

Committed Christian Life

The Goal and Process of the Christian Life



*But grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 3:18

1



CBLT



Contents

The Goal and Process of the Christian Life	3
Introduction.....	5
I. The Spiritual Life	7
II. The Goal.....	20
III. The Process of Spiritual Growth	24
IV. The Christian Life: God’s Work or Mine?.....	29
Conclusion	30
Appendix A. Spiritual Journal	36
Appendix B. Carnal Christian	40
Appendix C. God’s Side and Man’s Side	46
Appendix D. Absolute Surrender	51

The Goal and Process of the Christian Life

This lesson is taken from the course *Committed Christian Life*. We need men and women who are sold out for God; who have abandoned themselves completely and turned to the Lord whole-heartedly. We know it is God's desire that we be victorious and lead a full life for Him, but how to do that takes a lifetime to learn. Often we get bogged down along the way and it is easy to lose fervency, to become discouraged and even apathetic. But God's plan is for us to continue growing and learning. We pray this lesson will give you knowledge, inspiration, and tools to press on with joy!

Other lessons in this course are:

- 2) "The Power for the Spiritual Life"
Learn about the ministry of the Holy Spirit to unbelievers and believers and the three commands God's Word gives us about the Holy Spirit.
- 3) "The War"
We are in a spiritual battle with a determined enemy. Learn about the evil one's tactics and how to be victorious.
- 4) "Prayer: Worship and Praise"
Prayer is an expression of our relationship to God. Learn a fresh focus as you seek His face before you seek His hand.
- 5) "Prayer: Petition and Intercession"
Now with Almighty God in focus learn the joys of intercession. Included are the basic principles of prayer, hindrances to prayer and the importance of corporate prayer.
- 6) "Alive and Powerful — The Word Of God"
The Bible is our main source of communication from our Heavenly Father and the food of our spiritual lives. Learn how to make the most of this living, powerful resource.
- 7) "Walking By Faith"
The foundational principle of Kingdom living is faith. Learn how to deal with the challenges to faith as well as steps to knowing God's will for your life.
- 8) "Spiritual Transformation"

What God has promised is that He will transform us by the power of His Holy Spirit so that we become like Him. This lesson will begin to answer the question: As a result of my walk with Christ, what changes in my character should take place?

9) “Understanding Suffering”

Learn the five purposes of suffering and how our response to suffering will make or break us. We alone decide whether suffering will drive us to bitterness, or to spiritual maturity.

10) “Fellowship in the Family”

Learn how to help build unity in the church, our “family”, how to deal with conflict and how to practice fellowship that honors Christ and brings joy to our hearts.

11) “Ministering To Your Fellowman”

This is a lesson which will challenge you to examine how you can serve others. It will open your eyes to why God has given you gifts from His Holy Spirit, and how important it is for you to minister to those around you.

12) “Redeeming The Time”

What does the Bible say about work and how we should use our time? Do you know what your priorities are and do you set goals that reflect that? This lesson will help you redeem the time.

13) “Preparing for Revival”

There is much talk about revival, but little evidence of it. Take a look at the history of revivals and the principles we can use to bring revival now, here-- in our own lives, in our church, in Ukraine.

Introduction

The Christian life is a journey. From the moment we are born anew into the family of God, we begin the pathway toward maturity in Christ. The pathway is neither easy nor short. It is filled with obstacles erected by a cunning adversary who preys on our weakness. It is not a hopeless struggle, however, for the God of the universe has committed Himself and the resources of Heaven to aid His children.

This lesson is designed to help you focus on your goals in your journey with Christ. For the greatest benefit to your spiritual journey right now we recommend three things:

- 1) Keep a spiritual journal, at least while you work your way through this lesson. You will find one explanation of how to do this In Appendix A.
- 2) Make a goal to have a daily quiet time with the Lord. If you are in a leadership position we would challenge you to set aside an hour a day for one month. However if you do not already have a regular quiet time, start with a daily goal that you are willing to practice for one month.
- 3) Memorize 4 Bible verses. We suggest you choose 4 verses from Hebrews 11 — the famous chapter on faith.

Throughout this lesson there are various questions, exercises and assignments that will help you interact with the material and apply it to your own life situation. Note that at the end of this lesson there is an answer key so that you may check your understanding of the material covered.

Use a notebook to write out your answers to the exercises. This is your “thinking” notebook so that you can put down your own answers and thoughts on what you are learning. Our learning is reinforced by writing it down so this is an excellent tool as you pursue growth in your personal life.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. The Spiritual Life
 - A. Defining Important Terms
 - B. Four Types of Men
 - II. The Goal
 - A. Defining God’s Glory
 - B. Giving Glory to God
 - III. The Process of Spiritual Growth
 - A. Models of Spiritual Growth
 - B. Summary
 - IV. Christian Life: God’s Work or Mine?
- Conclusion

LESSON OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson you should be able to:

1. Write a one-paragraph summary of spiritual maturity.
2. State the characteristics of each of the following: spiritual Christian, natural man, baby Christian, and carnal Christian.
3. Be able to state the overall purpose of the Christian’s life and the five specific areas that should be included in our goals.

4. Identify how you are working on each of these five goals.
5. Explain the five models of Christian growth as discussed in this lesson and how they differ and/or are similar.
6. Explain what pattern of Christian growth you have experienced in your life with a diagram to illustrate it.
7. Briefly explain both God's role and the believer's role in the process of spiritual growth.

LESSON ASSIGNMENTS

This gives you a brief overview of how to proceed with this lesson.

1. Review the Lesson Outline and objectives.
2. Read the definitions of key terms.
3. Read the lesson and do the questions and exercises, referring to the Bible and the assigned readings as requested.
4. Reading assignments in this lesson:
 - “The Carnal Christian” Appendix B
 - “God's Part and Man's Part” Appendix C
 - “Absolute Surrender” Appendix D
5. Write in your spiritual journal every day including where you have read in the Bible for that day. If you have not prepared your “Spiritual Journal” do that now referring to the article in Appendix A “Spiritual Journal”...
6. Memorize four verses from Hebrews 11. There are 40 verses, so if you would memorize 4 a week you could cover the whole chapter in 10 weeks. The goal actually is not in the memorization, but rather allowing the Scriptures to soak into your soul.
7. Have a quiet time daily. During this time you can write in your spiritual journal and work on the scripture verses you are memorizing. ALL of this is time with the Lord.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS (AS USED IN THIS LESSON)

Carnal — A Christian who is living according to the prompting of the flesh for an indeterminate period of time so that his lifestyle can hardly be distinguished from that of a non-Christian

Crisis Point — Any identifiable experience of a believer that results in spiritual growth and a closer, more mature walk with the Lord or that results in a state of rebellion

Holiness — To be set apart, by God, for God; as an attribute, it refers to moral goodness and purity.

Maturity — The consistent display of the image of Jesus Christ in the character of the believer, made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit

Sanctification — The process of being made holy resulting in a changed lifestyle for the believer¹

Spiritual — (1) Partaking of, having its origin in, and being dominated by either the human spirit or the Holy Spirit; (2) Biblically speaking, living under the complete influence and power of the Holy Spirit

¹ Lorin L. Cranford, “Sanctification”, *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1443.

I. The Spiritual Life

Far too many Christians have no idea what the goal of the Christian life is. They stumble along, doing their best to live up to a standard that fits the current cultural ideal of what a “good Christian” is supposed to be. They have not understood that they are called to live a supernatural life, and that God is ready, willing, and able to provide them with everything they need to live that life victoriously. They are blind to the fact that there is more to the Christian life than just trying to hold on until they someday reach heaven. They are saved through Christ but are unaware that the Holy Spirit dwells in them to provide the power to live a successful Christian life. Believers are not left on their own. God’s desire is to do the supernatural through them. So we want to focus on what God intended when He created us.

In order to understand the Christian journey the first three lessons in the *Committed Christian Life* course will cover the three main persons involved. This first lesson is about you, the believer. Lesson Two is about the Holy Spirit who has been promised to us and is available to us all the time. Lesson Three covers the personage of Satan, the one who opposes God and all of His people and causes the struggle in the Christian’s life, trying to lead him astray on his journey.

As we begin let us define three terms: “holiness,” “maturity,” and “spirituality.” Once we begin to understand some of these terms that are often used in the Christian world we can then go on to see their place in our lives.

A. Defining Important Terms

1. Holiness

Revelation 15:4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy.” Our God is, above all things, holy. This is repeated over and over in Scriptures. The word “holy” appears over six hundred times in the Bible.

Its application to the believer is summed up in 1 Peter 1:16 where God’s words are: “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” Another verse from the writer of Hebrews says, “Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness, for without it no one will see the Lord.” (12:14 NetBible). Therefore, overwhelmingly so, we know that we need to be holy--and we are to pursue holiness.

What comes to mind when we try to picture someone who is holy? Your mind’s picture may be of someone who is extremely pious, never makes mistakes, prays all the time, never has any fun, memorizes the Bible and knows a major portion by heart. We could go on and on with how we picture holiness. But we need a more Biblical picture if we are going to actually “be” holy, as intimidating as it sounds. God gives no commands without providing a way to carry them out.

In Old Testament times, when an object — such as a piece of furniture that belonged to the Tabernacle or Temple — was sanctified, it was considered *holy unto the Lord*. It was never to be used for any other purpose than that for which it was dedicated. To become holy, then, was to become the property of God, set aside for the service of God, according to His will.

With inanimate objects, the will was not involved, so the process was simple. With people however it is different because we have wills and have the freedom to make choices. We *choose* to become the property of God and then He separates us. This is a key meaning to the word *holy*: to be separated to God; to be set apart. As we are set apart for God, who is holy, the command is for us to be holy. The attribute of holiness refers to moral goodness or purity. “The holiness of God is the complete embodiment of all of His moral attributes.”² It is the essence of Who He is and what sets Him apart from everything and everyone else. He is

² Fred R. Johnson, *Toward Conformity to the Image of Christ*, Vol. 1 (Haviland, Kansas: Faith Publishing, 2004), p. 9.

often referred to as *holy* and lifted up as *holy*. And so, as we are set apart for Him and His purposes, we are told to “be” holy, to pursue holiness.

In 2 Corinthians 7:1 we are told how to come to holiness: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” When we first enter into a relationship with Christ we experience a cleansing that only God Himself can perform to make us pure before Him. But as we go on in our Christian life we have an obligation to pursue holiness and keep ourselves clean from everything that would bring impurity to us. This is not an option as a believer. We are made in the image of God and so we have a capacity of holiness that is not true of mere objects. 2 Peter 1:4 says that we are to “become partakers of the divine nature”.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), American theologian and critical figure in the revival called the “Great Awakening” in America, wrote:³

As God delights in his own beauty, he must necessarily delight in the creature’s holiness which is a conformity to and participation of it, as truly as a brightness of a jewel, held in the sun’s beams, is a participation or derivation of the sun, though immensely less in degree.

What a thought of brilliance in our lives: that holiness is like a jewel glistening as a reflection of God Himself.

To be holy does not mean sinless perfection. Those who claim this have redefined “sin”.



Question 1 Read 1 John 1:8-10. What do these verses say about sin and the believer?

But you also see the answer to this problem in those verses. We can go to God any time to be forgiven and cleansed. We will never measure up to the holiness of God, but nevertheless He lays the path before us to pursue this attribute.

J. Vernon McGee has these helpful comments on holiness:⁴

Holiness is something that is really misunderstood. To the average person, holiness means to assume a very pious attitude, to become almost abnormal in everyday life. It is thought to be a superficial thing.

My friend, the Lord wants you to be a fully integrated personality. He wants you to enjoy life and have fun — I don’t mean the sinful kind of fun, but real delight and enjoyment in the life He has given to you. Holiness is to the spiritual life what health is to the physical life. You like to see a person who is physically fine, robust, and healthy. Well, holiness is to be healthy and robust spiritually. Oh, how we need folk like this today!

Holiness is becoming all that God desires you to be—for your good as well as for His glory.



Question 2 What are the two main ideas which are conveyed by the term “holy”?

A word that is closely related to *holiness* is *sanctification*. This word comes from the same root as holy and means the process of making holy. Therefore we are all as believers sanctified because we

³ Jonathan Edwards, *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume One <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1.iv.iii.iii.html>.

⁴J. Vernon McGee, *First Peter* (Nashville, TN: Thomas, 1991), 36.

belong to Christ; we have been set apart for Him. And it also means the process of becoming holy in the moral sense--to pursue this attribute of God.

To summarize, holiness as it applies to the believer is the setting apart of a person unto God. By this we mean that a person is separated **from** sin and the world and **unto** obedience to God. The believer's life becomes a visible expression of God's moral purity as he grows more and more into the image of Christ. Holiness sets the absolute moral perfection displayed in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ as the standard for Christian living. We can be satisfied with nothing less. Diagram 1-1, illustrates this truth:

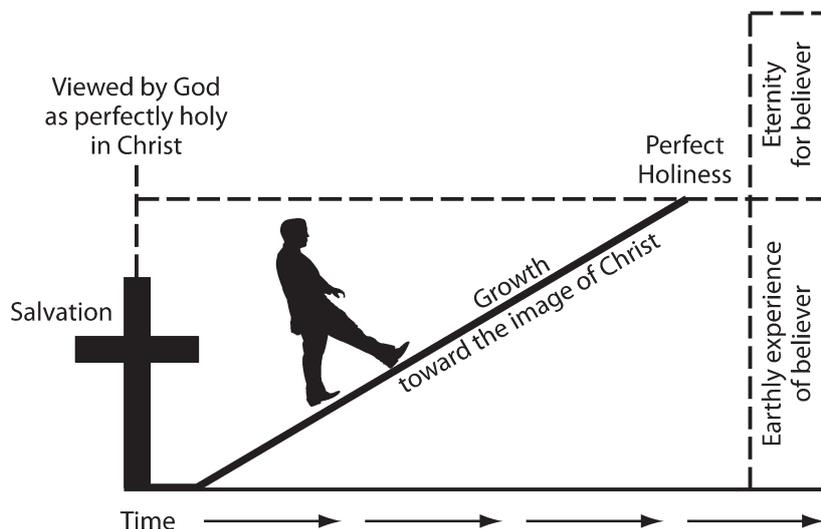


Diagram 1-1. **GROWTH TOWARD THE IMAGE OF CHRIST**

This illustrates three important aspects in our relationship to holiness. First, at the moment of salvation we are viewed by God as being totally free from sin in Christ. We have been set apart, or sanctified, in a definite act. First Corinthians 6:11 states, "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." Secondly, in our experience we progressively grow more and more toward the goal of holiness. Ephesians 4:15: "we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *even* Christ". Finally, in the eternal state, when we enter into the presence of the Lord, either in death or at His coming, we reach the final goal of perfect holiness. First John 3:2 states: "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him". In our eternal relationship with God we are absolutely holy because of our union with Christ. Our daily experience, on the other hand, is to be a progression in the development of holiness in our lives, culminating in our entrance into perfect holiness when we meet the Lord.

2. Maturity

The term "maturity" is closely linked with holiness in regards to the Christian life. Let us take an example from the physical world to help us define maturity. A newborn baby, nestled in the arms of his mother, is a beautiful picture. He brings joy to the excited parents. Yet that wonderful little child acts like a parasite. He does nothing for himself. He makes no decisions, contributes nothing to his care, gives nothing to anyone else. He lives off of the existence and goodness of others, offering only his cute, cuddly presence as compensation for all of his demands. But no one minds. Babies are supposed to be that way!

