

Chapter Seven

What Christians Needs to Adopt

Changing your focus from making disciples to loving God and your neighbor.

What would the church look like if the orthodox theology called for men to cooperate with God drawing man in to love God and your neighbor? If we really believed He was eager for us to love Him, 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 God and church?

What needs to be different is our *point of view* regarding God's attitude about wanting disciples. God wants people to love Him in the worst way. But He won't compromise His integrity to get them to do so. We need to make disciples His way; that is, out of love for Him.

We need to see God in order to be excited and enthusiastic about the job of making disciples. In order for God to work in the congregation, we must believe the Holy Spirit **is** moving within the congregation seeking people who He can convict of sin, righteousness and judgement. We must promote an atmosphere which welcomes the Holy Spirits working in people's lives.

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.¹ 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.²

Pastors must speak with authority assuring the congregation that the Holy Spirit, the very presence of God **is** in their midst. They must speak as "the utterances of God." (I Peter 4:11)

Orthodox Theology

We must get away from a theology which obscures the real message of christianity. The foginess of Calvinism permits wrong attitudes about God's views of man, and permits wrong attitudes about witnessing.

The theology of the face of scripture must be adopted. This means our *faith* is based on what the scripture says when we read it and take it at the plain, non-complicated, straight-forward way of interpreting it. I believe the following are the main points of theology that we must adopt:

The Chief End of Man is to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your mind, and all your strength.

This means we learn to appreciate, worship, serve with gladness, and honor God with all the fervency, creativeness, and joy we can muster.

This is based on the idea that in both the Old and New Testaments this is taught as the greatest or foremost commandment.³ And if it is the foremost commandment it is the highest goal we

1. Matt. 13:12 "For whoever has, shall *more* be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall *taken away* from him."

Mark 4:25

2. Heb.2:3 "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"

3. Duet.6:5; 10:12; 11:13; Joshua 22:5; Matt.22:37; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27

can achieve.⁴ See Chapter Two.

All of our focus and direction must be to accomplish love for God in as many lives as possible.

Salvation is not the Reward of Going to Heaven

Sometimes people misuse the word “Salvation.” Many times people say they “have Salvation” when they refer to their reward in Heaven. When they say, “I am saved,” they think of their present condition with reference to going to Heaven. Technically, salvation is the process, by which, they get to Heaven; meaning justification, reconciliation, sanctification and glorification. Glorification is what they really mean; the reward for loving God.

Salvation is the means to an end. It is not the end in itself. Loving God is the end goal. Glorification is the reward for doing so.

“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance.- Col.3:23-24

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4. I Tim.1:5 “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

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Salvation: A Work of God and Man

Since God is sovereign over all, God delegated to man part of the responsibility for salvation. That means He limited Himself to only being responsible for most of salvation, not all.

God gave man sovereignty over a man’s own life so that man will be capable of loving Him. This means that God will not encroach on man’s sovereignty. (i.e.) He will not override the sovereignty of a man.

To godly men He gave responsibility to cooperate with Him to seek out men who might be open to the love of God (Mk. 16:15-16). This is the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18,19). Godly men of today are direct spiritual descendents of Jesus and the Apostles.

To unregenerate man, the “Natural Man,” He gave responsibility to cooperate with godly men, trying to tell him about God. The one who cooperates is wise and the one who doesn’t cooperate is foolish (Matt. 7:24-26). The one who cooperates may be saved, depending on his further cooperation, but the one who does not cooperate will miss salvation for sure.

Man’s Part is Cooperating

Man is sovereign over his own life. It is his biggest asset, and it is also his biggest liability. It is his biggest asset because with it he can love God.

Man is very independent. It is his biggest liability because it can keep him from loving God. Independence must be trained to become dependence.

The Natural Man must cooperate to learn about God. He must be open to hearing and listening. He must be open because he is in control of what he listens to and hears. Man decides when he will listen and when he won’t. God does not override that sovereignty. See Chapter

Eight, Divine Sovereignty.

* Faith comes by hearing - Romans 10:17

The hearer must cooperate and be honest with himself to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit in order to believe.

