

PART TWO

Changing the Theology

This Page Intentionally Left Blank.

Chapter Five

Managed Cooperation Theology and Unity

Managed Cooperation today, is similar to following Jesus in His day. You walk with Him from day to day, and you do what He asks as if He were standing beside you; telling you in person. Only instead of Him telling you directly, the Holy Spirit tells you from your knowledge of Scripture. This is what it means to follow Jesus in our modern day.

The Central Purpose Implications

Before the foundation of the world, God desired a people who He could love and who would love Him forever.

It is the implication of this central purpose which is important. This implication suggests what christianity should be about. Christianity should be about persuading people to love God. This is so, because God will not extract love. Therefore, He chooses to persuade men to love Him. This is accomplished through the theology which Jesus taught which I have characterized as Managed Cooperation Theology.

Managed Cooperation Theology defines that salvation is a work of both God and man together. God manages and men cooperate. The Holy Spirit instructs through the word, and men learn. The Holy Spirit prompts men to act, and men accept the hint and do as He suggests. Godly men, who are spiritual descendents of Jesus and His Apostles, ask men to be disciples.

God's highest priority is us loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind, and with all our strength. And the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. *These priorities are the sum total of the marching orders of God's army. Love God. Love your neighbor.*

Loving God is expressed by devotion to Him personally. I said in Chapter One, My Encounter with Jesus, what that was like. We need to grow this idea of personal devotion to

Christ.

Making disciples is devotion to both God and your neighbor. Obviously, it is the betterment of God's inheritance, and it is the betterment of the disciple going to Heaven.

Loving your neighbor is expressed by devotion to his betterment. Loving your neighbor tells him God cares. It opens him to spiritual communication.

Central Purpose Implications about Non-Believers

Christianity should be about showing people that God exists, that He is good, and that He loves them, that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Christianity should be about showing people that if they will cooperate with God in getting to know Him, they will see that He is "good," and He will reveal Himself to them. And, then they can appreciate Him for being "good."

"Initial Cooperation"

It must be emphasized; that because non-believers don't understand much about God, they must cooperate with godly men who are trying to acquaint them with God. We need to tell them why they should listen. The reason they should listen is to taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8). It's like mathematics, you can't learn about it if you don't listen long enough and apply yourself. Its the same with knowing God.

Accentuating love to the unbeliever is essential because they distrust organized religion in general, and “people selling something” in particular. Its hard for people to believe that someone is doing something just for their benefit. Going to extreme measures to show them the love of God, is the only way a witness can get through. This is because it is the kindness of God, which leads them to repentance (Rom. 2:4). It is the mercy, grace, and love shown by the witness which they will attribute to God, because; they reason, God has produced that love in the witness.

Many people don’t listen because they don’t think God is relevant in the society. And they don’t want to waste their time. Most reasons for not listening have to do with demons working in peoples lives. The main problem to belief is getting people to listen, in order to hear. To listen one must be open to finding truth. If one assumes he has the truth already, he is fooling himself. He will not be open. Jesus said it is not the healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. He said, “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners.” (Mark 2:17).

What christians need to do is *pray that God the Holy Spirit will break the demonic bonds which prevent the Natural Man from listening.* Contrary to the belief of some, the Holy Spirit will influence but not to the degree of insuring or preventing ones salvation.¹

On the other hand personal sin, family troubles, sickness, cancer, accidents; sin in general tends to make some people come to the end of themselves. They may need someone like the God of the Universe in their life to solve their problems. These may listen and hear (Matt. 13:16; Rom. 11:8).

Other individuals may be against God. God says don’t caste your pearls before swine (Matt. 7:6). These may never open themselves to Godly concepts. If they don’t, they pay the price.

For any and all of these, you can pray that God will soften their heart. This is the first

opportunity for God and godly men to work together in a potential believer’s life. That is; we pray for them (Matt. 5:34). We pray that God might rebuke the evil one to open their eyes and ears (Luke 10:17; Rom. 10:1).

Many times christians expect to much from the Natural Man. Belief and faith are big steps in a persons life. It means abandoning much of what one has thought of as normal, right and ok.

Love and encourage the potential christian. Do not judge the persons past; it might be forgiven. Just help the person walk in whatever “light” he will accept (John 1:7). Tell him what God has done for you. Loving him, and letting him see you loving God, is the best you can do.

Central Purpose Implications about Beginning Believers

Christianity should be about *demonstrating the love of God* to beginning christians. That teaches them to love God by copying to others what was done to them, and for them.

Christianity should be about *cooperating with God; believing in faith* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that in *faith in Him* is life everlasting. And, that one must *accept Him as savior* and *be baptized* to demonstrate your commitment to Him.

We need to instill commitment to *cooperation with God* in allowing Him to manage the beginners life by example.

That *one must clean up one’s life.* And if one cooperates, that causes God to make one’s life better than it was before cooperating. They can, then, appreciate Him for that. That also gives them feedback that God will do more for them in response to their further acts of faith. That makes them feel good about cooperating further. These values must be actively taught, in church preaching, in Sunday school, and in home groups.

“Belief”

Belief is the intellectual acceptance of certain facts concerning God. As one allows himself to be exposed to God’s “light,” the Holy Spirit will demonstrate the contrast between the “good” of God, and the “evil” of the world and

1. See Chapter Six, Three Possible Theologies

of his own heart. This contrast is what tells him that he wants God's blessings and doesn't want Hell. The conviction of perception is produced by the Holy Spirit.

The following are the basics that one must accept. They may not be accepted all at one time. In fact, they will probably be accepted over time. But they all must be accepted to be regenerated (born again) by the Holy Spirit.

- * That God exists - Gen. 1:1, 26
- * That God rewards those that diligently seek Him - Heb. 11:6
- * That God loves you - John 3:16
- * That God wants to have a personal relationship with you - John 17:3
- * That God will take to Heaven those that love Him - I Thess. 4:16-17
- * That God will banish to Hell those who do not love Him - Matt. 10:28
- * That man is separated from God - Hebrews 7:26, See Chapter Three, Man's Separation from God
- * That man is his own boss - Proverbs 14:12, See Chapter Three, Sovereignty
- * That man is a sinner - Romans 3:23, See Chapter Three, Man's Sovereignty and his Fallen Nature
- * That Jesus Christ is the only provision for love and fellowship with God - John 14:6; Romans 5:8
- * That Jesus died on the cross to provide forgiveness of my sins - Matt. 26:28
- * That we must individually accept Jesus Christ as savior of our soul - John 1:12, Romans 10:9-10
- * That we must turn away from our sinful ways and embrace God's ways - Acts 17:30
- * That we need God's management of our life - Rev. 3:17-18
- * That we must individually accept God as manager of our life - Proverbs 3:5-6; Jeremiah 29:11
- * That our job is to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and everything else will be added unto us; by God's excellent management of our life - Matt. 6:33, Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and

knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him." (Rev. 3:20) This means everyone, not just the elect.

