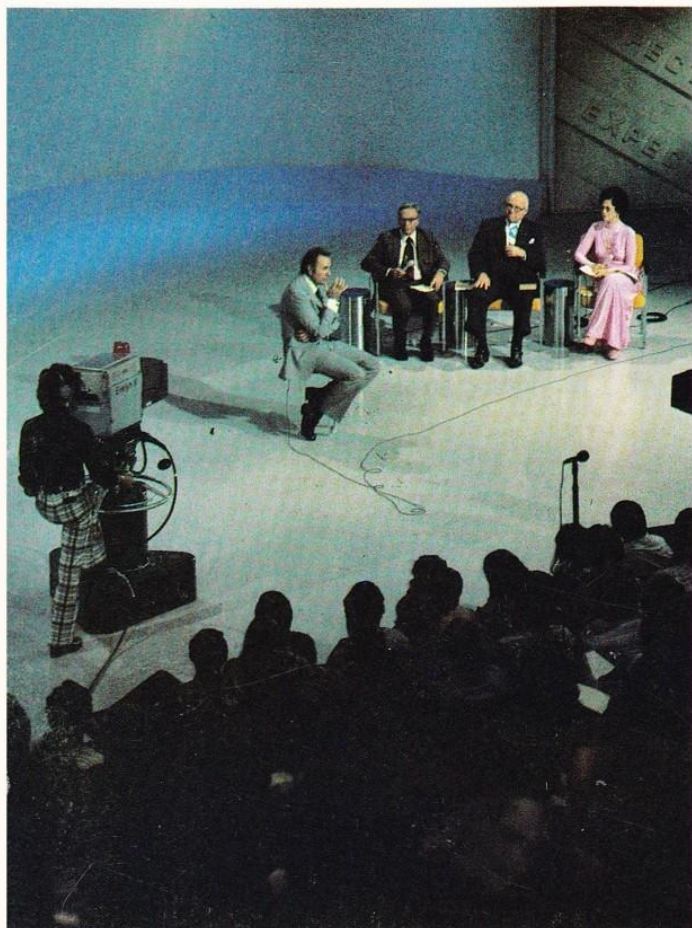
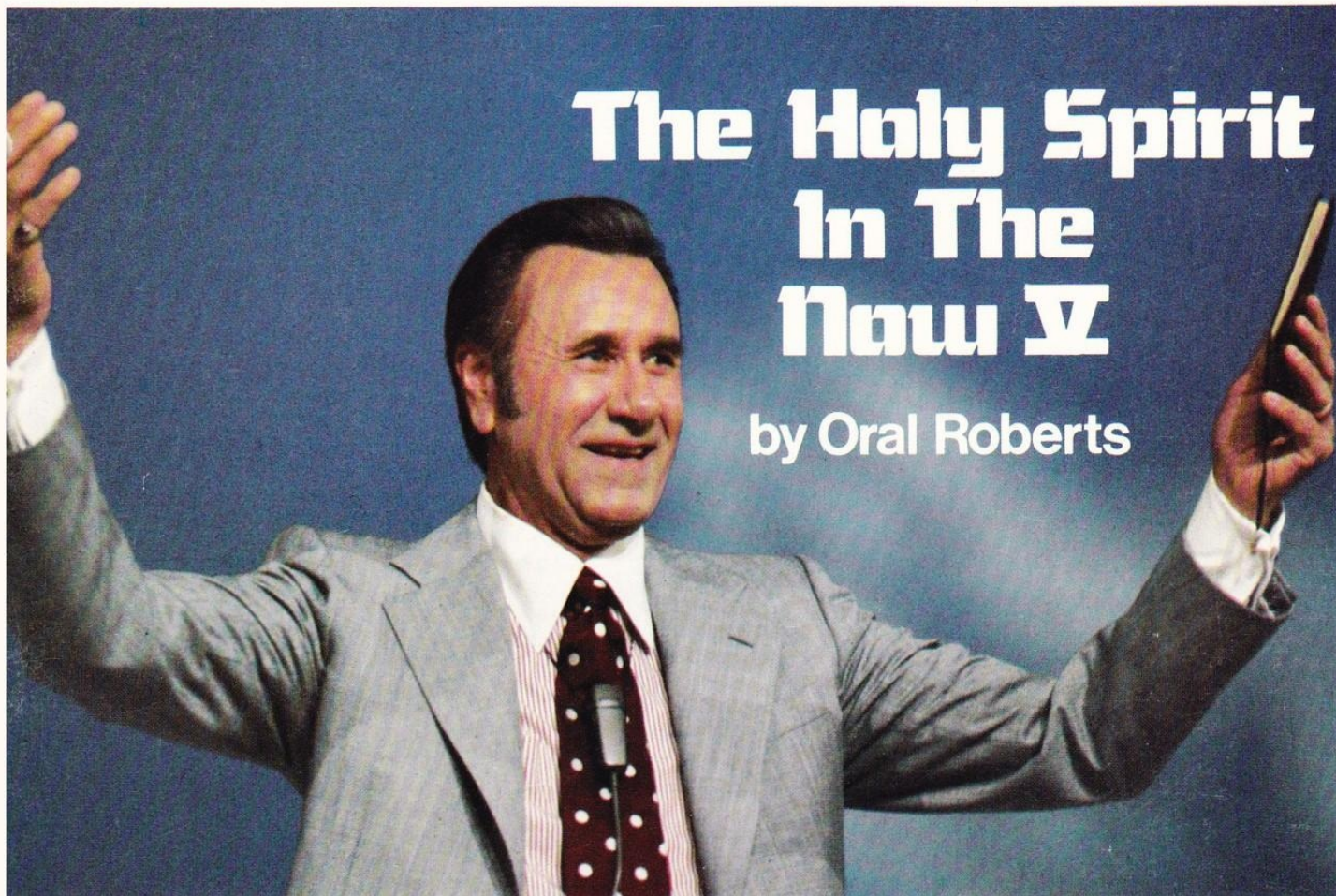


The Holy Spirit In The Now Σ

by Oral Roberts



The Holy Spirit In The Now V

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My Personal Word To You

Friend, as you study each lesson I'd like you to use your Bible. Please keep in mind that a class of approximately 2,500 people listened to this series of lessons. They have been only slightly edited to make what was said clear to the reader.

I would like to tell you about the miracle that brought about this class which is now part of the established curricula at Oral Roberts University. The first endowed academic chair on the Holy Spirit was established in the fall of 1972 through the generosity of my good friend, the late J. Arthur Rank, outstanding British businessman, member of Parliament, and Methodist layman.

I first met Lord Rank in 1967 when I spoke to a group of Christian businessmen in London. Although I had heard his name many times and knew of his Christian witness, this was the first time I saw him in person. Lord Rank was in his late seventies, but he stood tall and straight, a man of strength and character. I knew I was in the presence of a man of God. I took his hand and said, "Lord Rank, I'm honored to meet you." Then a curious impulse came upon me and I added. . . "I pray that God will fill you with the Holy Spirit."

Two years passed before I saw Lord Rank again, at which time I learned he had received the Holy Spirit. He then shared with me how this had transformed his Christian life and how the Holy Spirit had made Jesus Christ so real to him. He said, "I feel as though Jesus were walking by my side."

Because of his great interest in the Holy Spirit, Lord Rank determined to establish this chair at ORU. He passed away, however, on the day he was to sign the papers. The trustees of his estate honored his desire by setting aside a generous sum for this purpose for five years. Then they will decide if they wish to continue this course on the Holy Spirit.

As you study these lessons, I pray that God through the Holy Spirit will reveal Jesus to you in a way more real than you have ever experienced before.

Contents

[The Holy Spirit In The Now V](#)

[My Personal Word To You](#)

[Contents](#)

[Chapter 1, God Has A Need To Give](#)

[Chapter 2, How To Get Into The Rhythm Of Faith](#)

[Chapter 3, How To Receive The Miracle That Will Meet Your Heeds](#)

[Chapter 4, Are You Rich Toward God?](#)

[Chapter 5, One Foot On Earth, One Foot In Heaven](#)

[Chapter 6, Seed-Faith Living In Our Human Relationships](#)

[Chapter 7, The Love Of God](#)

[Chapter 8, The Good Seed And The Bad Seed](#)

[Chapter 9, How To Take A Bad Seed And Turn It Into A Good Seed Of Faith](#)

[Chapter 10, What Is Faith? By Dennis Bennett](#)

[Chapter 11, The Prayer Lahghage Of The Spirit](#)

[Chapter 12, Make The March Of Faith](#)

[Thank You](#)

Chapter 1, God Has A Need To Give

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: St. John 3:1-21

The Lord Jesus tells us about God in words that no human being ever said before. Now these words of Jesus are very familiar to many of us who were raised in the church. But I've been given what I think is a revolutionary concept of these words. Jesus is describing God to us, so that we can understand Him better. He wants us to understand how God works and how He does things. Then we can learn to do things like He does and really find the miracles He wants us to have. Jesus said in John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Jesus said these words to a man by the name of Nicodemus, a man who was searching for God, who wanted meaning in his life, who wanted some of the miracles that he had observed in the life of Christ.

When Nicodemus reached out that night to ask Jesus questions about God and about life, Jesus said to him, "You must be born again." That was a statement Nicodemus found difficult to understand. Jesus finally said to him, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (Read John 3:1-21.)

Now what was Jesus trying to say about God? I think He was trying to show us that God undertook the greatest Seed-Faith project in all history, that God himself was facing a need in His own existence, startling as that may sound. Does God have needs? Did God have a need at that moment? I'll say He did. God was sowing a seed for a desired result. God focused His love into giving, which brought about the very thing that God himself desired for human beings and which met the great need of God, the Creator of all the universe.

God Gives First

First, Jesus begins with the word GOD. God who scooped out the bed for the ocean, who flung the stars from His fingertips and sculptured the mountains and hung the earth on nothing — God. But what does this mean to me.. .to me in my existence, with the problems I have to face every day of my life? What does this mean to me? Jesus said, "God so loved.. .God so loved the world." God loved the world. And the world is mean. The world is full of murder, ugliness,

death, and people who will slit your throat. The world didn't care whether God existed or not. The world didn't even believe there was a God. The world was not interested in God. The world had made no expression toward God. God loves this world, made up of human beings in their ugliness and meanness, of whom the Bible says, "All have sinned and gone astray." God loved that world.

It's the kind of love that's so very hard for me to understand. That God would love the world, and love the world first, before the world ever loved Him back, or loved Him at all. God so loved That little word so sounds deep and tender. For God so loved the world that He gave; He made His love an act of giving. God is saying here that love is nothing unless it is translated into action, into something you do, something that rolls out of your being toward someone else. He so loved that He gave His only begotten Son. He spared not His own Son. He could have given any one of millions of angels. But He gave His only begotten Son.

Something For Nothing

You know, I think we are sometimes like the antique dealer who was always looking for bargains. When he came to a certain little town he went into a store where he noticed a cat drinking milk from a bowl in the middle of the floor. As he watched the beautiful cat he suddenly noticed that the bowl was an antique worth a lot of money. And he thought, I'll bet you this ole boy doesn't know that's an antique. Maybe I could buy that for litde or nothing.

So he walked up and said, "Mister, that's a beautiful cat. I've been needing a cat. I wonder if you'd sell me that cat."

The storekeeper said, "Sure, I'll sell you anything I've got. Just give me the money and the cat's yours." After paying him, the dealer picked up the cat and began to stroke him. He said, "My, what a beautiful cat. Oh, by the way, I notice he's drinking milk out of an old bowl. He's used to it and the old thing's not worth much. I believe I'll just pick it up and take it with me.'

The merchant said, "You put that bowl down! That's the best cat-seller I ever had. "

I think human beings are sometimes like that. When we approach others, we're often looking out for number one. We do have to preserve our own lives. We can't turn away from ourselves any more than we can turn away from anybody else. We are important to God who has made each of us unique and irreplaceable. I believe there's something built into you and me that's more precious than all the silver and gold and diamonds of the world. I believe that.

And so we have to love ourselves as well as love our fellowman. But at the same time I think we often expect something for nothing. Or we find ourselves cheating or trying to catch someone off guard so that we can take advantage of him.

God Gives His Best

Jesus said that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. That's really hard to take in. Now God has blessed Evelyn and me with four children — two sons and two daughters. Back in the '50s when my children were small, God gave me a vision while I was sitting in our house in Tulsa. It seemed as real as life. And I found myself so stirred and moved by it that I wept.

With my eyes wide open, I saw myself sitting while my children were playing in the yard. Suddenly I heard my older son, Ronald David, scream. You know how children have different ways of crying out. Sometimes they're just happy. Sometimes they're angry. When they're in trouble their voices have a special ring. That's how my son's cry, "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" sounded.