* Come follow me - Matt.4:19

* “. . . that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him

from the dead, you shall be saved;” - Rom.10:9

* The believer must cooperate with God and listen to the Holy Spirit to live a life of faith.

* When prompted to confess sin, be baptized, and clean up one’s life, one must cooperate.

* He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; - Mark 16:15

* Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness - Matt.6:33

* In your faith, supply moral excellence, - II Peter 1:5

* The person of beginning faith must cooperate further with the Holy Spirit when prompted to read, study,

learn about God and live by faith.

* “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may

prove what the will of God is, that which is Good, acceptable and perfect.” - Rom.12:2

* Be a doer not just a hearer - James 1:25

* Be Dependent on God - Matt. 6:33

* The person of growing faith must cooperate with the Holy Spirit when dealing with all the faith issues of

life. Cooperation with the Holy Spirit to be in training to share your faith is the next step. - II Peter

1:3-8

* The mature man of faith must cooperate with the Holy Spirit to teach and lead others. At the later

stages of faith, cooperating becomes natural, desirable and rewarding.

* “. . . namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their tres-

passes

against them, and He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassa-

dors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be

reconciled to God.” - II Cor.5:19-20.

* Don’t Worry about managing your life - Matt. 6:25-33

* You are to be complete - Matt. 5:48

God’s Part is to Provide, and Develop Love in Man

When man cooperates with the Holy Spirit to allow himself to be taught, God can then pour in the knowledge which transforms man. God providing for you and changing your character; as a by-product, produces love for God and others, in you.

1. God has a plan for your life

* “‘For 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.’” - Jer.29:11

2. God’s Job is to provide for all your needs

* God will take care of you - Matt. 6:30

* God will Provide your needs - Matt.7:7-11

* God shall supply all your needs -

Phil.4:19

* God heals your infirmities - I Peter 2:24

3. God’s Job is to Change Your Character

* Be transformed by the renewing of your mind - Romans 12:2

* “. . . since the day we heard of it (love), we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you

may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that

you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in

every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;” - Col.1:9-10

* “. . . the righteousness which comes from

God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and
the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His
death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” - Phil.3:9-11

Attitudes About God’s Opinions

Calvinism tends to minimize man’s contribution to salvation by saying God saves who He will, and man has little to nothing to do with it. This tends to portray man, in God’s eyes, as unimportant. This is not what the face of scripture teaches.

God thinks very highly of a believer

- * A believer is beloved of God - Col.3:12
- * “He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.” - John 14:21
- * A believer is a saint - Rom.1:7; I Cor.1:2
- * God rejoices over you - Zeph.3:17
- * God considers you a son - Matt. 7:9-11
- * I am free from condemnation - Rom.8:1
- * Faithful people are blessed - Gal.3:9
- * Abraham, the friend of God - James 2:23
- * I am living in the blessing of Abraham - Gal.3:14
- * Therefore, the believer is the friend of God When I cooperate blessings overtake me - Duet.28:2
I am blessed in the city - Duet.28:3
Blessed in the country - Duet.28:3
Your children are blessed - Duet.28:4
Blessed coming and going - Duet.28:6
- * Jesus has made me free - John 8:32
- * I am of God - I John 4:4
- * I have overcome the evil one - I John 4:4
- * Greater is He that is in me, than he who is in the world - I John 4:4
- * Christ has redeemed me from the curse of the law - Galations 3:13

I am strong in the Lord and the power of His might - Ephesians 6:10

I have on the whole armor of God - Ephesians 6:11

I am able to stand against all the strategies of the devil - Ephesians 6:11

* I am more than a conqueror - Romans 8:37

* I will not make Jesus ashamed of me - Romans 1:16

* I will bear the Name that is above every name, the Name of Jesus Christ - Philippians 2:9-10

* I have the power to submit to God, resist the devil and the devil will flee from me - James 4:7

* Healing is mine - I Peter 2:24

* My God shall supply all my needs - Philippians 4:19

* I will hold fast to Christ and He will reward me when He comes - Revelation 2:25-26

