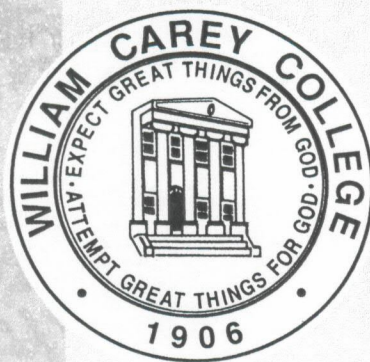


The CAREY PULPIT

*I charge thee therefore before God
and the Lord Jesus Christ...preach the word
(2 Timothy 4:1-2a).*



A Ministry of the Cooper School
of Missions and Biblical Studies
William Carey College
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“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?

As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!’”

Romans 10: 13-15

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When I graduated from William Carey College in 1985, I can remember having mixed feelings of both joy and sadness. I was pleased to know that the task of completing my undergraduate degree had been fulfilled; I was saddened to realize that I would be departing from a place where I had known great happiness and fulfillment in life. As I drove away from the campus at the conclusion of commencement exercises and was bound for the New Orleans Seminary, I never dreamed I would one day have the opportunity to serve at my alma mater. What seemed like a pipe dream has become a reality.

My first opportunity to return to the college occurred in February of 1991 when I joined the staff on the campus in New Orleans, and culminated with my recent appointment to the Hattiesburg campus as dean, Cooper School of Missions and Biblical Studies and as vice president of church relations. My role in this assignment is challenging, but has been made easier by the diligent efforts of those who have served before me.

I am indebted to Dr. Larry Kennedy for the strong foundation he laid as the previous dean and vice president. Having served for several years as a pastor in churches across Mississippi, Dr. Kennedy brought to this school a proven record of appreciation for Mississippi Baptists and Baptist life. He was instrumental in the increase and record enrollments of religion majors we have had in the Cooper School of Missions and Biblical Studies. His leadership and guidance has had a tremendous impact on the Cooper School. Now, as president, his leadership will extend to the entire college and be felt for years to come.

I am also indebted to Rev. Hardy Denham as the director of church and denominational relations. Rev. Denham has nurtured the church related vocations student program for over eight years. In his time of service in this capacity, the program has grown to record numbers and

continues to grow each year. He has been a faithful contributor to this publication, has initiated and conducted eight successful winter Bible studies to assist area pastors in their personal preparation, and has worked tirelessly to build the CRV program to an admirable level of excellence. In August, Rev. Denham officially announced his retirement as director of church and denominational relations. His legacy of care and attention to the CRV program will be appreciated for years to come.

I am grateful for the expertise and academic breadth of the faculty serving in the Cooper School. They exercise careful attention to teaching and guiding students. Each faculty member excels in his academic area and their collective experience has made my acclimation as dean much easier. It is my privilege to serve with these men in the Cooper School.

Finally, I am grateful for the wisdom and assistance of Mrs. Becky Bourdene. Her pleasant smile and genuinely warm greeting has been a source of comfort for many students, faculty, and administrators.

In keeping with the tradition of excellence that has been established, it is my prayer to continue to build, to nurture, to serve, and to assist both the college and the churches. The sermons that are provided in this issue of the *Carey Pulpit* are just one way of completing this task for our pastors.

Daniel P. Caldwell

GOD'S WORD FOR A NEW DAY

Joshua 1:6 - 9

Introduction:

In 1924 G. L. Mallory led a team of men who attempted to climb Mt. Everest, the highest mountain on earth (29,002'). The party reached the 25,000 foot level, and Mallory and A.C. Irvine left and tried to make it to the summit. They failed and died on the mountain. Later, one member of the team was addressing an explorer's club in London. He stood before a mural of Mt. Everest. Turning to look at the mural, he said: "Everest, we tried to conquer you once, and we failed. Everest, we tried a second time, and you were too much for us. Everest, we are going to conquer and overcome you because you cannot get any bigger, but we can!"

The people of Israel had faced the challenge of Canaan years before, and they failed. Then, years later, they again stood on the threshold of the promised land. The burden of leadership was on the shoulders of Joshua, and the Lord God gave him a word for a new day.

As we stand at the doorway of a new millennium, we need to hear again the word God spoke about a new day.