I jumped up and ran outside just in time to see two men grab him, throw him into the car, and drive away with him. At first I was so stunned I didn't know what to do. Then I jumped in my car and began to chase them.

Soon I lost them in the traffic. I drove like a wild man down the streets and alleys, crying and asking God to help me save my child. I found myself driving into the outskirts and then going down one of the country lanes. There I came upon their car. I stopped quickly, jumped out, and saw them on the side of the hill. They had just nailed my little son, Ronald David, to a cross which they were jabbing into the ground. As I pulled him down from that cross, he died in my arms sobbing, "Daddy, Daddy!" The vision was over. Out of the depths of my being, I cried, "O God, what does this mean?"

God spoke to me, deep in my heart, "If this had happened to your son, Ronald David, you would still have one son left. Isn't that right? I had only one Son and I gave Him. I so loved the world that I gave Him. And that's what one human life is worth."

I said, "There is no way that any human life can be worth the life of Your Son Jesus Christ."

And He said to me, "You don't have any right to judge. You have no way of judging. Only I can determine the worth of a human being. You have no right to put any less value upon yourself or upon another human being than I do. I say

that you and every human being is worth the price, which is My own Son.”

Now I'll never forget that. It has been in my being like a pounding surf, a roaring wind, a burning fire in my heart all through these years — that God gave His only begotten Son. And He gave Him for you. And He gave Him for me. He so loved that He gave. I want to give you the words of a song that Oscar Hammerstein wrote:

A bell is not a bell till you ring it.

A song is not a song till you sing it.

Love in your heart is not put there to stay.

Love isn't love till you give it away.

Just think about that a moment. A bell doesn't become a bell until it rings. A song isn't even a song until it's being sung. Love in your heart is not put there to stay. Love is not love until you give it away.

Seed Corn Is The Best

During the first part of my life I grew up on a little Oklahoma farm. Later my father became a minister of the gospel, but while I was a little boy he was a farmer. My second brother, Vaden, and I grew up together. We chopped cotton, hoed corn, and helped my father in the fields. The hardest task of all was gathering in the corn. Vaden and I rode the wagon to the fields, where we pulled the ears of corn from the stalk and pitched them into the wagon. Then we'd throw the corn into the barn.

I remember the day my father said, “Wait a minute, boys; don't throw those ears in the barn. You pitch them over to one side. ” At first we didn't know what he meant. Then he explained, “Don't throw these choice ears, the biggest and best ears of corn, in the barn. Put them over here in a little pile.. They're our seed corn, the best corn, v/hich we'll plant next year. This is the kind I want multi -plied back. If we plant these small ears, that's the kind of corn we'll get. If we plant our best ears, that's the kind of corn we'll get next year.”

Now that made an impression on me. It impresses me now.

Give Your Best

God gave His best, His only begotten Son. When our hearts reach out to another human being, that action is tinged with God's everlasting love. It's a reach from the deepest part of our being that strives to give our best. If we really want to be like God, to understand God as He exists and moves and acts in our

universe and as He deals with you and me on a personal level, then we're going to have to learn how to give God our best and then ask Him for His best. Now I've been trying to train myself to do this, and say, "God, I give You my best." Say it to yourself again and again: "God, I give You my best. Then I'll ask You for Your best. "

God Had A Need

God so loved the world that He gave His best, His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Why did God do this? Why was it so important to God that men should not perish, but that they have everlasting life?

Its a brutal fact that God had lost man whom He had created. The devil had stolen man from God. Man had chosen to go away from God and had gone astray in sin. God had lost His children. It's a little like losing one of your children, one that you gave birth to and brought into the world. Unless you've experienced it, you can never really know how parents feel when they've lost a little child. God had lost His children and He felt the need to win them back. God's need was to defeat the devil, to manifest His Son to destroy the works of the devil, to give His Son so that man would not perish but have everlasting life.

I believe that God had a need for man to be restored. God reached down His hand and took hold of you and me and lifted us up. He restored us to the way He had made us, in His own image and likeness. God had that need and He gave for a desired result. What was that desired result? God desired that no human being would perish, but that every human being would have life — that he would have abundant life, eternal life. God was focusing His love.

Focus Your Giving For A Desired Result

I can hold a magnifying glass up to the sun and let the bright sun come through it. If I focus it upon a piece of paper I can bum a hole in it almost instantly. I can actually set the paper on fire just by focusing on a spot on the piece of paper. Now that's the only way I can understand what God did.. .in so loving the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God focused His love upon His desire — that no man should perish, no woman should perish. Every human being would have life. You know, that's the thing we all want, life. Every older person is trying to live one more day. No matter if he's 90 years old he wants to live one more day. Every young person wants more life. We're trying to fulfill ourselves. We want life and that's what Jesus Christ came to give.

Once when Jesus came into a town where the people were very unfriendly, even hostile, James and John said, “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and [destroy] them?”

Jesus said, “The Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them”(Luke 9:54,56).

Do you think you can take your love and make it an act of giving? Can you focus your giving upon a certain desired result? Yes, you can.

It amazes me to realize that God focused His love, His gift which was His own Son, upon a desired result. And because of this, you and I can be saved. Many of us are saved. Many of us have been given eternal life, because He did focus His love. God’s desired result has happened in millions of lives, is happening in millions of lives, and will happen in millions of more lives. God had a need and God focused His love for His need to be met. He focused His love for a desired result.

Focus Your Love

I want to tell you what happened while I was on the way to the Jerry Lewis Telethon with the enormous gift of money from our students, faculty, and staff. I had no idea they would give \$10,000 in one chapel service. Just as I got to the airport a man walked up to me. Without saying a word he handed me a check for \$3,300 for the Oral Roberts University. I asked him, “What does this mean?”

He said, “Well, I just felt like I should do this.”

I was stunned. Here I’m on my way with a Seed-Faith check for the Jerry Lewis Telethon when a fellow walks up to me and gives us back more than one-third of this amount. It’s a total surprise to me. That’s one of the quickest Seed-Faith projects returned that I’ve ever seen.

Give In Love

If you give without love, you’re not really giving. St. Paul says that even if we give our bodies to be burned and have not love, it’s nothing. Your giving has to be motivated by the same love that motivated God when He gave His only begotten Son.

Through the years I’ve been slowly coming to the revolutionary ideas I’m sharing with you today. Time and time again I’ve been able to focus my giving...maybe for the construction of a building on the ORU campus.. .or for a

life to be touched. I say, “God, I’m giving so that this person will be healed. God, I’m giving so that a certain thing will come to pass in my life. I don’t know when or how but I’m giving for this.”

Now this idea is so new that I know it will upset you for a moment, but we’ve got to get over the idea that giving is a duty, that loving is an obligation. I wonder how Evelyn would feel if I walked over and said, “Honey, I’d like to kiss you. I owe you this kiss. It’s my obligation to kiss you.” I just don’t think she’d appreciate that kiss.

What is it you desire in your life? I believe you can focus your love just like you focus the sun right through a glass to that little piece of paper. You can focus it and something will be set on fire. You can focus it for a desired result. I don’t think you can tell God how or when to act. I think God’s going to act in the way He chooses and at the time He thinks is best for you. I think He’ll meet your need in His way, which is always better than your way. Once God meets the need, even though it may be different from what you had anticipated, you always say, “It’s better than anything I could have imagined.” Never once has God done less — He has always done more.

Expect A Miracle

Night before last as I lay in bed praying for a certain person who is dear to me, God touched me so deeply I couldn’t keep the tears back. Out of my prayer I found myself saying, “God, I’m going to make a certain commitment to You. I’m going to give a certain thing to Your cause. I’m going to focus my giving upon that person — for that person to want the keys of Seed-Faith, the keys of a new life.”

And now that I’ve given, I find myself expecting a miracle.

In Matthew 1:21 the angel of the Lord said:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

What’s the name that the angel of the Lord said this child would have? JESUS. And why did the angel say His name would be Jesus? Because He was going to save us from our sins. That’s it, isn’t it? You see, in the very name that God gave His Son, He was expecting miracles. “Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”

God was not just giving to the wind. God was not merely giving as a scattered seed. God was giving for a purpose. God was giving to save His

people. “For he shall save his people from their sins.” In the Greek language the words save and heal come from the same root word. “Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save [and heal] His people...” Now there is God expecting miracles.

You see, many people come to church expecting God to do great spiritual things there, but they don’t expect Him to do great things in their personal lives. If God is powerful enough to save the soul, He’s powerful enough to heal the body. He’s powerful enough to help you with your finances, your business, your job, your very life. I think your giving should be directed toward a purpose, a desired result. You should give in expectation of miracles.

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

Three Miracle Keys

The first key of Seed-Faith is: God is your source. Second: Give first, and give your best. And the third miracle key is: Expect miracles. I want to share these three miracle keys of Seed-Faith with you. I shall start at the beginning and go through to the end of the Bible, book after book, experience after experience in the Bible, working out the three keys of Seed-Faith. Say the three miracle keys:

1. God is my Source.
2. I will give, and give first.
3. I will expect many miracles.

Harvesttime

Expect the seeds you plant to be multiplied, to become a harvest. Expect the love that you give to be multiplied back to you. I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that God is going to meet needs in your life that have never been met. God is going to make a way for you where there’s never been a way. God is going to prosper you in ways you never dreamed that you could prosper. God is going to charge you with His Spirit, fill you so full of His Spirit that you’ll be an entirely different kind of human being. You’ll be a take-charge kind of human being. You’ll be a mountain-moving kind of human being. You’ll face your problems and your needs with your shoulders squared and your head up. You’ll believe God for miracles. I believe that things you now think are impossible will suddenly become possible, because God so loved you that He gave. You will so love that you can give and focus your giving upon a desired

result.

Prayer

Father, in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who You gave because You so loved us, I pray for many miracles to happen. I pray that God will loose you from bondage to self and open you to giving and loving so that your whole being will explode with God's love. I pray that you will start giving and start expecting the miracle that will meet your need. I pray for that miracle to begin now. Through Christ I believe and I know it's going to happen to you. Amen and amen.

Panel Discussion

EVELYN: God holds out His precious gift of life eternal to us. Can we refuse it?

ORAL: Yes, we can say no to Him, because we are free moral agents. God gave us the power of choice. If we want to we can spit at God; many people do, you know. **EVELYN:** Is this gift of eternal life automatic for the whole human race?

ORAL: God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth.. .the person becomes a believer, has faith in Him. We're talking about the miracle of Seed-Faith, faith as a seed we plant. There are millions of people who aren't saved now, who are going to perish. God gave His Son so that if we believe on Him, none of us will perish, but will come into life everlasting. **EVELYN:** All right, when does life everlasting begin? **ORAL:** The very moment we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God. Evelyn, I can just hear you saying, "And how can a person know? How can I know Jesus has saved me?"

EVELYN: I know that I know that I know that I know that I know that I know.

RICHARD: I was going to make a comment about God having a need. It's hard for us humans to think of God having a need.

ORAL: In what way do you think He had a need? **RICHARD:** Because, like you said, He lost man in the garden of Eden. Satan came in and stole man away. **ORAL:** But it was man's choice, man's own will. **RICHARD:** And God had a need to get man back. I'm just saying it's difficult to understand, and yet at the same time it makes it easier for us to understand God, because all of us have needs. And to realize that He has needs... **ORAL:** This is why God became a

man. He entered flesh, He came down in the form of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ became a man. I'm talking about a man, not some superangelic being. Jesus Christ was a man. He was one hundred percent human. He felt everything that you feel. He faced every temptation you and I will ever face. Jesus took the place of the sinner. Jesus Christ was here on earth, God walking around in human form, subject to everything man is. That's God as man. That's God saying, "I have a need."

God wouldn't have sent His Son into this world if He had not had a need. But, Richard, He spared not His own Son. Jesus Christ was a man all through His life. He was a man hanging on the cross. They buried Him and left Him.

The Holy Spirit touched that lifeless human form and life returned. It was no longer the lowly human Jesus. It was Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, raised from the dead. God! alive forevermore. I tell you, there's enough of the power of the Holy Spirit here to save every person, heal every person, meet every need.

Chapter 2, How To Get Into The Rhythm Of Faith

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: 1 Kings 17

I am very much aware of the various types of individuals and their particular needs. Students face academic problems, problems of relationships, problems of finance. Business people wrestle with problems that the workingman sometimes doesn't understand. I know about the struggle that businesses go through to exist, to bring forth new products, and to serve this country. I also know about the problems of working people. Will the job last, will they get the raise they deserve and need to pay their bills? Doctors and nurses have an entirely different set of problems because they deal with people on a one-to-one level. Housewives have problems caring for their family and home. Ministers of the gospel have a different set of problems because they deal with people's spiritual problems.