On the other hand, a twenty-year-old sitting in his mother's lap drinking out of a bottle would be a pitiful and disgusting sight. Why? Because twenty-year-olds are not supposed to act like babies. They are supposed to grow up. They are supposed to assume responsibility for themselves, to feed

themselves, and to care for their own needs. They are also supposed to contribute to the care and well-being of others. Understandably, a great deal more is expected of adults.

The normal development of a human being is a good analogy of the process of spiritual growth. When we are “born again” we start in spiritual infancy and must grow and mature in our Christian life. Ordinarily we use the word “maturity” to describe the degree to which an individual has become a responsible member of society. Let us take a closer look at what this term means and how it applies to the spiritual life of a believer as he grows in his Christian life.

The quest for spiritual maturity is a central theme in the New Testament. Look at some Scripture verses to see what they reveal.



Question 3 Look up the following verses and write what is said in regards to maturity:

a. 1 Corinthians 14:20 _____

b. Ephesians 4:11-13 _____

c. Philippians 3:14-16 _____

d. Colossians 1:28 _____

e. Hebrews 6:1 _____

Among believers the word “maturity” is often used to describe degrees of growth in Christian character.

In this way we are reminded of both the evidence of Christian growth, which is the conformity of our lives to the image of Christ, as well as the process of growth leading toward this. The word “mature” means “to complete,” “to accomplish,” “to perfect,” or “to have your skills and abilities fully developed”⁵. For instance, in John 4:34 the word is used in the original language in a non-theological sense. Here Jesus says, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.” Here it stresses the bringing to an end, or the completion of, a particular task.

So we can say that the word “mature” basically describes something or someone who is complete. Nothing is left undone or lacking. A certain goal has been reached. The word does not mean “absolute perfection” as we normally understand that concept. Rather, the stress is on having developed all the parts necessary for fulfillment of the desired goal. In the physical world we can understand that a human being can be full-grown and mature without being a perfect specimen and without having developed to his fullest potential. A simple illustration is how a man may use his muscles. All of the muscles in a mature adult are there, but if he does not use them at all they will atrophy. On the other side, as he uses these muscles and exercises and develops them, they increase in strength and ability.

⁵In the New Testament the word that is translated “mature” is the Greek word *teleios*. It and the other words in its word family occur 115 times in the New Testament. The verb form is the word *teleioo* which is translated “to complete,” “to accomplish,” or “to perfect.”

On the basis of this definition, the spiritually mature Christian is one who has reached certain specific spiritual goals. He is not perfect in the sense of “sinless”, nor does it mean that the process has been finished as he strives towards God’s holiness. We are filled with the grace of God and mature by the grace of God. This is what James had in mind when he wrote concerning trials, “the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” James 1:3-4. God uses the circumstances of life so that, like the skillful surgeon or musician, the mature Christian develops the inner qualities necessary for him to consistently live a life pleasing to God.

This life in the image of Christ is made possible by the energizing power of the Holy Spirit. The presence and power of the Spirit is what sets believers apart from the experience of non-believers. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to Christian living. This is covered more thoroughly in the lesson in this series, “The Power for the Spiritual Life”.

Spiritual maturity can be summarized with the following definition:

Spiritual maturity is the stage of the Christian life reached whereby there is a consistent display of the image of Jesus Christ in the character and actions of the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The above definition has three vital parts:

1. A consistent display of the image of Jesus Christ is the evidence of Christian maturity.
2. The power of the Holy Spirit is what enables us to mature spiritually.
3. The element of time is an essential factor in the process of spiritual growth; it involves learning to respond in a Christ-like manner to the demands of daily living, and this results in an abiding change of character.

In order to see this more clearly, let us consider a few more characteristics of spiritual maturity.



Question 4 Hebrews 5:12-14 gives at least three characteristics of the mature Christian. What are they?



Question 5 What are at least four characteristics of the immature Christian found in Hebrews 5:11-6:1?



Question 6 In Philippians 3:1-15 what are four characteristics of the **attitude** Paul has as a mature believer.



Question 7 In the verses below, note **what** is perfected, or made complete, and how this work is accomplished.

- a. James 2:22 _____

- b. 1 John 2:5 _____

- c. 1 John 4:12 _____

- d. 2 Corinthians 12:9 _____



Question 8 There is perhaps no verse in the entire Bible which gives such a concrete picture of one important dimension of “maturity” as James 3:2. What is this dimension?



Exercise 1

Summarizing maturity. Now, using the above discussion and scripture verses, write out at least one paragraph in your notebook summarizing what Christian maturity is. After you have done this, examine where you are in maturity. Are there areas in your spiritual life that are lacking maturity?

Spiritual maturity then is another way of looking at holiness. It emphasizes the goal of spiritual growth: growth toward conformity to the image of Christ. Furthermore, the term “maturity” implies a process for arriving at that goal. Everything in nature around us takes time to reach maturity. Spiritually the same principle applies.

3. Spirituality

Having looked at the concept of maturity, we will now focus on the concept of spirituality. Misunderstandings over the definition of the “spiritual” Christian have caused continual problems for believers in every age. It was a major issue in the first-century church. The church at Corinth, for example, was almost destroyed because of it. Many in that Corinthian church thought that some Christians were “spiritual” and others were not. Paul agreed with that, but his definition of the “spiritual man” corrected their judgment which they had based on external standards. Let us look closer.

In a non-theological sense, the word “spirit” is used simply for the wind in general, the air, or the breath we take (John 3:8; Job 41:16; Revelation 11:11). Spirit is vital for physical life (James 2:26).

There is simply no life without it. This basic meaning is important to remember as we look at the other uses of the word “spirit.”

In addition to referring to the Holy Spirit, the word “spirit” is also used of the “substance” of God. John 4:24 tells us God is spirit. Furthermore, in the realm of the invisible there are good and evil spirits (Matthew 12:45). When we come to man, we discover that, just as there is no physical life without “breath,” there is also no spiritual life without “the Spirit” (Romans 8:9).



Question 9 In 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 Paul uses the word “spirit” in three different senses. List each sense and the verse in which it is found.

To say that something is spiritual means that it partakes of, has its origin in, or is dominated by either the human spirit or the Holy Spirit. In the Christian life when we talk of the spiritual man we are specifically speaking of one who is “dominated” by the Holy Spirit. Therefore when we speak of spirituality in a believer’s life, we are actually speaking about the quality of his life in relation to God. How strongly is he really connected to God? What is his relationship with God? Who is running his life? What is he living for: this world or God’s kingdom — or we could say, the physical things of life or the spiritual things of life? Often it becomes a term of judgment as we look at others and try to determine how “spiritual” we think they are. But this term in comparison to *holiness* and *maturity* brings us more strongly to the actual relationship we have with Jesus Christ. That relationship is implied in the other terms because we cannot grow to be like Christ and not have a relationship with Him, and the deeper the relationship the deeper the spirituality as our spirit communes with His. In the next section we will see what Paul has to say about the spiritual man.



Exercise 2

Thinking it through. Write your own definition of each of the three terms — “holiness,” “maturity,” “spirituality” — and then compare. How are they related? Do they mean the same thing? How do they differ?

B. Four Types of Men

In 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:3 Paul deals with the concept of spiritual maturity by describing four distinct kinds of conduct evident among the Corinthians. Briefly stated, they are: the natural man; the spiritual Christian; the infant, or immature, Christian; and the carnal Christian.



Read this passage now. As you read especially examine what the text says about the different types of men.

1. The natural man

The word “natural” simply describes that which has been made alive with the breath of natural, or earthly, life — the kind of life we have in common with animals. In this sense it has no negative meaning. The Greek word for “natural” in 1 Corinthians 2:14 is *psychikos*. This same word is used in the Greek translation of Genesis 2:19 in reference to animal life. It is also used to refer to Adam in Genesis 2:7. However as Paul uses it here he is referring to a man without the Spirit of God in Him. He is a non-Christian. He is lost.

We also have this same Greek word *psychikos* in Jude 19. Read Jude 18-19.



Question 10 Who is being talked about in verse 19?

Here the word takes on a negative moral meaning. In some English translations the word is translated “sensual”.

Look at Diagram 1-2 which symbolizes natural man with his 3 parts. Man was perfect when God created him, but then he fell in the Garden of Eden.

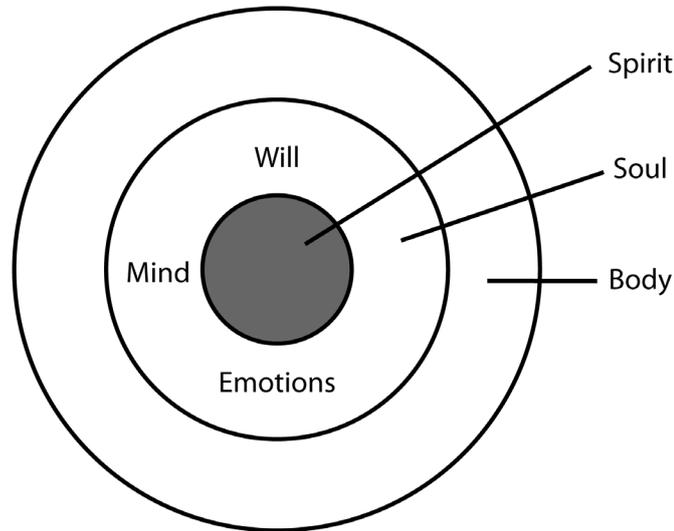


Diagram 1-2. **NATURAL MAN**

At that point in time, when sin entered the world mankind’s spirit was separated from God’s. Therefore the center circle is grayed in to represent man’s darkness.

“This is Alford’s statement:⁶

The psuchē [that is, the soul] is the centre of the personal being, the “I” of each individual. It is in each man bound to the spirit, man’s higher part, and to the body, man’s lower part; drawn upwards by the one, downward by the other. He who gives himself up to the lower appetites, is sarkikos (fleshly): he who by communion of his pneuma (spirit) with God’s Spirit is employed in the higher aims of his being, is pneumatikos (spiritual). He who rests midway, thinking only of self and self’s interests, whether animal or intellectual, is the psuchikos (sensual), the selfish man, the man in whom the spirit is sunk and degraded into subordination to the subordinate psuchē (soul). Another negative use of the word is found in James 3:15. In this verse the term signifies that which is opposite to spiritual life and practice. This negative meaning comes from the fact that human life without the spiritual dimension is in rebellion to God by relying on self rather than Him.”

To represent these influences upon a man we will add arrows (Diagram 1-3). These influences from the world around natural man include many things but have been summarized in environment and circumstances.



Question 11 Besides being dominated by the “soul,” or the materialistic natural life, how is the natural man described in I Corinthians 2:14?

⁶ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), 253.

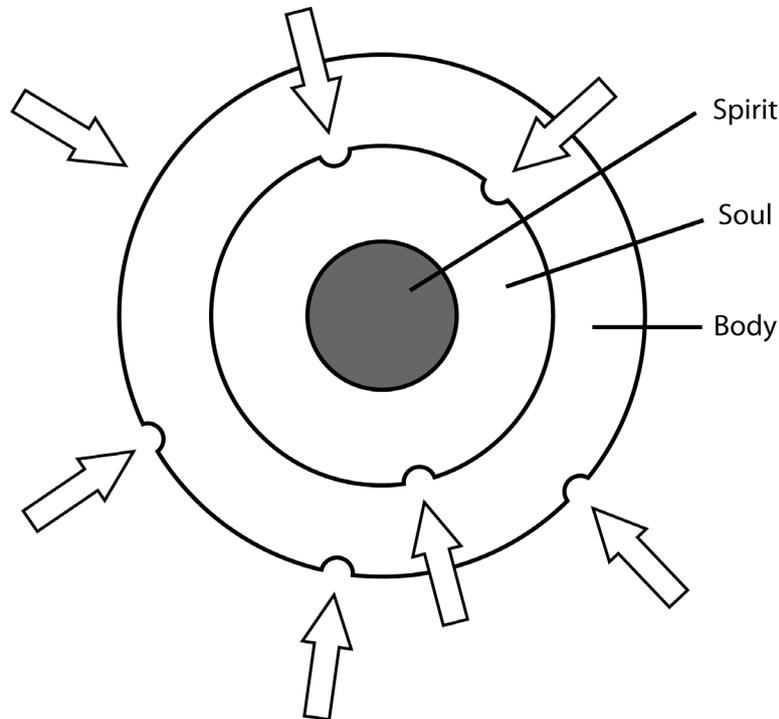


Diagram 1-3. **NATURAL MAN — INFLUENCES IN HIS LIFE**

Natural man has the following characteristics:

1. He is separated from God.
2. He is in spiritual darkness.
 - a. He does not accept spiritual things because they are foolish to him
 - b. He cannot understand spiritual things
3. Because of this void he is ruled by Satan and is a part of his kingdom.
4. He is at the mercy of his environment and circumstances.

2. The infant, or immature, Christian

Now, what happens when the natural man makes the step and becomes a Christian? Natural man suddenly becomes full of light — spiritual light. He is a new creature, a new being. He has accepted Christ into his heart and life. We can diagram it thus:

In 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 Paul turns his attention to the “infant Christian.” He is talking about the new Christian who is still immature. Paul does not at all indicate that this “infant” is to blame for his immaturity. Rather he is emphasizing this man’s limited capacity yet to understand deeper spiritual truths. And we see that he needs the “milk” of the Word, and is capable of digesting that and therefore growing on it.

Paul compares and contrasts the conduct of the new Christian (immature believer) with those of the spiritual man as between the milk of the babe and the solid food of the mature. The existence of the baby Christian implies that the Biblical model of the spiritual life is one of various stages. We will see this more clearly as we move on.

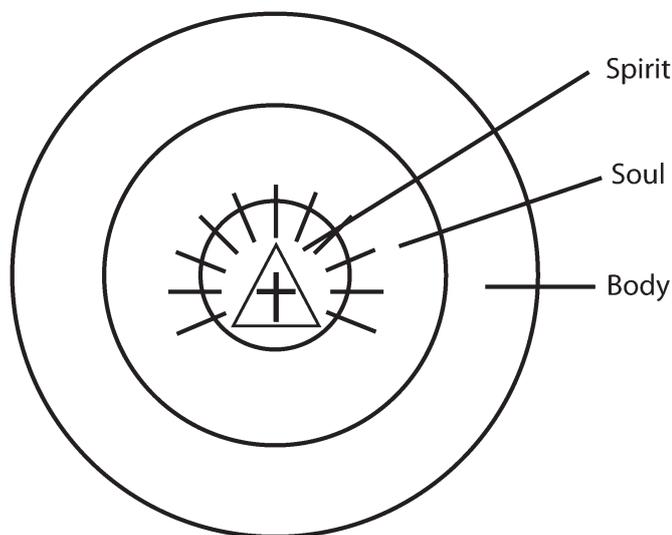


Diagram 1-4. **THE NEW BELIEVER**

Note the following characteristics of the new Christian:

1. He has a limited capacity for understanding the depths of certain teachings.
2. He needs and is capable of partaking of “milk”.
3. He is not reprimanded for his immaturity.

3. The carnal Christian

Now we move on to what Paul refers to as the carnal Christian. In 1 Corinthians 3:2-3a Paul said, “I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, **even now** you are **not yet** able, for you are **still** fleshly.” (emphasis added). The three indicators of time (underlined) used by Paul stress the seriousness of the issue. In A.D. 50, when the church was founded, it was natural for their conduct to reflect their immaturity, but to behave this way in A.D. 55, when Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, was a serious matter. Apparently Paul recognized but did not define an age of spiritual accountability for the Christian. He did not say, after one year, or after you have heard 25 of my sermons, or after you have read the Bible through three times. There was no identification of how much time should be involved or how much input. But these were babies who should have long since moved on in their spiritual lives.

