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LIVING IN THE STRONGHOLD OF DECEPTION

Pride and Humility

Part 6
of 8

For God to take us from pride to humility is the working of the cross by the power of the Holy Spirit. This takes a lifetime of walking with the Lord. One cannot go from pride to humility by one's own power or might. Pride came when Adam partook of the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden. Man came into knowledge of good and evil. Man ate of the wrong fruit. The fruit of pride and every evil thing is what Satan is and represents. Pride is the opposite of humility, just as darkness is the opposite of light.

One commentary says: "Pride is the crowning sin that besets the human race; it is the foundation sin of all sin; it is the 'good side' of the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil.' Behind every sin, one ultimately will find pride. Pride is the sin that caused the downfall of Lucifer. Pride is the sin that caused the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. God hates pride, because that's where all sin comes from."

Pride comes as an angel of light. Pride is very, very deceptive. One cannot detect pride unless one is walking in the way of the cross of Jesus Christ. One cannot

detect pride in one's own life and in the lives of others, unless one is walking the way of the cross of Christ. It is only by the cross that one can walk in true light, which is the opposite of pride. The Holy Spirit is the one who reveals to us our pride as we come into His workmanship. He is the one who gives us true light.

Let's look at how pride works. Yes, pride has works also. Sometimes these works look like the works of God, but the deception of Satan keeps us from the true works of God and keeps us from believing in the one whom God has sent. Jesus Christ does the work in us by the power of the Holy Spirit. *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent* (John 6:29).

John the apostle warned us about this. John had great discernment of the way of darkness and the way of light, the way of antichrist and the way of Christ. When one is *not* born of the Holy Spirit and is *not* being led by the Spirit, he walks in darkness and pride. Here is an example: I was raised in a church where tradition was a deeply rooted problem. Very little was preached on how a person is born again. Therefore, nobody was being led

by the Holy Spirit, because we didn't know about the Holy Spirit. When I became old enough to be baptized, by tradition I was baptized into the belief system of the church, which included all the traditional rules and ordinances. Yes, we included the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but they were just lifeless traditions. Tradition never taught me how to seek God personally. I was never born again. I just learned the rules and ordinances given by the traditions of our belief system. Therefore, I remained in my sin nature and pride, and I did not realize it. The good that I did, by following all the traditions, was nothing more than pride at its worst.

My friend, this is pride in the highest order. This is the "good part" of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Our sin nature is trying to save our sin nature. DECEPTION! It looks humble and feels humble, but it is the work of pride. We will never know the difference until the Holy Spirit brings us to the place where we cry out to God for help, become born again, and God's work starts in us. We come into this great salvation. We are baptized into Christ by

the Holy Spirit. This is the true faith. God have mercy!

First John 2:16 says: *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.* This is exactly how we operate when we try to change our sin nature with the power of the flesh, without being born of the Holy Spirit. The church I belonged to, operated in a worldly system, and didn't know it. It is pride. The rules and ordinances I followed felt good to my flesh, because I thought I was doing good things. How deceptive! How blind! How deaf! I had eyes, but I could not see. I had ears, but I could not hear. I was very empty.

My friend, if you find yourself in this situation, come to Jesus. Wrap yourself in the waiting arms of Jesus Christ. He knows all about it. Let Him open your understanding. Let Him fill you with the Holy Spirit. Come as a little child. He, the Holy Spirit, will lead you into truth. This deceptive pride will no longer have control of your life as you grow in grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

I had to forsake all my “good works” and cry out to Jesus Christ. Yes, it was God who brought me to this place. I couldn't go on the way I was. He changed my life forever. This began forty-four years ago. It is a life of learning who Jesus Christ is.

Philippians 3:13-14: *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

Yes, I have failed many times. He has never left me or forsaken me. He will never leave or forsake you. He takes us from operating in pride to living in humility.

When we operate in pride, we become an enemy to the cross of Christ. Philippians 3:18-21: *(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

God is the author of humility. He is the author of our salvation. The humble always call on the name of the Lord. The proud always call upon themselves. The humble get clear vision from heaven. The proud cannot see anything except themselves and their interpretation of Scripture. James 4:6: *But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* This is the same kind of grace that saves us and gives us great vision.

Again, this cannot happen outside of the cross working in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. True faith operates by true grace. Again, pride brings the fruit of darkness. Humility brings the fruit of light. You shall know them by their fruits.

Proud leaders always lord over the flock in many deceptive ways and lead many

into great darkness. It is the work of darkness. The blind will lead the blind and both will fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14). I would much rather follow one who has greatly failed in life and has humbled himself and called on Jesus Christ. The Lord will lift him out of the pit, because this man has repented of his proud sin nature and now sees God's great salvation and His great love. I know this man will lead me to the one who has revealed Himself to him instead of lording over me with a bunch of rules and ordinances that will lead me to destruction and death. Read Revelation 2:6. God hates this deception. One commentator said of the Nicolaitans: “The word ‘Nicolaitans’ means ‘laity-conquerors.’” They are preachers who exploit the people instead of spiritually developing them, which all false doctrine does. The Lord hates this, and so should we!

First Peter 5:6: *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.* We are to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God who is doing the work in us. Our own rules and works cannot exalt Christ or bring us into His life. These things will bring us into destruction, with no life, no vision, and no hearing, but only with blindness and deafness. Colossians 1:26-29: *Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in*

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Since our beginning in 2000, many people have written to us, asking to be added to our mailing list, while others have sent us names of their friends and family members. We think it's important for us to tell you that the cost of *The Amish Voice* is \$.50 a copy and is totally funded by readers from across our great country, who appreciate the ministry and care to support it. If the Lord would lay it on your heart to come along side of us by helping with expenses, it would be a great benefit as well as highly appreciated. In order to continue receiving the *Amish Voice*, please keep us informed of any changes to your address. Thank you. —Joe Keim

Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

We are to humble ourselves under the working of the mighty hand of God in us, that our eyes and ears would be open to the mystery of what are the riches of the glory of God, *which is Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27)!

My dear brothers and sisters, false religion is a terrible, terrible thing. Self-righteousness is a deadly, terrible sin. It is of the devil and it penetrates the church and the children of God. We either are of our Father and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, for they are one, or of the devil.