The opening of the door, is the opening of the door of your heart. God only requires that you cooperate with Him. If you will go two steps with Him, He will go three steps with you. "O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him." (Psalm 34:8)

The things above are what a man must believe. After becoming aware of these things, a man must cooperate with the prompting of the Holy Spirit to *act* upon this knowledge.

Central Purpose Implications to People of Faith

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and your neighbor as yourself. We must retrain ourselves to view that mandate as our highest priority. All activities should lead to those ends. Everything we do must revolve around this mandate.

Christianity should be about demonstrating personal cooperation with God; such that God manages one's own life; that is, we depend on Him to make our life successful. Cultivating the relationship with God causes more appreciation for God. It also causes Him to appreciate you more, such that He will reveal Himself more. Cooperation through relationship, causes all levels of love between Jesus and Man (John 15:4-5). Then, while cooperating, we must communicate that we are cooperating, such that others will see the good example.

Beginners in the faith, need to hear about how people of faith are cooperating with God in their lives. This means leaders need to make it popular via testimonies about how God is working in people's lives. A testimony might relate how the person had a great financial need. And how the family trusted God to meet the need, and how there was no known way the need would be met. But just in time, God came through to meet the need in an extraordinary way. Testimonies of God's love are extremely important to the spiritual health of the Christian

individual and church.

It seems that church leaders don't take advantage of this spiritual resource because they may feel there is not enough testimonies around. And, maybe there is not many during these spiritually lean days. Leaders must promote activities which encourage people to trust in faith. Leaders need to be creative in doing so.

Being creative is what is so special about loving God and people. We need to encourage creative expression of love for God. We need to encourage creative expression of love for our brothers and sisters. We need to encourage creative expression of love to the unbeliever.

This means we need to find creative ways to bless God! This could be done through blessing individuals personally, like the pastor, and other leaders; honor them because they guard your souls (I Tim. 5:17 with Heb. 13:17).

Teaching Individual Faith

Faith is believing those facts to the degree, that you will act on that belief. Your first act of faith may be to thank Jesus for forgiving your sin and express your intention to follow Him. It could go something like this:

“Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. Thank You for dying on the cross to forgive my sins. I open the door of my life and accept You as my savior and Lord. Thank you for giving me the promise of eternal life. Take control of my life make me successful and make me the kind of person You want me to be.”

The second step of faith is to be baptized (Acts 2:38). It is the confirmation of your confession of faith; believing and acting on that belief. It is the first thing Jesus did (Matt. 3:15; Mark 1:9; Luke 3:21). Being *baptized* based on ones confession of faith will certainly make God take notice (Luke 15:10). It is a start. From then on, it is one issue of faith after another to deal with.

Faith is Variable

There has been some question about how faith

works. Some scriptures suggest that faith is a gift from God. But they are in reference to the spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12:9). Some other scriptures suggest faith comes by hearing and the Word (Rom. 10:17) such that something in the person causes faith.

Calvinists would have us believe all faith is from God alone, and has nothing to do with what a man thinks for himself. Someone, coming from a Calvinistic perspective, has said that the Holy Spirit gives out faith, but sometimes we don't trust; however, faith is there in the background just waiting to be exercised. I guess, somewhere along the line, in some unknown way, God touches the person such that the faith is initialized and exercised.

I have a real hard time believing in the God alone explanation. Let's look at the case in point, Gen. 17:17. The angel of the Lord was telling Sarah and Abraham, God would give them a son.

“Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?’”

Their reaction suggests they thought the idea was ludicrous. Does this mean they had faith but did not trust at the time of the news from the angel? Does the faith come from God which was resting in the back of their minds, just waiting to be exercised? Then, why did they laugh? Did God touch them in some unknown way; and where there was scorn, now there was faith? This does not sound like the way people really think.

It sounds like Abraham was being honest. The verse says his reaction came from his heart. It seems like he really thought that was a crazy notion. But later, they did what was necessary to produce the child Isaac. Is it possible that as they thought it over, they changed their minds, and decided to believe God and cooperate? That later, they gained the faith that they really didn't have while listening to the news? I think so.

A Review of how we think

The soul; that is, our mind, will and emotions

are the part that make us *like* other individuals. If we looked at the soul in computer terms, our “mind” would be analogous to the central processor which actually does the reasoning. Into the mind stream inputs which are weighed in the process of forming an opinion or making a decision. We have our logic section that suggests what is reasonable. We have our long and short term memories that provide data which is applicable to the decision at hand. We have our sensors which provide inputs regarding the world around us at the time. We also have emotions that have an effect on the present decision and / or acceptance of data as facts.

That portion of the soul, the so called “will”, in my humble opinion, is a decision process; not an entity, which weighs the viable alternatives of any formulation or decision question. Each alternative has more or less important aspects, which in-effect, apply pressure on ones decision-maker (will) toward a decision for that particular alternative.

When we are listening to, and have to interpret, what someone else says or does, we take it all in and accept or reject the ideas as our perception filters the data.

Our perception is mostly governed by previously accepted information about life. That is, a person interprets each new piece of data in light of what he has previously accepted. This process tends to lend stability to one's life and yet it allows a person to discard old data and put new data in its place. This includes old beliefs replaced by new beliefs. This includes pagan beliefs replaced by Godly beliefs. This is the process by which God changes peoples thinking.

In addition to thoughts generated by our own mind, the Holy Spirit and demonic spirits also provide external inputs which affect our decisions.² They come in the form of thoughts that appear as our own. One of the major issues of the christian life is how do we tell the Holy Spirit's whisper, from a demonic whisper, from our own generated thoughts? The answer to that question is: we discern between the whis-

pers by comparing them to the scripture. The scripture is the truth. *This is a major reason for learning the scripture; to prevent deception.*

The comparison of Scripture to other ideas produces a contrast between the two. The contrast between the two is highlighted by the Holy Spirit which convicts concerning sin, righteousness and judgement. But the demonic spirits do the same thing; they try to persuade men to think and do against God.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). The Holy Spirit works in our mind to produce the godly point of view which is gained by a cooperative effort between the man and God working in our heart. The Holy Spirit counteracts the inputs received by the demonic powers.