I. It Was a Word About Courage (1:6-7a).

- A. Courage was needed for the challenge of Canaan. The Lord had promised the land to Israel, but it had to be taken. Joshua 13 reveals that no less than 31 kings and their armies had to be defeated before the land would belong to Israel.
- B. Courage is needed as we face the 21st century. Whether the 21st century will be a day of great advances for Christendom or a century of religious decline will depend in large measure on the degree of our courage.

II. It Was a Word About Conformity (1:7b-8).

- A. Joshua was commanded to conform to God's word. The reference to the Law probably meant the commandments, ordinances, and statutes the Lord had given in Deuteronomy.

- B. Consider the place God's Word is to have in the life of a believer.

1. First, Joshua was to do God's Word (vs. 7b).
2. Second, Joshua was not to deviate from God's Word (vs. 7c).
3. Third, Joshua was to devote himself to meditate daily on the Word and declare it to others (vs. 8a).

- C. Success in living demands conformity to God's word. Many church people today are conformists to the world— not just in terms of heels, hems, and hairdos, but in terms of morals and manners. People who possess the promised land of a life worth living are people who both believe and behave God's Word.

III. It Was a Word About Confidence (1:8b-9).

- A. Joshua was assured of success in service. He was told of the success he and the people would experience in campaigns (6:2; 8:1). This confidence was based on the fact that the Lord was with him (verse 9b). Thus Joshua and his people ventured forth confident of success.
- B. The awareness of the Lord's presence makes confident living possible.
 1. As was true with Joshua and the people of Israel, life has its setbacks.
 2. However, the people of God facing the uncertainty of life's tomorrow can do so with confidence knowing that they are not alone.

Conclusion:

Mallory and his team failed to reach the summit of Everest in 1924, but the summit has since been reached. Israel failed before the challenge of Canaan at Kadesh-barnea, but Joshua and a new generation were successful.

We today face the challenge of the 21st century. What the century will bring to us is dependent on our obedience to God's Word for our new day.

A NEGLECTED FARM

Proverbs 24:30 - 34

Introduction:

Frank Rowsome wrote *The Verse by the Side of the Road*. It is a book about the Burma-Shave signs and jingles seen alongside American highways from 1927 to 1963. Some of these had a real message, like the one which read: "Statistics prove near and far that folks who drive like crazy are!"

The wise man of old found a message by the side of a road. He passed a vineyard that had been neglected. This neglected farm spoke a message about:

I. The False Concept of Time.

- A. The farmer believed he had plenty of time in which to do His work. His philosophy was "never do today what you can put off until tomorrow." But the Bible warns about the uncertainty of tomorrow (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:13-14).
- B. A person must use the time he has.
 - 1. People are prone to put off until tomorrow what they need to do today. Such a practice presupposes that there will be a tomorrow.
 - 2. Time is an irreplaceable commodity. Once it is gone, it is forever gone. Shakespeare wrote:

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow creeps in this steady pace from day to day to the last syllable of recorded time; And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death" (*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene V).

II. The Waste of Precious Opportunities.

- A. The farmer had opportunities to do what needed doing. The present time had provided the opportunity to break up the fallow ground, sow the seed, and care for a crop.

- B. Life presents people with the opportunities to do what needs doing. Many of you have had these opportunities in the past, and you have one now.
 - 1. People have the opportunity to accept Christ as savior.
 - 2. People have the opportunity to lighten another person's burden and brighten his day.
 - 3. People have the opportunity to give a witness to those who are spiritually lost.

- C. So often life's opportunities are carelessly wasted. William Hunt, the artist-teacher, watched a student painting a scene of a barn at sunset. The student was meticulously painting each shingle on the barn in his painting as the sun set. Hunt said, "The light is not going to be there long and you are going to have to decide between the sunset and the shingles." If we choose the shingles, we miss the opportunity to capture the sunset.

III. The Failure to Perform a Duty.

- A. The farmer had a responsibility to the vineyard. He was the farmer and it was his vineyard. He had the responsibility to care for the vineyard. He failed to do that and the farm was neglected.
- B. Life involves responsibility. To be sure, the degree of responsibility is determined by the person's level of development. Many people are experts in shirking their responsibility and thus fail in life. A small boy who forgot to take his birth certificate to school as requested said to the teacher, "I forgot my excuse for being born." Responsibility is part of why we are here. Don't forget it.