In John 8, some were seeking to kill Jesus because the words of Jesus had no place in the lives of these religious people. John 8:41-42: *Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.*

Self-righteousness says it loves Jesus, but it can never know or understand the love of Jesus Christ, because its works or deeds are of its father the devil. DECEPTION! Verses 43-44: *Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

Now these people, who Jesus said were of their father the devil, were keeping the law of Moses to the best of their understanding. What were the lusts and

deeds that were so wrong? Lusts refer to what you set your heart upon. Self-righteousness always sets its heart on its own deeds as a way to God. This is of the devil, and his deeds will you do. It is our own fleshly do's and don'ts that we put on ourselves and others. In this we can never hear the words of Jesus. We can never come into the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 10:26: *If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.* What is the knowledge of the truth? What does it mean to sin wilfully? When I continue to practice some law or works to try to please God after I have heard the truth about Jesus having fulfilled all the law, my sin remains. Instead, we are to come to God in boldness and enter into the Holiest by a new and living way, by the blood of Jesus. This is what He did for us on the cross.

After we have received this truth but still practice some fleshly law or works trying to please God, we are wilfully sinning. We can never be saved by the works of the flesh. We are trying to save ourselves by our good works. We are denying what Jesus did for us on the cross. Hebrews 10:29 says that we have *trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.*

Brothers and sisters, this is a serious thing. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,* for He will judge (Hebrews 10:31).

Hebrews 10:22-24: *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil*

conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

May I illustrate again? When we try to save ourselves by the deeds of laws and self, it is like a big ocean with our sins mixed in this great body of water. Then, with a little hand dipper, we try to dip out our sins from this great body of water. It is an impossible task. The more I try, the worse it gets. The more I try, the great body of water sucks it out of my little dipper, and it gets worse. Do you see the impossibility? Do you see the frustration? What is the answer to our problem and the problem of mankind? Paul says in Romans 7:24-25: *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Trying to separate my sin from this big body of water with a little hand dipper is like trying to save myself by the works of my flesh or self-righteousness. When we do this, we have trodden underfoot the Son of God. We have called the blood of the covenant an unholy thing. Therefore, we cannot come into this great salvation that God has provided for us through Jesus Christ, because we are rejecting the only way to salvation, which is the cross of Christ and what He did for us. This is not only for our salvation, but for continued growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us never, never leave the cross of Christ! May God give us wisdom.

—D. Wickey, (602) 448-8528

How to Recognize Religious Spirits

1. Religious spirits oppress and persecute others, usually true believers. They do this in the name of God.
2. They are controlling, and legalistic, rigid in opinion.
3. Their religious zeal, spirituality, and righteousness is not of

God. They have no personal relationship with God, just a religious agenda they want followed, with them in control.

4. They focus on perfection, not progress.
5. They are proud and arrogant.
6. They find fault with others but not with themselves.

In the beginning

God the Father said to **God the Son** and **God the Holy Spirit**,
Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (Genesis 1:26).

Adam was made **Soul, Body, and Spirit!**

Soul (the seat of knowledge): after **God the Father**, which **He** breathed into Adam.
Body (like Jesus): that which was created by **God the Holy Spirit** and nurtured by **Mary**.
Spirit: a part of the Holy Spirit.

Man was a three-fold being, just like the (Godhead) **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**.
*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him;
male and female created he them* (Genesis 1:27).

First sin man committed? Eating a forbidden fruit

God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die (Genesis 3:3)
That day, the Holy Spirit in them **died!**

They are now different from God. They are a two-fold person – only soul and body!
*And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness,
and after his image [ADAM]; and called his name Seth* (Genesis 5:3).

All people are born in the likeness of Adam – a two-fold person!

Only after the second birth, people are like God again – a three-fold person!

Jesus talking to Nicodemus (John 3:1-3, 6-7, 16-18)

*There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:
The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi,
we know that thou art a teacher come from God:*

for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

*That which is born of the **flesh is flesh**; and that which is born of the **Spirit is spirit**.*

*Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again**.*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, **but have everlasting life**.*

*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world;
but that the world through **Him might be saved**.*

*He that believeth is **not condemned**: but he that believeth not is **condemned already**,
because he hath **not believed** in the name of the only **begotten Son of God**.*

Man always asks what the work of God is. What is needed?

Jesus answered and said unto them,

This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom **he** hath sent (John 6:29).

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to **his mercy**
he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of **the Holy Ghost*** (Titus 3:5).

And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace.

But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work (Romans 11:6).

The question is: **Do we believe it?**



This is Part two of two on a biblical response to sexual abuse in Anabaptist communities.

Relating to Victims

So now that we have established a biblical response to the perpetrators of sexual abuse, let's think about how we should be relating to the victims.

Statistics tell us that 20.5 percent of the people in our churches are sexual abuse survivors. If you have a church of 200 people, approximately 41 of those people are struggling to heal from sexual abuse.

That is over one in five church members. Yet, we hear almost nothing about sexual abuse. We don't talk about "such things." Often, we don't even know who the victims are or how to help them. And sometimes, if we do know the victims, we shame them instead of believing them. We betray their trust instead of helping them heal.

And then, we wonder why "some people" suddenly want nothing to do with church or God. We wonder why there is rebellion among youth. We wonder why people leave.

If we understood abuse, these things would suddenly make sense. That's why I will continue to speak up. I will not be silent. We need to start digging into this mess, because many lives are at stake.

Victims of sexual abuse are some of "least of these." They've been torn apart by "wolves in sheep's clothing."

Not only have their hearts been ripped apart by "good" church members who've abused them, they've also been ripped apart by church members who believe the perpetrators.

I believe that the Anabaptist church has the potential to be a good place to heal from sexual abuse. But first, we need admit that we have a problem. We need to understand what sexual abuse does to a victim, and what we should be doing for that victim.

What the church needs to understand about the effects of sexual abuse:

1. Sexual abuse affects a person spiritually.

When God created us, He made us sexual beings. God designed the sexual relationship to be a beautiful picture of how He loves us, His bride. He wanted it to be in the context of marriage only. But the enemy loves to distort that beautiful image. His goal is to steal, kill, and destroy.

Sexual abuse does just that – it steals a person's innocence, kills their spirit, and has the potential to completely destroy a person if not dealt with properly. As a result, the victim's view of God is severely damaged, particularly if the abuse happened by someone they trusted or someone who claims to be a Christian. Sexual abuse opens the door for all kinds of spiritual bondage. Countless lies and addictions stem from abuse.