Whatever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). This means that whatever thinking patterns incorporate ideas of faith; are true and godly, but the patterns which do not originate in faith are false and ungodly. When any thought pattern comes into the mind, it is compared to whatever thought references are available and applicable in memory. Some reference patterns may have a biblical origin, and others may have a non-biblical one. The Holy Spirit and demonic spirits try to persuade the person to accept their respective ideas. Usually this all takes place very quickly. The result is the person comes to some conclusion regarding the thoughts which were under consideration. That conclusion then becomes a part of the memory of the person. Eventually, thousands of conclusions in memory become part of the persons personality, and spirit. This is how people think.

Faith is variable because more faith or less faith comes from which voice you follow. If you take the word of demons speaking, you will move away from Jesus. If you take the word of the Holy Spirit speaking, you will move toward Jesus. If your overall thinking patterns gravitate toward Jesus, He will have more effect on your life than demons. If your overall thinking patterns gravitate away from Jesus, He will have less effect on your life than do the demons. These forces cause your faith to be variable.

2. Luke 12:12; John 14:16,17,26; Acts 5:3,4; I Kings 22:20-23

The issue is who will you believe? Most people don't realize these forces are even acting upon them. They just hear all the voices as their own various different thoughts.

Here is some insight from the interpretation of the parable of the sower, Luke 8:11-15.

(11) "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. (12) "And those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so they may not believe and be saved."

These people hear the truth but don't necessarily accept it. The devil speaks to their mind saying things which demean the word, and lobbies against believing. He tries to get their mind off of spiritual things, and onto the things of the flesh, world or pride (Rom. 8:6); which causes them to forget the word. This means they don't think about the things of the spirit which might produce life and peace. Thus, they reject or ignore, and the word is gone from their mind and life.

(13) "And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away."

These folks want to believe, and maybe do for a while, but have no support system which they need to get spiritual food. They have no foundation on which to sustain their new belief. The Holy Spirit has little truth to use to convict of sin, righteousness and judgement. They have little knowledge of, and closeness, to Jesus to sustain the onslaught of thoughts of the flesh, the world and pride. As a result, the whispers of the evil one lead them back into the temptations, which they find comfortable from before. Over time, they have less and less of Jesus to counteract the increasing temptations of the flesh, the world and their pride. They cannot stand against the demons and fall victim to the old life of slavery to sin, sickness and death.

(14) "And the seed which fell among

the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity."

These are nominal Christians who believe to some degree but are more interested in the ball games, climbing the corporate ladder, and worries about their stocks, bonds and 401k's. They don't seem to have time for Christ. The problem is that with little fellowship with Christ; the flesh, the world and the pride of ownership crowds out the Holy Spirit from their mind and heart. This results in depending on themselves, and not depending on God. They are the long term babes in Christ that should be more mature. These people usually have children who don't know God because they are not committed to teaching them about God. These might be called "lukewarm Christians."

(15) "And the seed in the good ground, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance."

These are the people who believe, cooperate with the Holy Spirit and draw closer to Jesus over time. With their commitment to Lordship and Jesus managing their life, the devil's influence weakens and the Holy Spirit's influence becomes stronger. They are freed from slavery to sin and become slaves to righteousness. They cooperate and the Holy Spirit teaches, convicts and loves. They see God's mercy, grace and love. They tell others about God because they are sold out to God themselves.

Over time, a body of data is accumulated in the form of life memories and experiences. In the end, what we accept as truth now, puts pressure on our decision-maker for succeeding opinions and decisions. Thus, practices of faith promote more faith, non-practice of faith permits removal of faith by the evil one (Matt. 13:12). Over time, faith or lack of it, affects your spirit.

The spirit (heart) of a man is the disposition of the soul as measured by the nature of one's life

memories. Is he a "health nut"; or "an old softy"; or maybe "an animal lover"; these are examples of dispositions of the heart. It is the spirit of a man which makes each individual *unique*.

Now, the "spirit" of a man, in the Biblical sense, is the character of those life memories with respect to God. Does the character of my life experiences reflect the nature of God and oneness with God? Or is my image more like an animal? Is it the character of my life to put God before self, or vice versa? Am I committed to God or committed to self? Have I trusted God in faith for other issues before? Do I have a track record with trusting God? Did I trust Him before on some hard issue? Then maybe it is easier to trust for the current issue.

For example, I trusted Jesus to be savior of my soul when I was twelve years old. But I didn't trust Him to be Lord, or manager, of my life until I was thirty five. What was going on in between? The Holy Spirit was using the time to show me my need to trust Him with managing my life. This demonstrates the same phenomenon that Abraham and Sarah demonstrated. That just because they believed God to move from Haran, doesn't mean they will have the faith to believe for a son from a ninety year old mother and a one hundred year old father.

Increased faith, comes through believing one more time, what God wants you to do *now*. You cooperate, assuming God will do what He says He will do. Even if it sounds impossible. Each time you take God at His word, and He comes through, it reinforces your ability to believe Him further. This reinforcement is the Holy Spirit's part. This is the mechanism that He uses to give you the faith which He wills. But you have to cooperate with Him in the exercises. Some people do, and some people don't. This is the basis on which the Holy Spirit issues out all the spiritual gifts (I Cor. 12:7-11); not just the gift of faith. But remember the demonic spirits are speaking to your mind also. The spirit you heed is the one who guides your life. So, turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance, for sure. Exercise your faith.

Practice becomes experience. Experiencing God opens one's eyes of "knowing" just like the little kid who burned his fingers. Increased faith or decreased faith is taught in the verses surrounding the parable of the sower. See Matt. 13:12, the context is godly knowledge from which faith comes.

"For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."

The variableness of faith is partially dependent on the variableness of godly knowledge. If godly knowledge varies, as the above verse suggests, then faith varies also. Some days you are closer to God than others. Some days you succumb to temptations that you may not on other days. Conversely, some days you would be strong against the same temptations on some days that you indulge on other days.

Learning to Allow God's Management

Allowing God to manage your life is you doing your part and God doing His part. That is the essence of living where God manages your life.

You can manage your life more or less. You will do a bad or mediocre job. He will do a great job. You have a limited point-of-view. God has an unlimited view into the past, present and future. This makes Him wiser than you.

The situation is that God has allowed you to choose. You can go your own way; or you can go His way. If you are smart, you will allow Him to manage your life. In these very trying times, God managing is especially important.

What most people miss is that God really loves you and wants your best. Like any GOOD parent, loving you involves your discipline. But as soon as you encounter discipline, you tend to bail out. You see the discipline as God not doing a good job, or things not going well, or life out of God's control (Heb. 12:11).

The problem, is your point-of-view about God managing. Everything that happens to you

is under God's control.³ The whole idea here is you have to trust God. You must assume that He is working in your life *even when it doesn't appear so*. You must assume He is managing your life properly even if it appears He is not. This is the meaning of faith.