How Are You Going To Get Your Needs Met?

How are you going to find a solution for the problem that is absolutely about to wipe you out? When someone says he doesn't have a problem, I don't believe it. I believe everybody has a problem, or he is a problem, or he lives with one. 1 Kings 17 talks to the NOW of your existence.

And Elijah (who was a prophet) the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab (Ahab was the king of Israel at that time), As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

Elijah was saying, "God is going to withhold the rain." And it was withheld from Israel three and a half years because the king and the country were in disobedience.

And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens (birds) to feed thee there. (Notice God said, "I have commanded the ravens to feed-thee there.") So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh (meat) in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth

to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. (First He commands the ravens to feed him, now He commands a widow woman to feed him.) So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake (I have no bread) but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse (vessel): and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

Did you ever feel like you wanted to die? Did you ever feel that things were so futile and desperate that you might as well die? Then you begin to understand her situation.

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not.

Don't be afraid. Many times when you say, "Don't be afraid," people think you are out of your mind. They say, "How can I not be afraid?" Elijah says, "Fear not," and then he tells her how not to be afraid.

Go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth (until the natural forces take over again). And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not (didn't diminish), neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah. And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and

brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth. (Now I know the truth. I KNOW!!!)

God Meets Elijah's Needs

In the land of Israel there was severe famine. Through the disobedience of King Ahab and his queen, Jezebel, there had been a general backsliding among the people of God. King Ahab had provoked the Lord with his sins more than any other king who had ever reigned in Israel. Ahab and Jezebel, king and queen of Israel, would not listen to God. They were leading the people into destruction. Then God did something to get their attention and to save them and their people from destruction. He put His Word into the heart and the mouth of a man named Elijah, a prophet who came out of the hills — really out of obscurity — into the presence of King Ahab and the queen. Elijah delivered God's Word, "Thus saith the Lord God, there shall be no rain upon the earth until I give the word, until I, the Lord God, give the word." Because of that, Ahab turned against Elijah and threatened his life. God said to Elijah, "I want you to go over to a little brook and hide there. While you're hiding,

I am going to preserve your life. No man will know where you are, and I shall sustain you. For I have commanded the ravens to feed you."

This is one of the most fantastic statements in the Bible. God commands the birds of the air to take notice of a human being. A single human life is so important that God speaks to the birds of the air, "I want you to fly bread and meat to him every morning and every night."

Then God said to Elijah, "You go down to the brook Cherith and there you'll find plenty of water." In spite of the drought you'll find water."

This goes on for some time before the brook dries up. A man may live without food, but he can't live without water. So here he is now...the prophet of God who has truly given of himself, who is keyed to God, his Source, so much that he's willing to risk his life.

God Speaks Again

The Word of the Lord came unto Elijah a second time and said, "Arise, and go to a little town called Zarephath where you will find a widow. I've commanded this widow to sustain you." First, God commands the birds of the air to feed the prophet. Then God commands a widow to feed this same man.

Both are unlikely sources of supply. You would never dream that God would use birds or a poor widow. Yet God commands them to take care of his prophet.

I can hear someone saying, “Sure, God takes care of His favorite few. Elijah’s a prophet of God. Sure, God’s going to take care of Elijah. But what about me? I’m no prophet. I’m no well-known individual. I-am just me — just me. What about ME?”

Well, I’m glad that question is in your mind because the same kind of power God used for Elijah is now used for the poor widow. God works the same kind of miracle for her that He worked for the great prophet. This is God’s way of dealing with every human being. This is the essential nature of God.

*if you and i can see the essential nature of god,
that it is the same — it never changes —
then we are going to be able to stand
in the place of an elijah or stand in the
position of the widow of zarephath
and see that god will be the same to us.*

God will be the same to you...whether you are known or unknown, whether you feel important or unimportant, whether you have lots of money or none at all, whether you are tall or short, whether your skin is white or red or brown or black or yellow or mixed. It makes no difference to God. The same God who commanded the birds to feed Elijah, and the widow to sustain him, is now going to use that same commanding power to meet the needs of the widow of Zarephath.

I’ve Got To Have A Miracle

Elijah meets the woman as she’s gathering kindling to build a fire. And he says to her, “Ma’am, I’ve come a long journey. Would you give me a drink of water?” The widow was glad to do that.

As she went to get it, he said, “And by the way,-would you bring me a little food?”

And she stopped and said, “Sir, I can bring the water but not the food; for, you see, my son and I have only enough food in the house for ourselves for one day. We are going to eat it and die. That’s what I’m doing now. I’m fixing this meal.”

It's like the businessman who said to me, "Oral, ten years ago I heard you speak on Seed-Faith. I was cynical. I wasn't against it; I wasn't against you, but I suppose you noticed that I wasn't believing it."

And I said, "Yes, any minister knows what's going on in his audience."

"Well," he said, "I want to tell you I made the mistake of my life. Do you remember my situation ten years ago?"

I said, "I do. I remember that you were fantastically successful. You were more than a millionaire. You had a beautiful wife. You were a great civic and social leader in your city."

He said, "Yes, I was successful. But today I'm broken in my body."

He had a kidney affliction; he was on the verge of emphysema. His breath was coming in desperate gasps. He was very different from the man I had seen in the audience ten years before when I tried to share the miracle of Seed-Faith.

He said, "Our marriage is gone; we are going to divorce. My business is gone, I'm near bankruptcy, and I've lost my health. I'd like to give what little I have left to God."

I said, "Sir, God knows you want to give Him all you have. He knows what's really in your heart. "

He wiped his eyes as he said, "I'm at the end. I've got to have a miracle."

I said, "You've got to have more than a miracle. You've got to have a new way of life. You've got to understand the way God deals and then accept the way He deals. You've got to learn the way God works with you and then work with God. You've got to learn this. It's not just one miracle you need. You need a whole life-changing process so that God can reestablish your life and put it on an even keel. You need God to help you for the rest of your life."

Then this man said, "I'm starting in Seed-Faith. I'm going to give."

I said, "Well, I want to tell you a story," and I began to tell the story about the widow of Zarephath that I'm sharing with you now.

This woman had planned her death. She was going to eat and then give up. She was going to give up.

You know what giving up means?

It means that you back out from life.

It means you turn away from what you are trying to do.

It means you give up your will — your shoulders sag,
your heart hurts, your steps drag, your smile fades,
your shoulders slump, and you go down.

If you are a student you can't study; you can't hold your mind on your studying. You get upset about everything. Nothing works. Nothing is right.

If you are a businessman, everything goes wrong...the economy is against you...people don't buy anymore...the government is over-regulating and everything in the world is going wrong.

If you are a mother, your children are doing things that you'd just give anything in the world if they'd quit doing. Some of them are stepping on your toes while they are little, and as they get older they step on your heart and break it.

Your whole life seems like a rose that bloomed once and will probably never bloom again. Do you ever feel that way? You feel that you aren't going to make it and the whole world looks dark. You don't know where you're going to go...what's going to happen to you...how low you're going to sink. You just feel like you are going to die.

Many a person is walking around who is already dead. He's not dead in his body — his heart is still pumping — but he's dead in his spirit — she's dead in her spirit. Their spirit is dead. Their will is dead and life is passing them by. They say, "I have a reason for being like this."

A Supernatural Intervention

The widow of Zarephath could have said, "It hasn't rained in all these months. My neighbors are dying. The stock is dying, the crops are not producing. There's nothing to eat. There's nowhere to go. If I go into town I'll starve there. If I stay here in this little farm house at the edge of town I'll die here. Death is everywhere. Defeat faces me at every turn of the road."

Now, friend, that's going on today. There's some part of your life that's defeated. There's some problem you are wrestling with that's getting the best of you. I contemplate my own life, how God called me to build Him a university. And now He's called me to complete the work by adding a medical school, a dental school, and a law school.

When I consider the economy of the country, the mood of the people, and

my small resources, I want to throw up my hands. I want to run and hide. I want to say, “God, no, I can’t do this.” I have said it. I’ve told God many times, but He just keeps the pressure on. And the pressure on me is there for a purpose. It’s there for my good, because if I obey God, He will build this School of Medicine. He will build this School of Dentistry, He will build this School of Law. God will complete the Oral Roberts University and He’ll do it a million times better than Oral Roberts can do it. God will do it.

The pressure you feel is the Holy Spirit coming into your heart. That’s a positive action of God in your life.

That’s God saying to you, “Rise up in the inner man.”

That’s God saying to you, “Don’t look at these meager dwindling financial resources...DON’T! Don’t look at these problems surrounding you. Quit gathering up a few pieces of kindling to build a fire to cook your last meal, to call in your friends and have a wake. Quit doing that. ”

Elijah said to the widow, “There’s a way for you to stop being afraid. There’s a way. Give me a little part of the food you said is your last meal. And the Lord says the meal and the cooking oil will not diminish. After you cook the first part for me, then cook for you and your little son. You are going to find as much meal and oil left as you started with. Then you cook the next meal and there will be the same amount left for the next meal. And it will happen day after day, month after month until the rain comes. When the rain comes, you won’t need the supernatural supply. You’ll have to go out and grub it again. You’ll have to work in the fields and get it in the natural way. But right now there’s going to be a supernatural intervention in your life...

THERE’S GOING TO BE A MOMENT WHEN ETERNITY STOPS AND HEAVEN TOUCHES YOUR EXISTENCE AND THE HAND OF GOD IS UPON YOU. AND HE WILL TOUCH EVERYTHING IN YOUR HOUSE. “It will be an electric feeling. The food itself will come to life, will multiply. You’ll find that it’s not a bare table, it’s not a lonely existence, you are not alone anymore. You are going to live; you are going to have abundant life. God is going to supply all your needs. God is going to take care of you, ma’am. Will you believe me?”

First, Elijah said to her, “Fear not!” Somewhere I heard that these two words, “fear not,” are in the Bible 365 times, one for every day in the year. A “fear not” for every day in the year. Say it:

Fear Not!

What is this unseen power that changes marriages that are falling apart, courtships that won't work, studies that we can't complete, businesses that will not operate successfully, jobs that will not continue?

What is this unseen power that can change the situation from worse to better? From defeat into victory? What is it? It's the Living God. IT IS GOD WHO IS IN THE NOW. It is God who cares, who loves, who's concerned.

God picked you out as one of His crowning pieces of creation.

You are unique and irreplaceable!

You are somebody...and I'm somebody.

We belong to God and GOD CARES.

He has a way for us to come out of our defeats.

It doesn't matter what the defeat is...what shape it takes in your life. It makes no difference because God has commanded an unseen force to sustain you, providing you will get into the rhythm of the way He does things.

How Does God Do Things?

First, God always gives first. He always loves first. He always takes a hand in people's lives first. He says for you to give first. The widow of Zarephath was to give first. She was to give a part of what she had, and give it first.

It must have frightened her terribly to be asked to give a part of all she had left in the world. But you see, without that as a seed to multiply, God had no way to meet her needs.

SHE HAD TO GIVE GOD A SEED TO MULTIPLY BACK TO MEET HER NEED.

She had to Seed-Faith something. She had to Seed-Faith. And it happened to be a little bit of bread.

In your life it may not be the sharing of bread with a hungry person. It may not be even the giving of money. It may be something more difficult. It may be putting a friendly arm on someone's shoulder and saying, "I am praying for you." It may be to go to some individual and share a word of encouragement. It may be to pray for a person or a family. It may be a gift of your time, freely given to God. It may be something else. But I tell you, it's a seed that God will multiply.

THE TINY LITTLE THING THAT YOU PUT IN
OUT OF YOUR HEART WILL NEVER DIE.
THAT SEED OF FAITH IS THE INGREDIENT
THAT MULTIPLIES THE DIMINISHING RESOURCES OF YOUR
LIFE.

Elijah Was Keyed To His Source

Notice that the brook eventually dried up. Now suppose Elijah had made the brook his source. Where would he have been? He didn't because he was keyed to God. So when the brook dried up he was in a position to hear God say, "Now I've commanded a widow woman to sustain you."

This Seed-Faith principle is all through the Bible. Here is a man keyed to God, the Source of his total supply. He was looking to God. He wasn't looking to the ravens or the brook. They were just helps along the way. They were not a source to him. When the brook dried up there was no break in his stride of faith, no giving up and crying out. Elijah's Source would never change, his Source would never dry up. His Source is God. So now he hears God say, "I'll just shift the scene. I've commanded a widow to sustain you."