Some of the indicators Paul gives are listed in I Corinthians 3:2-4.



Question 12 After reading these verses write down three ways these immature Christians continued to display their carnality.

You can see from this that their responses were not spiritual responses. They were still operating from a fleshly or worldly viewpoint.

Diagram 1-5 pictures what is happening in the carnal Christian's life. Yes, God is there, but he has been pushed away from the center and so this weak Christian is beset on all sides. At some point he has moved God to a low priority. So even though God is there in his life, he has not developed spiritually in his relationship so that he is hearing and listening to God's voice instead of his own desires and Satan's.

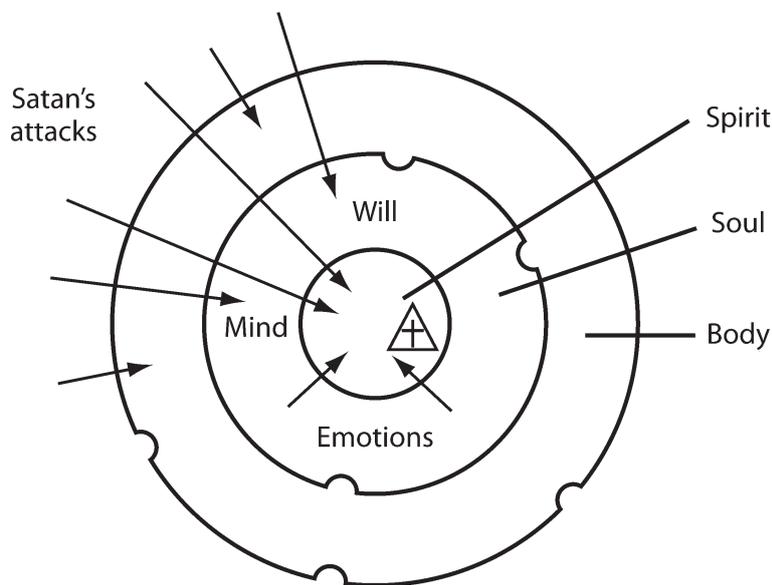


Diagram 1-5. **SATAN'S ATTACKS ON NEW BELIEVER**

We can identify the carnal Christian by the following characteristics:

1. He is alive spiritually. Christ has come in to dwell with him, but does not have preeminence in his life.
2. He does not know enough of the Word of God and its truths and principles to make wise spiritual decisions.
3. He is pulled in many directions and is still totally open to the any and all influence of his environment and circumstances.
4. He has little defense against Satan's attacks.
5. His life-style is barely distinguishable from "natural" man.
6. He has not taken opportunities to grow and mature.

The first and the last point are the two keys to the difference between an infant Christian and a carnal Christian. Whereas one is the normal, expected state, the other is abnormal. Whenever there is no growth, we consider it unhealthy, whether in the physical world around us, in the church, or in our own lives.

4. The spiritual Christian

And now we turn finally to the fourth man that Paul mentioned, the spiritual man. We find a different focus in this man and we find a level of spiritual maturity. Minimally we can say that he is dominated by the Holy Spirit. That is to say, he finds spiritual solutions, he has spiritual discernment, and he understands spiritual truths.



Question 13 What is stated about the spiritual man in I Corinthians 2:12-16?

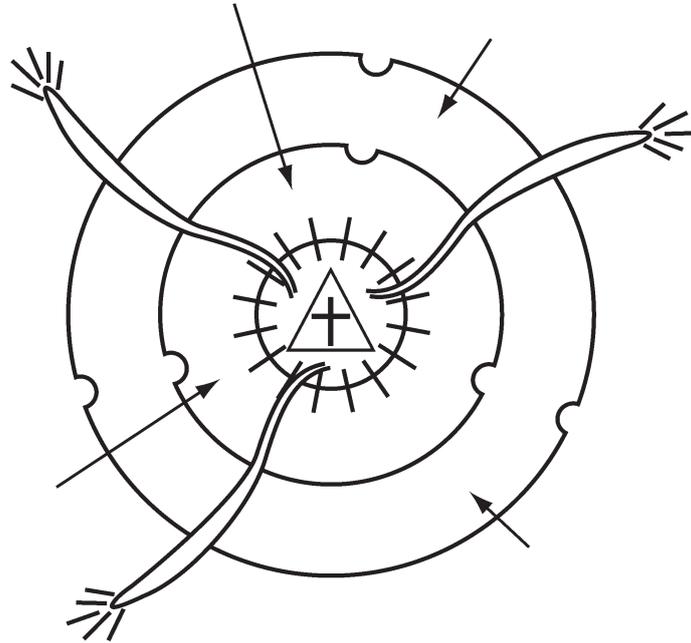


Diagram 1-6. **SPIRITUAL BELIEVER**

This diagram shows the “emphasis” that is missing in the infant Christian and the carnal Christian. In the spiritual man Christ not only indwells, He reigns over this man. This is a life that is brimming with spiritual vitality. Does he have trials? Yes. Does he face temptations? Yes. Does he fall at times? Yes. But he keeps going. He keeps growing. He keeps learning. And his life is one which Christ flows out of. Christ said, “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” John 7:38



Question 14 What did Jesus mean when He said this? (See John 7:39)

The Scripture Jesus was referring to is Isaiah 58:11: “And the Lord will continually guide you, And satisfy your desire in scorched places, And give strength to your bones; And you will be like a watered garden, And like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.” Does this describe your Christian life? If not, it can!

Characteristics of the spiritual man:

1. Christ rules his life.
2. He has surrendered every part of his life to Him.
3. He is grounded in Scriptural principles.
4. He has spiritual discernment.
5. He experiences the same influence from his environment and circumstances but they do not interrupt his Christian walk.

6. Satan attacks but he is able to stand firm.
7. “Rivers of living water” flow out of him so that he is influencing those around him for Christ—and blessing them.

As you can see we have expanded on what is stated explicitly in 1 Corinthians to round out the picture of the spiritual man. And we see clearly that this “spiritual” man can also be called the “mature” Christian.

One other interesting Scripture that specifically uses the terminology of the “spiritual” man is Galatians 6:1.



Question 15 What is he able to do, and why do you think this is the work of the one who is “spiritual“?

The following chart summarizes the four kinds of men as Paul presented them in 1 Corinthians as well as some further Scriptures to consider.

SUMMARY CHART			
Natural Man	Spiritual Man	Babe in Christ	Carnal Christian
1 CORINTHIANS 2:14	1 CORINTHIANS 2:15; 3:1	1 CORINTHIANS 3:1	1 CORINTHIANS 3:3
Dominated by the flesh—no spiritual capacity	Dominated by the Holy Spirit—spiritually mature	Characterized by fleshly conduct but is willing to serve God	Has a spiritual capacity but continually yields to the flesh
Does not welcome spiritual things	Spiritual discernment in life	Limited capacity for understanding God’s Word	Willful rebellion
Cannot know them experientially	Comprehends the “solid food” of God’s Word	Not reprimanded for his immaturity	Reprimanded— a moral issue
	Cannot be “examined” spiritually by non-Christians	Needs milk	Evidence is he is out of touch with everyone; he is selfish and proud
Jude 19; James 3:15	Romans 8; Galatians 6:1	1 Peter 2:2	Hebrews 5:12,13; Romans 6,7



Now turn to Appendix B and read “Carnal Christian” from *The Master’s Indwelling* by Andrew Murray. You will notice that the author only deals with two types of Christians, the carnal and the spiritual. After you have read the appendix, answer the following questions.



Question 16 What does he list as the four marks of the carnal Christian?

You will note that although the author says there are two types of Christians, spiritual and carnal, he also speaks of the infant Christian whose state of infancy is normal.



Question 17 Can the carnal Christian understand spiritual teaching? Why or why not?



Question 18 What steps does Murray list to becoming a spiritual man?

It is important to have the conviction that every believer can become “spiritual.” There are no limitations. It is not just something special for leaders or gifted people. Whether you agree totally with the author or not, it is obvious in our churches today that we need more “spiritual” Christians.

Now that we have clarified some of the terms, let’s look more closely at our goal as Christians.

II. The Goal

It is easy to lose our focus in life. We are surrounded by so many demands on our time and attention. As believers we cannot afford to lose sight of eternity. If we are so busy, so caught up with the struggles, sorrows, difficulties in this world that we do not remember who we are, we will lose sight of God’s purposes. Will we ever totally understand them? No. He has not chosen to show us everything, but He gives us glimpses. Our life on earth is an investment for eternity. It is because we serve an eternal God and will spend eternity with Him that we have certain tasks assigned us by God.

Now would be a good time to just take ten minutes to examine your purpose as a Christian. Do you know where you are going and why? Is life just happening to you? Do the following exercise before you go any further in the lesson. Formulate your own thoughts and ideas so that you can compare them to the following discussion. Your learning will be much greater as you do this.



Exercise 3

Write out your own thoughts on the goal of the Christian life. You need to seek to make a concise statement. If you do not feel your thoughts are well-formed, first write out what you think and then make it into a one-sentence statement. If you already know what you want to say, make your statement and then explain it as you feel necessary. Use Scripture to confirm it.

Now that you have thought through our purpose in the Christian life let’s look together at some Scriptures on this issue.



Question 19 Read the following verses, and write a brief statement for each stating what it says about our purpose.

- a. Isaiah 43:7 _____
-

- b. Jeremiah 13:11, 16 _____

- c. Matthew 5:16 _____

- d. 1 Corinthians 6:20 _____
- e. 1 Corinthians 10:31 _____

- f. Ephesians 1:5-6 _____

- g. Philippians 1:20 _____

- h. 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 _____

- i. 1 Peter 4:11 _____

From the above verses we can state that glorifying God is the purpose of the believer's life. You probably have already written something similar. But how do we do that? Glorifying God means to bring honor to Him. But how is that exhibited in our lives? Let's dig a little deeper into Scripture. First we will define "the glory of God".

A. Defining God's Glory

Some of the synonyms for the word *glory*, especially as we think of the glory of God, are "magnificence", "splendor", and "majesty". This word *glory* is used in many different ways in the Bible, including in reference to other nations or people. But of course nothing can come close to the glory of God Himself.

*What is the glory of God? It is who God is. It is the essence of his nature, the weight of his importance, the radiance of his splendor, the demonstration of his power, and the atmosphere of his presence. God's glory is the expression of his goodness and all his other intrinsic, eternal qualities.*⁷

We need to set that picture of God in our minds as we think of our purpose as Christians. For a picture of His glory as it was revealed to one man, read Isaiah 6:1-5.



Question 20 What does this passage say about the glory of God?

God's glory is a frequent theme in Scripture. First of all creation itself brings glory to God, the mighty Creator. In this respect it reveals God's glory to all. Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." All of God's work praises Him and brings Him glory. And secondly, the glory of God is displayed through His mighty actions. In

⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 51.

Psalm 111:2, 3 we read, “Great are the works of the LORD; *They are* studied by all who delight in them. Splendid and majestic is His work, and His righteousness endures forever.” Exodus 15:11 says, “Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?” No one can accomplish what God can. He is above and beyond our comprehension.

So, as we consider how awesome God is, it brings us to the topic of how can we “bring” glory to Him?

B. Bringing Glory to God

Let’s explore what it means to “give” glory to God or to glorify Him. Synonyms would be “to give honor”, “to give praise”, “to make known”, “to exalt” or “lift up”. But practically speaking how can we give honor to God? What does God expect from us? There are other lessons listed at the beginning that are devoted to these issues and will help us to seek deeper commitment and greater maturity. But to help us begin to think seriously through this the following are some of the ways scripture shows us that we can bring glory to God.⁸

1. By worshipping Him

This includes enjoying Him, loving Him, praising Him. Revelation 4:11 says, “Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.” This is a picture of what is happening in Heaven as God is being worshiped. All of eternity we will be worshipping Him, but eternity has started for us now. Eternity started when we were born again. God desires worship which rises up from our spirits now.

2. By becoming like Christ

Second Corinthians 3:18 says, “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” God’s desire is for us to become like His Son, and that is the measure of our spiritual growth. How much do we look and act like Jesus?

3. By loving other believers

Read Romans 15:1-7.



Question 21 Summarize what these verses say about your relationship with other believers. Specifically what do they say about how we bring glory to God?

4. By serving others with our gifts

First Peter 4:10, 11 speaks very directly about how each and every believer has received a spiritual gift, and that it should be used to bring glory to Him: “As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is

⁸ Points adapted from *The Purpose Driven Life*, 55–57.

serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” What a privilege, what a joy — what a responsibility.

5. By telling others about Him

Every time we speak about what God has done in our lives and in our world, about Who He is and what He can do, He is glorified. A day should never go by that we do not speak of Him to someone else, both believer and non-believer, because “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!” (Romans 10:15).

Read Psalm 145. This is just one sample from a man, King David, who was enamored with God and wanted to bring glory to His name.



Question 22 Write out specifically where David mentions people speaking about God in some way.

Maybe that gives new light on how we should be witnessing. Our witness before others should exalt Him and be a joy in our hearts and a spreading of that joy to others. Psalm 105:2-5 says,

Speak of all His wonders. Glory in His holy name; Let the heart of those who seek the LORD be glad. Seek the LORD and His strength; seek His face continually. Remember His wonders which He has done, His marvels and the judgments uttered by His mouth.

These five points touch the main areas in which we can glorify God. The first two have to do with our relationship with God, our spending time with Him, our focus on Him. And out of that flows a life that touches others — to the glory of God.



Exercise 4

Evaluate yourself. Take time to think about these specific goals for the Christian life, all of which are expressions of the ultimate goal of bringing glory to God. List each of these goals in your notebook. Is each of these goals a conscious part of your life right now? If so, how you are working on that goal? Be aware of the areas that are weak in your life right now.

We are going to turn now to the personal spiritual growth of the believer and discuss how that process takes place.

III. The Process of Spiritual Growth

We have already noted that one of the ways we bring glory to God is by becoming like Christ, taking on His character. This is God’s desire for us and is a goal as well as the evidence of our maturity in the Christian walk. We were created in the image of God and it is His desire to restore us completely to His image.

A. Models for Spiritual Growth

We will look at several models of spiritual growth. These are models that you may have observed in the body of believers, or heard preached in some way. For all models becoming Christ-like in attitude, word and deed is the measurement. This can only fully be measured by God as He knows the heart, but these are the areas in which we seek to be changed.

1. Hopeless struggle model

To some people the Christian life is an unending struggle. They view life on this earth as a battle that must be endured with little hope of making any real progress. They are just trying to hang on until they get to heaven. It might look like Diagram 1-7.

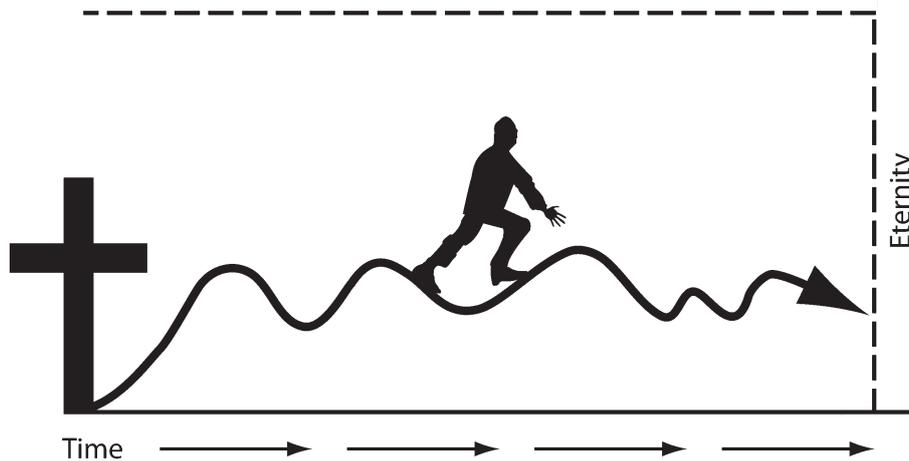


Diagram 1-7. **HOPELESS STRUGGLE MODEL**

Growth is sporadic, mostly because of a “downward” focus on the difficulties of life, rather than an “upward” or God-ward focus. Stop and think for a moment. Have you been living in this kind of defeat?