Conclusion:

Life, like the vineyard, can be neglected. This is usually the result of a false concept of time, the waste of opportunities, and failure with regard to responsibility.

HOW TO RETIRE AS A MILLIONAIRE

Matthew 6:19 - 21

Introduction:

Years ago I read an article on how to retire as a millionaire. The author wrote: "If you are now 25 and deposit \$2,000 a year for 40 years at 12% interest, at age 65 you will reap the grand total of \$1,718,000. making you a millionaire" (*Parade*, Nov. 15, 1981, p. 8).

In the text Jesus tells Christians how to retire in eternity as a millionaire. It involves doing the same thing the author wrote about using your treasure wisely. Consider:

I. The Peril With Treasures.

The peril with treasures relates to:

- A. The significance of treasures. People can give too much significance to things. This is implied in the words "lay up." The significance given to treasures can be seen in a threefold way:
 1. By making the acquisition of treasures the goal of life.
 2. By making possessions the standard of success.
 3. By making the amount of possessions the measure of a person's self worth.
- B. The security of treasures.
 1. Treasures in ancient times were represented by clothing (cloths), crops, and currency. Jesus identified a threefold threat to these treasures. He was reminding people that "riches do not endure forever" (Pro. 27:24).
 2. Treasures today are still not secure even though we have banks and vaults, security systems, and police forces. To lay up treasures on earth is like speculating in junk bonds or investing in a bankrupt company.
 3. A preacher visited a businessman to talk to him about the Lord. The man showed the preacher the industrial complex he owned and said, "This is all the god I need." Later that

complex was destroyed by fire. The preacher said to the man, "Your god has gone up in smoke."

II. The Possibility with Treasures.

Jesus said that even though we cannot keep what we have, we can make it pay dividends throughout eternity.

- A. The possibility depends on a priority. Our major concern should be our heavenly citizenship. (Refer vss. 21, 33; Colossians 3:1ff.)
- B. The possibility insures protection.
 1. Whereas treasures invested in this world are in constant danger, those invested in heaven are forever safe.
 2. Jesus said we can protect our treasures by exchanging what we cannot keep for what we cannot lose. You can use what you have now in a way that ensures you will never lose it. A man in Alexandria, LA, gave a large donation to help build a church building. Later, he lost his fortune. He would often look at the church building and say, "All I have left in this world is what I gave away."
 3. Thus, investing money in heaven: (1) ensures it against loss; (2) proves our loyalty; (3) brings greatest happiness; and (4) puts it where we will spend eternity.
- C. The possibility demands a procedure. How can one lay up treasure in heaven? The answer is twofold:
 1. First, by investing what we have in the work of God's kingdom.
 2. Second, by investing what we have in people who are going to heaven. (vss. Matthew 25:37-40).

Conclusion:

Most of us will never live to be 100, and we may not even live to retire in this world. But if we are saved, we will go to heaven. Are you investing today for that coming day? Are you using what you have now in a way that it will pay eternal dividends?

A SUCCESSFUL SERVICE

Acts 10:24-35; 44-48

Introduction:

A family of four, who had just returned from the Sunday morning worship service, were eating their noon meal. They were talking about the service. The mother criticized the choir; the teenage daughter, the instrumentalists; and the father criticized the preacher. The small son said, "I thought it was a pretty good show for a quarter." How do you judge a service to be successful or not?

The text is a record of a successful service. It wasn't in a church house, for there were none then. But it was a worship service, and it was successful because of:

I. The Participation in the Service.

- A. The house was filled with people. Peter was greeted by a large gathering of people (vs. 27). That's the way it should be (Hebrews 10:25). God is honored by His people being present for worship.
- B. Consider two facts about the participants.
 1. First, the people were invited. Cornelius was the host, and the people present had been invited by him (vs. 24). Vance Havner said, "The preacher is to fill the pulpit, and the people are to fill the pews."
 2. Second, the people were interested (vs. 33).

II. The Proclamation in the Service.

- A. The proclamation began with a vision. Peter's experience in Joppa (vss. 1-23) was his preparation. The preacher must "see" the word he preaches (Amos 1:1).
- B. The proclamation involved a venture.
 1. Peter not only went to Caesarea, but ventured to speak for God (vs. 34).