Sexual abuse has the potential to turn a Christian into an atheist. I believe that sexual abuse is one of the ways the devil is snatching the souls of our children. Whether we realize it or not, we are in a battle for their souls. And we need to start fighting instead of pretending there isn't a problem.

2. Sexual abuse affects a person emotionally.

When a person becomes a victim of sexual abuse, a part of them "dies" inside. They may laugh a lot or be the class clown but if you were to see inside their heart, you'd be staring at a bloody mess. Some victims "stuff the pain" as a way to survive. It looks good on the outside, but sooner or later, it will come out. They may hardly ever cry or show emotion. Others cry all the time and have trouble functioning in daily life. Either way, the abuse they experienced is affecting them, and they need help.

Anxiety and depression are very common among victims. They fear everything and everyone. They don't trust anyone, even safe people. They view themselves as dirty, ugly, and worthless. They don't think they are worth your time or love. They push love away because to them, love hurts.

3. Sexual abuse affects a person physically.

It should be no surprise to us that emotional and spiritual problems sometimes affect people in physical ways. This is very true in sexual abuse victims.

The constant fear and anxiety that victims live in sometimes produce unexplainable headaches, back aches, and stomach aches. Bowel and bladder issues and frequent UTIs are common. Nightmares and vivid dreams of entrapment are part of life for many victims.

There is so much more that could be said about the effects of sexual abuse. I only skimmed the surface to help us realize how it wrecks relationships in the lives of its victims – relationships with God, the church, their family and their friends.

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So, what should the church's response be to the victims of sexual abuse?

1. Believe them instead of blaming them.

Besides helping a victim find healing in Jesus Christ, this is, hands down, the most important thing we must do for victims.

When a victim discloses sexual abuse, believe them. I am horrified by some of the things that are said about victims in some of our Anabaptist churches. "They are just making that up because they want attention. Besides, abuse doesn't happen to Christians!" Worse yet, sometimes similar statements are made to the victim's face.

And then, to top it all off, we blame them. "Why didn't you yell?" we ask the victim incredulously. Or "You should've tried to fight!" To a victim, these kinds of responses shout one thing: "It's all your fault." The problem is, we don't talk about abuse. Therefore, we don't teach people what to do in a bad situation. How are they supposed to know what to do if we don't talk about it?

Be assured of one thing: Responses like the ones I mentioned above do serious damage to an already wounded heart, to the point of suicide in some cases.

"But people sometimes lie about sexual abuse, don't they?" you ask. Yes, it happens. But it's actually not as much as we think. Most sources agree that the percentage of false allegations is around 2-8 percent of reported abuse. There are people who feel it's much lower than that in our Anabaptist circles due to two things: (1) The 2-8 percent was based on reported abuse; studies indicate that only 40% of rapes and abuse are reported. Thus, the 2-8 percent is not a very accurate number. (2) Anabaptist people are taught from little up to be honest and tell the truth. Therefore, the true number of false allegations in our churches is probably less than 2%.

Another reason why we struggle to believe victims is because their stories are vague and the details "change." Instead of writing them off as liars, we need to understand what trauma does to the brain.

All abuse is traumatic. But the younger a child is when abuse happens, and the worse the abuse is, the more a victim will tend to disassociate from the experience. They may not remember what happened to them for years. They may remember a little but not many details. They might know something happened, but have no idea who abused them.

Have you ever been in a traumatic car accident? Do you remember all the details of the accident? Do you remember the car coming toward you and the crashing sound of the metal? In the case of a very bad car accident, a person sometimes doesn't remember anything for a few hours, days, or weeks surrounding the accident. It is much the same way with abuse. **Just because a person can't tell you exactly where they were at, who abused them, the severity of the abuse, or how many times they were abused, doesn't mean it didn't happen.**

There was a rather sickening study where a perpetrator filmed his abuse encounters with children. The authorities confiscated the abuse videos and asked each of the victims to tell them what the perpetrator had done to them. They were amazed at the response of these children. The majority of them downplayed the severity of the abuse.

Often, when abuse allegations surface, the preachers or the child's parents go to the perpetrator and ask them if they abused the victim. Sometimes, the abuse is confessed. (I admire those people!) But too often, the perpetrator says, "No. I would never do something like that!" And so, the matter is dropped.

Let me ask you this: What else is the perpetrator supposed to say? **Folks, if he/she has the ability to somehow defy**

their conscience and abuse an innocent person, then they definitely can lie about it, too.

I say all that to say this: When someone (child or adult) admits that they were abused, believe them. There is a 2 percent chance or less that the allegations are false. If you do have any qualms about believing a person's story, seek the face of God and ask Him to bring the truth to light.

2. Protect them.

After we believe them, we must do everything we can to protect them. Remember, their world is no longer a safe place. **The incident must be reported. (See Romans 13:1-5; Eph. 5:11, 1 Peter 2:13-15.)**

But protect them in little ways too. People who've been victimized once walk around with a "target on their back". They often are victimized again.

I've seen far too many victims leaving the church because the church is not a safe place for them. The perpetrator still sits in the pew, Sunday after Sunday. Maybe he/she even teaches Sunday school. Or maybe the perpetrator is one of the preachers. At any rate, being in the presence of one's abuser is not a "safe place" to a victim.

I know of no place that is more safe than the lap of Jesus Himself. If we are going to be the hands and feet of Jesus, then church is going to have to be a safe place.

3. Grieve with them.

Take time to grieve with the victim. Grieving is hard. No one should have to grieve alone. A sexual abuse victim often grieves alone simply because abuse tends to be such a "hush hush" subject in our circles.

Grieving the loss of innocence is a little like grieving for a loved one who walked away from God. Once it is gone, it's gone forever.

Think about the things that you wish someone would do for you if you were grieving. Maybe they just need a card or a journal, or a listening ear. Maybe they need a few hours of silence at a coffee shop, or a weekend get-away. There is so much we can do for people who are grieving.

4. Love and affirm them.

Sexual abuse victims need someone to show them what true love looks like. They need to be showered with affirmation.

They need to hear things such as “I believe you.” “What happened to you was not your fault.” “You are loved.” “You are clean and pure.” “I will walk with you.” “I will protect you.” “I will do everything I can to help you heal.” “You are brave and full of courage.”

When someone in church has a bad car accident or has an extensive surgery of some kind, we do very well at caring for their physical needs. We take a meal, babysit their children, help them financially, visit them, etc. We all “pitch in” and help them in their physical affliction.