* I am God's workmanship - Ephesians 2:10

* I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit - Ephesians 2:18

* I am a saint and live in God's household - Ephesians 2:19

* I may approach God with boldness, freedom and confidence - Ephesians 3:12

* I am righteous and holy - Ephesians 4:24

* My citizenship is in heaven - Philippians 3:20

* I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins - Colossians 1:14

* I am blameless and free from accusation - Colossians 1:22

* Christ lives in my heart - Colossians 1:27

* I am or will be firmly rooted in Christ if I walk in Him - Colossians 2:7

* I have already or will be made complete in Christ - Colossians 2:10

* I am chosen of God, holy and dearly loved - I Thessalonians 1:4

* I am a son of light - I Thessalonians 5:5

* I have been given a spirit of power, love and a sound mind - I Timothy 1:7

* Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call me brother - Hebrews 2:11

* I am a holy partaker of the heavenly calling - Hebrews 3:1

* I have the status to come boldly before the throne of God to find mercy and grace in time of need
- Hebrews 4:16

* I have been born-again - I Peter 1:23

* I am one of God's living stones - I Peter 2:5

* I am a person of God's own possession - I Peter 2:9

* I am an alien and stranger to this world - I Peter 2:11

* I am an enemy of the devil - I Peter 5:8

* I have been given exceedingly precious and magnificent promises by God - II Peter 1:4

* I am a partaker of the divine nature - I Peter

1:4

- * I am anointed by God - I John 2:27
- * The Father loves me greatly such that we are called the children of God. The world does not know us because it did not know Him - I John 3:1
- * I am like Christ - I John 4:17
- * I have eternal life - I John 5:13
- * I have been redeemed - Revelation 5:9
- * I am the temple of the Holy Spirit - I Corinthians 6:19
- * I do not have to be anxious for anything - Philippians 4:6
- * When I pray, God gives me peace - Philippians 4:6-7
- * I shall do even greater works than Christ Jesus - John 14:12

God Thinks Man's Part is Important

God thought man's part of salvation was so important that He delegated to man the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:19-20). That is, the introduction of the Natural Man to Christ, and to make them disciples. It was so important a job that God's inheritance is dependent on godly men's performance of the job! If we don't reconcile people, God gets no inheritance. That is a tremendous responsibility.

- * "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." - John 14:20
- * "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to remembrance all that I said to you." - John 14:26

Godly Attitudes About Preaching and Witnessing

Since Calvinism postulates that man has little to do with salvation and loving God, attitudes toward witnessing have been: why bother?

Pastoral attitudes toward preaching have been heavy on building of the congregation, and light on evangelizing. After all, God saves whom He will, when He will, not having much to do with preaching.

A proper view of preaching and witnessing is that God can't wait to work in a heart that is sensitive to Him and sensitive to spiritual things. But it requires a godly person to be excited and optimistic about what the Holy Spirit will do in a sensitive heart.

Godly men must expect that God is waiting for them to produce fertile hearts within which He can work. Faith is not believing that God might work in someone's heart. Faith is believing that God *will* work in someone's heart if pastor or witness has enough faith to be bold and ask for a commitment of faith; or a commitment to holiness.

- * God and I have overcome the evil one - I John 4:4
- * Blessed are you when men revile you for God's sake - Matt. 5:11-12
- * Jesus wants to heal - Matt. 8:3, 7; 9:18, 22, 25, 28-29
- * I desire compassion not sacrifice - Matt.9:13
- * I call sinners not the righteous - Matt.9:13
- * Gadarenes, the pig farmers, ask Jesus to leave, He does - Matt.8:28-34
- * God wants workers - Matt.9:37-38
- * Doubt stifles faith and God's action -

My Spiritual Position In Christ

Let's say I am a new believer, I am not positive how God works in my life. Someone tells me I must confess all my sinful infractions or God will not hear my prayers. Then to complicate life further, my car engine develops a knock, the value of my stock shares go to zero and I discover a lump on my body where one is not supposed to be. Is God mad at me? Does He care if I hurt as long as I do what is right? Or is He just working for my good in a way I cannot understand? I really don't know. This is doubt.