You *must* assume God is a good parent. If you don't, you won't be able to trust Him. God is the owner and operator of the Universe. He loves you. He has the power to make happen whatever He wants. He will take care of you until your time to go and be with Him.

The biggest problem you will ever have is believing, even though you are a sinner, that God is still on your side. God takes care of you but usually it is right at the last minute before you actually have the need. He does that to build your faith in Him. If you need food for dinner, you may not get it until you sit down to thank God for the meal. That's right, you thank Him for it even though it has not arrived yet. That is faith.

God's part is to supply what you need and manage your life.

Here is your future, all decreed, set in stone.

"I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare, and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

You want to know your future, as a believer, that's it. Insured by declaration of the God of the Universe for your particular life; future success. How God does it, is not for you to know, it's His business. It is your business to cooperate.

First, trust God in everything. He works for you all the time. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean *NOT* (emphasis mine) on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path." (Proverbs 3:5-6) If you are trusting, whatever happens to you **IS** God's will for your life. Nothing is out of His control. All is in His control. The hardest thing to do is believe that.

Ask God to help you believe Him.

Second, trust God in everything. "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who are trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness." (Heb. 12:11) Trials and troubles are not for your destruction; but for your training. Remember you are taking on the divine nature; and cultivating future success.

Third, did I mention that you need to trust God in everything. I guess I did.

Fourth, and most important of all, trust God in everything. God will take care of you.

"Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. "For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. "Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone? "Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him?" (Matt. 7:7-11)

This is God's part; to make happen to you what will be best for your training. Don't bail out, no matter what. Everything that happens to you is His will for your life. The next paragraph is your part.

It is your job to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and if you do, all these things; food, shelter and clothes, will be added to you (Matt. 6:33). Not just these things, but much more He will give, because He loves you.

What about if Christians have been taken away by God in the rapture already, maybe He doesn't care about us anymore. That thought is hogwash! It is straight out of the pit of Hell. God cares about you even more than before. Besides there is another rapture for you near the Second Coming of Christ (Rev. 14:14-16).

3. Read the story of Job to see this.

During the seven year Tribulation, more people will come to love God than in any other period of man's history. The pressure is on. If you read bible history, it was always during the periods of discipline that people turned to God.

Trusting God is what this 2000 year period is all about. God is asking you to trust Him to manage your life. Will you do it?

Your part is to seek Him first. His part is to provide for you first, and make your life successful.

Your part is to appreciate Him working on your behalf. His part is to provide for your needs.

Your part is to accept, with gladness, whatever happens to you, even death. His part is to provide for your future; life and needs now, and Heaven later. If you would like to start serving Him right now, see Appendix B.

One of the biggest problems for an individual to overcome is: to not lean on your own understanding. You must allow God to cultivate dependence on Him in your life. That is the meaning of cooperation. Since we have managed our own life for so many years, it is hard to give that up.

In reality, first we give God management of our life for awhile, then we take it back. We catch our selves doing our own thing, and we give Him back management. We have to consciously practice dependence. We have to consciously practice just doing *our* job; seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let God do his job of providing, and making our life full and successful. That is, not being overly concerned or worrying about it.

As a person of faith, God has a whole curriculum of lessons for you to learn. These lessons are given in II Peter 1:1-11. He also tells you why you should learn them. These lessons help God change you from having an "evil" nature to having a "good" nature; like God's nature. Peter calls God's nature the "divine nature."

The objective of allowing yourself to be changed (to cooperate) is so that when we get to Heaven we will be enough like God that we are

compatible with Him. Its like a married couple, they need to be compatible with each other to have a happy marriage. We need to be compatible with God to have a happy relationship in Heaven.

The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and good conscience and a sincere faith (I Tim 1:5).

If we just take responsibility for doing what He asks, the Holy Spirit will accomplish the changing of our heart to the divine nature. This is what it means to love God; doing what He asks.

Managed Cooperation today, is similar to following Jesus in His day. You walk with Him from day to day, and you do what He asks as if He were standing beside you; telling you in person. Only instead of Him telling you directly, the Holy Spirit tells you from knowing the word.

God does the management, we just follow Jesus. He is responsible for our success. This is Managed Cooperation Theology where the rubber meets the road.

"Knowing" is acting in faith for a long enough time, that God feeds back to you confirmation of the truth of your faith. The confirmation usually comes in the form of God doing unusual things over and over again. Things like, in the case of a poor man, praying for bread, and God providing money from where none is expected.

When this kind of thing happens over and over again, God becomes real by experience. Just like the little kid who burned his fingers.

One of the great joys of the christian life is seeing God's hand. Seeing God's hand is the confirmation that He is alive and working in your life; and knows you personally. It demonstrates that God is real. We need that confirmation!

These are the implications of the Central Purpose for the Creation. And, if we adopt these suggestions, that sets us up to be one in the bond of love; with the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

Unity in the bond of love

Unity in Theology brings unity in the churches. If we can get together on the essentials of christianity, and agree on what Jesus was trying to accomplish in His disciples, then we have a chance of affecting our society today. We all agree on the gospel; that is, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. We all agree on the goal of making disciples. What we don't agree on is where to go from there.

Some churches use ritual and form to try to unify their people. Some churches use many meetings and lots of social gatherings to unify their people. These methods work to some degree, but are inadequate to truly unify. Jesus is the center of our life. He is the only one who can truly unify. We must gather around God. We must gather in His name around Him. He needs to be the focus of our attention for a significant period of time; at each meeting.

Unity in the bond of love was the concept of Jesus. In His high priestly prayer to the Father, John 17:22-23, He said:

“And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.”

This is the common bond which I experienced in, “My Encounter With Jesus” story I told in Chapter One. These kind of experiences we need to feel the presence of God. To experience His presence is good. But that is not to say experience takes the place of the Word of God. Experience supplements the reality of the Scripture. Experience does not take the place of Scripture. We desperately need to experience the reality of God in our culture.

This means that when the body of Christ, the church, is united, the world comes to know that Jesus is sent by Father God. The world also comes to know that the Father loves them. **This is what unity of the body, does for the cause of Christ. It causes the world to know the truth**

via the church.

At the present time, the church at large is fragmented, there is very little unity. And, it causes the world to believe that the christian God is of little consequence in life. God must be very grieved. This must be changed. Unity of the church at large, starts with unity between an individual and God. Have you cleared away all sin between you and God by asking any needed forgiveness? Are you right with God? Are you in fellowship with God? Do you love Him?

Unity between individuals and God

Eph. 4:1-6: Paul, the Apostle, calls for the unity of individuals with each other and God.