How much more we should be doing this for sexual abuse victims. Think about it: They may be “fine” physically, but emotionally they are bruised and broken. We need to be doing all we can to make their load easier. We need to care for them and their families. We need to love them well.

5. Help them find healing.

But how? Is there hope? YES! A thousand times yes! Jesus is the Master Healer. *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed* (Isaiah 53:5)

In my own journey, I’ve found that forgiveness is the key to healing.

Now please, I beg you to keep

reading. Please, victims, “don’t write me off” yet. And the rest of you, please don’t “run away” with “forgiveness.” Let me explain what I mean.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is not trust. Forgiveness is not forcing the victim to “forgive” so that there are no legal consequences for the perpetrator. Forgiveness is not “shutting the victim up” to protect a family, church, or business image.

That is not forgiveness. **Forgiveness is making a conscious choice to be okay with the struggles I have today because of the abuse. Forgiveness is choosing to take responsibility for my reaction to the abuse. Forgiveness is choosing to forgive every time I feel bitterness rising in my heart when I think about the abuse or the person who abused me.**

That, brothers and sisters, is forgiveness. Healing and forgiveness are so intertwined in the healing process that it is hard to separate them. You cannot forgive without some measure of healing. And yet, you cannot heal without forgiveness. They go hand-in-hand.

Though I am of the firm belief that healing comes when we forgive, I believe that every victim needs to make that decision for themselves: “Am I going to continue being a victim or am I going to let God make something beautiful out of the ashes?”

God doesn’t force us to do anything. He doesn’t force us to forgive. We shouldn’t force anyone else to forgive either.

6. Remember that healing is a journey.

We tend to forget that. Healing from sexual abuse takes time. Years. Sometimes even decades. Some people may never fully recover. This doesn’t mean they didn’t forgive or that they haven’t found true healing.

Some people never fully recover from car

accidents either. Does that mean they haven’t healed? No.

If you feel incompetent of leading someone to Jesus and helping them forgive, there are Biblical Christian counselors who lead people to Jesus every day in their offices.

In conclusion, the consequences of doing little or nothing to help sexual abuse victims are huge. Victims who haven’t dealt with their abuse often end up becoming perpetrators. They sometimes become atheists. They have a much higher chance of becoming prostitutes. They are at risk for committing suicide.

Jesus has some sobering words for us in Mark 9:42: *And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.*

I can’t think of a better way to offend a child than to (1) sexually abuse them and (2) to refuse to believe and protect them. It is serious stuff, brothers and sisters. God does not deal kindly with those who hurt the innocent and vulnerable.

The church doesn’t have a very good track record when it comes to dealing with sexual abuse – both on a perpetrator level and victim level. I shudder when I think of what God must think of the stories I hear nearly every week about the church’s response to victims.

We, as the body of Christ, have a responsibility to help the lambs whose spirits have been murdered by “wolves in sheep’s clothing.” After all, we are His hands and feet.

And if we truly know Jesus, we will reach out to sexual abuse victims. We will believe them. We will love them. We will care for their broken hearts and spirits.

May God give us wisdom and courage to relate to them the way He would. —Ann Detweiler

End

Feedback and Response Section

1

Why do you call your paper the *Amish Voice*? You know that some of the things you are trying to preach aren't in the Old Order Amish beliefs! The main thing I have an issue with is this new belief of knowing one is saved! We read a lot of die Hoffnung and know that we have to "Keep on in die Hoffnung (hope)!"

I don't think this is the way you were taught either. Stay in the way you were taught, we read. Why is it that when people want to be worldly and have worldly stuff, they think they can have it and still serve God? So many think they finally found the right faith. It just doesn't all measure up in the Testament.
—Mrs. W. S.

Joe Keim responds: We have a twofold purpose in calling our paper the *Amish Voice*: a) many of the writers were born and raised Amish b) most of our recipients are Amish and Mennonite. Therefore, it makes sense to call our publication the *Amish Voice*.

I understand that some of the things we write about are not necessarily what all Old Order Amish are teaching. However, there was a time - not too many generations ago - when our forefathers did preach what is being taught in the *Amish Voice*. And the truth is, there are still some Old Order Amish churches who are preaching and teaching the one true gospel of Jesus Christ. Sadly, though, there are others who are placing a much greater emphasis on their Ordinance Letter (man-made rules) than on God's Word - in this case, traditions and rules of the church have become more important than God's Word.

It has never been our intent to persuade anyone to leave the Old Order Amish Church. Rather, it is our goal to challenge those who have pushed Scriptures aside and made their Ordinance Letter of greater value.

I fully realize that neither you or others would come right out and say, "I believe the Ordinance Letter is more important than the Bible," but let us pause and take a sincere look at our actions. What do they say? Ask yourself, "If Jesus came to your church and wanted to become a member, would He fit in? Would he condemn and excommunicate anyone who did not live up to your list of man-made standards?" Think about it.

The Bible, which we ought to accept as God's only and final authority, teaches very clearly that: a) salvation is not based on anything we do (Ephesians 2:8-9), and that b) salvation is fully -100 percent - based on the work of God (John 1:12-13).

Those who put their trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ by faith alone are instantly forgiven and made alive (Ephesians 2: 1, 5), justified (Romans 5:1; 8:30, 33-34), and delivered from spiritual death, darkness, and the wrath to come (2 Corinthians 1:10; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

Is it even possible that someone could experience such a radical and instant change as the new birth and not know it? According to God's only and final authority, the answer is clearly no!

1 John 5:13 states, *These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.*

You mentioned that the Bible reads, "we should stay in what we were taught." My question is, what if that person is being taught wrong? Should he or she continue to stay? Is it more important to stay than to surrender to God's Word? Maybe we should let God answer that.

Galatians 1:8-10 says, *But though we [Paul and the apostles], or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we [Paul and the apostles] have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received [from Paul and the apostles], let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men?*

Acts 5:29 continues: *Then, Peter and the other apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than men.*

Let me remind us all that when we stand before God, only one thing will matter: Did we - while alive on earth - read, obey and fully surrender to God's only and final authority. If the answer is no, then bid yourself to change. If the answer is yes, then glory be to God.

Finally, let me respond to your very last question. You wrote, "Why is it when people want to be worldly and have worldly stuff, they think they can have that and still serve God?"

