . "...they say they understand, they believe that, and that that is the way Christians should live---but that it doesn't really apply to their current situation."

12. "If it is your will for us to stay in Taiwan for a while longer, then you and you alone will issue Rosana's visa. And if the visa cannot be issued then we will know that it is your will for us to return to the States instead."

13. "The more I rely upon God, the more difficult it becomes to again rely upon human understanding."

14. "For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Sprit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered."

15. 1) At our best praying we do NOT really know what to pray for (8:28a).
- 2) Our simple or complex desires are translated by the Holy Spirit into groanings (8:28b).
- 3) The Holy Spirit searches our hearts (to determine genuine motives), then makes intercession for us according to the will of God (8:28c).
16. He practiced 1 Thessalonians 5:18.
17. 1) Don't panic. 2) Don't read a covenant ("fleece") too quickly. 3) Accept what the Lord reveals.
18. By praying and firmly standing on 2 Chronicles 20:15b, "Thus says the Lord...Do not be afraid nor dismayed for the battle is not yours, but God's."
19. Accepting what the Lord reveals.
20. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. When you will call upon me and come and pray to me, then I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

## Chapter 8

### "WAITING ON THE LORD MATURES US"

1. The lord caused him and us to be shut out of the Garden of Eden.
2. Wait for Him.
3. He is laboring until Christ is fully developed in us.
4. God cares for us when we wait upon Him.
5. In Psalm 37:4,....the desires of thine heart.
6. "God will provide"
7. "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in



**glory by Christ Jesus."**

**8. Strength and Healing**

**9. ...a clue why He's doing what He's doing.**

**10. ...listen to God for sensitivity on how to comfort that person.**

**11. ...essential.**

**12. 100**

**13. 90**

**14. ...to prepare themselves for the Promised Land.**

**15. "If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt."**

**16. Persistent every day waiting.**

**17. Living by Faith ought to be the norm.**

**18. "the Lord provides for those he loves, while they are asleep."**

**19. ...not moving God to you in order to get something, but moving yourself**

**closer to God in order to become something.**

**20. It involves listening to God as much as it does talking to God.**

**Not the end.**

**May it be a beginning to greater maturity for each of us**

~ *Notes* ~

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