My physical father loved me and did not separate me from himself because I did not confess every broken house rule, and I cannot believe my Heavenly Father, who loves me more, would treat me that way either (Matt. 7:9-11). Well then, You ask, what is my true position with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ?

Romans 5:19 says about Adam and Christ:

“For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made *righteous*.”⁵

It is through the obedience of Christ, not us, that makes us righteous. So, through Christ's finished work there is a way for me to be *righteous* before a holy God. The way this happens is simple; God forgives our sin past, present and future (Rom. 4:6-8). That plan gives us time to be transformed, from our old state of mind, by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2), into the new person that God wants us to be.

How I become Righteous

To answer your question, “What is my true position with the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ?” I'll ask you back, how were your sins forgiven in

the first place?

The way you became righteous is by faith. Faith is believing in something to the degree that you act upon that belief. Saving faith in Christ requires believing and acting upon the following:

9 “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved;

10 “for with the heart man believes, resulting in *righteousness*, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Rom. 10:9-10)

Therefore, the way you became *righteous* was to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead. And you are saved by acting on that belief by confession and living out your life with Jesus as Lord (boss, manager) of your life; as best you can.

Righteous Men in Bible History

Genesis 15:4-6:

4 “Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him (Abram), saying, “This man (Eliezer) will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”

5 “And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ And He said to him, ‘so shall your descendents be.’

6 “Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned (accounted) it to him as *righteousness*.” (Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6)

Hebrews 11:4:

4 “By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was *righteous*, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.”

5. Emphasis in all the quotes are mine.

Our believing makes us righteous and our confession (a demonstration of faith) makes us a partaker in the promises of salvation just like the Old Testament saints.

I am Free from Sin

If I admit I am a sinner and keep asking and trusting Jesus to heal me, then that qualifies me to be declared righteous on an on-going basis. Why? Because giving up my will and ways to adopt Jesus' will and ways is a figurative death for me, and it is a real death for my self-will and ways (Rom. 6:1-17).

5 “For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6:5).”

7 “For he who has died is free from sin (Romans 6:7).”

God is saying I have no sin in His eyes. I am sinless. Do you understand the enormity of that concept? That is good news! This means God likes me even when I do things considered sinful! It means when my car breaks down He still likes me, and when lumps appear where they shouldn't, it means He still likes me.

For the future, it means that God wants to teach me something (I Pet. 5:6-10; Heb. 12:6-11). It means that God is operating in order that I might become a partaker of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Even though my discipline hurts, I can be confident He still loves and *likes* me.

No Condemnation!

God says in Romans 8:1:

1 “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

In the past, was I in Christ Jesus? Yes. I was righteous then because God forgave my sin and there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Am I in Christ Jesus now? Yes. I am now righteous because there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Will I be in Christ Jesus in the future?

Yes, if I continue to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and I continue to confess Jesus as Lord of my life. Then I will be righteous in the future because there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

He has forgiven all sins past, present and future. Therefore, I am righteous all the time; just as Jesus is righteous.

What If I Slip?

What happens if I *unknowingly* commit an act considered sinful under the law or forget to confess some infraction? Am I, in God's eyes, back under the law or am I still under grace where there is no condemnation?

Answer: I am still under grace because my being righteous is not a function of my works (my sin under the law) but a function of Christ's work, and my confessing that Jesus is Lord and believing in my heart that God raised Him from the dead (Rom. 10:9-10). And as long as I believe that, I am righteous.

What happens if I *knowingly* commit an act considered sinful under the law but for now don't choose to confess it? Am I, in God's eyes, back under the law or am I still under grace where there is no condemnation?

I am still under grace. My being righteous is not a function of my works but a function of Christ's work; and, my confessing Jesus as Lord and believing in my heart that God raised Him from the dead.

However, that is not the end of it. Although I have not lost my righteousness, by ignoring my sin, I have begun a path that will lead me away from *wanting* Jesus as Lord.

Because of that act and previous experience of being under the law, I will *feel* guilty which causes me to separate myself from God to some degree. But in God's eyes, the blood of Christ has wiped away my sins past, present and future so I am *not* guilty at court. Whenever Satan accuses me before the Father, Jesus intercedes and the Almighty Judge pronounces me innocent (Rom. 8:33-34; Heb. 6:20). Hallelujah! But sin is very deceitful.