2. Consider three facts about this venture.
 - First, preaching is a venture.
 - Second, God calls and sends the preacher.
 - Third, the message must be God's word.
- C. The proclamation anticipated a victory. The Jews with Peter "were astonished" (vs. 45), but Peter wasn't! He had to be told what to do (vs. 29), but then he anticipated victory when he did. Do you expect anything to happen in a worship service?

III. The Professions in the Service.

- A. The people believed the gospel and were saved. They were waiting to hear how to be saved (vs. 43). When they heard, they believed. This is what can happen when lost people are under the Spirit-led preaching of the gospel.
- B. Consider two facts about the professions.
 1. First, the eagerness with which the professions were made. These people were looking for answers. When they heard how to be saved, they were so eager that they didn't wait to be invited to respond.
 2. Second, the excitement with which the professions were made (vs. 46). The speaking in tongues was the result of the Holy Spirit, and "the tongues" were probably their native language (Latin) or simply excited shouts of praise. Notice that the tongues were unsought, unexpected, and undemanded.

Conclusion:

How do you judge a service to be successful? We have the report of this service to serve as a standard. The threefold standard is:

1. The people were present.
2. The word of God was proclaimed.
3. The Holy Spirit performed.

GIVING MY BEST

Luke 9:57-62

Introduction:

Dr. Curtis Jones told of his visit with the popular violinist, Benno Rubinoff. During their visit Rubinoff stated that when he was not on tour, he practiced eight hours a day; and when on the road, he often practiced between concerts. When asked why he spent so much time practicing, he replied, "Well, I strive for perfection. I doubt if my audience would know the difference if I lightened up on rehearsals, but I would. Music is my life. Music is in my heart. I must always give my best."

Jesus extended to three men the opportunity to become disciples and follow Him. Yet, all three failed to latch on to the moment. Although all three wanted to follow, they were not willing to put Christ first in life and give Him their best.

Jesus is still seeking those who will follow Him. Although there are many who may want to, few are willing to give their best. The Lord said, "Whosoever he be of you that forsake not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:33)." What Jesus demands is our best. Therefore, see what it means to give our best.

I. Giving Your Best Means You Put Commitment Over Comfort (vss. 57-58).

The first man came to Jesus wanting to follow. Jesus told him of the condition in which he may find himself if he chose to follow the Lord. It is inferred that the man was not willing to give up the comforts of the temple and give his best for the Lord.

There are many who are willing to follow if they do not have to make a commitment which may demand that they leave the comforts of life. Christ never promised comfort in serving Him. Paul wrote of the danger involved in serving Christ:

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)

II. Giving Your Best Means You Put Loyalty Over Legalism (vs. 59-60).

The second man was asked by Jesus to follow (v. 59). But he too was not willing to give his best. Instead, he asked to go and bury his father. On the surface this would seem to be a legitimate reason to postpone fellowship. It was the duty of the eldest son to insure the proper burial of his parents upon their death. However, his response did not mean that the man's father was dead or even sick. It meant that the man wanted to stay around till his father died so that he could fulfill his legal responsibilities.

Many today are living in the custom or legalism of our time. Whether it is the legalistic ways of religion or their surroundings, their loyalty is to this world. Jesus is asking for us to follow Him loyally.

III. Giving Your Best Means You Put Faithfulness Over Family (v. 61-62).

The third man also wanted to follow Jesus, but he had a problem with faithfulness. He placed his family first. His request to say farewell to his family was more than asking for a goodbye hug and kiss. The customary farewells would take weeks to perform

In Luke 14:26 Jesus said: *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, an children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

Jesus said that the one who has put his hand to the plow but is constantly looking back and longing for the things of the world is of no use to the kingdom (vs. 62).

Conclusion:

Violinist, Benno Rubinoff said, "Music is my life, music is in my heart. I must always give my best." As Christians we claim that Jesus has given us our life, for He is in our hearts. Shouldn't we also always give our best? We can give our best if we put commitment over comfort, loyalty over legalism, and faithfulness over family.

DON'T WAIT TOO LATE

Luke 13:22-30

Introduction:

The "Procrastinator's Poem" goes something like this;

*I've gone for a drink and sharpened my pencils,
Searched through my desk for forgotten utensils.
I reset my watch, I adjusted my chair,
I've loosened my tie and straightened my hair.
I filled my pen and tested the blotter
And gone for another drink of water.
Adjusted the calendar, and I've raised the blind, And
I've sorted erasers of all different kinds.
Now down to work I finally can sit,
Oops, too late, it's time to quit.*

We live in a day of procrastinators, whose motto is, "Why do today what you can put off until tomorrow."