Exercise 5

Read the following verses and write down what they teach about the possibility of real progress and the confidence we can have about our spiritual growth.

- a. 2 Thessalonians 1:3
- b. Colossians 1:10
- c. Philippians 1:9

2. Repeated dedication model

A second view might be labeled the “repeated dedication” view. In this view the believer goes through cycles — cycles of dedication, development, defeat, and then dedication again. It is true

that all believers go through these cycles. The danger in this model is that the believer is going from crisis to crisis and not experiencing steady growth in maturity because the emotional element becomes the measurement. The “mountain top” experience makes them feel good, but because of the dependence on emotions there are long periods of defeat which results in a minimal amount of spiritual growth. This might look like Diagram 1-8.

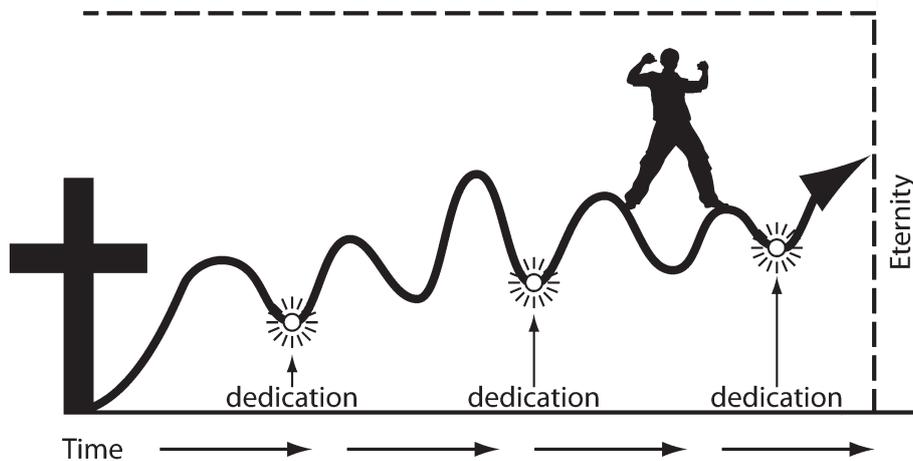


Diagram 1-8. **REPEATED DEDICATION MODEL**

3. The Lordship model

In this model the basic idea is steady progress toward the image of Christ, toward maturity, over time. The principle taught by those who hold to this model is that the believer puts himself under the lordship of Jesus Christ, whether at the moment of salvation or a later point in time when he understands the implications of this step, and then proceeds in obedience to Christ to steadily move on to the likeness of Christ to maturity. The emphasis is on daily dying, daily taking up his cross and moving on in obedience. Usually there is a stronger emphasis on will power than on “God” power. The focus on what must happen is right, but there is often a lack in understanding of “how” it is going to happen.

Romans 12:1-2 is an important Scripture to all believers. Each of these verses emphasizes one important aspect leading to spiritual growth.

In verse 1 we are commanded to “present” ourselves as sacrifices to the Lord. The tense of this verb in Greek signifies that the action takes place at a particular point in time. There are two ways of interpreting this command. First, Paul may be referring to a once-and-for-all dedication of ourselves, a commitment that stands as the entry point into our continuing growth toward maturity. It could take place at the time one trusts Christ for salvation, if his understanding of the cost of discipleship is adequate. For another this might occur subsequent to salvation at a time when he comes face-to-face with the full implication of following Christ. In either case it is a one-time surrender of oneself to the lordship of Christ.

Second, it is possible to understand the command as signifying a submission to the lordship of Christ at any time that he realizes an area of his life is not fully committed to Him. This could be some area that had never been considered before, or an area in which there had been disobedience, making this a part of repentance. One fact all of us understand is that sin is a deterrent to spiritual growth. It must not be allowed to accumulate in our lives and affect the closeness of our relationship with the Lord.

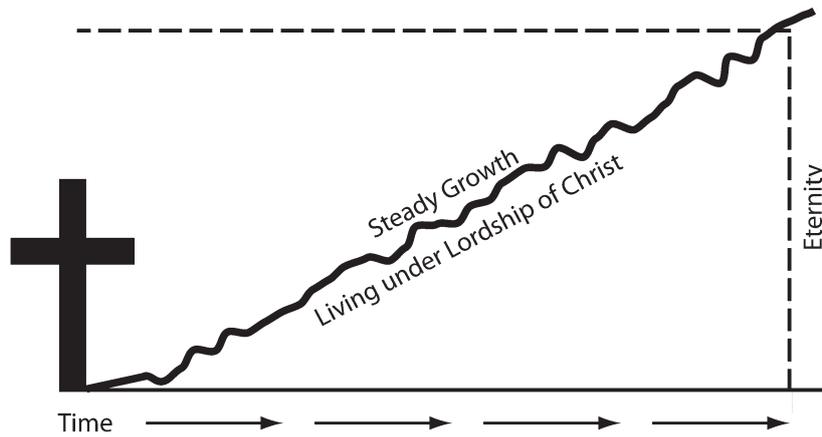


Diagram 1-9. **LORDSHIP MODEL**

By confessing your sins and knowing that He has forgiven you, you can have the freedom from guilt with the same assurance expressed by David in Psalm 103:12:

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Thanking God demonstrates that we have faith and believe that God has forgiven us. As the Christian presents himself to Christ, he continues on in the process of spiritual maturity.

In both of these views on Romans 12: 1,2 there is one common thread. Paul wants us to see that our spiritual growth is a function of our living under the lordship of Christ.



Question 23 In order to reinforce this important concept, read the following verses, and note what they say about the lordship of Christ:

a. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 _____

b. Luke 6:46 _____

One definition of lordship that you may find helpful is as follows:

All I am and all I have belong to Jesus Christ.

This definition covers every area of my life: myself, my time, my abilities, my possessions, my relationships.

If Romans 12:1 emphasizes the lordship of Christ, verse 2 emphasizes the ongoing growth that should result from that lordship. Note the command. We are to be “being transformed.” The command is in the Greek present tense, signifying an ongoing process. How we can “be transformed” is the subject of the whole *Committed Christian Life* course and the process of a lifetime. It is enough to say here that Paul presents the Christian life as continual growth (transformation) toward spiritual maturity under the lordship of Christ.

4. The two-stage model

The next model became widely known through the eighteenth-century English preacher and theologian John Wesley. Wesley taught that through a second work of grace, similar to salvation in that it is appropriated by faith, the believer’s sin nature was eradicated and replaced by what he called “perfect love”. Wesley taught that after this second work a believer would be “perfect” in that he would never knowingly sin. He believed that there was still the issue of ignorance and mistakes

because we are human beings. This was meant to be a once-and-for all action — being filled with the Holy Spirit in an act of entire sanctification.

Over the years this teaching has appeared in various forms. It has commonly been referred to as baptism in the Holy Spirit. When Pentecostals came into being they taught that this baptism was accompanied by the sign of tongues. This was also true of the charismatic movement. We may refer to it as a “two-stage” view of the Christian life because of its emphasis on the two levels on which a Christian can live. In this model a crisis point of dedication or faith after salvation results in real spiritual growth. This may be referred to as “baptism or filling of the Spirit”, “entire sanctification”, “second blessing”, “or “second work of grace”. Whatever the title, the reference is always to a total filling of the Holy Spirit to enable the believer to be victorious in living his Christian life. This view could be depicted as shown in Diagram 1-10:

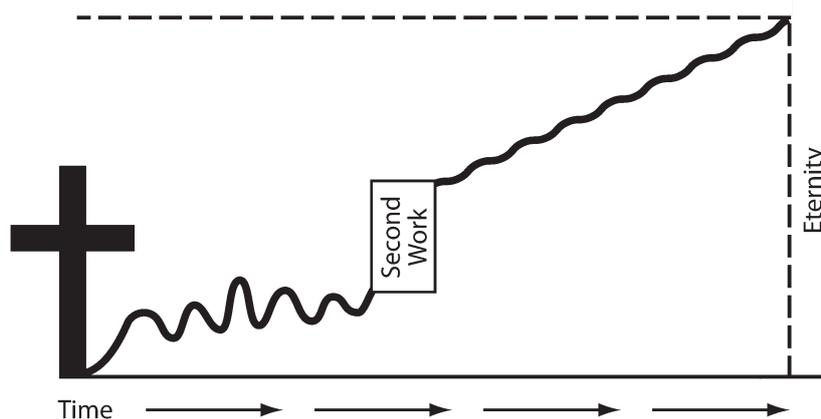


Diagram 1-10. **TWO-STAGE MODEL**

This model only expresses the two-stage idea in a general way. Many who adhere to this model also believe that there can be a falling away or backsliding, so that would offer a different dynamic to the whole model. But since that is not the “ideal” or the common experience we will let this model represent this viewpoint. Probably the main criticism that people have of this model is that there are two “categories” of Christians.

And now we come to the final model that we will consider.

5. Spirit-filled Model

Even though many people would not acknowledge a “second work of grace”, everyone is agreed that we need to walk in the Spirit, that the Holy Spirit should have an active part in our lives, and that there is power accessible to us through the Holy Spirit. We can see down through history to the present day that many great Christian leaders have experienced a “filling” of the Spirit. We can go back to Peter who walked with Jesus for three years and definitely believed in Him, but denied Him when put to the test. And then we pick up his story again in the book of Acts, after he receives the Holy Spirit, and we see a totally different man. There is Saul’s experience in Acts. He met Christ on the road to Damascus and acknowledged Him there, but it was a few days later when we read that he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17). We have already mentioned John Wesley who was a key leader in 18th century revival in England. Dwight L. Moody, a great American evangelist of the late 19th century developed a hunger for more power in his ministry. One day as he was crying out to God to fill him with His Spirit he had a very emotional experience with God. When he returned to his preaching, even though he used the same sermons and methods, hundreds were converted. Other men include Spurgeon, the great British Baptist preacher, Charles Finney, a critical figure in American revival in the 1800’s, Andrew Murray who led revival in South Africa and influenced the Christian world even to the present day with his writings, and Bill Bright, the founder of Campus

Crusade for Christ, a huge organization that has impacted the world for Christ. These are just a few examples. Some of these men used the term “baptism of the Spirit”, but whatever the terminology, all of them felt the need for something more in their Christian walk.

For this model we are going to go to the simple command that we find in Ephesians 5:18, “...be filled with the Spirit.” All of us receive the Holy Spirit when we receive Christ, but that does not mean that He plays a major role. Our third model emphasized the lordship of Christ, but it is only in our submission and then filling with the Holy Spirit that we have the ability to keep Christ as our Lord, not just our Savior. This is a one-time event, but it is also an ongoing one. It allows the rivers of the Holy Spirit to pour through us as we saw in the diagram of the spiritual man. This view is depicted in Diagram 1-11:

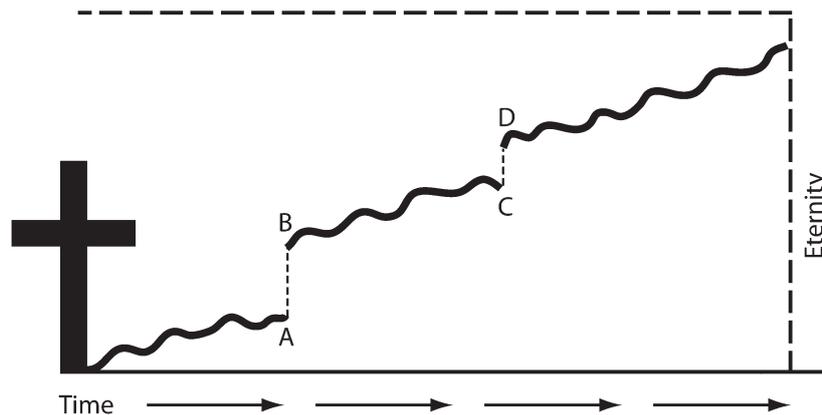


Diagram 1-11. **SPIRIT FILLED MODEL**

In this model we have pictured a couple points. Let us suppose that moving from point A to point B would be a person becoming aware of his need to be filled completely with the Holy Spirit so that he might grow and serve God more effectively. With that experience comes a “jump” in maturity. A little later in life the Christian becomes aware of a new area where he has not submitted to God and again seeks the Spirit to fill his life in that area. So he moves from C to D, again a jump in maturity, or holiness, or spirituality. There is both the element that it is an ongoing process, and that it is one in which we will only be successful if the Holy Spirit is able to work.

B. Summary of Spiritual Growth Models

And so we have completed several models of the Christian life and how growth and maturity takes place. Probably the most obvious point from these various models is that as we seek to obey Christ and become like Him, we are going to need supernatural help. He does not call us to an ordinary life. He calls us to something far greater — a supernatural one.

The models described represent a sincere desire of those who adhere to these models to live a holy life, pleasing to the Lord. Therefore, one cannot totally dismiss their objectives but must consider or evaluate the method used to reach these objectives.

Wherever you place yourself on the models of spiritual growth everyone does acknowledge that there are crisis points for the believer who desires to mature. Often crisis points involve similar elements — a period of stagnation, “defeat” or personal crisis, true repentance, an increase in faith, and a decrease of self effort with a fuller dependence on the Holy Spirit. Regardless of the label given to the experience, the ingredients are often similar.

Spiritual renewal may be what you or your church needs. Use biblical discernment regarding your understanding and explanation of the issues, but be careful that your concern over certain teachings with which you disagree does not prohibit the work of the Spirit in your church.

Take a minute to reflect on what has been said so far. As you consider the above points, answer the questions in Exercise 6.



Exercise 6

Write about your experience. In your personal experience what are the crisis points that you have experienced and have helped you move forward in your Christian walk? Make a list of these. Make your own personalized model in your notebook of what pattern you think your Christian growth has looked like. Adapt any of the models as necessary.

IV. The Christian Life: God’s Work or Mine?

Before ending this lesson, there is one more area that we need to look at. As the believer moves toward spiritual maturity, what role does he play and what role does God play? What are his responsibilities?

The Bible is full of commands for us. All of these commands have to do with God’s will for our lives: what He desires for us and from us. Usually when we are first saved we are excited by the adventure of following Christ wherever He leads, but for many of us, as the first flush of love wears off, we become overwhelmed by this new life we are commanded to live. We try and try and try, and fail almost as many times as we try. So, should we just quit trying? Just let God do it? We have already proved that we cannot succeed alone. Many of these commands require self-discipline of which we have little, especially when we think about emulating the character of Christ. So, we are back to the “struggle” model. We use our willpower — and fail. We make new resolutions — and fail. And so, many eventually just accept the status quo and feel that they will just have to go through the motions and hope for the best.



Read “God’s Side and Man’s Side” in Appendix C now. It is the first chapter in the book *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whitall Smith. This book has been a help and encouragement to many believers for well over a century and continues to be printed and used. After you have read, answer the following questions.



Question 24 According to the author, what is man’s part in the Christian life?



Now read “Absolute Surrender” by Andrew Murray in Appendix D and answer the following questions:



Question 25 In the author’s conversation with a man who was involved in training church workers, what was his answer to Murray’s question of what he would say was the great need of the Church, and the message that ought to be preached.