Elijah goes there and finds a supply.

This is why you cannot afford to get your eyes on anything or anybody other than God, because human beings are going to fail you. Earthly resources will dry up.

One of my associates works for us out of the gift of his own life, because he has independent means and wants to work for God. One morning he was sitting at his desk, looking very downcast. I said to him, "What's the matter?"

He said, "Haven't you read the newspaper this morning?"

I said, "Yes, but what are you referring to?"

He said, "The stock market, the bottom has dropped out. Most of my assets are in the stock market. That's what I look to for my earnings..."

And I said to him — and I think God anointed me to say it to him because it came out of my spirit, not my mind — "Since when is the stock market your source of supply? Since when do you make the stock market — something that man can manipulate up and down — your source?"

He said to me, "Oral, what are you trying to say to me?"

I said, “My brother, God is your Source. God is not dependent upon whether the stock market is up or down.”

He said, “Well, that’s where most of my assets are.”

I said, “Not really, not really. Your real assets are in God. Your real asset is your faith in God. Your real asset is the way you love and give of yourself. Your real asset is the way you expect miracles from God. God is not bound to meet your needs through the stock market. It goes up and down like a yo-yo. God is bigger than the stock market. If it dries up, God will open up a new situation for you.”

I remember he put up his hand and he said, “Oral, you’ve made my day.”

Not only is your day made, I think your life is made when you understand who your Source is. I don’t think it’s easy. In my experience I’ve found it hard to remember who my Source is. Oh, it’s easy to remember for a day or a week, but it’s also easy to get our mind off God. It’s easy to get our mind on someone we think is going to help us. If that person fails us, then we give up. We say, “What am I going to do now?”

What if all your avenues are cut off? You see, if you have God, you still have your Source. And you can plant a seed and receive the miracle for your need. I believe this with all my being. If you lose your job, if your business fails, if your marriage is destroyed...! believe that if you hold on to God as your Source, keep on planting seed out of your need, and expecting miracles, God will intervene in your life just as surely as He did in Elijah’s. And just as surely as He did in the life of the widow of Zarephath.

God Is In The Now!

The widow had a tremendous experience. Her food was multiplied, she saw the power of God. But right in the midst of it a tragedy occurred, the death of her son. So she went to Elijah and said, “O man of God?” It’s a question. She’s wondering now. She has forgotten how God multiplied the food in her house. And that’s easy to do...to forget the blessings of God. To forget that sometime, somehow, God intervened in your life. It’s easy to forget that. And she said, “My little boy has died. Have you come here to recall my sin? To bring to my memory my life as a young girl? Have you come to haunt me?”

The Widow Got The Blessing But Failed To Redirect Her Thinking

If I were to give a starving man a fish, I could sustain his life for a day. But if I teach him how to fish, I could sustain his whole life. If God blesses you and you say, “Well, I’ve got a blessing from God,” that’s one thing. But if that blessing of God causes you to redirect your thinking, then your whole life will be changed. There is a greater blessing in Seed-Faith than just planting a seed out of your need for a desired result. God is saying more to you, He’s telling you to find the rhythm of Seed-Faith living.

The widow of Zarephath gave out of her need and she gave for a desired result. What was the desired result? That the food supply would not diminish, right? And she gave, expecting miracles. And the blessing came. But she paid more attention to the blessing than to redirecting her thinking.

The Miracle Key

So Elijah now begins to change her thinking. He says, “Give me your little son.” He took him in his arms and went upstairs where he had been sleeping. Elijah called upon the Lord. And God caused that little boy’s life to revive. Then Elijah gave the child to his mother. Her statement is the key. She says to Elijah, the man of God, “Now I know. I KNOW that the Word of God in your mouth is truth. I KNOW. I UNDEBSTAND it now.”

I don’t believe the widow of Zarephath understood when she first planted her seed, giving bread to the prophet. I believe she did it because she was inspired by the man. I believe the man inspired her to believe for this kind of miracle. She was able to say, “Yes,” but I don’t believe she understood. But now she says, “I understand. I understand what you’re saying to me. I understand that regardless of the drought and the famine, I’m to trust GOD. I’m not to look at these circumstances but to look beyond them to God. I’m to be constantly open and giving.”

Loving And Giving Makes You Vulnerable

When you start loving you’re going to hurt once in a while. People are going to take advantage of you sometimes. But you can’t stop loving and giving because of your vulnerability. If you do you’ll become bitter. You’ll lose your faith. You’ll become a cynic and you’ll laugh at the supernatural. You’ll mock the power of God. And you’ll wind up without God, without hope. I’ve seen many a person rolling in money who had no hope. And I’ve seen many a person down and out financially who had no hope. They are full of cynicism, unbelief, and bitterness, because they had stopped loving and giving.

A True Story

I want to share with you something in my life. When I was dying with tuberculosis I didn't believe I would live, until a relative leaned over me and said, "Oral, God is going to heal you." These were the first positive words I had heard. I'm sure others had been said, but my mind hadn't heard them. Well, I was converted and healed and the years passed. And then one day this relative came to see Evelyn and me. And she said, "I'm in trouble."

I said, "What's the matter?"

"Well," she said, "you know, times are bad."

I said, "Yes, but specifically what's wrong?"

She said, "My husband has been out of work for three months."

I said, "No, I didn't know it had been so long." She said, "Do you know that we're down to our last food? We can't even buy gas for our car."

I said, "No, I didn't know it was that bad. Here, take this."

She said, "No, I don't want any money from you. I don't want any money from anybody. I won't take welfare. I'm going to trust God."

But I heard the question in her mind...if I'm trusting God, why has He let me down like this? This was the unspoken question. And how well I understood it, because I have been in that place so many times. And I said, "Do you remember when you gave to me?"

She said, "No."

"Don't you remember leaning over me and saying, "Oral, God is going to heal you?"

"Oh, yes, I remember that."

"Do you realize you gave me the beginning of a new life? Those words caused me to believe that God cared about me. And through that I turned my life to God, was converted, and healed. You realize what a gift you gave me? That was a seed of faith and you should be expecting miracles from it."

And she said, "Well, I don't believe that I should expect anything back from what I give. I've never been taught that. I've always been taught just to give and not to expect anything back."

I said, "Have you ever planted flower seeds?"

She said, "Yes."

“Did you plant the seed, expecting it to multiply back?”

“Well, of course.”

“Well, then, don’t you realize your giving is a seed? God will return it but you won’t recognize it if you aren’t expecting. It’ll pass you by and you’ll wonder where God is.”

She said, “That’s how I feel now. I wonder where God is. I wish I had something to give.”

I said, “You’ve already given a lot. You have two problems and here they are. One, you don’t know who your Source is.”

“Oh,” she said, “I trust in God.”

I said, “Sure you do, but you don’t know He’s your Source right now. And the second thing that’s wrong is you’re not expecting a miracle from the seed you’ve already planted.” Well, the conversation ended and she left.

In a few days she came back carrying two worn one-dollar bills. As she handed them to me, she said, “Here, Oral, put this in God’s work.”

I said to her, “How much money do you have?” She said, “Two dollars.”

I said, “You know I can’t take them.”

She said, “Oral Roberts, I’m not giving you two dollars. I’m giving them to God. If you don’t want them, give them back to me, and I’ll put them somewhere else. I’ve thought about what you said. I have thought about the widow of Zarephath. You said to give out of my need and I’ve done what you said. Now you’re turning me down.”

I said, “Give me the money.” I tell you, I can remember the feeling that swept through me when I held those two worn dollars in my hand, knowing they were the last she had. I wanted to give them back and add to them real quick. But I couldn’t do it.

She looked at me and said, “You told me to make God my Source. You told me to give. You told me to expect miracles. That’s what I’m going to do.” And she walked out.

Evelyn and I talked it over. We prayed. Not long after, she came back — her face beaming.

She just started in right there at the door. “Listen to me. A contractor called my husband and said, “Come to work. I’ve got a year’s work for you and I may take you on permanently after that.”

Her husband is a carpenter. She went on, “You know there’s no work. No buildings are going up in this town. And I’ve been offered a job, the best job I’ve ever had in my life.” Then she said, “Something more important than that is happening. I know who my Source is.”

This happened fifteen years ago to my sister, Mrs. Jewel Faust of Tulsa, Oklahoma. This is a true story. My sister came to a point in her life where she knew — she understood. She understood. The widow of Zarephath said, “Now I know. I know that the words in the mouth of God’s prophet are the truth.”

Do you know the truth? Do you know the rhythm of faith, how to get into it, how to give of yourself and expect God to intervene? How to trust Him and not let your trust be put in anything or anybody besides God? To give God your best and then expect His best?

Prayer

What is your need? I want you to wrap your arms around yourself and let me pray with you. Let me pray that God will open your eyes and let you see that God is your Source. Let me pray that God will show you how to expect miracles.

Father, in the name of Your Son Jesus, my Lord and Savior, I ask You for many miracles. I ask You for them.

And now I pray for you. I pray that Jesus Christ will stretch out His hand and touch you. I pray you will feel the sensation of His presence and there will dawn upon you an understanding that God is real, that God is in the NOW, God is your Source...your Source of total supply...that God is going to work miracles in your life. He’s going to start now.

Through Jesus Christ I pray, I believe, and I expect many miracles in your life. Amen and amen.

Chapter 3, How To Receive The Miracle That Will Meet Your Needs

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: St. Luke 5:1-11

Wouldn't you like to throw over your net into God's plenty and see it filled to overflowing?

Wouldn't you like to find God's depth for your problem and then see the miracle-working, life-changing power of Jesus Christ attack that problem until it's wiped out of your life?

Wouldn't you like to wake up in the morning and know that the whole day is as fresh as the morning dew, the whole day is an open book, a clean page?

Wouldn't you like to face your past failures and know they could be blotted out? There are millions of people in this world who are dragged backwards every day of their lives because of past defeats. There are people who feel the dead weight of a previous error so that they can't go forward because of the backward pull of that defeat. There are people who do not know they can take even one step forward in life because they don't know the miracle-working power of God exists. They don't know that the essential nature of God is to bring His miracles into each of our lives. They don't know God cares. They don't even know He exists. And you and I, those of us who believe in Jesus Christ, often forget WHO we belong to. We forget the nature of God and we forget that...

God Is In The Business Of Meeting Us At The Point Of Our Need

Here our Lord Jesus Christ comes on the job of the fishermen.

He comes on the job where they have failed. He invades the arena where they have tried and failed.

He walks up to them while they are mending their nets and grumbling, "Why didn't we catch any fish last night? We've spent our lifetime making a living like this. We know all there is to know about fishing. We've toiled all night and we've taken nothing. What's wrong with us anyway?"

As they look at the sea of Galilee they think of the fish they should have caught.. .the fish they could have sold to feed their families and earn a living. They see that old sea and it looks forbidding, like an enemy. And they sit there lonely, forlorn, and in misery.

And yet, standing near is the Son of God who can speak to the things He created and cause them to do what He commands. All the fish in the sea obey the voice of Jesus Christ. Jesus can miraculously bless every man's work. Jesus Christ can meet every problem.

It's a moment of destiny.

It's a second when heaven is bending low to kiss the earth.

It is a time when the glory of God is closer than one's fingertips.

And a drama is about to unfold.

The Depth Of Your Giving Is The Depth Of Your Successful Living

The depth of your giving is the depth of your successful living. Now say, the depth of my giving is the depth of my successful living. Say it! **THE DEPTH OF MY GIVING IS THE DEPTH OF MY SUCCESSFUL LIVING.**

What was God's depth? In John 3:16 Jesus Christ himself says of God His Father:

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

What was the depth of God's giving?

His only begotten Son.

The depth of God's giving was His best. The depth of God's giving was giving off the top. The depth of God's giving was His only Son.

The depth of God's giving was giving out of His own need, His need to restore man.. .who had been lost to the devil. God had a need and that need was to recover the human family which had been stolen out of His creative hands. So God gave out of His need, giving His only begotten Son as His depth, and He gave for a desired result.

What was the desired result for which our God gave?

That no one would perish, but that every person would have everlasting life. That's God's desired result.

In 1 Kings 17 is a story of Elijah. Israel was backslidden when Elijah came forth as a prophet of God to lead the nation back. The depth of his giving brought the people back to God. When Elijah's life was threatened, he had the courage to deliver the Word of God. He knew the threat of death hung over his

head. So he offered up his life. He was willing to be killed. He gave of his love because he loved those people. He gave of his love because he loved God. He gave of his time because he wanted to invest it in the service of God for those people.