You must be referring to your Ordinance Letter.

Let's, for a moment, put the Ordinance Letter aside and strictly go by God's authority! Which is more worldly: a kerosene lantern or an electric powered bulb? The newspaper or the internet? The buggy or the car? Which ones are worldly; which ones are not? Are they not all worldly? The truth is, if you can see it with your eyes and touch it with your fingers, it is of the world.

Continued
Next Page

Nowhere in the entire Bible does God say any one of these worldly things are forbidden to man-kind. A good question for all of us might be: what gives you, or anyone else, the right to sit on God's throne and say which ones are godly and which ones are ungodly?

One may walk away and say, Joe wants everyone to hook their house up to electricity, drive a car and get the internet. If so,

they unfortunately missed my point.

One final word: I challenge you to lay all your personal preferences aside and return to the one and only authority – God's everlasting words of truth. Let each one of us stop condemning and judging others who live by another set of preferences. Read Romans 14, and see how God says we are to handle differences of opinions and preferences. —Joe Keim

2

Good Morning, Greetings on a cold Monday morning. I would like to order one of your books, *The Overcoming Life*. And here is some money to help pay for your newsletter. Finally! Keep up the

good work! I know you face opposition, but so did Jesus. I'm also thankful for some opposition, so we know Jesus is working. If Satan would leave us alone, then he would be sure he has us in his clutches already. —E. T., Ohio

Paul Miller responds: Hello, E. Thank you very much for your gift. It will certainly help us be able to continue sending out the *Amish Voice* and getting the truth of God's Word to many people. You are right that many people oppose some of our teaching, but this is not much difficulty compared to what many Christians around the world face. Also, when we do get letters of opposition, they seem to be more of "This is not what we believe" or "This is not what our church teaches" instead of "This is not what God's Word says." I suppose the reason for this is that many still cling to their religion and the beliefs that they were taught from their early years. These things can be difficult to let go, but our desire is to discuss these things as

friends and go to the Word of God together.

While we do get some letters of opposition, we also get some letters like yours—encouraging and thanking us for staying true to the Word of God. We hope that all of our readers will be like the Berean Jews of Acts 17 and not just blindly accept or reject the *Amish Voice*, but search the Scriptures to see what the Bible really says.

Thank you for your kindness and encouragement. May you keep trusting in God and following Jesus faithfully as you read the Bible, love God and others, and obey the commandments of Jesus. —Paul Miller

God Wants to Be Best Friends With You

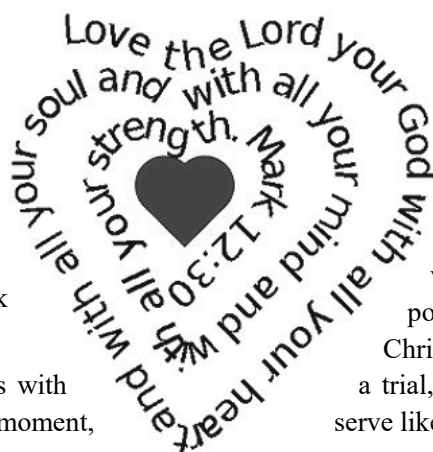
—Joe Keim

As our world becomes more and more selfish and godless, it becomes harder and harder to stay focused on eternity and the return of Jesus Christ. Dads, moms and single adults are to the point of wanting to give up. They feel frustrated with Americanized Christianity. While we point our fingers at them, they point their fingers at us – it's the same blame game that started in the Garden of Eden and is now devouring our government and news media. Some shout: we need another reformation! Others, are just going through the motions, hoping that somehow things will make a turn for the better or Jesus comes back and removes us from the chaos.

What is the answer? Is there one? Yes, it starts with you (me). So, block the world out for a moment, including your local church.

God wants your heart today – all of it. He wants a spouse-like connection with you – talking and walking together with you – feeling and caring for each other; just like the young man and woman who have fallen in love with each other – you know, they are constantly thinking of each other, writing letters,

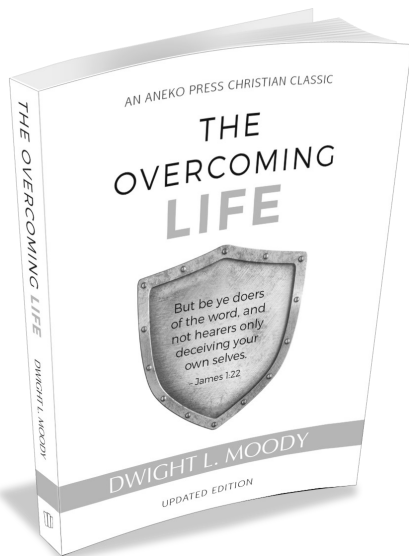
calling, meeting and giving each other gifts. It's that kind of relationship God wants to have with you – today! When all this is in place, the world, the times, and local church will begin to look and feel completely different.



Let's consider that no local church has ever been perfect. Not even the ones written about in scripture. We have all been hurt by others, and we have all hurt others. So, let's bow our head before God, ask for forgiveness, forgive others, and let's meet with the church this week. Not because we earn extra brownie points, but because God commanded Christians to do so. Go and pray for someone in a trial, be challenged to keep on keeping on and serve like Jesus served.

Psalm 34:17-19: *The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles. The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.*

—Joe Keim



Continued from the last issue.

External Foes

What are our external foes? What does James say? *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God* (James 4:4). And John? *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him* (1 John 2:15).

People want to know, what do you mean when you say *the world*? We find the answer in the next verses. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever* (1 John 2:16-17).

The world does not mean nature around us. God nowhere tells us that the material world is an enemy to be overcome. On the contrary, we read, *The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein* (Psalm 24:1). And, *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork* (Psalm 19:1).

Canon Liddon taught that “Human life and society are alienated from God, through being centered on material pursuits and possessions, and because of this are opposed to God’s Spirit and kingdom.” Christ said, *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you* (John 15:18-19). Love of the world means a lack of consideration for the eternal future because of a love for passing things.

How can the world be overcome? Not by education and not by experience. It can only be overcome by faith. *For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* (1 John 5:4-5).

Worldly Habits and Fashions

One thing we must fight is worldly habits and fashions. We must often go against the customs of the world. I have great respect for a man who can stand up for what he believes is right against all the world. He who can stand alone is a hero.