Question 26 What reason did he give for this answer?



Question 27 State the four points the author makes about God’s part in our surrender and briefly explain what he means for each.



Question 28 What did George Mueller believe was the secret to his happiness and the Lord’s blessing in his life?

This is a rather impassioned plea for Christians to believe that God wants to bless, and to trust Him with their all. Many people have preached and taught this in many different ways. Whatever terminology may be used, all agree that we need to give our all to God, simply because it is a Biblical principle. This is man’s side of what God desires to work in our lives. As long as we are filled with self, where can God work? How can He fill what is already full? There has to come a time if we want to really grow that we are willing to cast ourselves totally upon God, giving up everything that is holding us back. Undoubtedly we have to maintain this attitude of surrender because we cannot know all that will come into our lives, and we often have new opportunities of surrender. But if we have made that decision to be wholehearted, to be abandoned to God, we can move on with assurance knowing that He will help us at every turn in the road.



Exercise 7

Surrender. Examine your own heart right now. When you think of “absolute” surrender, does something or someone come to mind? Something that you think is too hard to trust to God, or something or someone that you love too much to give up for God? Are you prepared for a leap of faith into absolute surrender? Where is your commitment? Be honest with yourself. God already knows what is in your heart.

Conclusion

This has been a long lesson but it lays a basis for understanding ourselves as believers, other believers we meet and interact with, and how God is working. We trust that it has given you hope and direction on your spiritual journey. If you enjoyed this lesson you may want to ask your leader about doing another lesson. There is a list of lessons at the beginning. Also the complete books *The Christian’s Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whitall Smith and *Absolute Surrender* by Andrew Murray are available and well worth your time reading to help you along your Christian walk.

Answers to questions



Question 1

These verses state very plainly that if we say we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves and making a liar of God.

Question 2

The two main ideas conveyed by the term “holy” are:

- a. Set apart for God.
- b. Morality or purity.

Question 3

- a. Encouragement to be mature in your thinking, not like a child.
- b. God has given the church leaders to build up the body of Christ which includes helping them become mature and Christ-like.
- c. Have the attitude of pressing on — and keep living up to what we have already attained.
- d. Warn and teach so that people will become mature in Christ.
- e. To be mature we need to go beyond the basic teachings about Christ and salvation. (It is the foundation to build on, not the end.)

Question 4

Three characteristics of the mature Christian are:

- a. He partakes of solid food: He can understand the deeper things of God and His Word.
- b. He has the ability to use the Bible in life situations (because of “practice”).
- c. He can distinguish between good and evil in everyday situations.

Question 5

You should have listed at least four of the following:

- a. He is dull of hearing.
He doesn't **want** to hear the difficult things.
- b. He needs to be taught the elementary principles.
He is still on the ABC's.
- c. He needs milk.
He is not yet capable of digesting the deeper truths of Christ.
- d. He is called an infant.
- e. He does not know the Word of God.

Question 6

According to Paul, the perfect, or mature Christian, will have the following four characteristics:

- a. He has no confidence in the flesh. vs. 7
- b. He is claiming his righteousness in Christ, not his own effort. vs. 9
- b. He has not yet arrived at complete perfection. vs. 12
- c. He is always pressing on in his Christian walk. vs. 14

Question 7

The following things are perfected:

- a. Faith is perfected through good works.
- b. The love of God is perfected by keeping His Word.
- c. The love of God is perfected by loving one another.
- d. Power is perfected in weakness.

Question 8

The mature Christian has control of his speech.

Question 9

Paul uses the word “spirit“ in three different senses in these verses:

- a. Holy Spirit — 1 Corinthians 2:10, 14
- b. Human spirit — 1 Corinthians 2:11
- c. Spirit of the world — 1 Corinthians 2:12

Question 10

This refers to apostates who have come into the church.

Question 11

Two characteristics of the natural man are:

- a. He does not accept spiritual things because they are foolish to him.
- b. He cannot understand spiritual things.

Question 12

Three marks of carnality:

- a. They were still unable to understand the deeper truths of the Christian life and faith. (no meat yet)
- b. There was jealousy and strife. (like any “natural” man)
- c. There were arguments over who they were following. (no focus on Christ Jesus)

Question 13

- a. The spiritual man has spiritual discernment.
- b. He can better understand and appreciate the wisdom of God preached.
- c. He cannot be examined spiritually by the non-Christian.

Question 14

He was referring to the Holy Spirit whom He was going to send. It is from the Holy Spirit that these “rivers” of living water are to flow.

Question 15

The spiritual man has the ability to restore a brother who has sinned. It must be the work of someone who is “spiritual“ because it requires maturity, discernment, and experience.

Question 16

1. A protracted infancy. This includes needing to be cared for all the time, and not being able to help others.
2. Sin and failure continually. (Note the word “continually”. This, we could say, is habitual).
3. Even though spiritual gifts may be evident, spiritual graces are not.
4. He is unfit for receiving spiritual truths.

Question 17

According to the author they do understand it, but it does not seem to make changes in their lives.

Question 18

1. Recognize that the spiritual life, a walk in the Spirit, is possible.
2. Be convicted by the Holy Spirit about his carnal state.
3. Believe Christ to accept him and take charge of his life.
4. Give himself as an empty vessel to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Question 19

- a. We were created to bring God glory.
- b. We are to be a people clinging to God and causing Him to receive glory and honor. Give glory to God.
- c. Let your good works cause people to glorify God.
- d. Glorify God with your body.
- e. Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.
- f. Our salvation is to the praise of the glory of God’s grace.
- g. Paul’s desire was that Christ would be glorified in him whether he lived or died.
- h. A prayer that God would count us worthy of our calling and fulfill our desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, so that Jesus would be glorified in us.
- i. Our speaking and serving should be done in a way that God will be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Question 20

The whole earth is full of God’s glory.

Question 21

Your answer. Express what these verses say to you concerning your relationship to other believers. To God’s glory we are to be in unity glorifying Him together. And as we accept others the way Christ accepted us it is to God’s glory.

Question 22

Vs. 4 One generation will praise God’s works to another and shall declare God’s mighty acts.

Vs. 6 Men will speak of the power of God’s awesome acts and David said he would tell of God’s greatness.

Vs. 7 People should eagerly speak about how they remember God’s abundant goodness and shout joyfully of God’s righteousness.

Vs. 11 People will speak of the glory of God's kingdom and power.

Vs. 12 They will make known to others God's mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of His kingdom.

Vs. 21 David said his mouth will speak the praise of the LORD.

Question 23

The lordship of Christ involves the following:

- a. We have been bought with a price, and we belong totally to the Lord.
- b. Lordship demands that we obey Him.

Question 24

Man's part is to surrender to God and put his trust in God to perform His will.

Question 25

He answered, "Absolute surrender to God is the one thing."

Question 26

He said that if people were strong in this area then they were teachable and always improved. The others who were not (surrendered) often would leave the work.

Question 27

- 1) God expects our surrender. God cannot do the work He desires in our life without our complete surrender to our Creator. He claims it.
- 2) God accomplishes our surrender. He is willing to make it happen in our lives. We do not have to do it ourselves, but be willing for Him to do it.
- 3) God accepts our surrender. When we are willing to yield absolutely, we can do it in faith that He accepts what we have to offer.
- 4) God maintains our surrender. God is able to keep us surrendered to Him by His power.

Question 28

George Mueller stated that:

- 1) By God's grace he was able to maintain a good conscience before God daily.
- 2) He was a lover of God's Word.

Answers to exercises



Exercise 1

Your answer.

Both to summarize and expand on what we have discussed about spiritual maturity, we can say that the spiritually mature Christian consistently seeks to display the image of Jesus Christ. The fruits of the Spirit are being developed in his character. He knows the Bible well and has the ability to use it to view life from God's point of view and to live in a way pleasing to Him. At the same time, however, he is aware that he has not fully arrived. He is not beyond sinning (Galatians 6:1). He is, however, a "babe in evil" (1 Corinthians 14:20). He keeps the commands of God (1 John 2:5), pursues works of faith (James 2:22), and has a genuine love for others (1 John 4:12).

Exercise 2

Your answer.

Exercise 3

Your answer.

Exercise 4

Your answer.

If we have any commitment to the Christian life we are working towards at least some of these goals, if not all, all of the time. The question is not if you have accomplished those goals in the past, but are you working on them right now in your daily life? Do you know where you want to go in the future in these areas?

Exercise 5

These verses show real progress is possible because:

- a. Paul acknowledges the growth of these believers in their faith and their love.
- b. Paul prays that they might grow.
- c. Paul prays that their love will grow more and more.

Exercise 6

Your answer.

Exercise 7

Your response. Pray about this issue in your life, and the lives of your fellow sojourners.

Spiritual Journal

APPENDIX



The following are instructions of how to set up and use your spiritual journal. Buy a notebook with at least 60 pages in it.

1) Prayer pages — The first 7 pages (or more if you choose) will be set aside for a weekly prayer list. The purpose is to help you to be balanced in your prayer focus as well as to have a plan to pray for people you are concerned about. The pages will be done by the day of the week and you can refer back to them on that day to pray.

- **Monday — *My Family***

Under this category list the name of each member of your family. If you are married, include your spouse's family members. When there is a new addition to the family through birth or marriage, add that name. Every week pray for their needs as you know them, and also pray a promise from Scripture for them. You may want to write down a verse reference to pray for that person specifically. Pray that God will guide them, keep them, use them, meet their needs, and draw them closer to Christ. Also thank God for what He is doing in their lives.

- **Tuesday — *God's Family***

As you pray for the church, start with your local body of believers listing those who are in leadership, and their spouses and children as you feel a need to pray for them. List other members that God has laid on your heart to pray for. List denominational leaders that you know about. Pray that each one would help the gospel be proclaimed and the body of Christ built up. List missionaries that you know of and try to find out what their specific needs are. To this you can also add other Christian ministries and the leaders of those ministries including churches from other denominations in your community.

- **Wednesday — *My Community***

Your community includes not only where you live, but where you work and travel — all of those we see around us with needs as Jesus taught. List your neighbors by name (you may need to find out their names if you do not know), employers, co-workers, clerks at stores. Seek to see these people through Jesus' eyes and pray for them. Include local government officials, whether it is the mayor or policemen. Pray for God's light in their lives, for a hunger for and knowledge of God, that they would act in justice and righteousness, and for God to meet their needs both physical and spiritual.

- **Thursday — *My Nation***

You may use 2 Chronicles 7:14, putting nation-wide revival at the top of your list. Pray that God would revive His people all across the land, that they would humble themselves before Him and seek Him whole-heartedly, repent and fall in love with Him — that He would hear, forgive and heal the land. Ask God to bring spiritual awakening everywhere. Ask His forgiveness for the nation's sins of pride, prejudice, insensitivity to the needs and hurts of others. List political leaders on various levels and pray for each one. List and pray about current national issues.

- **Friday — *The World***

Pray for a movement of the Holy Spirit all around the world bringing revival and spiritual awakening. Choose specific countries to pray for: pray for the church there to be strong in faith and witness; for a spiritual awakening; for specific missionary efforts you know of; for many to be added to God's kingdom in that place. Be sure to include one or more of the Muslim lands and the persecuted church there.

- **Saturday — *The Helpless, Hurting and Lost***

Pray for those who are physically and spiritually in pain. Pray that God would use believers including you and your family to meet needs. Read Matthew 25:31-46 to help you pray and see needs. Pray for these people in your community, and find out about needs in your province, nation-wide, and world-wide. Pray for ministries that are involved in helping the hurting. Pray for God to open your eyes to see these people and to find ways to touch their lives with His love.

- **Sunday — *Personal Guidance***

This is a day to come before the Lord asking Him to show you the needs in your life. What are His desires for you specifically? Seek His guidance in the key areas of your life: personal, family, work, church, community. Choose specific Bible verses that you want to pray about in your life, whether it is a promise or a command.

Leave several pages blank before you start the daily records of your journal so that you can add more people or issues to pray for as you intercede.

2) Body of Journal

Now you need to lay out your whole journal according to the calendar. Starting with today's date you need to set up the pages for a full month right now. At the top of each page, in green ink, write the day and the date. Under that write "Bible Reading", and below that "Memorization/Meditation". Next write "God's Thoughts, My Prayers". A sample page is provided at the end of this appendix. Leave at least two blank pages after each month so that you can write in ideas or quotes or Bible verses that you want to remember and meditate on.

3) Quotes and helps

The last contribution to your journal will be scattered throughout. About two or three centimeters from the bottom of each page write "Quotes and Verses" in green. As you work through lessons in *Committed Christian Life* course and hear or find things in other places, take the time to write some of the quotes or helps or Scripture verses at the bottom of the pages in green ink — or red if it is definitely something you want to transfer to another notebook. As you use your notebook you will be encouraged to look back over it periodically to see what you have written. We need frequent reminders of what God is teaching us and how He is working in us. At the same time as you review what you have written you will see these quotes and verses that caught your interest or spoke to you, and they will be an ongoing encouragement.

4) How to use your journal

Many believers down through the ages have kept spiritual journals—some of them very regularly, and others just on occasion. It is one of the methods we have to help us increase our learning, by giving us a stronger focus, forcing us to express what is happening, and giving us a concrete record to look back upon. We encourage you to at least make it a goal to keep a spiritual journal daily for one month. It is not possible to grow spiritually or to be effective in God's work if you do not meet regularly with Him. You have learned about this, and hopefully have practiced it, but our quiet time with God is often one of the things that is easily shifted to a lower priority. As a related goal, determine to have a regular quiet time every day this month, which will include prayer, Bible reading, and memorization and meditation. If you are a church leader commit to an hour a day. The preference is that you do this in the morning so that you have focus and direction for the day's tasks regardless of what they may be. We will talk later about the priority great men in Christian history have given to this. They were men who shook their world for Christ. These are the kind of men God is seeking.

At the beginning of the journal is the weekly prayer list that you will fill in according to what you feel led to pray for. As you pray each day you should turn to the page that has that day of the week and pray for the people and issues on that page. Of course, if you want to pray for all of the lists daily, you are free to do that.

This journal will also help you to keep record of your quiet time. In the body of the journal at the top each page under the title "Bible Reading" is a place for you to write exactly where you have read in your Bible that day. It should be filled out at the end of your quiet time. Under that is "Memorization/Meditation" where you will write which verses you are seeking to memorize and meditate upon.

And then in the body of the journal each day you have a place to write down what you "saw" as you read your Bible and/or special prayer concerns you have. What you write is left to your personal choice. Some days you may want to write out a prayer to God. Whatever you choose to do, write **something** every day. Bring your journal to your group meeting so that you can share some of the things the Lord has been teaching you. You may find the focus of how you use your journal changing as you progress and are challenged in new areas of your Christian walk. And as you find it an encouragement we hope that it will become a life time habit that will be a tool to build you up in your faith.

On the next page will be a sample of what a normal page in your journal should look like.

(Sample page of Spiritual Journal)

TUESDAY September 12

Bible Reading today: _____

Memorization/Meditation today: _____

GOD'S THOUGHTS, MY PRAYERS:

Quotes and verses:

Carnal Christian

APPENDIX



Excerpt from *The Master's Indwelling* by Andrew Murray

The book *The Master's Indwelling* was derived from a series of addresses delivered by the author in 1895, Andrew Murray's compilation of 13 meditations is meant to encourage Christians throughout different stages of their spiritual walk. This is a man of God whose voice still speaks to the needs of today.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal.