There was an incident during the American Revolution that illustrates the tragedy that can result from waiting too late. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, the commander of the British troops at Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't read it until the game was finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but he had waited too late. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment were captured.

Many make the fatal mistake of waiting too late when it comes to a decision for Christ. In Luke 13, Jesus told a parable warning that some would wait until it was too late. In this parable, Jesus gives three reasons that cause people to wait until it's too late.

I. Some People Wait Until It's Too Late Because the Way Is Too Hard (vs. 24).

I have yet to meet one who claims that he does not want to go to Heaven. But I have heard many say they just can't give up their position, their possessions, or their pleasures to try and live like the Bible commands us to live. The way is hard and people just don't

want what is hard. In Luke 9:23-24, Jesus gave us the standard to follow. *Deny self, take up your cross daily, and follow Me.* In Luke 14, Jesus said to count the cost of being a disciple.

II. Others Will Wait Until It's Too Late Because They Trust in False Hopes. (vss. 26-27).

Earlier, Jesus had warned that:

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matt 7:21-23)

Many will wait too late because they are trusting in their membership at the church, their baptism certificate, their ability to keep the Laws, or the good deeds they have done. Yet, all who will place their trust in these false hopes, will one day hear Jesus say, "I know ye not whence ye are, depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity."

III. Yet, Others Will Wait Too Late Because of Pride in Their Hearts (v. 30).

Jesus was speaking to those who would not humble themselves before God. Others gained positions in the temple and were unwilling to surrender their pride and become servants of the Lord.

Jesus wants to become our Lord and Savior. To do so means to turn from self to Him.

Conclusion:

There is an ancient story told of three demons who argued over the best way to destroy the Christian mission in the world. The first demon said, "Let's tell all the Christians there is no Heaven."

"No," said the second demon, "Let's tell all the Christians there is no hell."

The third demon said, "Let's tell all the Christians that there is no hurry."

What reason is keeping you from making a decision for Christ today? Don't be tricked into believing that there is no hurry, for today may be your last chance. "Don't wait until it's too late!"

THE WATCHMAN'S RESPONSIBILITY

Ezekiel 3:16-27

Introduction:

Today our society is plagued by many significant problems. Many of these problems are a direct result of people refusing to assume the God-given responsibilities which every individual inherits as a member of the human race.

In this text we find that as God's watchman over Israel, Ezekiel had certain responsibilities which he was expected to assume if his life was to have the impact upon Israel which God wanted it to have.

As Christians we must also realize that we too have been called to be watchmen for God. And as a result of that call, we too have been given certain responsibilities which we are expected by God to fulfill. Consider three responsibilities of the watchman which are revealed in this text.

I. It Is Our Responsibility to Warn the Rebellious (vss. 16-21).

- A. In these verses God revealed to Ezekiel that it was his responsibility to warn the wicked that there would come a day when they would be judged for their sin. He also instructed him that it was also his responsibility to warn those who had at one time lived righteous lives, but who had fallen into sin, that they too would be judged. He also pointed out to Ezekiel that if he failed to carry out that responsibility, the blood of those he failed to warn would be on his hands.
- B. The precedent here is clear. As those who have been called out to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, we also have the responsibility to warn those who rebel against God. Sometimes this means witnessing to the lost. At other times it means pointing out to a brother or sister in Christ that they are living outside of God's will for the Christian. As Christians we must be a bold witness for Christ outside and inside of the church.

II. It Is Our Responsibility to Witness Responsibly (vss. 24-27).

- A. God said to Ezekiel, "I've given you a job to do, but it's not a job that you are to attempt in your own power. I will close your mouth until I am ready for you to speak on my behalf. At that time you may say to these people."
- B. In order to be responsible witnesses for Christ, we too must learn to witness in God's power, using God's word as our guide. We must never rely upon our own power or our own ideas and theologies. People need to hear the truth, but it must be God's truth, not our own personal version of the truth.