Suppose it is the custom for young men to do certain things you wouldn’t like your mother to know of or things your mother taught you are wrong. You may have to stand up alone among all your companions.

They will say, “You can’t get away from your mother, eh? Tied to your mother’s apron strings?”

Just say, “Yes, I have respect for my mother. She taught me what is right, and she’s the best friend I have. I believe what you’re doing is wrong, and I’m going to stand for the right.” If you have to stand alone, stand. Enoch did it, and Joseph, and Elisha, and Paul. God has kept such men in all ages.

Someone says, “I drink socially. I know

it’s a dangerous thing because my son is likely to follow me. But I can stop whenever I want to. Perhaps my son hasn’t got the same power as I have, and it may be too much for him. But it’s the custom in the society in which I move.”

Once I got into a place where I had to get up and leave. I was invited into a home, and they served a late supper. There were seven kinds of liquor on the table. I’m ashamed to say they were Christian people. A deacon urged a young lady to drink until she was embarrassed. I rose from the table and left. I felt that it was no place for me. They considered me very rude. It went against custom to protest such an infernal thing. Let’s go against custom when it leads us astray.

I was told in a southern college, some years ago, that no man was considered a first-class gentleman who didn’t drink. Of course it is not so now.

Pleasure

Another enemy is worldly pleasure. Many people are just drowned in pleasure. They have no time for any meditation at all. Many men are useless to society and to their families, because they gave themselves up to the god of pleasure. God wants His children to be happy, but in a way that will help and not hinder them.

A lady came to me once and said, “Mr. Moody, I wish you would tell me how I can become a Christian.” The tears rolled down her cheeks. “But I don’t want to be one of your kind.”

“Well,” I asked, “have I got a peculiar kind? What’s the matter with my Christianity?”

“Well,” she said, “my father was a doctor and had a large practice. He used to get so tired that he took us to the theater. We were a large family, and we had tickets for the theater three or four times a week. I suppose we were there a good deal more often than we were in church. Now I’m married to a lawyer, and he has a large practice. He gets so tired that he

takes us out to the theater.” She added, “I’m far better acquainted with the theater and theater people than with the church and church people. And I don’t want to give up the theater.”

“Well,” I said, “did you ever hear me say anything about theaters? There have been reporters here every day for all the different papers. They print my sermons verbatim in one of the papers. Have you ever seen anything in my sermons against theaters?”

She said, “No.”

“Well,” I said, “I have seen you in the audience every afternoon for several weeks, and have you heard me say anything against theaters?”

No, she hadn’t.

“Well,” I said, “what made you bring them up?” “Why, I supposed you didn’t believe in theaters.” “What made you think that?”

She said, “Do you ever go?” “No.”

“Why don’t you go?”

“Because I’ve got something better. I would rather go out into the street and eat dirt than do some of the things I used to do before I became a Christian.”

She said, “I don’t understand.”

I said, “When Jesus Christ has the position of authority, you will understand it all. He didn’t come down here and say we shouldn’t go here and shouldn’t go there. He didn’t lay down a lot of rules, but He laid down great principles. He says if you love Him you will take delight in pleasing Him.” As I preached Christ to her, the tears started again.

She said, “I tell you, Mr. Moody, that sermon on the indwelling Christ yesterday afternoon just broke my heart. I admire Him and want to be a Christian, but I don’t want to give up the theaters.”

I said, “Please don’t mention them again. I don’t want to talk about theaters. I want to talk to you about Christ.” So I took my Bible, and I read to her about Christ.

But she said again, “Mr. Moody, can I go

to the theater if I become a Christian?”

“Yes,” I said, “you can go to the theater just as much as you like if you are a true Christian, and you can go with His blessing.”

“Well,” she said, “I am glad you are not as narrow-minded as some.”

She felt quite relieved to think that she could go to the theater and be a Christian.

But I said, “If you can go to the theater for the glory of God, keep on going. But be sure that you go for the glory of God. If you are a Christian, you will be glad to do whatever pleases Him.”

I really think she became a Christian that day. The burden was gone and there was joy. However, just as she left, she said, “I’m not going to give up the theater.”

In a few days she came back to me and said, “Mr. Moody, I understand all about that theater business now. I went the other night. There was a large party at our house, and my husband wanted us to go. We went. But when the curtain lifted, everything looked so different. I said to my husband, ‘This is no place for me. This is horrible. I’m not going to stay. I’m going home.’”

“He said, ‘Don’t make a fool of yourself. Everyone has heard that you’ve been converted in the Moody meetings. If you go out, everyone will hear about that too. I beg of you, don’t make a fool of yourself by getting up and going out.’”

“But I said, ‘I have been making a fool of myself all of my life.’”

The theater hadn’t changed, but she had something better. She was going to overcome the world. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit* (Romans 8:5). When Christ has the first place in your heart, you are going to get victory. Just do whatever you know will please Him. The great objection I have to these things is that they are given too much importance, and become a hindrance to spiritual growth.

Business

It may be that we have to overcome in

business. Perhaps it’s business morning, noon, and night, and Sundays, too. When a man drives like Jehu (2 Kings 9:20) all week and like a snail on Sunday, isn’t there something wrong with him? Now, business is legitimate, and a man isn’t a good citizen if he won’t go out and earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He ought to be a good businessman and do the best job possible. At the same time, if he lays his whole heart on his business, makes a god of it, and thinks more of it than anything else, then the world has come in. It may be very legitimate in its place, like fire, which, in its place, is one of the best friends of man. Out of place, however, it is one of the worst enemies of man. Like water, which we cannot live without. Yet, when not in place, it becomes an enemy.

So my friends, that’s the question for you and me to settle. Now examine yourself. Are you getting the victory? Are you growing more in your Christian character? Are you achieving mastery over the world and the flesh?

Remember that every temptation you overcome makes you stronger to overcome others. And every temptation that defeats you makes you weaker. You can become weaker and weaker or stronger and stronger. Sin takes the strength out of your vitality, but godly character makes you stronger. So many men have been overcome by some little thing. Remember what it tells us in the Song of Solomon. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes* (Song of Solomon 2:15). Many people seem to think that things like getting agitated, being misleading, and telling white lies are little things. Sometimes you are able to stand strong in the face of a great temptation, and before you know it, you fall when faced with some little thing. Many men are overcome by a little persecution.

This article was taken from the book, ***The Overcoming Life*** — by **D. L. Moody**. To get a free copy of *The Overcoming Life*, go to page 15.