1 Corinthians 3: 1

The apostle here speaks of two stages of the Christian life, two types of Christians: "I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." They were Christians, in Christ, but instead of being spiritual Christians, they were carnal. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet are ye able, for ye are yet carnal." Here is that word a second time. "For whereas"—this is the proof—"there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?" Four times the apostle uses that word carnal. In the wisdom which the Holy Ghost gives him, Paul feels:—I can not write to these Corinthian Christians unless I know their state, and unless I tell them of it. If I give spiritual food to men who are carnal Christians, I am doing them more harm than good, for they are not fit to take it. I cannot feed them with meat, I must feed them with milk. And so he tells them at the very outset of the epistle what he sees to be their state. In the two previous chapters he had spoken about his ministry being by the Holy Spirit; now he begins to tell them what must be the state of a people in order to accept spiritual truth, and he says: "I have not liberty to speak to you as I would, for you are carnal, and you cannot receive Spiritual truth." That suggests to us the solemn thought, that in the Church of Christ there are two classes of Christians. Some have lived many years as believers, and yet always remain babes; others are spiritual men, because they have given themselves up to the power, the leading and to the entire rule of the Holy Ghost. If we are to obtain a blessing, we must first decide to which of these classes we belong. Are we, by the grace of God, in deep humility living a spiritual life, or are we living a carnal life? Then, let us first try to understand what is meant by the carnal state in which believers may be living.

We notice from what we find in Corinthians, four marks of the carnal state. First: It is simply a condition of protracted infancy. You know what that means. Suppose a beautiful babe, six months

old. It cannot speak, it cannot walk, but we do not trouble ourselves about that; it is natural, and ought to be so. But suppose a year later we find the child not grown at all, and three years later still no growth; we would at once say: "There must be some terrible disease;" and the baby that at six months old was the cause of joy to every one who saw him, has become to the mother and to all a source of anxiety and sorrow. There is something wrong; the child can not grow. It was quite right at six months old that it should eat nothing but milk; but years have passed by, and it remains in the same weakly state. Now this is just the condition of many believers. They are converted; they know what it is to have assurance and faith; they believe in pardon for sin; they begin to work for God; and yet, somehow, there is very little growth in spirituality, in the real heavenly life. We come into contact with them, and we feel at once there is something wanting; there is none of the beauty of holiness or of the power of God's Spirit in them. This is the condition of the carnal Corinthians, expressed in what was said to the Hebrews: "You have had the Gospel so long that by this time you ought to be teachers, and yet you need that men should teach you the very rudiments of the oracles of God." Is it not a sad thing to see a believer who has been converted five, ten, twenty years, and yet no growth, and no strength, and no joy of holiness?

What are the marks of a little child? One is, a little child cannot help himself, but is always keeping others occupied to serve him. What a tyrant a baby in a house often is! The mother cannot go out, there must be a servant to nurse it; it needs to be cared for constantly. God made a man to care for others, but the baby was made to be cared for and to be helped. So there are Christians who always want help. Their pastor and their Christian friends must always be teaching and comforting them. They go to church, and to prayer-meetings, and to conventions, always wanting to be helped,—a sign of spiritual infancy.

The other sign of an infant is this: he can do nothing to help his fellow-man. Every man is expected to contribute something to the welfare of society; every one has a place to fill and a work to do, but the babe can do nothing for the common weal. It is just so with Christians. How little some can do! They take a part in work, as it is called, but there is little of exercising spiritual power and carrying real blessing. Should we not each ask, "Have I outgrown my spiritual infancy?" Some must reply, "No, instead of having gone forward, I have gone backward, and the joy of conversion and the first love is gone." Alas! They are babes in Christ; they are yet carnal.

The second mark of the carnal state is this: that there is sin and failure continually. Paul says: "Whereas there is strife and division among you, and envying, are ye not carnal?" A man gives way to temper. He may be a minister, or a preacher of the Gospel, or a Sunday-school teacher, most earnest at the prayer-meeting, but yet strife or bitterness or envying is often shown by him. Alas! Alas! In Galatians 3:5 we are told that the works of the flesh are specially hatred and envy. How often among Christians, who have to work together, do we see divisions and bitterness! God have mercy upon them, that the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, is so frequently absent from His own people. You ask, "Why is it, that for twenty years I have been fighting with my temper, and can not conquer it?" It is because you have been fighting with the temper, and you have not been fighting with the root of the temper. You have not seen that it is all because you are in the carnal state, and not properly given up to the Spirit of God. It may be that you never were taught it; that you never saw it in God's Word; that you never believed it. But there it is; the truth of God remains unchangeable. Jesus Christ can give us the victory over sin, and can keep us from actual transgression. I am not telling you that the root of sin will be eradicated, and that you will have no longer any natural tendency to sin; but when the Holy Spirit comes not only with His power for service as a gift, but when He comes in Divine grace to fill the heart, there is victory over sin; power not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. And you see a mark of the carnal state not only in unlovingness, self-consciousness and bitterness, but in so many other sins. How much worldliness, how much ambition among men, how much seeking for the honor that comes from man—all the fruit of the carnal life—to be found in the midst of Christian activity! Let us remember that the carnal state is a state of continual sinning and failure, and God wants us not only to make confession of

individual sins, but to come to the acknowledgment that they are the sign that we are not living a healthy life,—we are yet carnal.

A third mark which will explain further what I have been saying, is that this carnal state may be found in existence in connection with great spiritual gifts. There is a difference between gifts and graces. The graces of the Spirit are humility and love, like the humility and love of Christ. The graces of the Spirit are to make a man free from self; the gifts of the Spirit are to fit a man for work. We see this illustrated among the Corinthians. In the first chapter Paul says, “I thank God that you are enriched unto all utterance, and all knowledge, and all wisdom.” In the 12th and 14th chapters we see that the gifts of prophecy and of working miracles were in great power among them; but the graces of the Spirit were noticeably absent.

And this may be in our days as well as in the time of the Corinthians. I may be a minister of the Gospel; I may teach God’s Word beautifully; I may have influence, and gather a large congregation, and yet, alas! I may be a carnal man; a man who may be used by God, and may be a blessing to others, and yet the carnal life may still mark me. You all know the law that a thing is named according to what is its most prominent characteristic. Now, in these carnal Corinthians there was a little of God’s Spirit, but the flesh predominated; the Spirit had not the rule of their whole life. And the spiritual men are not called so because there is no flesh in them, but because the Spirit in them has obtained dominance, and when you meet them and have intercourse with them, you feel that the Spirit of God has sanctified them. Ah, let us beware lest the blessing God gives us in our work deceive us and lead us to think that because he has blessed us, we must be spiritual men. God may give us gifts that we use, and yet our lives may not be wholly in the power of the Holy Ghost.

My last mark of the carnal state is that it makes a man unfit for receiving spiritual truths. That is what the apostle writes to the Corinthians: “I could not preach to you as unto spiritual; you are not fit for spiritual truth after being Christians so long; you can not yet bear it; I have to feed you with milk.” I am afraid that in the church of the nineteenth century we often make a terrible mistake. We have a congregation in which the majority are carnal men. We give these men spiritual teaching, and they admire it, understand it, and rejoice in such ministry; yet their lives are not practically affected. They work for Christ in a certain way, but we can scarce recognize the true sanctification of the Spirit; we dare not say they are spiritual men, full of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let us recognize this with regard to ourselves. A man may become very earnest, may take in all the teaching he hears; he may be able to discern, for discernment is a gift; he may say, “That man helps me in this line, and that man in another direction, and a third man is remarkable for another gift;” yet, all the time, the carnal life may be living strongly in him, and when he gets into trouble with some friend, or Christian worker, or worldly man, the carnal root is bearing its terrible fruit, and the spiritual food has failed to enter his heart. Beware of that. Mark the Corinthians and learn of them. Paul did not say to them, “You can not bear the truth as I would speak it to you,” because they were ignorant or a stupid people. The Corinthians prided themselves on their wisdom, and sought it above everything, and Paul said: “I thank God that you are enriched in utterance, in knowledge, and in wisdom; nevertheless, you are yet carnal, your life is not holy; your life is not sanctified unto the humility of the life of the Lamb of God, you can not yet take in real spiritual truth.”

We find the carnal state not only at Corinth, but throughout the Christian world to-day. Many Christians are asking, “What is the reason there is so much feebleness in the Church?” We can not ask this question too earnestly, and I trust that God Himself will so impress it upon our hearts that we shall say to Him, “It must be changed. Have mercy upon us.” But, ah! that prayer and that change can not come until we have begun to see that there is a carnal root ruling in believers; they are living more after the flesh than the Spirit; they are yet carnal Christians.

There is a passage “from carnal to spiritual.” Did Paul find any spiritual believers? Undoubtedly he did. Just read the 6th chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians! That was a church where strife, and bitterness, and envy were terrible. But the apostle says in the first verse: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” There we see that the marks of the spiritual man are that he will be a meek man; and that he will have power, and love to help and restore those that are fallen. The carnal man can not do that. If there is a true spiritual life that can be lived, the great question is: Is the way open, and how can I enter into the spiritual state? Here, again, I have four short answers.

First, we must know that there is such a spiritual life to be lived by men on earth. Nothing cuts the roots of the Christian life so much as unbelief. People do not believe what God has said about what He is willing to do for His children. Men do not believe that when God says, “Be filled with the Spirit,” He means it for every Christian. And yet Paul wrote to the Ephesians each one: “Be filled with the Spirit, and do not be drunk with wine.” Just as little as you may be drunk with wine, so little may you live without being filled with the Spirit. Now, if God means that for believers, the first thing that we need is to study, and to take home God’s Word, to our belief until our hearts are filled with the assurance that there is such a life possible which it is our duty to live; that we can be spiritual men. God’s Word teaches us that God does not expect a man to live as he ought for one minute unless the Holy Spirit is in him to enable him to do it.

We do not want the Holy Spirit only when we go to preach, or when we have some special temptation of the devil to meet, or some great burden to bear; God says: “My child can not live a right life unless he is guided by my Spirit every minute.” That is the mark of the child of God: “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” In Romans 5 we read: “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given unto us.” That is to be the common, every-day experience of the believer, not his life at set times only. Did ever a father or mother think, “For today I want my child to love me?” No, they expect the love every day. And so God wants His child every moment to have a heart filled with love of the Spirit. In the eyes of God, it is most unnatural to expect a man to love as he should if he is not filled with the Spirit. Oh, let us believe a man can be a spiritual man. Thank God, there is now the blessing waiting us. “Be filled with the Spirit.” “Be led by the Spirit.” There is the blessing. If you have to say, “Oh, God, I have not this blessing,” say it; but say also, “Lord, I know it is my duty, my solemn obligation to have it, for without it I can not live in perfect peace with Thee all the day; without it I can not glorify Thee, and do the work Thou wouldst have me do.” This is our first step from carnal to spiritual,—to recognize a spiritual life, a walk in the Spirit, is within our reach. How can we ask God to guide us into spiritual life, if we have not a clear, confident conviction that there is such a life to be had?

Then comes the second step; a man must see the shame and guilt of his having lived such a life. Some people admit there is a spiritual life to live, and that they have not lived it, and they are sorry for themselves, and pity themselves, and think, “How sad that I am too feeble for it! How sad that God gives it to others, but has not given it to me!” They have great compassion upon themselves, instead of saying, “Alas! it has been our unfaithfulness, our unbelief, our disobedience, that has kept us from giving ourselves utterly to God. We have to blush and to be ashamed before God that we do not live as spiritual men.”

A man does not get converted without having conviction of sin. When that conviction of sin comes, and his eyes are opened, he learns to be afraid of his sin, and to flee from it to Christ, and to accept Christ as a mighty deliverer. But a man needs a second conviction of sin; a believer must be convicted of his peculiar sin. The sins of an unconverted man are different from the sins of a believer. An unconverted man, for instance, is not ordinarily convicted of the corruption of his nature; he thinks principally about external sins,—“I have sworn, been a liar, and I am on the way to hell.” He is then convicted for conversion. But the believer is in quite a different condition. His sins are far more blamable, for he has had the light and the love and the Spirit of God given to

him. His sins are far deeper. He has striven to conquer them and he has grown to see that his nature is utterly corrupt, that the carnal mind, the flesh, within him, is making his whole state utterly wretched. When a believer is thus convicted by the Holy Spirit, it is specially his life of unbelief that condemns him, because he sees that the great guilt connected with this has kept him from receiving the full gift of God's Holy Spirit. He is brought down in shame and confusion of face, and he begins to cry: "Woe is me, for I am undone. I have heard of God by the hearing of the ear; I have known a great deal of Him and preached about Him, but now mine eye seeth Him." God comes near him. Job, the righteous man, whom God trusted, saw in himself the deep sin of self and its righteousness that he had never seen before. Until this conviction of the wrongness of our carnal state as believers comes to each one of us; until we are willing to get this conviction from God, to take time before God to be humbled and convicted, we never can become spiritual men.

Then comes the third mark, which is that out of the carnal state into the spiritual is only one step. One step; oh, that is a blessed message I bring to you — it is only one step. I know many people will refuse to admit that it is only one step; they think it too little for such a mighty change. But was not conversion only one step?

So it is when a man passes from carnal to spiritual. You ask if when I talk of a spiritual man I am not thinking of a man of spiritual maturity, a real saint, and you say: "Does that come in one day? Is there no growth in holiness?" I reply that spiritual maturity cannot come in a day. We can not expect it. It takes growth, until the whole beauty of the image of Christ is formed in a man. But still I say that it needs but one step for a man to get out of the carnal life into the spiritual life. It is when a man utterly breaks with the flesh; when he gives up the flesh into the crucifixion death of Christ; when he sees that everything about it is accursed and that he can not deliver himself from it; and then claims the slaying power of Christ's cross within him, — it is when a man does this and says: "This spiritual life prepared for me is the free gift of my God in Christ Jesus," that he understands how one step can bring him out of the carnal into the spiritual state.

In that spiritual life there will be much still to be learned. There will still be imperfections. Spiritual life is not perfect; but the predominant characteristic will be spiritual. When a man has given himself up to the real, living, acting, ruling power of God's Spirit, he has got into the right position in which he can grow. You never think of growing out of sickness into health; you may grow out of feebleness into strength, as the little babe can grow to be a strong man; but where there is disease, there must healing come if there is to be a cure effected. There are Christians who think that they must grow out of the carnal state into the spiritual state. You never can. What could help those carnal Corinthians? To give them milk could not help them, for milk was a proof they were in the wrong state. To give them meat would not help them, for they were unfit to eat it. What they needed was the knife of the surgeon. Paul says that the carnal life must be cut out. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh." When a man understands what that means, and accepts it in the faith of what Christ can do, then one step can bring him from carnal to spiritual. One simple act of faith in the power of Christ's death, one act of surrender to the fellowship of Christ's death as the Holy Spirit can make it ours, will make it ours, will bring deliverance from the power of your efforts.

What brought deliverance to that poor condemned sinner who was most dark and wretched in his unconverted state? He felt he could do nothing good of himself. What did he do? He saw set before him the almighty Saviour and he cast himself into His arms; he trusted himself to that omnipotent love and cried, "Lord, have mercy upon me." That was salvation. It was not for what he did that Christ accepted him. Oh, believers, if any of us who are conscious that the carnal state predominates have to say: "It marks me; I am a religious man, an earnest man, a friend of missions; I work for Christ in my church, but, alas! temper and sin and worldliness have still the mastery over my soul," hear the word of God. If any will come and say: "I have struggled, I have prayed, I have wept, and it has not helped me," then you must do one other thing. You must see that the living Christ

is God's provision for your holy, spiritual life. You must believe that that Christ who accepted you once, at conversion, in His wonderful love is now waiting to say to you that you may become a spiritual man, entirely given up to God. If you will believe that, your fear will vanish and you will say: "It can be done; if Christ will accept and take charge, it shall be done."