The Deceitfulness of Sin

The deceitfulness of sin comes in when I feel guilty, and if I didn't know the truth, I would believe that I am guilty before God, when in fact I am not. This guilt causes me to separate myself from God because I don't think He is pleased with me so I tend to hide just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden. It becomes more difficult to keep my mind "set on the Spirit", and easier to keep my mind "set on the flesh". One is spiritual life and the other is spiritual death (Rom. 8:6-7).

A person in this situation is faced with two choices: (1) Confess his sin and be released from guilt (I John 1:9) until his next sin, which produces a "roller coaster" Christian experience; (2) Neglect to cleanse himself and allow the guilt to be stored inside. When enough guilt is stored, a degree of hardness of heart occurs (Heb. 3:13, 12:15). Thus your *faith* in Him is decreased.

What we see happening here is that decreased faith leads to separation from God, and separation from God leads to stunting of growth and unfruitfulness (Jn. 15:4-6). Hardness of heart and unfruitfulness allow Satan to have a *greater* influence on our lives.

Jesus said in John 15:5-6,

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

This is the result of separating yourself from Jesus. Here is another similar passage. Hebrews 6:4-8 gives us the "destination" at the end of the road leading to separation from God.

4 "For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 "and have tasted the good word of

God and the powers of the age to come,

6 "and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

7 "For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God;

8 "but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned."⁶

At what point are you not righteous any more? If this process of hardening of the heart by degrees persists, then at some point you will cease to believe Jesus should be Lord (Boss) of your life and that God raised Him from the dead (Heb. 6:6). This is the point of original entry into the family of God. So a person goes out the way he came in; by faith or lack of it.

Are we saying then, that one does not need to confess his sins? May it never be! Everywhere the scriptures asks us to confess our sins one to another; especially to God. But if we have our mind on the spirit, God has already forgiven us before committing the sin. Confession to God is needed for those having their minds on the flesh, namely, the natural man. We must confess sins and ask forgiveness to be freed from the separation producing guilty conscience. This insures closeness to the Father, especially for the new believer, long enough to enter God's "rest" (Heb. 4); even though it produces a roller coaster Christian experience.

Entering God's Rest

Entering "God's rest", is realizing your true status with the Father. When you read and believe this concept, you will have true liberty. You will always be comfortable with Jesus and the Father knowing they like you, and therefore you

6. See also parable of talents; Matthew 25:14-30

are free to love them.

15 “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” (Rom. 8:15”

God has allowed us this grace so we have sufficient time to renew our mind enough to see that God is truly good. Over time we learn that man is evil and God is good. After some christian experience we get to where we appreciate God for who He is. As we appreciate Him we move into loving Him.

Isn't this what it is all about, to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength"? You have to know He likes you as well as loves you before you can fully love Him.

Confession before Cleansing?

But what about I John 1:9 which says:

9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Isn't that a conditional statement that requires confession before cleansing?

Verses Eight and Nine are addressed to the person who says they have no sin: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us." That person has crossed the line into unrighteousness. Why? Because saying one has no sin is the equivalent of avoiding the truth and embracing a lie which causes one to believe he doesn't need Jesus as Lord (II Thess. 2:12; Rom. 1:25). Therefore, verse nine is needed to restore such a one.

But verse Seven is addressed to the man who is walking in the light or, in other words, is walking according to the enlightenment of God's revealed truth. Verse seven says, "...but if we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses from all sin." The result: I am clean as long as I realize I am a sinner and need Jesus as manager of my life.

It is such a comfort to know that as long as I

recognize His Lordship and management of my life, I am forgiven; and therefore righteous by His blood. However, Jesus cannot be faithful to forgive without confession, if I am deceived into believing I have no sin, (verse 9) and therefore don't need Him anymore.

It is believing that you are righteous which allows you to come, guilt free, to the throne of grace; that you may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need (Heb.4:16).

It is believing that you are righteous which assures you that no matter what negative thing happens, that God still loves you and likes you.