“I, THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one-another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

This means we all need to be unified together; individuals, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We need to be unified under the influence of the Holy Spirit who is our common bond. We need to be one in the bond of love. There is a song with those very words which we would do well to sing often. We need to be unified like the group I mentioned in Chapter One, My Encounter with Jesus. It reminds us of our common ground. The world system exalts individuality, Christ exalts unity.

Unity of the individual with Christ is first and foremost. Make sure no sin comes between you and God; keep short accounts. Confess your sin to God; He accepts you the way you are. He can take it, He loves you like a son or daughter. When you are honest with yourself, you

grow. When you are not honest with yourself, you delay and inhibit any growth that might come.

Draw close to God, and He will draw close to you (James 4:8). Personally, you can do this by reading and studying your Bible. Listen to worshipful music, listen to instructional CD's. Allow yourself into a small group bible study. Allow yourself to be exposed to uplifting seminars. Allowing yourself to move toward God, produces appreciation and love in you. The Holy Spirit connects with you as you cooperate. The two of you working together against demonic forces produces unity between you.

Unity in the Local Church Service

What needs to be different, is our point of view regarding God's attitude about *His* wanting disciples. God wants people to be saved and love Him in the worst way. But He won't compromise His integrity about faith to get them to do so. When we don't get results in church, we tend to think its ok. It appears as if He doesn't want to use us to make disciples today. This notion is compounded by the existing Calvinistic theology that says, God alone saves all people. We reason that if God saves alone, He probably doesn't want to save anybody from our church this particular day. So we go on down the road of life deceived to some degree.

What would the church look like if the orthodox theology called for men to cooperate with God, drawing man in to work with God to make disciples, love God, and love our neighbor? If we really believed God was eager for us make disciples, and eager to work in men's lives to help them to become lovers of God, wouldn't that make a difference in our attitudes about church? Of course!

Because belief and salvation are a work of *both God and man together*, man's role in the process, takes on an importance not felt in a hundred years. We would say, God is actually looking to men, to **us**, to do the reconciling of men to God by faith (II Cor. 5:19).

Pastors must speak with authority assuring the congregation that the Holy Spirit, the very

presence of God **is** in their midst (Matt. 18:20). The pastor must accentuate that point. It is necessary to convince the congregation that the Spirit is present when they don't see Him, or don't sense Him.

This does not mean believing that the Holy Spirit *might* be there. This is not praying that the Holy Spirit *will* be there. That is not faith. We must believe the scripture that He **is** there; ready and waiting. We must promote an atmosphere which welcomes the Holy Spirits working in our lives.

Although the scripture says, where two are more are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst (Matt.18:20), nearly no one believes that. What people **do** believe is: its just a church service. Nothing more is going on. Satan has fostered this idea, it plays right into his hand. *We must believe the face of scripture that He is there!* If we don't believe the face of all scripture, its no wonder we can't get christianity right. If we don't believe the face of scripture, we have nothing else to provide truth and guidance. If we don't believe the face of scripture, we might as well go home and shut our mouths. We need to stop this business of picking and choosing what we will and won't believe! Its killing us.

The implication of the Lord actually being in our midst, through the Holy Spirit, can be life changing. For those with issues needing to be solved by doing business with God, His presence is essential. It makes all the difference in the world to everyone, when they really believe God is there. If by faith, church leaders assume He **is** there, it causes them to set up their service as if He **is** there in the flesh. This is the attitude needed to conduct a service where leaders are expecting the movement of the Holy Spirit to appear. That is faith!

Pastors must invite the congregation to confess their sins, make a commitment to Christ, be committed to holiness, fellowship with small home groups, and be involved in ministry. *When pastors make these invitations, the Holy Spirit then has opportunity to convict individuals of whatever they need to change.* Without such

invitations to action, people are not motivated to change and be different. It is too easy to hide behind silence. Billy Graham's invitation is what made him so successful; people were faced with the decision to go forward or stay in their seat. The Holy Spirit was working overtime in hearts.

With these changes, it is not just leaders expecting God to do what they should do. It is *godly men* setting up the stage of God's playhouse by preparing the heart of men to receive the wonderfulness of the Holy Spirit. **We should be giving to people all the tools they need to form opinions and make decisions about God; and that action, sets the stage for the Holy Spirit to do His convicting work in their heart.** The Holy Spirit convicts but the person affected, actually makes the decision to follow the Holy Spirit's conviction. This is how God and man work together toward loving God. This is not Arminianism. This is Managed Cooperation Theology. Many times the person does not follow the conviction of the Holy Spirit. But that's ok. Our job is to make opportunities that the Holy Spirit can use to convict people's heart.

God is alive in our midst, and He always was, but now, with these attitude changes, we see Him in our midst because of the decisions made, and lives changed! Results make our hearts soar like an eagle! God is blessing visibly! Hallelujah!! We are serving by faith once again.

The pastor can preach, the congregation can witness, the missionaries can evangelize, and we get results! The Holy Spirit will ignite holy passions for God like never before. People come to know the Lord, get baptized, get active, grow in holiness; everyone wants to have a part. When people believe they are truly in partnership with God Almighty; that He needs their personal service in a righteous cause, in a work that is worthwhile for eternity, they feel honored and blessed to be a part of it. When there is success, which brings hope, people want to be involved with a winning team.

But God's role takes on an even bigger sig-

nificance. When I commit to Him fully, He feeds back to me the reality that He is there. I feel His presence. I feel His love. He works in people's lives miraculously because of their increased faith.

We need to see God in order to be excited and enthusiastic about the job of making disciples. However, in order for God to work in the congregation, we, and especially church leaders, must believe the Holy Spirit is moving within the congregation seeking people who He can convict of sin, righteousness and judgement.

Seeing Him by faith is the only way possible to see Him. People who have much faith get more faith. People who have little faith have theirs taken away (Mark 4:24-25). This principle is a two edged sword. On the positive side, one can gain faith fast if it is exercised but if not exercised, it melts away quickly. The lesson is, keep your faith active. Don't neglect it (Heb. 2:3-4).

We are looking at new life for individuals, and for the larger group, the church. We must **unite** our individual selves with God by practicing our love for Him. We must increase our worship time.

We need extended worship in church to adore Jesus. We need to sing with our hearts open to the kind of music that is worshipful; psalms read, hymns sung, and spiritual songs meditated upon (Eph. 5:19). Many of the songs played today do not elicit a worshipful spirit. We need to change that. It is great to "enter His gates with thanksgiving in our heart" but once inside the gates, so to speak, we should promote a worshipful spirit. Christian music which is not worshipful is just entertainment. God loves to hear our worship but His Spirit needs to fill our heart to connect with Him fully. This usually takes more than a few minutes, a more extended time is needed to develop and maintain worship in the service.