Then, my last mark. A man must take that step, a solemn but blessed step. It cost some of you five or ten years before you took the step of conversion. You wept and prayed for years, and could not find peace until you took that step. So, in the spiritual life, you may go to teacher after teacher, and say, "Tell me about the spiritual life, the baptism of the Spirit, and holiness," and yet you may remain just where you were. Many of us would love to have sin taken away. Who loves to have a hasty temper? Who loves to have a proud disposition? Who loves to have a worldly heart? No one. We go to Christ to take it away, and he does not do it; and we ask, "Why will He not do it? I have prayed very earnestly." It is because you wanted Him to take away the ugly fruits while the poisonous root was to stay in you. You did not ask Him that the flesh should be nailed to His cross, and that you should henceforth give up self entirely to the power of His Spirit.

There is deliverance, but not in the way we seek it. Suppose a painter had a piece of canvas, on which he desired to work out some beautiful picture. Suppose that piece of canvas does not belong to him, and any one has a right to take it and to use it for any other purpose; do you think the painter would bestow much work on that? No. Yet people want Jesus Christ to bestow His trouble upon them in taking away this temper, or that other sin, though in their hearts they have not yielded themselves utterly to His command and His keeping. It can not be. But if you will come and give your whole life into His charge, Christ Jesus is mighty to save; Christ Jesus waits to be gracious; Christ Jesus waits to fill you with His Spirit.

Will you not take the step? God grant that we may be led by His Spirit to a yielding up of ourselves to Him as never before. Will you not come in humble confession that, alas! the carnal life has predominated too much, has altogether marked you, and that you have a bitter consciousness that with all the blessing God has bestowed, He has not made you what you want to be — a spiritual man? It is the Holy Spirit alone who by His indwelling can make a spiritual man. Come then and cast yourself at God's feet, with this one thought, "Lord, I give myself an empty vessel to be filled with Thy Spirit." Each one of you sees every day at the tea table an empty cup set there, waiting to be filled with tea when the proper time comes. So with every dish, every plate. They are cleansed and empty, ready to be filled. Emptied and cleansed. Oh, come! and just as a vessel is set apart to receive what it is to contain, say to Christ that you desire from this hour to be a vessel set apart to be filled with His Spirit, given up to be a spiritual man. Bow down in the deepest emptiness of soul, and say, "Oh, God, I have nothing!" and then surely as you place yourself before Him you have a right to say, "My God will fulfill His promise! I claim from Him the filling of the Holy Spirit to make me, instead of a carnal, a spiritual Christian." If you place yourself at His feet, and tarry there; if you abide in that humble surrender and that childlike trust, as sure as God lives the blessing will come.

Oh, have we not to bow in shame before God, as we think of His whole Church and see so much of the carnal prevailing? Have we not to bow in shame before God, as we think of so much of the carnal in our hearts and lives? Then let us bow in great faith in God's mercy. Deliverance is nigh, deliverance is coming, deliverance is waiting, deliverance is sure. Let us trust; God will give it.

God's Side and Man's Side

This is the first chapter of the nineteenth-century classic *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* by Hannah Whitall Smith. It has an exciting message of freedom—from the bondage of sin, to the life of Christ—and this is what has made *The Christian's Secret* a favorite for more than a century.

In introducing this subject of the life and walk of faith, I desire, at the very outset, to clear away one misunderstanding which very commonly arises in reference to the teaching of it, and which effectually hinders a clear apprehension of such teaching. This misunderstanding comes from the fact that the two sides of the subject are rarely kept in view at the same time. People see distinctly the way in which one side is presented, and, dwelling exclusively upon this, without even a thought of any other, it is no wonder that distorted views of the whole matter are the legitimate consequence.

Now there are two very decided and distinct sides to this subject, and, like all other subjects, it cannot be fully understood unless both of these sides are kept constantly in view. I refer, of course, to God's side and man's side; or, in other words, to God's part in the work of sanctification, and man's part. These are very distinct and even contrastive, but are not contradictory; though, to a cursory observer, they sometimes look so.

This was very strikingly illustrated to me not long ago. There were two teachers of this higher Christian life holding meetings in the same place, at alternate hours. One spoke only of God's part in the work, and the other dwelt exclusively upon man's part. They were both in perfect sympathy with one another, and realized fully that they were each teaching different sides of the same great truth; and this also was understood by a large proportion of their hearers. But with some of the hearers it was different, and one lady said to me, in the greatest perplexity, "I cannot understand it at all. Here are two preachers undertaking to teach just the same truth, and yet to me they seem flatly to contradict one another." And I felt at the time that she expressed a puzzle which really causes a great deal of difficulty in the minds of many honest inquirers after this truth.

Suppose two friends go to see some celebrated building, and return home to describe it. One has seen only the north side, and the other only the south. The first says, "The building was built in such a manner, and has such and such stories and ornaments." "Oh, no!" says the other, interrupting him, "you are altogether mistaken; I saw the building, and it was built in quite a different manner, and its ornaments and stories were so and so." A lively dispute would probably follow upon the truth of the respective descriptions, until the two friends discover that they have been describing different sides of the building, and then all is reconciled at once.

I would like to state as clearly as I can what I judge to be the two distinct sides in this matter; and to show how the looking at one without seeing the other, will be sure to create wrong impressions and views of the truth.

To state it in brief, I would just say that man's part is to trust and God's part is to work; and it can be seen at a glance how contrastive these two parts are, and yet not necessarily contradictory. I mean this. There is a certain work to be accomplished. We are to be delivered from the power of sin, and are to be made perfect in every good work to do the will of God. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord," we are to be actually "changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. A real work is to be wrought in us and upon us. Besetting sins are to be conquered. Evil habits are to be overcome. Wrong dispositions and feelings are to be rooted out, and holy tempers and emotions are to be begotten. A positive transformation is to take place. So at least the Bible teaches. Now somebody must do this. Either we must do it for ourselves, or another must do it for us. We have most of us tried to do it for ourselves at first, and have grievously failed; then we discover from the Scriptures and from our own experience that it is a work we are utterly unable to do for ourselves, but that the Lord Jesus Christ has come on purpose to do it, and that He will do it for all who put themselves wholly into His hand, and trust Him to do it. Now under these circumstances, what is the part of the believer, and what is the part of the Lord? Plainly the believer can do nothing but trust; while the Lord, in whom he trusts, actually does the work entrusted to Him. Trusting and doing are certainly contrastive things, and often contradictory; but are they contradictory in this case? Manifestly not, because it is two different parties that are concerned. If we should say of one party in a transaction that he trusted his case to another, and yet attended to it himself, we should state a contradiction and an impossibility. But when we say of two parties in a transaction that one trusts the other to do something, and that that other goes to work and does it, we are making a statement that is perfectly simple and harmonious. When we say, therefore, that in this higher life, man's part is to trust, and that God does the thing entrusted to Him, we do not surely present any very difficult or puzzling problem.

The preacher who is speaking on man's part in this matter cannot speak of anything but surrender and trust, because this is positively all the man can do. We all agree about this. And yet such preachers are constantly criticized as though, in saying this, they had meant to imply there was no other part, and that therefore nothing but trusting is done. And the cry goes out that this doctrine of faith does away with all realities, that souls are just told to trust, and that is the end of it, and they sit down thenceforward in a sort of religious easy-chair, dreaming away a life fruitless of any actual results. All this misapprehension arises, of course, from the fact that either the preacher has neglected to state, or the hearer has failed to hear, the other side of the matter; which is, that when we trust, the Lord works, and that a great deal is done, not by us, but by Him. Actual results are reached by our trusting, because our Lord undertakes the thing trusted to Him, and accomplishes it. We do not do anything, but He does it; and it is all the more effectually done because of this. The puzzle as to the preaching of faith disappears entirely as soon as this is clearly seen.

On the other hand, the preacher who dwells on God's side of the question is criticized on a totally different ground. He does not speak of trust, for the Lord's part is not to trust, but to work. The Lord does the thing entrusted to Him. He disciplines and trains the soul by inward exercises and outward providences. He brings to bear all the resources of His wisdom and love upon the refining and purifying of that soul. He makes everything in the life and circumstances of such a one subservient to the one great purpose of making him grow in grace, and of conforming him, day by day and hour by hour, to the image of Christ. He carries him through a process of transformation, longer or shorter, as his peculiar case may require, making actual and experimental the results for which the soul has trusted. We have dared, for instance, according to the command in Rom. 6:11, by faith to reckon ourselves "dead unto sin." The Lord makes this a reality, and leads us to victory over self, by the daily and hourly discipline of His providences. Our reckoning is available only

because God thus makes it real. And yet the preacher who dwells upon this practical side of the matter, and tells of God's processes for making faith's reckonings experimental realities, is accused of contradicting the preaching of faith altogether, and of declaring only a process of gradual sanctification by works, and of setting before the soul an impossible and hopeless task.

Now, sanctification is both a sudden step of faith, and also a gradual process of works. It is a step as far as we are concerned; it is a process as to God's part. By a step of faith we get into Christ; by a process we are made to grow up unto Him in all things. By a step of faith we put ourselves into the hands of the Divine Potter; by a gradual process He makes us into a vessel unto His own honor, meet for His use, and prepared to every good work.

To illustrate all this: suppose I were to be describing to a person, who was entirely ignorant of the subject, the way in which a lump of clay is made into a beautiful vessel. I tell him first the part of the clay in the matter, and all I can say about this is, that the clay is put into the potter's hands, and then lies passive there, submitting itself to all the turnings and overturnings of the potter's hands upon it. There is really nothing else to be said about the clay's part. But could my hearer argue from this that nothing else is done, because I say that this is all the clay can do? If he is an intelligent hearer, he will not dream of doing so, but will say, "I understand. This is what the clay must do; but what must the potter do?" "Ah," I answer, "now we come to the important part. The potter takes the clay thus abandoned to his working, and begins to mold and fashion it according to his own will. He kneads and works it, he tears it apart and presses it together again, he wets it and then suffers it to dry. Sometimes he works at it for hours together, sometimes he lays it aside for days and does not touch it. And then, when by all these processes he has made it perfectly pliable in his hands, he proceeds to make it up into the vessel he has purposed. He turns it upon the wheel, planes it and smooths it, and dries it in the sun, bakes it in the oven, and finally turns it out of his workshop, a vessel to his honor and fit for his use."

Will my hearer be likely now to say that I am contradicting myself; that a little while ago I had said the clay had nothing to do but lie passive in the potter's hands, and that now I am putting upon it a great work which it is not able to perform; and that to make itself into such a vessel is an impossible and hopeless undertaking? Surely not. For he will see that, while before I was speaking of the clay's part in the matter, I am now speaking of the potter's part, and that these two are necessarily contrastive, but not in the least contradictory, and that the clay is not expected to do the potter's work, but only to yield itself up to his working.

Nothing, it seems to me, could be clearer than the perfect harmony between these two apparently contradictory sorts of teaching on this subject. What can be said about man's part in this great work, but that he must continually surrender himself and continually trust?

But when we come to God's side of the question, what is there that may not be said as to the manifold and wonderful ways in which He accomplishes the work entrusted to Him? It is here that the growing comes in. The lump of clay would never grow into a beautiful vessel if it stayed in the clay-pit for thousands of years. But once put into the hands of a skillful potter, and, under his fashioning, it grows rapidly into a vessel to his honor. And so the soul, abandoned to the working of the Heavenly Potter, is changed rapidly from glory to glory into the image of the Lord by His Spirit.

Having, therefore, taken the step of faith by which you have put yourself wholly and absolutely into His hands, you must now expect Him to begin to work. His way of accomplishing that which you have entrusted to Him may be different from your way. But He knows, and you must be satisfied.

I knew a lady who had entered into this life of faith with a great outpouring of the Spirit, and a wonderful flood of light and joy. She supposed, of course, this was a preparation for some great service, and expected to be put forth immediately into the Lord's harvest field. Instead of this, almost at once her husband lost all his money, and she was shut up in her own house, to attend to all sorts of domestic duties, with no time or strength left for any Gospel work at all. She accepted the

discipline, and yielded herself up as heartily to sweep, and dust, and bake, and sew, as she would have done to preach, or pray or write for the Lord. And the result was that through this very training He made her into a vessel “meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

Another lady, who had entered this life of faith under similar circumstances of wondrous blessing, and who also expected to be sent out to do some great work, was shut up with two peevish invalid nieces, to nurse, and humor, and amuse them all day long. Unlike the first lady, this one did not accept the training, but chafed and fretted, and finally rebelled, lost all her blessing, and went back into a state of sad coldness and misery. She had understood her part of trusting to begin with, but not understanding the divine process of accomplishing that for which she had trusted, she took herself out of the hands of the Heavenly Potter, and the vessel was marred on the wheel.

I believe many a vessel has been similarly marred by a want of understanding these things. The maturity of Christian experience cannot be reached in a moment, but is the result of the work of God’s Holy Spirit, who, by His energizing and transforming power, causes us to grow up into Christ in all things. And we cannot hope to reach this maturity in any other way than by yielding ourselves up utterly and willingly to His mighty working. But the sanctification the Scriptures urge as a present experience upon all believers does not consist in maturity of growth, but in purity of heart, and this may be as complete in the babe in Christ as in the veteran believer.

The lump of clay, from the moment it comes under the transforming hand of the potter, is, during each day and each hour of the process, just what the potter wants it to be at that hour or on that day, and therefore pleases him. But it is very far from being matured into the vessel he intends in the future to make it.

The little babe may be all that a babe could be, or ought to be, and may therefore perfectly please its mother, and yet it is very far from being what that mother would wish it to be when the years of maturity shall come.

The apple in June is a perfect apple for June. It is the best apple that June can produce. But it is very different from the apple in October, which is a perfected apple.

God’s works are perfect in every stage of their growth. Man’s works are never perfect until they are in every respect complete.

All that we claim then in this life of sanctification is, that by a step of faith we put ourselves into the hands of the Lord, for Him to work in us all the good pleasure of His will; and that by a continuous exercise of faith we keep ourselves there. This is our part in the matter. And when we do it, and while we do it, we are, in the Scripture sense, truly pleasing to God, although it may require years of training and discipline to mature us into a vessel that shall be in all respects to His honor, and fitted to every good work.

Our part is the trusting, it is His to accomplish the results. And when we do our part, He never fails to do His, for no one ever trusted in the Lord and was confounded. Do not be afraid, then, that if you trust, or tell others to trust, the matter will end there. Trust is only the beginning and the continual foundation; when we trust, the Lord works, and His work is the important part of the whole matter. And this explains that apparent paradox which puzzles so many. They say, “In one breath you tell us to do nothing but trust, and in the next you tell us to do impossible things. How can you reconcile such contradictory statements?” They are to be reconciled just as we reconcile the statements concerning a saw in a carpenter’s shop, when we say at one moment that the saw has sawn asunder a log, and the next moment declare that the carpenter has done it. The saw is the instrument used, the power that uses it is the carpenter’s. And so we, yielding ourselves unto God, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto Him, find that He works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure; and we can say with Paul, “I labored; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” For we are to be His workmanship, not our own. (Eph. 2:10.) And in fact, when we come to look at it, only God, who created us at first, can re-create us, for He alone

understands the “work of His own hands.” All efforts after self-creating, result in the marring of the vessel, and no soul can ever reach its highest fulfillment except through the working of Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.”

In this book I shall of course dwell mostly upon man’s side in the matter, as I am writing for man, and in the hope of teaching believers how to fulfil their part of the great work. But I wish it to be distinctly understood all through, that unless I believed with all my heart in God’s effectual working on His side, not one word of this book would ever have been written.