Since, you don't need to worry that your relationship with God might be broken. Thus, you always feel accepted.

What it Means for God to Manage Your Life

Do I want God to Manage My Life? This is the first question you must grapple with before you sign on to God managing your life. Do you want Him to manage? If He manages, you have to want Him to manage; otherwise He won't. This is because He has given you sovereignty over the decisions you make, governing your own life. You get to run it. You have been doing so your whole life. You get to choose now, whether or not to invite Him to be Lord, as well as savior, of your life.

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.

You can manage your life more or less. But you will do a bad or mediocre job at it. He will do a great job. Now tell me, how good of a job have you done managing your own life? I'm talking spiritually speaking. Do your kids walk with God? Are you at peace with God? Do you have a good relationship with your wife? (or husband?) Do you have any bitterness or resentment in your life? Do you love all your neighbors?

If any of these questions are no, you need God's management in your life.

Here are some good reasons you should let God run your life. You have a limited point-of-view. God has an unlimited view into the past, present and future. This makes Him wiser than you.

You cannot love God by yourself. The goal in this life is to love God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. If you allow Him management of your life He will show you His mercy, grace and love which will cause you to appreciate and love Him.

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 we encounter discipline, we 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.

The problem is, your point-of-view about God managing. Everything that happens to you is under God's control.⁷ The whole idea here is you have to trust Him. 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, operator and chief lover 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.

So, if you have decided you need God to manage your life, read on. If not, you can quit now, and continue to do your own thing (Proverbs 21:2).

How God Manages

The biggest problem you will ever have with God managing your life, is believing that 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 thrust upon you. 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.

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

Here is your future, all decreed, and 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. Remember Jer. 29:11 equals future success. Insured by declaration of the God of the Universe for your particular life. He is faithful and true to you. How God does it, is not for you to know, it's His business. It is your business to learn to cooperate. Everyone is *independent*, and must become *dependent* on God.

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)

Assume He is right no matter what you think. If you are trusting Him, 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 what He says. The reason it is so hard, you're not absolutely sure He will come through for you. He will be there for you. Ask God to help your unbelief (Mk.9:24).

Second, trust God in everything.

“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet

7. Read the story of Job to see this.

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 Jer. 29:11 is your future success. Remember you are taking on the divine nature, and He will achieve it for you.

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 provide for you, and 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. Remember Jer. 29:11 is your future success. 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 He will give much more because He loves you.

Your part is to seek Him first. His part is to provide for you, and make your life successful. Therefore, you need to read, study, apply, and do what He says.

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.

One of the biggest problems for an individual to overcome is: not to bail out and do your own thing. 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 concerned or worrying about being successful.

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 with Him 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.

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 per-

son. 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.

The II Peter Chapter One School

This is the place where the Lord has outlined the curriculum for going from beginning christian to mature believer to loving “knower” (one who knows, for sure, Jesus as Lord).

Peter starts out reminding us what blessing we have in Christ. He outlines where we are going. That this is the path to follow, to take on the divine nature

You start with your faith. It may be weak but it will build as you draw closer to Jesus and the Holy Spirit over time. The way you build faith is to exercise it. Practice trusting God for what you need. If you trust yourself, instead of God, your faith will weaken. More relationship to Jesus equals more faith; less relationship to Jesus will produce less faith.

To your faith supply moral excellence. Clean up your life. Stop the lying, stealing, cussing or whatever. This is a major step. This is where your life change is most effected. You may have to ask forgiveness for some things. I know I did.

I had previously worked for a man who manufactured electrical devices which used silver slugs as contacts. I stole some silver from him. I felt so guilty I had to go back to him, return the silver and ask his forgiveness. I could have gone to jail for that foolishness.

Considering going back to him and confessing my theft was like Jesus asking me to jump off a cliff. Did I trust God enough to confess my sin and be forgiven, and if so it would be like Jesus catching me before I hit the bottom and died of shame. Or, would the man turn me in to the police; and I might go to jail; in which case it would be like hitting the bottom, and dieing of shame. For me, this decision was like Jesus in the wilderness; will I go the worlds way, or God’s way.