The depth of Elijah's giving was the giving of himself. He gave out of his need and he gave for a desired result. God supplied his needs because of the seeds of faith he had planted. God supplied his needs through ravens, birds who dropped meat and bread to him in his little cave. Later God sent Elijah to a widow woman in Zarephath. He commanded her to feed Elijah.

There Was A Command Of God To Feed Elijah Because Of The Depth Of His Giving

What was the depth of giving of the widow of Zarephath? She had only one meal left. She was going to cook it for her little son and herself, then eat and die. But Elijah walked up and said, "You go and do as you've said, but first cook a little bit of that meal for me, the prophet of God. The Lord says if you do that, the meal and the cooking oil will not diminish until the day rain comes on the earth. Until then there will be a supernatural invasion of God's multiplying power upon your food. It will not diminish, but rather it will increase day after day and month after month until the rain comes when you'll have natural resources of food. But until the natural forces are able to supply your needs, God will give you supernatural answers."

What was the depth of her giving?

She gave part of the last morsel of bread in her house. This was her depth of giving. She gave out of her own need and she gave for a desired result, that she and her son wouldn't die. The desired result was for the extension of their lives and the life of the prophet of God. That was the depth of the giving of the widow of Zarephath.

What was the depth of the giving of Peter and the fisherfolk who were his partners?

When Jesus preached to the great crowd by the sea of Galilee, He noticed these fishermen washing and mending their nets. He saw the desperate, lonely look upon their faces. He saw the slow way their hands moved. He felt the defeat they were suffering. He walked over and asked them to give.

And what was the depth of that giving? Their capital resources, the commercial fishing boat with which they made their living.

Jesus Christ invaded their lives, their actual resources for life, and He dared to say, “The depth of your giving is to lend Me that boat that I may use it for a higher purpose. Let Me have it. Give it to Me.”

The depth of their giving was to receive His word and give what Jesus asked. Jesus spoke to the people from the boat. When He gave it back, He said, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.”

Jesus Borrowed The Boat Empty But He Gave It Back Full

Whenever God asks you to find your depth of giving, He doesn't do it because He needs it. He doesn't do it to feed himself or to clothe himself or build himself a house. He doesn't do that. God asks something from you and me with which to work His miracles. He asks you and me for seeds of love and faith so that He can multiply His blessings back to us. He asks us for the failures so that He can make successes.

When Jesus Christ was asked to die on the cross He had the promise that God would raise Him from the dead. Do you believe that Jesus Christ could have gone to the cross, suffering and giving up everything, without any hope that He would ever live again? The Bible says He endured the shame of the cross and the suffering for the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). There was a joy set before Christ. God was saying to Him, “If You'll suffer this, if You will go to Calvary and die for the sins of mankind, I'll raise You from the dead and You'll be King of kings and Lord of lords.” That was the promise.

When we find our depth of giving, that depth of giving leads to a net-breaking, boat-sinking load!

It leads to a miracle of God.

It leads to a supply of your needs that you can get met in no other way.

It means the whole resources of heaven are flung against your problem.

Our weapons are not carnal, they are mighty, even to the pulling down of the devil's strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4). You see, when we give something we are not giving it up. We are investing it in the bank of eternity that has never failed to pay a dividend.. .a bank that can never go broke...is always oversupplied...and will never fail to meet our need. Do you believe that?

God is speaking to you now about your depth! The depth of your giving is the depth of your successful living. It's not living with your hand out, saying,

“Give to me” or “What can I get out of this?”

It’s not putting your hand out, expecting something for nothing. It’s not seeing how I can slack off this job and do as little as possible, just enough to get by. But it’s working when the boss is not looking. It’s telling the truth when a lie would be more convenient. It’s being honest even though no one is watching.

The depth of your giving is at the very depth of your vital being, a depth that reaches to the deepest part of your soul where your love and compassion flow. Your better self emerges with every ounce of honesty and integrity to be multiplied into more integrity and more honesty.

There are no shortcuts.

There’s no such thing as something for nothing.

God himself sent His Son.

God didn’t ask something for nothing.

Neither can you or I ask something for nothing.

We must find our depth of giving.

What did Peter do?

He found his depth and gave of it — his boat. He obeyed Jesus — launching out into the sea, actually going against all the rules of fishing. You see, they fished at night rather than during the day. The waters of Galilee are so clear during the day that the fish see the net and swim away. So they fish at night. Jesus is saying, “Fish during the day. It doesn’t make any difference. It’s My miracle that’s going to make them bite anyway. ”

THIS SUPERNATURAL POWER IS RELEASED WHEN WE FIND OUR DEPTH OF GIVING... WHEN WE LEARN HOW TO RELEASE THE BETTER PART OF OURSELVES

Just the other day I dealt with a desperate man who said, “I’m floundering. I’m miserable. I feel like the work I’m in now is leading to a dead end. I’m not fulfilling myself. I don’t even know if I’m doing God’s work. ”

As I listened to him, I picked up his spirit and his feelings. And I also felt the Holy Spirit giving me a word of knowledge for him. I asked him, “Do you think you would be doing God’s work if you were preaching the gospel?” He said, “Of course.”

“Would you if you were engaged in some kind of worthwhile church work?”

“Yes, I’d be doing God’s work.”

“Well, what about feeding hungry people?”

He said, “Yes.”

“Well, your job has to do with feeding people. What you do helps create food for the people of the world. Don’t you realize that God is concerned about the hungry people? That He transformed the loaves and fishes just to feed hungry people? Don’t you know that the job you are doing is also God’s work? The man who comes to your house and hauls the trash away is doing God’s work, because when trash piles up disease strikes. So the man who hauls it away is doing God’s work. The trash hauler is doing God’s work. Besides that, the job doesn’t make the man — the man makes the job. The person makes the job.”

“Well,” he says, “what shall I do?”

I gave him two bits of advice. One of them was —you can guess — to read my new book, *A Daily Guide to Miracles*. In fact, I challenged him. I said, “I double-dare you to read it.”

Now that’s putting it on strong, isn’t it? I said, “Read *A Daily Guide to Miracles*, and say the key for each day over and over to yourself. Find the key of Seed-Faith for each day in that book.”

He promised me he would do it.

Then I said, “When you go to work in the morning, treat your job like you do your wife. When you feel a surge of love for your wife, don’t you feel like stroking? Doesn’t love want to stroke?”

“Yes, of course.”

“How about your children? When you feel a surge of love for your children, don’t you want to get them in your arms? Don’t you want to stroke them and say the words of love that you feel down deep inside?”

He said, “Yes, I do.”

I said, “Why don’t you go to that job with love and stroke your job, stroke it with love? Be thankful you have a job. Do that job better than anybody else has ever done it. Help your boss, make his work easier. Don’t worry about being seen. Just stroke that job with your love. Give it your best and one of these days your boss may be transferred or promoted. They are going to need a special kind of person in that company, and who do you think they are going to think of? They are going to think of the man that does his work with love, stroking it.

That's who they're going to think of."

I hire hundreds and hundreds of men and women. I've done it through the years. Who am I looking for? Someone who will do the job with love, someone that will do it with joy. Someone who just can't wait to do it.. .and there's no part of it that's too low, not if they have to get down on their knees and scrub the floor. What's wrong with scrubbing a floor if you scrub it with love? Somebody's got to scrub the floor. Somebody's got to clean the furniture. Someone's got to repair the automobiles. Someone's got to cook the meals.

What is this caste system in America that says you've got to be a doctor ora lawyer or a preacher or businessman to be somebody in this world? No one can take anything from those professions. But I'll tell you, whatever your job it's important to enter into it with God's love...touch it with the stroke of your concern...do it with all your heart...and do it with joy.

One young man wanted to start his ministry where mine is now. And I said, "Well, I know how you feel because when I started out as a young preacher, I just hurt every time I heard an older preacher preach, especially if he could preach well. I wanted to preach that well myself. And I couldn't to save my neck. And all I could do when my time came was to get up and preach the best I knew how, to put all the love and concern I had into it. "

One day somebody noticed me. People began to pay attention to me. No one was printing anything about me. No one was writing letters to Oral Roberts. Somehow I got carried away with what I was doing. I got so in love with Jesus Christ and so full of Him that I wanted to hug everybody in the world. I wanted to touch people, and the next thing you know there were people writing me that I'd never heard of, people coming for prayer. How they ever knew where I was, I don't know.

I want to tell you two experiences about preachers. I was in one of the larger crusades and had a lot of people to pray for, some slightly ill and some deathly ill. With the desperately ill there are often terrible odors. And you really have to have a feeling for them or you can't do it. Well, that night I was just feeling the anointing of God and praying for people right and left. I saw a dear friend of mine, a preacher, who walked to the car with me. He put his arm around me and said, "Ole buddy, how do you do it?"

I said, "How do I do what?"

"How do you pray for all these people?"

"What do you mean, how do I pray for them? You just saw me."

He said, “I know but I’m called to preach. I’m not called to run around, laying hands on people. You know, when I got up near you, I had to walk away because I couldn’t stand the odor of their illnesses. I just don’t feel like God wants me to stoop down to that level.”

And I said, “Well, what about the doctors? Every doctor I know is willing to face the odors of people’s illness. I never met a doctor who was for sickness. Every doctor I know is against sickness. I never met a doctor who felt he was stooping low when he touched a sick person or operated on him. Do you think doctors have more concern for people than preachers?”

It wasn’t long after that I prayed for a man dying with cancer. The odor of the cancer was so strong that when I leaned over him to pray, I threw up. I found myself going backwards, and I heard myself saying, “God, I can’t do that. I can’t touch that man. I can’t do it.”

God said deep inside me, “Oral Roberts, you say you can’t touch him. You can’t stand the odor. Well, I want to tell you, son, if you’re not willing to touch the man with that odor, you’re not worthy to be My child.”

And in my heart I said, “Wait a minute, Lord.” And I couldn’t get over there fast enough. That is the truth. And not only did I touch him, I threw my arms around him. And I prayed for him like my heart would break. So I found my shortcoming, the same feeling in me, at that moment, of stooping too low to touch a man whose illness had such an odor.

I want to tell you, when I’ve gotten close to God and found my depth of giving, there isn’t anybody I can’t touch. There isn’t anything that I’m not willing to do. But when I haven’t found my depth and I’m not close to God, there are a lot of things I don’t want to do. There are a lot of things I think are beneath me and I’m not willing to stoop to do them. There’s no way a man can stoop like Jesus stooped to touch people without feeling like he’s standing taller than a mountain. So the depth of your giving is the depth of your successful living.

The Depth Of Your Giving Is Your Vulnerability

When you find the depth of your giving, then you become terribly vulnerable.

When you offer love, it is sometimes refused.

When you extend a hand, it’s not always taken.

When you smile, people don’t always smile back.

When you give, sometimes those you help the most resent it the most.

It's like a man who heard that another fellow was talking about him and was very much against him. He said, "Why should that fellow hate me? I've never done anything to him."

We get terribly vulnerable. The moment that Peter found his depth of giving, he was vulnerable. Why? Because now, right out in broad daylight, that great crowd heard Jesus ask for Peter's empty boat. Those watching might have thought, "Peter, not only have you failed to catch any fish, but now you're giving away your boat. If you couldn't catch fish with a boat, what are you going to do without one? Now, you're without a boat."

As far as we know, the crowd was not dismissed that day. It's possible that Jesus held the crowd that day to show them a lesson in Seed-Faith. After Jesus finished His sermon, He said to Peter, "Launch out into the deep and let down your net for a catch."

And his buddies probably thought, "Peter, do you mean you're going out there during the day? You know if you throw your nets out the fish will run. They'll see the net. You know you fish at night, Peter."

You see, Peter is vulnerable. He knows they'll laugh their heads off at him because he's starting to accept the words of Jesus which are contrary to the words of men. Jesus is going against common sense and experience.

Peter says to Jesus, "I've toiled all night and taken nothing. Yet You tell me to launch out into the deep and let down my net for a catch."

You know how you feel if you've ever gone fishing and fished all day or night and caught nothing. You're wet and hungry and you're aggravated.

You know how you feel when you try to put some project over. You do everything you know how but the thing just blows up in your face.

You know how you feel, students, when you study hard for an examination but can't remember a thing when you sit down.

You know how you feel, businessmen, when you've ordered your merchandise, filled your inventories, and put out your advertising but nobody comes to buy.

Your wives know what it is when you've done all you can with your children, but nothing seems to work.

Or maybe you've prayed and done your best to win your parent to Christ

but somehow everything seems to fail. And you say, “Well, if I can’t win my own mother or my own father, why should I try to win anybody else to Christ?”

Or you’ve prepared your lesson and taught your classes. But when it’s over, you feel you haven’t reached one student.