III. It Is Our Responsibility to Worship Regularly (Ezekiel 3:22-23).

- A. In verses 22 and 23, we catch a glimpse of Ezekiel's perception of God. He was a man who stood in awe of God. The Bible says that when he saw the glory of the Lord, he fell on his face. He prostrated himself before the Lord.
- B. One of the great problems within the church today is that many people seem no longer to be in awe of God. Many no longer seem to find Him worthy of their worship on a regular basis. As a result, God has a decreased number of people who can be used to accomplish his great and majestic plans. If we are to be the watchmen God has called us to be, we must worship him regularly.

Conclusion

Christians must ask themselves today the following questions:

Are we living up to our responsibility as God's watchmen by:

- warning the rebellious?
- witnessing responsibly?
- worshipping regularly?

CHARACTER TRAITS OF SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIANS

Mark 2:1-12

Introduction:

Virtually everyone wants to be a success in life. It's been my observation that those who are successful in life are people who live with a sense of mission.

In the text we find four men who successfully accomplished their mission of getting the paralytic to Jesus in order that he might be healed. Consider four character traits in these men.

I. A Character Trait of the Successful Christian Is a Concerned Spirit (vs. 2:3).

- A. Four men came to Jesus carrying a paralytic. Since the text does not specify why these men brought the cripple man to Jesus to be healed, one can speculate that it was out of a heartfelt concern for him. The text does not imply that the paralytic solicited the help of the others. It simply says that four men brought him to Jesus.
- B. We also must possess a concerned spirit if we are to successfully accomplish our mission of bringing the world to Jesus. We live in a world full of hurting people who have reached the end of their rope in life. Many of these are looking for someone to reach out to them. They will only listen to our message if they are convinced that we care about them.

II. A Character Trait of the Successful Christian is a Cooperative Spirit (vs. 2:3b).

- A. The paralytic was carried by four men who carried him on a mat or a bed. Most probably they did so with each man holding a corner of the mat. Had one man decided that he was not going to cooperate with the other three, chances are they would have been unable to successfully get the paralytic to Jesus. It took all four men cooperating together to successfully accomplish their mission.

- B. As Christians we must realize that if we are going to be successful in bringing the world to Jesus, we too are going to have to cooperate with one another. No single individual is going to accomplish what Jesus commissioned us to do. It's going to take us all pulling together. Christ never commissioned a "Lone Ranger" to accomplish His will.

III. A Character Trait of the Successful Christian Is a Christ-Centered Spirit (vs. 2:3-4).

- A. These men were focused on Jesus. They knew that if the paralytic was to be healed of his affliction, only Jesus could do it. Therefore, even as they faced obstacles which seemed insurmountable, they remained focused on reaching the Lord.
- B. One of the greatest reasons why so many churches today are paralyzed is the fact that they have removed their focus from the Lord Jesus Christ. They have failed to remember what it is they were established to do, in whose power they are to do it, and for whose glory it is to be done. If we're to be successful, our focus must be centered on Christ.

IV. A Character Trait of the Successful Christian Is a Creative Spirit (vss. 2:4-5).

- A. These men found that the usual method of entering the house was not going to work. Therefore they used a creative approach to accomplish their mission.
- B. We live in an ever changing world. We must face the reality that we too are going to have to be creative in our methodology of sharing the gospel message. The message never changes, but the method in which we share it must if we're to be successful.

THE TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 7:13-29

Introduction:

As Jesus preached his most famous sermon, he must have seen the ordinary folk who were hungry to hear his messages.

But Jesus also saw those who were only there for curiosity's sake. There were the Pharisees and the scribes. He saw through their stares and into their hearts. He knew they had only contempt for himself and for his message.

As Jesus explained the principles of Kingdom Living, he said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven." It was his way of saying, "I have shown you the kingdom; now take caution that you enter." Real discipleship does not consist only in the externals of legalistic ritualism or the abstinence from lawless behavior, but in the internal transformation of the human heart by the divine work of God.

I. A Real Disciple Experiences an Inward Transformation Because of a Relationship with Christ (vss. 13-14).

- A. Jesus pointed out that if the people followed the example of the Pharisees, they would only be led to destruction. While the Pharisees placed heavy emphasis on the external regulations of the Law, Jesus stressed an inward transformation. Jesus said they should strive to enter the narrow gate.
 1. This implies difficulty (means restricted).
 2. Perhaps, it is the difficulty of entering that deters many from entering.
- B. Alexander the Great and his army of 40,000 men crossed the Hellspont and began the conquest of the Persian Empire. In order to finish off the Persians, the Greeks had to cross the treacherous Hindu Kush Mountains. The pass through the mountains was narrow and suitable for ambush. The Greek army pressed on and eventually defeated the Persian Army.