We need the Word of God read in open service, to honor God's presence. To thank Him for His presence. To read the Word with reverence is to honor the Word. Honoring the Word, honors the God whose Word it is from. Reading

the Word aloud was done in the time of Ezra, the priest (Nehemiah 8:1-8). He was standing above the people so they could see him clearly. Ezra had a podium which he set the book of Law upon. He opened it, and the people stood up. He and others read from the book the whole day. Since I am advocating loving God in deed, I believe we need to honor God in our church services by showing we honor God's Word. We should read the Bible portion which is applicable for the day from the podium while the audience stands to their feet. This is honoring to God, and His Word of life. This practice instills honor and love for God in the youth and beginning christian. Ezra honored God. We should so honor God and His Word these days.

We need testimonies of God's movement via the Holy Spirit. This can come in the form what God has done in a life years back, or what God has done more recently. In the church service, sometimes this could be five minutes for a more recent anecdote, or ten to fifteen minutes for a more dramatic, life changing testimony. These kinds of moments are vastly enriching to youth and beginning christian. These kinds of moments are what removes the humdrum of everyday church for some people. It makes church interesting and meaningful. I believe we should lengthen the service to an hour and a half. This will give ample time for extended worship and enriching activities.

We need special music and drama. Special music and drama draws the unbeliever to come to church just for the interest factor, if not for God. Special music and drama makes church, to some degree, a show. People respond to that; it peaks their interest long enough to become acquainted with Jesus. I used to belong to a large church who did that. All the hype and activities, got people interested in God. God was somebody! He was glorified in that assembly. Many came, at first, just for the activities. But later became influenced by the mercy, grace and love of God. The activities kept people around long enough to become acquainted with the goodness of God which they later wanted in their life.

Some have argued that such light hearted, entertaining activities, are too much like a show. The implication is the practice is irreverent. I suggest that if the program is such that Jesus would enjoy it, no problem. And if it appeals to people while uplifting Jesus Christ in the process; what's wrong with that? This is an act of love for unbelievers, new believers, and godly men of faith alike. We all enjoy the entertainment side of well done, godly, uplifting productions. God is not a cosmic killjoy. Sometimes people tend to be so.

We need special teaching of the Word; special guest speakers. This is not to say that the local pastor is in any way inadequate. Special speakers could come in the form of missionaries to foreign lands, professors of seminaries on tour with some special relevant message. Usually a well known personage of spiritual significance is appropriate, and draws a big crowd. These kinds of activities say God is significant.

We need people praying for the church service, during the church service; that the Holy Spirit will move in peoples hearts at the times of decision opportunity. Prayer is needed for the pastor to have words and his heart filled with the Holy Spirit, to deliver the message that God wants him to give; even if he had something else in mind. Prayer is needed to uphold the worship pastor to sing, praise and play to the glory of God during his time to lead.

We need a special prayer service time where everybody prays for the destruction of Satan's strongholds and fortresses which have been built in loved one's lives. It could go something like this. Announce in the service that everyone who has a loved one or friend needing prayer, write the name on a piece of paper and it would be collected in the offering baskets. These would be brought to the front and emptied into one container. The elders would come forward, and someone would read a prayer similar to the one in Chap. Eight, Prayer for the Lost and Oppressed. Everybody would pray as the prayer was read. This prayer will help destroy the influence of the demonic powers on the loved ones of the congregation. The

prayer which was read would be made available to everyone at an information table for use at home.

We need the pastor to implore people to be reconciled to God during a time of invitation. Billy Graham really got it right when He asked people to come forward to make a commitment to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. The song, “Just as I am,” was the perfect introduction to coming. It helped the heart to be soft to the gentle nudge of the Holy Spirit.

The pastor and leaders of the local church cannot predict who will want to make a commitment to God or when. But they do anyway; therefore, assuming an invitation is not needed. I believe it is imperative that the pastor take the last five minutes of his sermon on Sunday to offer an invitation to come forward and pray with someone, or make a commitment to Christ. This is a tremendous benefit to the heavy hearted, and to the person on the verge of making a commitment to Jesus at the prompting of the Holy Spirit. We are remiss in loving God if we don't offer opportunities to be reconciled to God.

Some have said that if such emotional occasions are offered, that our christianity is too emotional; as if emotion is negative. Feeling passionate about our love for God is good; not bad. The people who say such things are also the people who tend to believe the sovereignty of God is more important than the love of God. This is unfortunate. Emotion is a big part of the passion which people feel for God. But on the other hand, emotionalism overdone is out of balance also, and must be tempered with the prudence of sober thoughtfulness about Scripture.

We need to come in contact with the experience of His suffering occasionally, just to appreciate what He did. This could be done by showing clips from the movie, “The Passion of Christ,” and the pastor speaking on the subject. Maybe, a scene could be set on stage with a cross or whipping post appropriately decorated with the reminders of His suffering; the pastor speaking of His love for us all. Afterwards, an invitation to pray with someone about sins need-

ing forgiveness would be in order. Perhaps a communion time would be appropriate after such a scene.

We need to serve communion often to remember His sacrifice. People need to *experience* appropriately, the forgiveness associated with the body and blood of Jesus. It could be simple as two elders standing at the front, one holding the bread and one holding the cup. As people file past, they take the bread, and the elder says, “The body of our Lord broken for you.” And, as they continue to the elder holding the cup, the person dips his bread into the cup, as the elder says, “The blood of our Lord shed for you.” The person departs to his seat and partakes as he or she goes.

We need to practice as many other appropriate activities as creative people can invent. These activities uplift and unify the body. All these activities express our love to God.

Unity Between Leaders and the Congregation

In the thirty or so years I have been in various churches, I have seen a reluctance on the part of elders and other leaders to draw in members of the congregation to share in the works of ministry. That is, you may see deacons not in charge of anything or responsible for much. Usually there is lots to be done, or could be done; but elders seem to be afraid, to some degree, of losing their control. So they hesitate to delegate. They hesitate to take on any more responsibility than is necessary. Thus, they don't need help in managing their respective responsibilities, if indeed they have any individual responsibilities. In short, there is a tendency to not share leadership. This may be attributed to overcautious thinking, fear of loss of control, no perceived need for more workers; maybe all of the above at one time or another.

It seems to me that if we have people willing to do the work of ministry, elders should be forward looking enough to plan goals, events and tasks such that the workers can be busy doing something worthwhile. If leaders don't, they are not asking Jesus what the church should do next. They are not leading properly.