I went to him and confessed, not knowing

what he would do. But God is merciful and the man was gracious and forgave me. It was the hardest thing I have ever had to do. God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.⁸ It was worth the embarrassment to have the freedom from the guilt.

In your moral excellence, knowledge. Read your Bible. Start going to church with Sunday school classes, witnessing to people, and studying your Bible. Reading this book, the one you are reading now, is good.

In your knowledge, self control. Self control is not yelling when you get mad. Of course, there is all different areas of self control. Abandon the smoking, drugs, and screwing around. You are going to heaven; God is holy and you need to be compatible with Him, by the time you get there.

In your self control, perseverance. Perseverance is sticking it out for the long haul. That is, the rest of your life. This means as a minimum, you must believe Jesus is God for the rest of your life. You must persevere through the times that you experience trouble and the choices to trust, or not trust, God. Perseverance is being refined by fire as gold is refined. Perseverance is trusting God through it all.

In your perseverance, godliness. Godliness is learning to take on the character and knowledge of God. The character of God is abandoning the desires of the flesh. See Galations 5:17-21. And conversely, adopting the fruit of the Spirit in your life. See Galations 5:22-25. Learn the scriptures; it teaches you who God is.

In your godliness, learn brotherly kindness. This is where you learn to love your spiritual brothers. You learn to appreciate your godly brothers who labor in the same cause of Christ in which you labor. You love (Phileo; see Chapter Two of this book) because you see your spiritually senior brothers love. That is, them loving God and others. You help them in their struggle against sin and in their devotion to God. At the same time, you learn too.

And in your brotherly kindness, christian

8. James 4:6

love. This means you develop your ability to love people and God because of attributes inside yourself. This is agape love. See Chapter Two of this book on agape love.

Peter goes on to say that those who comply with this curriculum and go on to practice these things will never stumble, and have the entrance into the eternal kingdom open wide to them.

Learning these things requires hard work and discipline. If there is any top-priority advice I would give; it is this: *trust God and don't give up God under any circumstances!*

A Call From the Idolatry of Pleasure and Money

Norm, isn't it a bit much to call pleasure and money idolatry? People don't "worship" (bow down) to any idol; even money.

You are right that nobody bows down, but nevertheless they still do something which is the same thing. Pleasure is more important to many people than God is to the same people. From God's point-of-view that is idolatry. There is nothing wrong with enjoying life. There is nothing wrong with your job or lifes work, as long as it is not more important in your life than God.

When one looks at your life, on Sunday morning, do you care more about going fishing, or going to the races, or skiing than going to church? If the answer is yes, then pleasure may be an idol for you.

This is not to say one can never go anywhere except church on Sunday. The issue is what is most important to you in an on-going basis. Anything which is overall more important than God, in your life, is an idol.

Jobs, investments and stocks may be an idol. One must evaluate the importance of those activities compared to the importance of God in your life. Do you spend much of your time concerned with money? Are you spending significant time other than your eight hours per day pursuing more money? If so, money may be an idol for you.

I ask you to put God first. If you will make Him manager of your life to the extent that you trust Him for meeting your financial needs, He will meet those needs for you.

Pastors and Leaders Action

For years and years, it has been said that God unilaterally and arbitrarily chooses who is saved, and who is lost. That is not true. God and man work together.

God has given up part of His sovereignty to man. God has given up the part which governs man's personal sovereignty. Man personally has sovereignty over his own life. This is so he can choose to love, or not love, God. This also makes him personally responsible for his own actions. Are you personally responsible for your own thoughts and actions? Knowing this, means we need to change how we approach preaching and witnessing. Christians have been given the ministry of reconciliation of men to God. God will support our efforts 100%.

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. After the leadership team has a solid cohesive plan, then the pastor needs to preach a sermon of what should be different and why. All the Elders should take part to show solidarity with the pastor. Perhaps a series of sermons is in order to show the congregation what needs to be done.

Perhaps a special humble attitude is necessary within the leadership. What is most important is the congregation sees God through the changes. If that requires a humble attitude of the leaders, it is worth it, and God will honor

your sacrifice.