Or as an attorney, you’ve tried a case and blown it.

Or as a doctor, you’ve done everything you know to do, exactly what you did on a similar case. That one was successful and this one is not. You see the life draining out of your patient before your eyes.

Life Has A Way Of Rising Up And Hitting You

People will laugh because you’re vulnerable. When you give, you become vulnerable. A lot of people don’t give because they don’t want to be vulnerable. They don’t want to put themselves in a position where people can laugh at them or where they might fail.

Not long ago, a man needed a great favor from me.. .a business favor that I was able to confer. But do you know what I did wrong? I wasn’t wrong in granting the favor. I was wrong in the conditions I attached to it. I found myself saying, “Sure, I’ll do this for you, providing you do three things for me.” You do these for me and I’ll do this for you.

He couldn’t say no because I was the only man in the world who could do that one business favor for him. He couldn’t turn to anybody else. You know, every now and then you’re able to do something for a person that nobody else in the world can do. What I did wrong was to put conditions on it.

He agreed to the conditions and I felt good. Now I had three problems out of the way.

About a week later, I felt like a sheep-killing dog. Do you know how a sheep-killing dog feels? I’ve heard that statement all my life.. .it means you feel bad. I mean, I was so negative that when I walked in I felt like somebody got up and left. And you know how the Lord begins to deal with your heart. Maybe He doesn’t speak audibly but I understand Him anyway. It’s a real clear language to me. The idea I was getting from God was, “Well, you really helped this man, didn’t you?”

“Yes, Sir, I was able to help him.”

“And you put three conditions on him, didn’t you?” “Yes, Sir, because I have needs myself. You understand that.”

“You preach Seed-Faith but you were not practicing it. You think that’s Seed-Faith?”

In my heart I was saying, “Well, no, I don’t believe it was.”

“Weren’t you making him your source instead of Me?”

“Well, Lord, I guess I hadn’t thought about it, but that is true. I put conditions so this man will guarantee a certain return to me. So now he is god to me. He has become my source.”

When God begins to deal with me like that, it isn’t hard for Him to get close to me because I am deeply concerned about how I respond to life. I saw that I had done wrong. I saw there was no way for God to multiply good seed back to me. Sure, I would get the three things. The man would keep his word to me but I needed a lot more than these three things. I sat down and wrote the man, “Dear friend, I’m wrong. I withdraw those conditions on the favor you asked me. You owe me nothing. I’d like to ask your forgiveness.”

I didn’t know how he’d take the letter. It really didn’t matter because I felt so good. I can’t tell you how good I felt for now I knew I had planted a seed. I knew I had given God something to multiply back. I knew I had given Him something to work with to help me with my needs. I was now finding my depth of giving.

Why had I put conditions on that gift? Because I didn’t trust. I didn’t believe God would multiply it back. I didn’t believe it. I was distrustful. I had doubt. I wasn’t in faith. It was not an act of love. It was an act of cold, calculating business.

In the final analysis, that kind of business relationship will destroy people. As a Seed-Faith Christian, I had been about to take part in it. But now, thank God, I’d written the letter. I’d gotten it off my heart. I wasn’t thinking anymore about that man helping me. In fact, I’d reached the place I didn’t want him to help me. I really hoped he wouldn’t do any of those things so I could stand and see God do them. In my heart I knew if God decided to do them, He’d do them a lot better than that man could. When I attached conditions, I was cheating Oral Roberts. I was denying God the opportunity of multiplying the seed that I had sown.

Six months passed, nothing happened, but I was perfectly happy. I want to testify today that God met each of those three conditions, only about ten times better than that man ever could. I saw them happen one by one and they happened through God.

You see, Jesus says to go the second mile. In the days of Jesus' life on the earth, Roman government ruled over Palestine. As the occupying force, a Roman soldier had the legal right to compel an Israelite to carry his burden for him one mile. Then he could unload it and legally say, "I have discharged my obligation and you cannot force me to carry it another mile." The Roman had to let him go free. But Jesus said, "I say to you, carry it not only one mile, but also carry it two. Carry it one mile because he forces you, then carry it one more because you love him." It was hard for the Israelite to go the second mile because it made him vulnerable. The Roman soldier would laugh at him. The Roman would count it as a sign of weakness. The world has always looked on meekness as weakness, but meekness is God's almighty power. The meekest man in the world was Moses. But if you wanted to go across the Red Sea, you better hitch yourself to his star because he'd roll the water back. If you were in the desert and you needed a drink of water, you better be with Moses because when he spoke or struck the rock the water would come out. If you were out there hungry and you needed quail on toast, you better have him as your chef.

People laugh and mock us when we say, "All right, we will go the extra mile." You know, in our relationship as husband and wife, the devil doesn't want us to go the second mile. He laughs when the husband decides, "Well, I'm going to care more for my wife. I'm going to do more things for my wife. I'm going to express my love more." And the devil says to that husband, "Well, now, she just might laugh at you."

Or, the wife decides that she is going to give more love and then she thinks, "Well, now my husband might wonder why I'm doing that. He might even wonder what I've been doing."

Suppose you help another student study for an exam. Maybe he's laughing at you behind your back, because you worked hard and he didn't. When you find your depth of giving, you have to be willing to be vulnerable to what people say or think. You're a fool, they say.

For example, here's a doctor. He leaves his work, flies off to the jungle, and works with desperately ill people for a month. He pays his own way and receives nothing for his work. A lot of people think he's a fool. Suddenly he's vulnerable.

Once You Have Found Your Depth Of Giving You Can Never Go Back To The Old Life

You can never go back. Simon Peter stands in the boat, he and the other

fisherfolk. Jesus is at the bow of the ship saying, "Steer it this way. Your depth is right out there." When they reach it, He says, "There's the depth. Throw over the net."

They throw over the net. The Creator of fish spoke, "Hit the net, hit the net, hit the net," and the fish struck it from all sides. They filled it, they overflowed it, they broke the net. When they hauled the net in, there were so many fish the boat began to sink.

It was in that net-breaking, boat-sinking load that Peter sees Seed-Faith work.

Do you remember the first time Seed-Faith ever worked for you? I do. Evelyn and I were pastoring a little church. We had given our week's salary hoping to stimulate other members to give to buy a parsonage. Now \$55 a week isn't much but when it's all you've got it's the same as a million dollars. We were joyous in giving it, but when we got home we looked at each other and thought, well, we're a pair of fools. With \$55 we could just barely get through the week. We were just getting by but now we'd given our week's salary. This happened at a Wednesday night prayer meeting.

At 4 O'clock the next morning there was a knock on the door and a man said, "Brother Roberts, Brother Roberts, wake up!" I opened the door and it was a wheat farmer, a member of our church. He had not been in church often and had really gone away from God. Since we had come there, he came once in a while. He said, "I was at the prayer meeting last night."

I didn't remember his being there.

He said, "God touched my heart through what you all did. Here is \$400."

I remember how it felt. Four one-hundred-dollar bills in the hands of a young preacher and his wife. I will never forget it.

Peter was like that. He said, "Look at all these fish, but look at me. God, I'm a sinful man." He brought all his sins to Him, all his weaknesses, all his selfishness, all of the things he had been holding to himself. All of his lack of concern toward other people came flooding up in his mind. He said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

Jesus said, "No, follow Me, and I will make you a fisher of men." Peter, you can't go back. You can't go back to that old life of washing and mending your nets, worn out with failure, with no courage to go out in the morning and try again. You look like an accident going off to happen. You look like you've been eating sauerkraut and crab apples and hangin' on to the weeping willows.

You've got a long mule face. You're like the woman who said she always felt the worst when she felt the best because she knew how bad she was going to feel when she started feeling bad again. Peter, you can't go back to that kind of life. You've come into the miracle of Seed-Faith. You've come into a new dimension. You've come into a new human relationship.

In other words, your relationship with men is going to change. The change from a no-catch of fish to a multiplied miracle-catch of fish is not as great as the change that's going to come over you. Your human relationships are going to change.

One time a preacher said he was going to stop preaching to individuals. He said he couldn't do anything with individuals so he was going to see what he could do with the world. People often say, "Brother Roberts, I love God but I don't like people." It's the people relationships that bug us. It's getting along with husband and wife or child or friend or enemy or teacher or student or businessman or buyer or seller or man or woman. That's the trouble, isn't it?

Our Lord said in Luke 6:38, Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. When we find the depth of our giving, it's going to affect the people around us.

I'm going to tell you a story that touches me deeply. And every time I tell it, I'm a better man. And I hope if everything else is forgotten, you'll remember this story. There were two men, one rich and one poor as far as worldly goods are concerned. The rich man had only one friend, this poor man. The reason he didn't have any other real friends was because he couldn't accept his vulnerability. He didn't know if people liked him or just liked his money. He didn't know if he had any friends, whether they wanted to be around him because he was wealthy or because they liked him. So he quit giving and he became tight. He reached the place where he wouldn't do anything for anybody or give anything to anybody.

But one man, poor in worldly goods, befriended him. And it was evident that he wanted nothing more than friendship from the rich man. One day as they were walking along, it began to rain. They were walking over a little wooden bridge when the poor man slipped and fell into the water. He couldn't swim. In his fear, his first thought was, "Give me a hand."

Then he remembered that his rich friend wouldn't give anything to anybody. So he threw up his hand and said, "Here, take my hand. Here, take mine." And his friend reached down and pulled him out.

Now, what if the poor man hadn't developed a giving way of life? Here, let me give you my hand. He would have drowned that day. This story has had a profound influence upon my life. Jesus was saying, "This onetime miracle of catching fish is not what it's all about. It's more than that. It concerns a way of life." You don't find your depth of giving once and for all. You seek your depth of giving every day. In every relationship ask, "What am I to do? What am I to give?"

If it's an offering being taken for a worthy cause, you ask, "What is my depth of giving?" Then give that amount.

If it's a cause calling for your time, ask what your depth is.

It's a way of life. It's the Christian life. It's becoming a disciple of the Lord. How many of us reach it? Probably none of us reach it to any great extent. But as long as we know that Jesus Christ is saying, "Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," we know that we can make progress. We know we're on the stairsteps and even if we fall back a step we can take that step again. We are on the Stairsteps and we are trying.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT HOW PERFECT YOU ARE, OR THAT YOU DON'T MAKE ANY MISTAKES... CHRISTIANITY IS REACHING OUT WITH YOUR HEART AND TRYING

You are trying. And if you miss it, you ask forgiveness. If someone harms you, you forgive. You may carry a grudge for a day or two, but you soon get it out. You soon get rid of the bitterness. If you're not in love today, you're determined to be in love tomorrow, so that your love is released.

Let me ask you, "What is the biggest problem that you are facing?"

Is it a physical problem?

Is it a problem in your home or family?

Is it a child, a mother, a father?

Is it a marriage?

Is it a job?

Is it a human relationship that isn't working?

Is it the need of money?

Is it the need of a car or a place to live?

Is it your need for soul salvation?

LET ME PRAY WITH YOU. Will you reach out and give of your love by praying for someone else?

Prayer

Father, I come to You in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and I ask for many miracles.

And, dear friend, I pray for you. I pray that Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who gave His own life to teach us to give, I pray that Jesus Christ of Nazareth will help you find your depth of giving. I pray that Jesus Christ will help you learn to give and that you will come into giving out of sheer joy...that you will give because you want to give. You will give of your love, you will give of your heart. I pray that God will multiply that back to you by giving you health and wholeness, salvation, good relationships with people, a supply for your financial needs, a sharper mind, or whatever you need. I pray that Christ will help you like you've never been helped in your life.

Through Jesus Christ I pray, I believe, and I expect many miracles in your life. Amen and amen.

Chapter 4, Are You Rich Toward God?

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: St. Luke 12

A certain man tilled the ground which brought forth plentifully. He said to himself, “Well, now, what am I going to do? I don’t have enough room to store all the harvest from the seed I’ve planted.” As he thought within himself, he said, “I know what I’ll do, I’ll tear down the present barns, which aren’t big enough, and I’ll build much bigger barns to store all my fruit, all my seed, and all my goods. After I’ve stored those big barns and storehouses brimful, then I’m going to say to my soul, ‘You’ve got it made, Soul. You have arrived and you’ve got all these goods laid up for a lot of years ahead of you. Therefore, just take your ease. You can relax now; you can eat and drink and really be merry.’ ”

But at that moment he was interrupted by an unseen force, a voice which spoke from out of the silence, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?” Then the voice added these words, applying them to everyone, “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Let me tell you, that’s powerful stuff. It’s the opposite of Seed-Faith.

Who Is Your Source?