There are lots of people around who are willing to do things. It seems to me, the leadership culture needs to change. Loving God and our neighbor is people using their gifts for the building up of the body. I perceive church leaders needing to do a better job of planning what can, and should be done; and then set about to *ask* people share in doing those jobs. That is the work of building up of the body in strength, and in numbers. One of the requirements however; is elders must delegate authority and responsibility; and, be sure and *ask* people to do the work of the ministry.

Unity Between Congregations.

Unity brings synergy. Unity of the Spirit of God with our spirit in large numbers of people creates a phenomenon known as synergy. When synergy is in present, it creates a sense of the Spirit that can be felt and experienced not found in a small group or in an individual.

One of the common ways we see this phenomenon is at the Super Bowl. There, you see fifty thousand fans yelling and screaming and rooting for their team. Synergy can be seen where someone or group starts the action called, “the wave;” where a group stands up, waves their arms, and sits down again. In the next section another group does the same. This same action goes around the stadium and it looks like a wave going around. Everybody works together to create this wave because its fun and contributes to the feeling of the spirit of the game. Its a part of the enjoyment of attending such events.

Another one of the positive ways we have seen the synergistic effect is with Promise Keepers. That was a great thing to experience. Fifteen thousand men worshipping their God in unison. It was a spark of the Holy Spirit too wonderful to behold. The atmosphere of the stadium was electric with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Another example is a Billy Graham crusade. He simply preaches Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The Holy Spirit uses the thousands singing to God which promotes the Holy Spirit to work

powerfully in the hearts of people. Singing, “Just as I am,” people pour out from their seats to confess their sins and make commitments to Christ. The synergy of thousands of christians together in unity, produces a collective spirit, in conjunction with the Holy Spirit, which can be experienced in no other way.

This kind of experience must be arranged by churches working together. It cannot be done by individual churches alone.

Its functions like this which get the attention of the whole city, and perhaps the whole country. That is when we become relevant to the nation.

This is possible if the Community Churches will work with the Methodist Churches, the Baptist Churches work with the Churches of Christ and similar alliances form to do great things for God; under the unity of the Spirit in the bond of love.

Expressions of Love to Unbelievers

I have talked about love for God, and how we might relate to Him as individuals; in a local church setting; and as congregations working together to accomplish a common goal. Now I want to offer some ideas about how we might love our neighbor as an individual one on one, and in group to group settings.

As an individual, one on one, we try to find opportunities to show the love of Jesus to each other. Jesus had an encounter with the woman at the well which is a good example. See John 4:6-26.

He equated water that quenched one’s thirst to “living water” that quenched the thirst of the soul. The analogy was an interesting way to lead into a conversation which had great significance to her family. We can also use creative ways to start conversations of great significance.

Around our home or anywhere, random acts of kindness demonstrate the kind of love Jesus had for people.

* You might see your next door neighbors trash can out on the street after its been dumped. Put it away in his yard for him. If it is out regularly, put it away every week for him. It may

produce an opportunity to tell him why you do it for him. That is, you are expressing to him that the God of the Universe loves him.

* Give a tip to your hair stylist. For some years, I have given my hair stylist a healthy tip. I don't have much money but she does a good job, and I know she appreciates it. We talk about spiritual things, and I know she sees God in the kindness of my tip.

* The next time you see a disheveled person, standing by a traffic light off a freeway exit, holding a shabby cardboard sign, give Him a few dollars in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, who is called Christ.

* The next time another driver tries to beat you out of a parking spot at the mall, let him have the spot, and give them a blessing as well.

* If your mother-in-law starts to give you a hard time about something, say nothing, walk over to her, give her a big hug, and in the sweetest way you can muster, tell her you love her. This is very disarming. She may never recover.

* Hold doors open for people. Most times they appreciate it.

* Call and or write to people who have shared a need. Many times, their need causes their heart to be soft toward God. You can step in as God's ambassador (II Cor. 5:20).

These are some ways to minister to the people you meet every day. You must be on the look-out for such opportunities. The most important thing is try to be creative in how you love. You never know when someone will want to talk about spiritual things. All you have to do is be loving.

By group to group I mean the occasion where a group from the church will go to minister to a group in the world forum.

State fairs, local fairs, gatherings of local artists there are lots of opportunities to minister in groups where the love of Jesus can be presented.

* Buy small bottles of water that can be given away to people on a hot day. The bottle might have an invitation to the local church; with the address and times of the services on a label. The impetus to read the label could come

from the quote about Jesus being the living water, and a short explanation about what that quote means. The bottles are given away with an attitude of love, not wanting anything in return but just being a blessing to people. If persons want to talk about the church or spiritual things, certainly there should be people available to share answers.

* "Take a Spiritual I Q test" the sign would say. The booth was designed to ask people to answer questions about their knowledge of general religion and christianity; a five minute written test. It is graded and scored. The answers ranged from simple to difficult. When they were finished taking the test, a mature christian would sit down with the test taker and talk about the answers. There was enough variety in the test, to guess where the person was coming from spiritually. This exercise opened the door to many interesting and mutually beneficial conversations about Jesus. Many times people believed in reincarnation, or Mohammed; these conversations always turned to Christ sooner or later. There were people praying while the conversation lasted, and praying for God to bring open minded people to the booth. Several times in my experience unbelievers made commitments to Jesus, believers straying away from God recommitted their lives. Many people received blessing, a loving, listening ear and literature to enhance their interest in Jesus. This was a great way to make people feel comfortable while talking about God.

That is what we must accomplish. Try to find creative ways for people to feel comfortable while talking about spiritual things. Find ways that unbelievers can give themselves permission to talk about God.

The Theology That Jesus Taught and Practiced

Jesus started His public ministry by going to the synagogue and declaring who He was and what He would do in Israel. This defined who He was and what He was there to accomplish. He

went in, stood up to read, and someone handed Him the Isaiah scroll. He read Isaiah 61:1 and part of verse two.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. “He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

Then He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down.

This action demonstrates His purpose and goals in total. All of what He was about; and therefore what we should be about, is summed in that brief action. Later, in the foremost commandment (Mark 12:28-30), He made the summation of all that He was to accomplish. From the above, we can see His purpose in ministry consists of five goals.

- (1) To preach the gospel to the poor.
- (2) Proclaim release to the captives.
- (3) Recovery of sight to the blind.
- (4) Set free those who are downtrodden.
- (5) Proclaim the favorable year of the

Lord.

Matt. 9:35-36 - “And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. “And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were very distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.”

Throughout His ministry, we see that Jesus was moved by compassion to help His fellow man. This tells us we should be moved by compassion for our fellow man. That is, love God for who He is and what He has done for us, and us be moved by compassion to serve our neighbor.