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Jeff Schreve explains that when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in a new believer, not only does He seal that believer for eternity, but He also gives them spiritual gifts. They are ready now to be used to do God's work.

April

You Are Forgiven, Parts 1 and 2

Motivated by His great love, God acted to forgive your sins through the saving work of Jesus Christ. **Dr. Charles Stanley** explains how an abundant life is possible only when we recognize all that our Savior did for us at Calvary. Once we grasp the message of the cross, we will see it as the power of God to redeem us from our sins and to deliver us from what we were before we met our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Leading Your Wife's Heart Toward Intimacy, Parts 1 and 2

Best-selling author **Gary Chapman** joins **Jim Daily** from Focus on the Family to explain how a husband and wife can renew the passion of their intimate relationship.

May

God Loves You Just as You Are

Dr. Charles Stanley explains how an abundant life is possible only when we recognize all that our Savior did for us at Calvary. Once we grasp the message of the cross, we will see it as the power of God to redeem us from our sins and to deliver us from what we were before we met our Savior, Jesus Christ.

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Dr. Adrian Rogers from Love Worth Finding shares a very thought-provoking quote: "Nature forms us, sin deforms us, education informs us, society reforms us but only Jesus Christ can transform us." This message looks at the transformed life of "the shady lady of Jericho" who became the great-grandmother of King David.

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For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth (Hebrews 12:6).

For years I struggled with the idea of God's chastening in my life. Especially the idea of God chastening me without me knowing why. I would never punish my own children without first making sure they understand why. And yet I had to be honest, in many of the difficult things I've faced in my life, I have not had a clear reason for them. Is there a difference between trials and chastening? How can I know the difference? You cannot love and trust a God who seems to delight in hurting you. And yet scriptures are very clear on the value and need for God's chastening in our lives. This is by no means conclusive, but here are a few thoughts that have helped clear things up for me.

First of all, I believe the Word is clear, there is a chastening in the form of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7-9). And there's the chastening that comes from straying from God's will (Psalm 119:67). In both of these I believe God will make it clear why we are being chastened if we want to know. And I also believe God has no delight in chastening of this nature. Rather, His delight is in showing mercy and blessing, and lifting the chastening as soon as He sees we've learned what He's trying to teach us. He's

a good Father.

One of the meanings for the word *chastening* is "discipline; training and education of children." So much of the difficult times we go through are intended to teach us things. It's here that we receive the revelation of Jesus and the completion we have in Him. I believe this is an endless process. As we see the immensity of the value of the revelation of our completion in Christ, it becomes easier to suffer the pain and the loss. (Philippians 3:7-8).

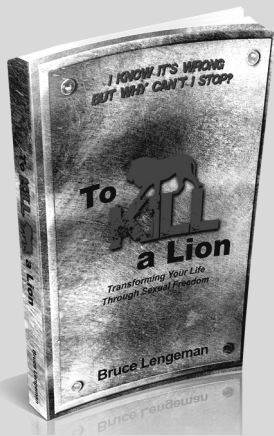
Then we have what is described in 2 Corinthians 4:12. The chastening that ministers poverty, weakness and death. The only way the power of Christ can work through us is by a continual weakening and death (letting go) of our natural strength. This is an endless process and extremely important. It makes us "poor in spirit" – weak and dependent on God alone. It keeps us pliable and teachable. It can only be endured by faith...without faith it will embitter and destroy a person. But all of the godly people we've appreciated the most, have gone, and are going through this continual process. During the time the tabernacle was being built, man had already learned how to pour hot metals into forms in order to make their desired objects. However, all the gold objects to be used in God's service were to be made

of "beaten gold." This means every piece was made from a lump of gold and beaten into something useful and beautiful, one blow at a time. Gold is very malleable. This such a beautiful and prophetic picture of God's way with us in the New Covenant.

I believe by far the majority of our chastening is not about things we've done wrong, but about the "earthen vessel" that surrounds the treasure we are carrying (2 Corinthians 4:7). God is a wonderful Father! And we can be completely convinced that He will make all things work out for our benefit if we love Him (Romans 8:28).

Recently I was telling God, "Lord it seems so much of my life You've had to humiliate me. I really want you to take the reproaches (disgraces, slander) out of my life, and be able to bless me with favor." Just that quick, God spoke to my heart, "Would you rather be proud?" I bowed my head and with tears I told Him, "No Lord, I would rather be humiliated and disgraced for the rest of my life than to be proud." Later, I saw the apostle Paul said he takes pleasure in reproaches (2 Corinthians 12:10). Be encouraged with the cup God has given you to drink. He is your Father and will work out all things for your benefit if you keep on trusting and loving Him. Hallelujah! — Dale Schmucker

Do you struggle with lust or other sins and addictions?



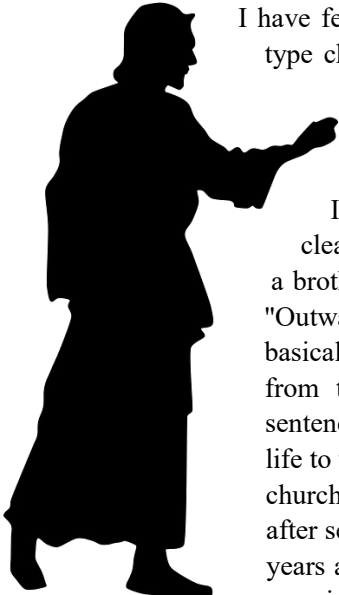
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Evangelism

—By John Weaver

'E-van'ge-lism': the spreading of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness. To evangelize was the last commandment that Jesus gave before his departure. Go ye into all the world, and teach them to observe all the things that Jesus had taught over the last three years.



I have felt that evangelizing is a weak area with many Anabaptist-type churches. Yes, there are individuals who are active in local ministries, thank God. And many support foreign missions.

But to be active in local outreach has never been very strong.

I want to introduce to you a writing that brings out very clearly the results of not reaching out in ministry ... Written by a brother by the name of Jim Newsom who has a ministry called "Outward Focused Ministry". (what a great name). Jim was basically a delinquent, petty criminal, dishonorably discharged from the armed services, and finally given a 30-year prison sentence for second degree murder. On July 26, 1972, Jim gave his life to the Lord Jesus and his life was changed forever. He started a church in prison. He reached out and never quit. He was released after serving eight years and continues in various ministries. A few years ago, he spoke at a sister church of ours in the area. He is an amazing brother whose zeal for reaching out is commendable

As I stated, he gave me a paper that tells us in just a few words what happens if the church does not focus on reaching the lost. I pray that we, our people, the church would follow his example, and Christ's command and look outward. Not inward. See if you can identify.