First, we see that this man had no source for his life. God was not in his thoughts. He took no account of the existence of God in heaven or on earth. The rich man behaved as if God never existed, as if He never spoke to a human being, as if He never put His hand upon a person’s life, or as if He had nothing to do with the soil or with a person’s goods or money, time or talent, immortal spirit or soul.

The rich man made himself a source. He looked at himself and said, “What will I do? I’ve been extremely successful, I’ve made all this money, and I’ve got all these goods stored up. Here are more goods and fruits which need to be stored. Well, I’ll just tear down my barns and I’ll build bigger barns and fill them up. Then I’ll say to my soul, ‘Soul, you’ve had a lot of dis-ease in your life, you’ve not been at rest. But now you are going to be at rest. All the troubling of your soul will cease now and your soul will be at peace. You can eat, you can drink, and you can be merry. You can shed your problems. All your deep-seated sorrows, miseries, and torments will cease and you can really be merry. You can have the time of your life.’ ” He was saying in essence that he was his own god,

that he was his own source. He did not think of God as his source. The rich man represents those of us who do not reckon with God as being close to humanity, as taking much interest in a single, solitary human soul.

People say, “Well, God is too busy to be thinking about me. He is up there in His heaven carrying on all the big things of the world. He isn’t concerned whether I have shoes on my feet or food in my stomach or clothes on my back. Why should I ask God about those things?”

I encounter people who feel like this all the time, people who watch me on television and write, “Mr. Roberts, you talk about God as if He takes a hand in everything you do, as if He knows everything about you, and is concerned about every intimate detail of your life.” And I always say, “Well, that’s true.”

And they reply, “Well, how can that be, because God is so busy?”

God Cares About Everything In Your Life — Big And Little

I remember being at a preacher’s convention when one of the speakers related a story about a lost and found shoe buckle. That day while attending the convention a young woman had become upset because she had lost the buckle from one of her new shoes. She prayed, asking God to help her locate the lost shoe buckle and pretty soon she found it. This woman had said to the speaker, “I just praise God that He helped me find my lost shoe buckle!”

One of the men in the audience immediately stood up and said, “You know, I don’t believe in this kind of thing. I think it’s a lot of foolishness. God is too big and too concerned about the things affecting the human race to be concerned about a woman’s lost shoe buckle.”

Then I was asked to comment on this incident. I didn’t know what I was going to say, so I waited a moment till the Spirit brought these words to me, “Well, Jesus Christ was concerned about the taxes that His disciples had to pay. When they had no money for taxes, He told them to catch a fish, open its mouth, take the coin from its mouth, and pay their taxes. If Jesus numbers the very hairs on our head, then surely He’s concerned about a woman’s lost shoe buckle.”

Now the first man who had commented received much applause from the audience, but when I shared this thought they all stood up and cheered. It just showed me that people are hungry to know that God is even concerned about somebody’s lost shoe buckle.

God Is Our Source

First, the rich man had no real understanding that God is our Source, that God takes a hand in our affairs, and that God owns everything. He had no basis upon which to say, “These are my goods and my fruits.” He had no basis to say, “My ground has brought forth plentifully” or to say, “My soul.” All we have comes from God, the Source of our life.

Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give

(Matthew 10:8)

Second, the rich man stored up his seed rather than plant it. After he had received so much, he stopped his plantings. He violated God’s rule. He denied God’s plan, which is given in the eighth chapter of Genesis, that as long as the earth remains there will be seedtime and harvest. Seedtime and harvest. Galatians 6:7 says: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Look through the whole Bible for the word seed. You will find that the word seed is used hundreds of times. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Seed of David that God planted upon the cross, that He gave for our sins. Jesus himself counted His life as a seed that He himself gave. And He told us that if we have faith as a grain of mustard seed, we can say to our mountains, “Be removed,” and they’ll obey us.

Sowing And Reaping

The whole Christian life is based on sowing and reaping the seeds that we have planted. When we enter into a discipleship with the Lord Jesus, then we experience the miracle of Seed-Faith, which will become so powerful that we can speak to the mountain and it will be removed. First you make your faith as a seed and then you speak to your mountain of need. That’s when the mountain of need will be removed, when we have made our faith as a seed we plant.

Beyond Your Own Power

Have you ever thought of the seeds stored up within you? Have you ever thought about the immense amount of love that you possess? Your capability of loving so much, of having the power to love other human beings until they feel the stroke of your love? Have you ever thought about the amount of time you have and how much of that time is available in your life to give, to plant as seed? Have you thought about your concern for others that you may never have fully shown? Have you thought about the talent you have? I know it’s easy to put your talent down and to feel inadequate for some great task. But somehow God has

locked himself up within you, and with God you have access to everything that God is.. .and God is everything. You can take the talents He has given you and go beyond them by touching the hem of His garment and feeling the enriching power of His presence upon your God-given gifts, so that you can actually go beyond your own power.

Do you know there's a story in the Old Testament about a man who ran faster than he could run? His name was Elijah and he outran the fastest Arabian horses in Asia. There were just a few minutes to get from the top of Mt. Carmel to Jezreel before the great rains came. He told Ahab, the king, to get into his chariot, with the fastest horses in Israel. Elijah said, "Well, Ahab, you'd better get with it now. You better start moving." Ahab whipped up his horses and down they went like the wind. A few miles later Elijah flashed by. The Bible tells how Elijah outran Ahab's chariot from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel, a distance of 18 miles. He's the greatest cross-country runner we've ever heard of.

Our Tremendous Treasure

The rich man stopped his plantings, he stopped his giving. Have we stopped our seed-plantings? Have we stored up our God-given abilities and talents? Every minute of time we have is a minute God has given us. What are we doing with that minute?

In 2 Timothy 4:7,8 St. Paul said, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. .. for me and for all those who believe and trust in God. But notice that he had a fight and he fought it. He had a faith and he kept it. He had a course to follow and he completed it. That is, Paul says he didn't stop his plantings. Paul says he didn't stop his givings. He didn't store up all these things within him, but he gave beyond himself. He's like a tree whose seed is carried by the winds, which may blow them a mile away where a new tree will grow. You'll find few seed at the base of a tree because it gives to the winds.

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days (Ecclesiastes 11:1).

Jesus says in Luke 6:38:

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

The Bible teaches us to give outside ourselves. The Bible teaches us to

reach out, to be inclusive — not exclusive; not to be part of a little exclusive club, nor to be a little exclusive person who surrounds himself in his own little pale light of glory. The Bible teaches us to open up, to let out, to let go, to give of ourselves... because we have tremendous treasures within ourselves.

You And God Are A Majority

When I was a little boy growing up and stammering so bad, I never knew I could preach a sermon. I never knew that I could speak without stammering. I didn't know there would ever be a day that I could speak without stammering. I didn't know I could stand before an audience and speak and the words would not stick in my mouth. I didn't know I had a gift of preaching within me. I didn't know that it would be unlocked through the power of God when He healed my lungs filled with tuberculosis. I didn't know God was within me. I always thought of God being way off somewhere in heaven. And you had to call on Him to come down. "Come down here, God. I mean, if You're not too busy up there, come on down here where I live." I didn't know God was within me. I didn't know I didn't have to yell at Him across the hills but could speak quietly to Him in my soul and He would answer back. I didn't know that. I didn't know that I could give of my talents. I didn't know that I had the talent to build a university, and no one would have ever been able to convince me of that.

But you never know until you open up, because when you open up and plant your seed God begins to multiply it back. When you begin to give, God begins to give back. And what you give is added to. Suddenly it's no longer just you and what you possess. It's all God is, and all that God possesses. And you and God become a majority. Say it to yourself: "God and I become a majority."

Take Thine Ease

But this man stopped his plantings and stored them all up. Then he said, "I'll say to my soul, 'Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' " So he said to his soul, "Eat, drink, and be merry, and take thine ease." You know his words were a great admission that his soul was not at ease. And he wanted something desperately to put it at ease — to eat, to drink, and thus be merry.

There are a lot of people who take food into their bodies but who do not really enjoy their food. There are millions of people who have a nervous stomach, who have ulcers of the stomach. There are millions of people who cannot eat a meal, no matter how much food or drink is put before them. The body, spirit, and mind don't have that health-harmony which allows food to satisfy the hunger pangs. I believe that saying grace has something to do with the

way we digest our food. I believe it has a way of setting us down. I believe saying grace is important. It doesn't have to be said aloud. Prayer can be a breath that comes out of our spirit. It can be something that nobody hears but God. The important thing is that it comes from our spirit, a thanksgiving to God, and an asking of a blessing. How foolish it seems to some people to do that. But how wonderful it is to people who know the reality of it!

Although this man's soul was not at ease, he desired to be happy, to be merry in spirit, to be on top, to smile and be filled with joy. He thought that by storing up all of his unplanted seed he could provide security for himself, and from that security he could give his soul ease.

You know your soul is always at the surface. It's never far from your emotions. It's always near your actions. We are so often unaware that the soul is involved when we eat a meal, or when we don't eat. When we laugh, or don't laugh. When we cry, or don't cry. The soul is always right at the surface and there's no way we can put it down and keep it down. It's going to assert itself. We may not understand the assertions of our soul. The soul language may not be intelligible to us, because we are not soul-minded, spiritually-minded, God-minded.

Open Up And Give Out

We're not accustomed to giving of ourselves, our hand is out to get. I tell you, if you were to go behind the prison bars of any typical institution in the world, particularly in the United States, and if you went into the cellblocks and talked to the individuals there, and if they were to level with you — tell you the absolute unvarnished truth — I believe the majority of them would say, "I wanted something for nothing." Or they would say, "I got mad at somebody and I wanted to kill him." Or, "I wanted this and couldn't get it, so I just forced my way in and took it."

I know there are exceptions to that. There may be many innocent people in prison, because we have a system that's not that perfect. But even outside those bars in a free society, there are few free men and free women. We're not free because we've stored up our resources within ourselves. We've held our hand back or we've doubled it into a fist rather than opening it up and extending it.

In the Old Testament the prophet Samuel said, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23). How many times we should, but don't, say a little prayer for someone. We don't sow that

seed of prayer. And, therefore, not many prayers are prayed back for us, because there's nothing for God to multiply. There's no prayer seed to multiply back because we don't pray as a seed we plant. This is the reverse of Seed-Faith and sometimes we can understand better by seeing the opposite principle.

Expect A Miracle

Something else is that the rich man had no expectation for miracles. Now that seems a trite statement, particularly coming from me because I'm the man that talks a lot about expecting a miracle. Maybe someone else said it before I did, I don't know. I'd never read it or heard it from human lips. The first time I heard it was when God spoke in my heart and told me to expect a miracle and to tell people to expect miracles. You can't expect miracles if you don't know God. You have no basis upon which to expect a miracle if you're not planting seeds of faith. There can be no miracle to move that mountain from your life or my life unless, first of all, we plant a seed of faith.

If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove (Matthew 17:20).

You see, when you plant seeds of faith you can expect miracles, the real miracles of the Bible which are the supernatural intervention of God in your life. When the almighty power of God himself is thrown against the enemy that's trying to destroy you. Or when God arrests a disease in your life. Or when God supplies a financial need that you have. Or when God provides the right boyfriend or right girlfriend or right person to marry. Or when God enables you to have a marriage that is right in His sight. Miracles that go beyond the power of mortality into the immortal and heavenly, when God comes down among us to do great and mighty things.

Only God Can Heal

There are millions of people who never think about praying when they get sick or when they get into trouble. They leave God out, they don't expect a miracle, they think they can make it without God. This man who planted his crops and felt that he had done all these great things really didn't think about God. What do I mean by that? He didn't grow a crop. Nobody can grow a crop. Nobody can make a seed grow. Only God can make a seed grow. Only God can cause a crop to multiply. We can plow the ground, we can put the seed in, we can cultivate and hoe but, you know, only God can do the rest.

No doctor can heal anybody. I have never met a doctor who said he

could. He can't heal. He can perform surgery. He can give medicine. He can give a good word. But God has to do the healing. The doctor can put us into a position where God can cause nature to heal our bodies. A prayer cannot heal. My prayers have never healed anybody, and I've never healed anybody. No one else has ever healed anybody. Sometimes our prayers can get a person into a position where the Spirit of God and the human spirit can work together. Then the divine healing process which has been there all the time, begins to work. Prayer doesn't heal. Medicine doesn't heal. Farmers don't grow crops. We don't make anything. We don't even make an automobile. We just put some materials together, steel, copper, and whatever else is put into cars. God is the One who creates and heals.