Absolute Surrender

APPENDIX



This is the first chapter in the book *Absolute Surrender* by Andrew Murray. Andrew Murray lived from 1828–1917, born in South Africa and a minister there for 60 years. He wrote many books in his generation. He was a great pastor, revival leader and deeply committed Christian who wanted to help people receive all that God desired for them. “May not a single moment of my life be spent outside the light, love, and joy of God’s presence,” was his prayer. “And not a moment without the entire surrender of myself as a vessel for him to fill full of his Spirit and his love.”

“And Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine and all that I have” (1 Ki. 20:1-4).

What Ben Hadad asked was *absolute surrender*; and what Ahab gave was what was asked of him—*absolute surrender*. I want to use these words: “My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have,” as the words of absolute surrender with which every child of God ought to yield himself to his Father. We have heard it before, but we need to hear it very definitely—the condition of God’s blessing is absolute surrender of all into His hands. Praise God! If our hearts are willing for that, there is no end to what God will do for us, and to the blessing God will bestow.

Absolute surrender—let me tell you where I got those words. I used them myself often, and you have heard them numberless times. But in Scotland once I was in a company where we were talking about the condition of Christ’s Church, and what the great need of the Church and of believers is; and there was in our company a godly worker who has much to do in training workers, and I asked him what he would say was the great need of the Church, and the message that ought to be preached. He answered very quietly and simply and determinedly:

“Absolute surrender to God is the one thing.”

The words struck me as never before. And that man began to tell how, in the workers with whom he had to deal, he finds that if they are sound on that point, even though they be backward, they are willing to be taught and helped, and they always improve; whereas others who are not sound

there very often go back and leave the work. The condition for obtaining God's full blessing is *absolute surrender* to Him.

And now, I desire by God's grace to give to you this message—that your God in Heaven answers the prayers which you have offered for blessing on yourselves and for blessing on those around you by this one demand: *Are you willing to surrender yourselves absolutely into His hands?* What is our answer to be? God knows there are hundreds of hearts who have said it, and there are hundreds more who long to say it but hardly dare to do so. And there are hearts who have said it, but who have yet miserably failed, and who feel themselves condemned because they did not find the secret of the power to live that life. May God have a word for all!

Let me say, first of all, that God claims it from us.

God Expects Your Surrender

Yes, it has its foundation in the very nature of God. God cannot do otherwise. Who is God? He is the Fountain of life, the only Source of existence and power and goodness, and throughout the universe there is nothing good but what God works. God has created the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the flowers, and the trees, and the grass; and are they not all absolutely surrendered to God? Do they not allow God to work in them just what He pleases? When God clothes the lily with its beauty, is it not yielded up, surrendered, given over to God as He works in it its beauty? And God's redeemed children, oh, can you think that God can work His work if there is only half or a part of them surrendered? God cannot do it. God is life, and love, and blessing, and power, and infinite beauty, and God delights to communicate Himself to every child who is prepared to receive Him; but ah! this one lack of absolute surrender is just the thing that hinders God. And now He comes, and as God, He claims it.

You know in daily life what absolute surrender is. You know that everything has to be given up to its special, definite object and service. I have a pen in my pocket, and that pen is absolutely surrendered to the one work of writing, and that pen must be absolutely surrendered to my hand if I am to write properly with it. If another holds it partly, I cannot write properly. This coat is absolutely given up to me to, cover my body. This building is entirely given up to religious services. And now, do you expect that in your immortal being, in the divine nature that you have received by regeneration, God can work His work, every day and every hour, unless you are entirely given up to Him? God cannot. The Temple of Solomon was absolutely surrendered to God when it was dedicated to Him. And every one of us is a temple of God, in which God will dwell and work mightily on one condition—absolute surrender to Him. God claims it, God is worthy of it, and without it God cannot work His blessed work in us.

God not only claims it, but God will work it Himself.

God Accomplishes Your Surrender

I am sure there is many a heart that says: "Ah, but that absolute surrender implies so much!" Someone says: "Oh, I have passed through so much trial and suffering, and there is so much of the self-life still remaining, and I dare not face the entire giving of it up, because I know it will cause so much trouble and agony."

Alas! alas! that God's children have such thoughts of Him, such cruel thoughts. Oh, I come to you with a message, fearful and anxious one. God does not ask you to give the perfect surrender in your strength, or by the power of your will; God is willing to work it in you. Do we not read: "It is God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13)? And that is what

we should seek for—to go on our faces before God, until our hearts learn to believe that the everlasting God Himself will come in to turn out what is wrong, to conquer what is evil, and to work what is well-pleasing in His blessed sight. God Himself will work it in you.

Look at the men in the Old Testament, like Abraham. Do you think it was by accident that God found that man, the father of the faithful and the Friend of God, and that it was Abraham himself, apart from God, who had such faith and such obedience and such devotion? You know it is not so. God raised him up and prepared him as an instrument for His glory.

Did not God say to Pharaoh: “For this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power” (Ex. 9:16)?

And if God said that of him, will not God say it far more of every child of His?

Oh, I want to encourage you, and I want you to cast away every fear. Come with that feeble desire; and if there is the fear which says: “Oh, my desire is not strong enough, I am not willing for everything that may come, I do not feel bold enough to say I can conquer everything”—I pray you, learn to know and trust your God now. Say: “My God, I am willing that Thou shouldst make me willing.” If there is anything holding you back, or any sacrifice you are afraid of making, come to God now, and prove how gracious your God is, and be not afraid that He will command from you what He will not bestow.

God comes and offers to work this absolute surrender in you. All these searchings and hungerings and longings that are in your heart, I tell you they are the drawings of the divine magnet, Christ Jesus. He lived a life of absolute surrender, He has possession of you; He is living in your heart by His Holy Spirit. You have hindered and hindered Him terribly, but He desires to help you to get hold of Him entirely. And He comes and draws you now by His message and words. Will you not come and trust God to work in you that absolute surrender to Himself? Yes, blessed be God, He can do it, and He will do it.

God not only claims it and works it, but God accepts it when we bring it to Him.

God Accepts Your Surrender

God works it in the secret of our heart, God urges us by the hidden power of His Holy Spirit to come and speak it out, and we have to bring and to yield to Him that absolute surrender. But remember, when you come and bring God that absolute surrender, it may, as far as your feelings or your consciousness go, be a thing of great imperfection, and you may doubt and hesitate and say:

“Is it absolute?”

But, oh, remember there was once a man to whom Christ had said:

“If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23).

And his heart was afraid, and he cried out:

“Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

That was a faith that triumphed over the Devil, and the evil spirit was cast out. And if you come and say: “Lord, I yield myself in absolute surrender to my God,” even though it be with a trembling heart and with the consciousness: “I do not feel the power, I do not feel the determination, I do not feel the assurance,” it will succeed. Be not afraid, but come just as you are, and even in the midst of your trembling the power of the Holy Spirit will work.

Have you never yet learned the lesson that the Holy Spirit works with mighty power, while on the human side everything appears feeble? Look at the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. We read that He, “through the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14), offered Himself a sacrifice unto God. The Almighty

Spirit of God was enabling Him to do it. And yet what agony and fear and exceeding sorrow came over Him, and how He prayed! Externally, you can see no sign of the mighty power of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God was there. And even so, while you are feeble and fighting and trembling, in faith in the hidden work of God's Spirit do not fear, but yield yourself.

And when you do yield yourself in absolute surrender, let it be in the faith that God does now accept of it. That is the great point, and that is what we so often miss—that believers should be thus occupied with God in this matter of surrender. I pray you, be occupied with God. We want to get help, every one of us, so that in our daily life God shall be clearer to us, God shall have the right place, and be "all in all." And if we are to have that through life, let us begin now and look away from ourselves, and look up to God. Let each believe—while I, a poor worm on earth and a trembling child of God, full of failure and sin and fear, bow here, and no one knows what passes through my heart, and while I in simplicity say, O God, I accept Thy terms; I have pleaded for blessing on myself and others, I have accepted Thy terms of absolute surrender—while your heart says that in deep silence, remember there is a God present that takes note of it, and writes it down in His book, and there is a God present who at that very moment takes possession of you. You may not feel it, you may not realize it, but God takes possession if you will trust Him.

God not only claims it, and works it, and accepts it when I bring it, but God maintains it.

God Maintains Your Surrender

That is the great difficulty with many. People say: "I have often been stirred at a meeting, or at a convention, and I have consecrated myself to God, but it has passed away. I know it may last for a week or for a month, but away it fades, and after a time it is all gone."

But listen! It is because you do not believe what I am now going to tell you and remind you of. When God has begun the work of absolute surrender in you, and when God has accepted your surrender, then God holds Himself bound to care for it and to keep it. Will you believe that?

In this matter of surrender there are two: God and I—I a worm, God the everlasting and omnipotent Jehovah. Worm, will you be afraid to trust yourself to this mighty God now? God is willing. Do you not believe that He can keep you continually, day by day, and moment by moment?

Moment by moment I'm *kept* in His love;

Moment by moment I've life from above.

If God allows the sun to shine upon you moment by moment, without intermission, will not God let His life shine upon you every moment? And why have you not experienced it? Because you have not trusted God for it, and you do not surrender yourself absolutely to God in that trust.

A life of absolute surrender has its difficulties. I do not deny that. Yes, it has something far more than difficulties: it is a life that with men is absolutely impossible. But by the grace of God, by the power of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, it is a life to which we are destined, and a life that is possible for us, praise God! Let us believe that God will maintain it.

Some of you have read the words of that aged saint who, on his ninetieth birthday, told of all God's goodness to him—I mean George Muller. What did he say he believed to be the secret of his happiness, and of all the blessing which God had given him? He said he believed there were two reasons. The one was that he had been enabled by grace to maintain a good conscience before God day by day; the other was, that he was a lover of God's Word. Ah, yes, a good conscience is complete obedience to God day by day, and fellowship with God every day in His Word, and prayer—that is a life of absolute surrender.

Such a life has two sides—on the one side, absolute surrender to work what God wants *you* to do; on the other side, to let God work what *He* wants to do.

First, *to do what God wants you to do.*

Give up yourselves absolutely to the will of God. You know something of that will; not enough, far from all. But say absolutely to the Lord God: “By Thy grace I desire to do Thy will in everything, every moment of every day.” Say: “Lord God, not a word upon my tongue but for Thy glory, not a movement of my temper but for Thy glory, not an affection of love or hate in my heart but for Thy glory, and according to Thy blessed will.”

Someone says: “Do you think that possible?”

I ask, What has God promised you, and what can God do to fill a vessel absolutely surrendered to Him? Oh, God wants to bless you in a way beyond what you expect. From the beginning, ear hath not heard, neither hath the eye seen, what God hath prepared for them that wait for Him (1 Cor. 2:9). God has prepared unheard-of things, blessings much more wonderful than you can imagine, more mighty than you can conceive. They are divine blessings. Oh, say now: “I give myself absolutely to God, to His will, to do only what God wants.”

It is God who will enable you to carry out the surrender.

And, on the other side, come and say: “I give myself absolutely to God, *to let Him work in me to will and to do of His good pleasure*, as He has promised to do.”

Yes, the living God wants to work in His children in a way that we cannot understand, but that God’s Word has revealed, and He wants to work in us every moment of the day. God is willing to maintain our life. Only let our absolute surrender be one of simple, childlike, and unbounded trust.

God Blesses When You Surrender

This absolute surrender to God will wonderfully bless.

What Ahab said to his enemy, King Ben-hadad—“My lord, O king, according to thy word I am thine, and all that I have”—shall we not say to our God and loving Father? If we do say it, God’s blessing will come upon us. God wants us to be separate from the world; we are called to come out from the world that hates God. Come out for God, and say: “Lord, anything for Thee.” If you say that with prayer, and speak that into God’s ear, He will accept it, and He will teach you what it means.

I say again, God will bless you. You have been praying for blessing. But do remember, there must be absolute surrender. At every tea-table you see it. Why is tea poured into that cup? Because it is empty, and given up for the tea. But put ink, or vinegar, or wine into it, and will they pour the tea into the vessel? And can God fill you, can God bless you if you are not absolutely surrendered to Him? He cannot. Let us believe God has wonderful blessings for us, if we will but stand up for God, and say, be it with a trembling will, yet with a believing heart:

“O God, I accept Thy demands. I am thine and all that I have. Absolute surrender is what my soul yields to Thee by divine grace.”

You may not have such strong and clear feelings of deliverances as you would desire to have, but humble yourselves in His sight, and acknowledge that you have grieved the Holy Spirit by your self-will, self-confidence, and self-effort. Bow humbly before him in the confession of that, and ask him to break the heart and to bring you into the dust before Him. Then, as you bow before Him, just accept God’s teaching that in your flesh “there dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7:18), and that nothing will help you except another life which must come in. You must deny self once for all. Denying self must every moment be the power of your life, and then Christ will come in and take possession of you.

When was Peter delivered? When was the change accomplished? The change began with Peter weeping, and the Holy Spirit came down and filled his heart.

God the Father loves to give us the power of the Spirit. We have the Spirit of God dwelling within us. We come to God confessing that, and praising God for it, and yet confessing how we have grieved the Spirit. And then we bow our knees to the Father to ask that He would strengthen us with all might by the Spirit in the inner man, and that He would fill us with His mighty power. And as the Spirit reveals Christ to us, Christ comes to live in our hearts forever, and the self-life is cast out.

Let us bow before God in humility, and in that humility confess before Him the state of the whole Church. No words can tell the sad state of the Church of Christ on earth. I wish I had words to speak what I sometimes feel about it. Just think of the Christians around you. I do not speak of nominal Christians, or of professing Christians, but I speak of hundreds and thousands of honest, earnest Christians who are not living a life in the power of God or to His glory. So little power, so little devotion or consecration to God, so little perception of the truth that a Christian is a man utterly surrendered to God's will! Oh, we want to confess the sins of God's people around us, and to humble ourselves. We are members of that sickly body, and the sickness of the body will hinder us, and break us down, unless we come to God, and in confession separate ourselves from partnership with worldliness, with coldness toward each other, unless we give up ourselves to be entirely and wholly for God.

How much Christian work is being done in the spirit of the flesh and in the power of self! How much work, day by day, in which human energy—our will and our thoughts about the work—is continually manifested, and in which there is but little of waiting upon God, and upon the power of the Holy Spirit! Let us make confession. But as we confess the state of the Church and the feebleness and sinfulness of work for God among us, let us come back to ourselves. Who is there who truly longs to be delivered from the power of the self-life, who truly acknowledges that it is the power of self and the flesh, and who is willing to cast all at the feet of Christ? There is deliverance.

I heard of one who had been an earnest Christian, and who spoke about the "cruel" thought of separation and death. But you do not think that, do you? What are we to think of separation and death? This: death was the path to glory for Christ. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross. The cross was the birthplace of His everlasting glory. Do you love Christ? Do you long to be in Christ, and not like Him? Let death be to you the most desirable thing on earth—death to self, and fellowship with Christ. Separation—do you think it a hard thing to be called to be entirely free from the world, and by that separation to be united to God and His love, by separation to become prepared for living and walking with God every day? Surely one ought to say:

"Anything to bring me to separation, to death, for a life of full fellowship with God and Christ."

Come and cast this self-life and flesh-life at the feet of Jesus. Then trust Him. Do not worry yourselves with trying to understand all about it, but come in the living faith that Christ will come into you with the power of His death and the power of His life; and then the Holy Spirit will bring the whole Christ—Christ crucified and risen and living in glory—into your heart.