Preaching the Gospel

Preaching the Gospel to the poor. This is not to say that the rich *could* not hear, but the rich seem to have no need or desire to hear (Luke 18:25;

Mark 2:17).

The Gospel, in the strictest sense, is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ; that which Billy Graham preaches. There is also the “Gospel of God’s Grace,”⁴ which is all that is involved with the calling of the church out of the world, and into the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13). The Gospel of God’s Grace is the practical application of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ to His church. It is the who, what, where, when, why, and how of the church. You could say it is the “rest of the story.”

Proclaiming Release to the Captives

Jesus came to proclaim release to the captives, and free them from sin, sickness and death. The proclamation, because it is a proclamation, means that all who are in Christ Jesus have the benefit of freedom from sin, sickness and death. That is the proclamation. As Christians today, we have the same imputed freedoms. But these freedoms must be appropriated by true faith; just as they were appropriated by faith in His day, under His ministry.

Sin Rom. 4:8 - “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account.”

Sin Rom. 6:6 - “knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Sin I John 1:7 - “but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Sickness Matt. 4:23 - “And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.”

4. Unger’s Bible Dictionary, “Gospel,” p. 420.

Sickness Matt. 10:1 - “And having summoned His disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”

Sickness Luke 13:11-12 - “And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. “when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your sickness.’”

Death (physical) Heb. 2:14b - “. . . that through death (His) He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

Death (physical) Mark 5:23 - “and entreated Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death; please come and lay Your hands on her, that she may get well and live.’”

Death (separation) John 5:24 - “Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

Death (separation) John 8:51 - “Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.”

Death (separation) Rom. 8:2 - “For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”

Jesus sets us free from the bonds which hold men in slavery to sin, sickness and death. Most of the time it is spiritual death; that is, physical separation from God which we are saved from; healing from physical death happens on occasion.

Jesus does the healing. Our Job, as mature Christians, is to set up physical conditions such

that men meet Jesus and ask for His healing. Setting up the conditions provides the context in which the Holy Spirit can work.

Recovery of sight to the Blind

Jesus healed peoples blindness in at least two ways; (1) physical blindness, restoring literal sight, and (2) spiritual blindness, giving spiritual insight to His disciples and others.

Physical Matt. 20:30-34 - “And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, ‘Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!’ “And the multitude sternly told them to be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!’ “And Jesus stopped and called them, and said, ‘What do you wish Me to do for you?’ “They said to Him, ‘Lord, we want our eyes to be opened.’ “And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they received their sight, and followed Him.”

Spiritual Luke 6:20-22 - The Beatitudes:

(1) Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

(2) Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied.

(3) Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

(4) Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and heap insults upon you and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

Spiritual John 9:39-41: “And Jesus said, ‘For judgement I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind.’ Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, ‘We are not blind too, are we?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you

say, We see; your sin remains.”

These are some of the concepts that Jesus used to cause men to be free from spiritual blindness. The gospels are full of these counter active concepts which He used to give people light. It is the contrast between the “light” and the concepts of blindness (former thinking patterns) which the Holy Spirit uses to enlighten the hearer.

Set free those who are downtrodden

Many people are sick because of more than a usual amount of demonic activity in their life. They may or may not be sick. They may or may not have visible signs of demonic activity in their life. But usually the downtrodden are oppressed by great infirmity, or mental, or emotional problems, and may have visible demonic activity in their life. They are very pitiful. But Jesus came to set them free from their chronic infirmities and the demonic oppression in their life.

Jesus healed three different types of oppression: (1) Casting out demons which inhabit people, (2) people having demons inside which cause sickness and, or deformity, and (3) dispelling demonic thinking and deception from people. Healing in this area could be termed; freeing their thinking to be different.

Casting out demons Luke 4:33-35 - “And there was a man in the synagogue possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Ha! What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who You are --- the Holy One of God!’ “And Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he went out of him without doing him any harm. And amazement came upon them all, and they began discussing with one another, and saying, ‘What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they

come out.’”

Jesus cast out demons which set people free from the tyranny of oppression imposed by the demons. This is one of the benefits of faith in Jesus that we might be free indeed from demonic power.

Demons causing sickness and deformity Luke 13:11-12 - “And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. “when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your sickness.’”

Freeing someone’s thinking Matt. 16:23 - “But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.’”

Peter must have been embarrassed to have committed such a faux pas. But Peter had a uncanny way of sticking his foot in his mouth.

In the kingdom of darkness; that is, the whole world system, which Satan controls, dwells the people who are captives to the various sins which are common to man. These people are firmly held in captivity by their sinful ideas of what is right, proper and good. This is not the “good” of God, but the good of what they determine; is good, and fair, and right in their own eyes. Because they have a sense of right, proper and good, not God’s standard, they are actually deceived and ignorant of God. Jesus came to free these from their prison of ungodly thinking and deception. He would transform them into the kingdom of Father’s dear Son.

Transferring Authority Matt. 10:1 - “And having summoned His disciples, He gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.”

These scriptures demonstrate another facet of

Jesus' ministry which illustrate His desire to bring freedom to people, such that they can appreciate and love God. I have written a study, given in Chapter Seven, on the subject of Spiritual Warfare. So I will not say more here except to say that Jesus cast out demons, and we can too.

Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord

To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, was to proclaim that a Jubilee was in effect (Lev. 25:10-18). He was referring to the day in which all debts are forgiven; all lands sold revert back to the original owners, and the slaves go free. Proclaiming the favorable year of the Lord was Him arriving. He came and started His ministry with the proclamation that, in effect, good news had arrived. See Mark 1:14-15.

“And after John (the baptist) had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.’ See also Matt. 4:17.

The proclaiming of the favorable year of the Lord is the announcement that Messiah had arrived. And indeed He had.

All of the personal ministry of Jesus can be summed in the words, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and your neighbor as yourself. For this is what He did for three and one-half years. He loved God in obedience to the ministry, the torture of the Cross, even through the not knowing of why the Father left Him near the end. He loved the Father anyway. He certainly loved all the people He healed through His compassion. Jesus is God, and God is love. Therefore, Jesus is love. That is what we must be about; both to God and our neighbor.

Pastors and Leaders Action

Now, pastors and leaders, its up to you. What will you do with what you have read and

learned? Will you continue to do what you have always done, or will you make some changes? Or better yet, will you think about what you have read, mull it over, pray and ask God what you should do? This involves such sweeping changes, you may want to give it lots of thought before doing anything.

I suggest you arrange for your whole leadership team to read this book. Talk over the concepts. Plan how these principles will apply to your congregation and / or denomination.