If you don't become a reconciler of the lost, you will become an evaluator of the saved. There is something inherent on our new nature that wants to see people get right with God, and if we don't direct it at the lost, we will direct it to the saved.

Then instead of pursuing sinners, we will spend our time policing the saints. All of us have been called to be fishers of men, but when those who are called to fish, don't fish, they fight.

When energy that was meant to be used outside the church is used inside the church, the result is explosive. Instead of casting nets, we cast stones. Instead of becoming teachers of the lost, we become critics of the saved. Instead of extending helping hands, we point accusing fingers. Instead of helping the hurting, we hurt the helpers, and sadly the lost go unreached, the poor go unfed, and the confused go uncounseled.

But when those who are called to fish, fish; they flourish, souls are reached, lives are changed, and the world is impacted. —John Weaver

Declared Righteous

Lately I've heard a lot of "We are just POOOOR sinners, saved by grace. We all sin every day, we will sin today, we will sin tomorrow, and then again on Saturday."

Yes, there is an element of truth to that, but that is one side of the coin. Do you really want to focus on that side of the coin? Do you want to focus on your earthly body, rather than what God Himself declares you to be? I choose to look upward. If God has declared us righteous then we will be happy to accept that!!

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). — Gerald Hochstetler

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and place in which we are to confess sins to God and to those against whom we have sinned, but Jesus didn't require any of that – He simply asked Peter and Andrew to follow Him. He certainly didn't tell them to go join a certain group or to go follow some other men. No. When He calls us, He simply expects us to drop our old ways of life and follow Him.

Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21).

And I will make you fishers of men. There is something that stands out to me about how Jesus taught His disciples. He didn't say, "Keep fishing for now, and then on Sunday I will tell you how to be like Me." Jesus also didn't say, "Watch Me, and you will learn how to be like Me." Of course, Jesus did teach by example, but He also taught His disciples and the multitudes verbally and on the spot. What if today, instead of expecting people to guess why we do what we do, we used words as gracious as the words of Jesus, freely and lovingly talking with our family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers about the things of the Lord?

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel [good news] to every creature (Mark 16:15).

And I will make you fishers of men. Jesus said plainly that He'd be the one turning the disciples into fishers of men. I'm convinced, from reading the Bible and from personal experience, that we can't do anything good of ourselves. But if Jesus "makes us" into the good thing He desires us to be, then we can do all things, because He's the one doing it in and through us rather than us trying to do it in our own strength.

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Philippians 4:13).

And I will make you fishers of men. When reading the Gospels (the first four books in the New Testament), I see in many different ways the love Jesus had for His disciples and for the multitudes of people to whom He ministered. He was always truthful, but He was also very patient. He had high expectations, but he also allowed His disciples to make mistakes as they learned.

Mothers, read the Gospels and learn from Jesus about how to gently and lovingly nurture your little disciples in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. Fathers, make sure your children know you love them and will have patience with them as they make mistakes and learn how to cope with life.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if

ye have love one to another (John 13:35).

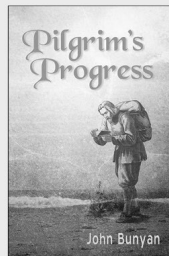
We've hardly begun to scratch the surface of the words of Jesus in this short passage. There is, however, one thing I know: the same Jesus Christ who was walking by the Sea of Galilee 2,000 years ago is still calling men and women everywhere to follow Him today. Not only is He asking us to follow Him, but He is also wanting to transform us from being fishers of fish to being fishers of men.

As we forsake our nets, whatever our earthly "nets" may be, let us instead follow Jesus. He will teach us how to do something of much greater value, not because we have done anything to earn this special attention from Him, but because He has commanded us to follow Him. As we submit to Him alone, He will follow through with His promise to make us fruitful laborers in His vineyard.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

—Jeremiah Zeiset, Abbotsford, Wisconsin

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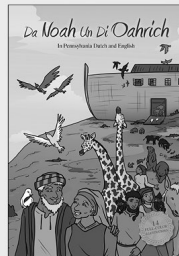
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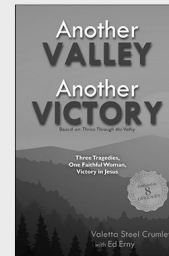
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Follow Me

—Jeremiah Zeiset

*And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, **Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.** And they straightway left their nets, and followed him (Matthew 4:18-20).*

Imagine with me that you are in Galilee and you are a fisherman by trade. You are Jewish and know the Old Testament very well, likely having committed most or even all of it to memory. From your studies, you know that God is going to send a Savior into the world, and you know from reading the Old Testament prophets that He will be showing up someday soon.

You're spending yet another day on the shores by the Sea of Galilee, and you are tossing your net into the sea, again hoping for a good catch. Then, you have an unexpected encounter – you meet the Messiah face-to-face. He walks up to where you are fishing, and what He asks you to do next will change your life forever.

Jesus's words were few and to the point: **Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.** Simple, easy to understand words, but profound. It's these words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that I want to look at in more detail.

Follow me. It didn't take Jesus but a second to say these two words. Isn't the same true today? Before Jesus changed my life, I was a sinner, and I knew it. Even worse, I liked and enjoyed my sins. But one day something changed, and my heart of stone

was replaced with a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). What others had tried to change with the law was changed from within the heart. How exactly did it happen? It's not something you can explain to just anyone; each person must have experienced the same spiritual transformation for themselves.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Follow me. I'm certain that if you were Peter and Andrew, the last place you would have expected to see Jesus was at your workplace. They were perhaps thinking of someday going and searching for the Messiah, but they certainly didn't expect to have the Messiah come and find them! That is how He works, though – He reaches out to us and asks us to follow Him while we are yet sinners.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

Follow me. Jesus could have told Peter and Andrew to first go and put on clean Sunday clothing. After all, if they were going to follow the Messiah, shouldn't they be dressed up like a Jewish rabbi (the spiritual leaders of the day)? He could have first asked them to confess all their sins and make everything right with God before following Him. There is, of course, a time

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