Jesus said that we were to choose the narrow road. There are easier paths that one might take, but the path that leads to life eternal is not an easy one. A real disciple of Jesus Christ is one that has decided to take the narrow path. There is a transformation that takes place in the heart of the disciple. He is on the narrow path, not because he has to be there, but because he wants to be there.

II. A Real Disciple Displays Evidence of a Relationship with Christ (vss. 15-23).

- A. Jesus said that we would find out more exact information about who persons really are by the fruit they bear.
 1. He said, "don't respond to, or learn from" these false prophets.
 2. He also informed them not to "give attention to, or agree with them."
- B. How is one able to identify these "pseudo prophets?" Jesus said you would know them by the fruits they bear. A Christian should give verbal testimony to his faith in Christ. But the definitive evidence of a relationship is the way a person behaves. Christ in us produces fruits which are proofs of that relationship.

III. A Real Disciple Builds a Life Upon the Word of God (vss. 24-29).

- A. Jesus said that a real disciple is like the person who built his house upon the rock of the Word of God. He contrasted this with the person who is not a real disciple, whose life is built on unstable sand.
- B. Storms rage which threaten lives. There are evidences all around us of lives built on the shifting sands of human ideas and philosophies. Only those lives built on the Word of God can withstand the storms.

Conclusion:

How does one become a real disciple? By choosing to follow Jesus and by allowing the Holy Spirit to produce evidence of a relationship with Christ.

BARNABAS: TRAITS OF A GOOD CHRISTIAN LEADER

Acts 11:19-26

Introduction:

Many church growth experts agree that most of the churches in Protestant Christianity are in a slump. Somewhere between 70 to 80% of Southern Baptist churches have either plateaued or declined. A correction that reverses the trends in American churches will require a mighty work of God and good Christian leadership. It will take leadership that focuses on what God is doing, possesses an encouraging spirit, and empowers others to lead.

Dr. Chuck Kelley of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary said, "The difference between wildflowers by the side of a road and a crop in a field is intentional cultivation. One can fluctuate dramatically from year to year. The other is dependable. We are more like tourists enjoying a field of wildflowers than intentional farmers working for a fruitful harvest."

I. One Trait of Good Christian Leadership is a Preoccupation in What God is Doing (vss. 22-23).

- A. When the church at Jerusalem heard that the Greek-speaking Jews in Antioch had responded to the Gospel, they were interested in knowing more about what God was doing there. The church sent Barnabas to Antioch to investigate and report back to the church at Jerusalem.
- B. Leadership in churches that are growing is preoccupied with what God is doing. Christian leadership recognizes its own limitations in light of the unlimited power and ability of God.

II. A Second Trait of Good Christian Leadership is an Encouraging Spirit (v. 24).

When Barnabas arrived at Antioch and discovered what God was doing there, he encouraged them to continue. These Christians had endured persecution since Stephen had been stoned.

III. A Third Trait of Good Christian Leadership is Involvement in Equipping Others (vv. 25-26).

- A. Barnabas and Saul spent a great deal of time with the Antioch church in a teaching ministry. It is better to train ten people than to do the work of ten people. But it is harder.
- B. Relationship building is a process which takes time. When that time is invested, trust and vulnerability grow. We offer these questions as part of this building process, knowing that when used in love and wisdom, they will help men open their hearts to each other. Movements like Promise Keepers suggest these questions men may ask each other in order to build accountability into a relationship:
 1. Have I been with a woman in the past week that could be viewed as compromising?
 2. Have all my financial dealings been filled with integrity?
 3. Have I viewed sexually explicit material?
 4. Have I spent adequate time in Bible study and prayer?
 5. Have I spent quality time and given priority to my family?
 6. Have I fulfilled that mandates of my calling?
 7. Have I just lied to you?

Conclusion:

Whoever you are, there is some younger person who thinks you are perfect. There is some work that will never be done if you don't do it. There is someone who would miss you if you were gone. There is a place that you alone can fill. (By Jacob M. Braude from *Braude's Source Book for Speakers & Writers*, submitted by Dr. William T. McConnell, First Christian Church, Harrison, Ohio.)

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