Really, we don't even have any seed of our own to plant. We can plant only the seeds that God has given us. We can only give of God's love. We can only give of God's concern. We can only give of God's time, because the time I have is the time which God has given me. I can't give my time, I can only give some of God's time. I can expect a miracle only when I believe in God and trust in God and give of myself. Then I can expect a miracle. I know that I am nothing, and can do nothing unless God Almighty does it and lets me do my part through Him. Neither do I believe that you will ever be anything or ever do anything unless you do it out of God's strength. Do you believe that?

The Good Seed Unplanted Becomes The Bad Seed Planted

The second section of this lesson is terribly important. It's this.. .the good seed unplanted becomes the bad seed planted. Do you know what a weed is? It's an unplanted good seed. A weed is something that happens when a good seed is not planted. For when you plant a good seed, a weed can't grow in that place. A weed is the result of a good seed unplanted which becomes a bad seed planted.

The rich man didn't plant his good seeds. He stored them up, didn't he? He didn't trust God for the ease of his life, the ease of his soul, the peace of his soul. He said, "I'll give my soul ease." He left his seeds unplanted and, therefore, they became bad seeds planted. Do you know what happens if you store up the seed? It starts to rot. I know this because I grew up the first part of my life on a farm, and we stored onions and potatoes through the winter. And do you know, our onions would sprout but they wouldn't multiply. The potatoes would sprout but they wouldn't multiply. Not till we planted them. As long as we kept them in the bam or under our house or in a little storage room, they

would sprout but not multiply. In fact, a lot of the time we never got through the winter with our supply, because they rotted or the rats would gnaw at them. Jesus said:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

He's not saying we're not to have our needs met on this earth or that we're not to be prosperous. He's not saying that at all. He's saying that prosperity must not become a god to us. We are not to put our trust in our prosperity.

In Due Season

Bad seed has a due season just like good seed. The Bible says in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." There's a due season for oranges and apples, wheat and corn. They ripen in due season and that can't be rushed.

In a reverse way, bad seed has a due season. This man's bad seed now had its due season. There was an unseen presence, a voice, which said, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Thou Fool!

Listen to the story. He was in his big house when his men brought in the report of the latest crop, which filled the bigger barns that he had completed only a few weeks before. He leaned back, sighed, and a smile came over his face. As he sat there with his hands clasped over his stomach, he began to soul-talk.

"Well, Soul, ole buddy, you've got it made now. You can eat and drink and be merry. You'll never want any clothes that you can't buy, because you've got the money to buy them. You'll never want a car that you can't buy because you can buy any car, any number of cars you want. If this house isn't right, you can just tear it down and build a bigger and better one. If you want to go to Europe or to Asia or to Africa, you can go. You've got it. So, Soul, just stop all of that dis-ease you've had through these years. All that restlessness, where you've been worrying me. You just lie down and be quiet and think about all that food, the best steak and the good drink that you've been wanting. And talk about having a big time! You're going to be merry. You're not going to have to worry

about bad days and bad nights. You're really going to have a great time." He was sitting there indulging in that soul-talk, when there was a sound in the room, a voice speaking and calling him a fool. "Thou fool!"

He whirled around and said, "Who called me a fool?" You don't call a man like that a fool. You may call a poor miserable person who doesn't have anything a fool and get away with it, but you don't call a big successful man a fool.

But the voice kept on talking, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

He slumped and fell to the floor with a thud. His wife rushed in, crying, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" And he could only mumble. Then suddenly he was quiet, and when she put her hand over his heart she felt nothing.

She rushed to the phone to call the doctor and the pastor and they hurried there. When the minister leaned over to say a prayer, God said, "Take your hands off. Take your hands off him. Don't you pray."

After the doctor had made an examination he looked up and said, "He's dead."

Then, as the story goes, the doctor wondered if he should order an autopsy, because apparently there was nothing to cause death. The preacher's thoughts were, "Why do you suppose God wouldn't let me pray for this man? What kind of death is this? This is a strange death. What caused his death?"

Death By Unknown Causes

Are there always known causes for people's death? How can you explain some deaths? Ministers who deal with thousands of people near death have had some strange experiences. On a number of occasions I have felt an unseen and strange power pulling my hand back. I may have said words but there was no prayer, because I couldn't pray. How can I explain that? I cannot. How can doctors explain why a person dies when the autopsy shows no physical cause, nothing one can see or feel or know? Death by unknown causes. People die with and without known physical causes. People die because a bad seed has been planted and that is a good seed not planted. It's exactly like what night is. Night is the absence of day. Darkness is the absence of light. One is the absence of the other.

Fear Or Faith

What is fear? Fear is the absence of faith in God. When I'm afraid, I can start working on my fear successfully only by working on my faith and getting myself into a position where I can believe God. When I get my seed planted and my faith working, then my fear starts leaving and my faith grows stronger. I know inside myself that God is working things out.

On the other hand, when something upsets me and I don't get my faith going right I get a streak of fear right down the middle of my stomach. I go to bed but either I cannot sleep or else I wake up as though I'd had no sleep. All day I have a knot in my stomach. I know that God doesn't intend for me or you to live like that. I know that God is a good God. I know that God wants us to be in health and to prosper, even as our soul prospers. That's 3 John 2. I know if we give, God will give to us. I know if we have faith as a seed, we can speak to our mountains. I know that. I also know that I forget it, abuse it, and let things come out of me that shouldn't come out.

I also know there is a devil to help me do those things. I know there's a devil to tempt, to test, and to suggest things. I know that Jesus taught us to resist the devil, so that he would flee from us.

Is It Your Nature To Sting Or To Bless?

I want to share with you a story that has such a powerful impact that I don't think you'll ever forget it. It's about a scorpion and a turtle on the banks of a deep river.

The turde was about to swim across when the scorpion said, "Turde, would you let me ride upon your back?" The turtle said, "No, I can't do that because you would sting me and I would die."

The scorpion said, "Oh, no. No, no, I promise you, I won't sting you. You're my friend. You know I wouldn't sting you. Let me ride upon your back."

And the turtle said, "All right, if you'll promise me you will not sting me, I'll let you ride upon my back." So the scorpion got on the turde's back and the turde plunged into the water. About halfway across, the scorpion stung the turtle.

The turtle said to the scorpion, "Why did you sting me? You promised me that you wouldn't sting me."

The scorpion said, "That's right, I promised. But you see, it's my nature to sting." And they both died.

What are we talking about? We re talking about a way of life, about developing your nature in a certain direction. The nature of the scorpion is such

that it will sting. The turtle could believe all he wanted to that the scorpion wouldn't sting, but, nevertheless, he was stung. We can believe that we can plant bad seed and it won't sting, but it will sting.

Get On God's Side

When we sow the seeds of sin, we die. When we sow bad seeds, we have a bad harvest to reap. The bad that I do to anybody is multiplied and comes back to me. The good that I do to anybody is also multiplied and comes back to me. Both the bad and the good seed have a due season. One has death and one has life. We're not talking about Seed-Faith giving once in a while; we're talking about Seed-Faith living. We're talking about developing Seed-Faith as a way of life, about trying to get into such a rhythm of Seed-Faith living that as we live and breathe we're on God's side. We're on the side of good. We're on the side of loving. We're on the side of being concerned. We're on God's side.

Family Doctor Comments

Doctor: Oral, you said something that got hold of me as a doctor and that is what you said about "the rhythm of life." There's a rhythm in this world and in this life, and if we can get hold of it, I believe that disease could not attack a person. Not if we were in tune with God in every way and if we were a giving person. I believe that somehow this key of giving of yourself is the secret to health. I think if we could get into God's rhythm and in His Spirit that even our cells and cell membranes would get such a protective covering around them that bacteria would be afraid to come. They would say there is no use because this guy is in rhythm with the universe. He is in rhythm with God.

Chapter 5, One Foot On Earth, One Foot In Heaven

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: St. John 12:1-8

This lesson has to do with your life as you live it in this world and as you are going to live it in the world to come. It has to do with the aching in your heart, with your problems and needs, and also with your aspirations and hopes. Then it has to do with life in the other world — whether those problems and needs will continue or whether there'll be greater joys and triumphs — whether you'll live on in torment and misery or whether you'll live on in a new life.

Now there's some tremendously important things in this Seed-Faith lesson. What does it mean for Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, to anoint Jesus with the rarest and costliest perfume and then dry His feet with her beautiful hair? What does it mean for her to give the costliest gift she has, as an anointing for the day of His burial? What does this mean to you and me? What does it say to us NOW? What does it mean for Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, to react like he did? Why did he rebuke Mary? Why did he dislike what she had done? Why did he say:

“Why was not this very costly perfume sold for a large amount of money and the money given to the poor?” Why did he say that? And why did the writer, St. John, add these words as a sort of postscript?

“Not that [Judas] cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.”

Why was that said? Why did Jesus say:

“Let her alone, she's done what she could. She's anointed My body for the burial.”

Is Mary planting a seed of faith on the good side of life, and is Judas planting a seed of evil on the bad side of life? Even more important, from which side of life did Mary give? Was her Seed-Faith given from this side of life or was it given from the spiritual, eternal life of God in Mary? Is it possible to give like that? Is it possible to live with one foot on earth and the other foot in heaven? Is it possible to give in the NOW and also to give as if you were already on the other side? Do you think you might say after death, “I wish that I had given in a certain way while I was on the earth?” What is Jesus trying to say to you and me about our needs and the answers to those needs?

First, I believe that Mary made her gift of Seed-Faith from the other side of life. She was able to transport her thoughts beyond this life, look back, and

say, “This is what I wish I had done, and therefore this is now what I am going to do.”

Mary had been a part of the life of Jesus. She, her sister Martha, and her brother Lazarus, apparently prominent people in the time of Jesus, had opened their home to Christ. They lived near Jerusalem in the little town of Bethany where Jesus often came to spend several days or weeks. Mary would sit at His feet, look up into His face, and drink in the words of Jesus Christ. The truths of the Son of God found an opening in her heart. Martha was troubled and anxious about the material things of life which had a great hold upon her. Although she loved Jesus too, it was kind of a mixed love which had wavered when her brother Lazarus died. Not much is said about Lazarus until Jesus raised him from the dead. Jesus loved all men, but there was a special way in which He loved Lazarus.

A Memorial Forever

Mary, who is believed to be the younger of the two sisters, had been giving of herself to Jesus.. .her time, her home, her devotion. Now in one shining moment she makes a gift of Seed-Faith that transcends all time and eternity, that leaps over the days to Jesus’ burial. And she does something terribly significant, so significant and important that Jesus said what Mary of Bethany did for Jesus Christ would be a memorial to her th. Highout all generations.

Here I am two thousand years later, talking about it. When the gospel is preached all over this world, preachers refer to Mary’s gift as a memorial to her faith in God. In that one shining moment of giving she memorialized herself in the heart of God and in the hearts of millions of people who would live after her, even unto this day. What did she do? She poured a rare and expensive perfume upon the feet of Jesus, drying His feet with her hair, as the fragrance filled the room.

A Liar And A Thief

Why was Mary’s gift different from the gift Judas Iscariot said he would like to make? Judas Iscariot said, “Why wasn’t this sold for a large sum of money and given to the poor?”

Now that’s a wonderful thought, isn’t it? Here is one of the twelve apostles properly concerned about the poor. But St. John says that wasn’t really of concern to Judas: “Not that Judas cared for the poor.” He didn’t care at all. He was a thief who wanted to sell the ointment so that he could steal the money for

his own use. He had his hand out; he wanted something for nothing.

And that's what a thief is. There are a lot of people who don't actually steal but who have the spirit of a thief. I mean, they would steal if they believed they could get by with it. They have the spirit of a thief. Judas didn't care for the poor. He wanted the money. He didn't care anything about the poor because he didn't care anything about Jesus Christ. He didn't care anything about himself. For in the final analysis Judas Iscariot sold Jesus Christ. He betrayed Him into the hands of His enemies for thirty pieces of silver, less than \$50 today.

You see, when people get a love in their heart for money, when they just love money for money's sake, it's not the amount that turns them on. It's just money itself, money as an end in itself.

Idol Worship

When one man who was worth many millions was asked how many more millions he wanted, he replied, "One more."

Another who had great farms was asked, "How long are you going to keep buying farms? How much more land would you like to have?"

He answered, "All the land that borders my farms."

Judas wanted money for his own use, not for the poor. St. John carefully points out that God knows what's in our hearts. He knows why we want what we want and what we want it for. He knows the motivation of our beings.

The End Of A Thief

Judas was a liar, a thief, and a traitor. After he got the thirty pieces of silver for betraying Jesus, it finally dawned upon him that he had shipwrecked his life for money he didn't even want. He saw that once he had it, it couldn't do anything for him. Anything gotten in a wrongful way has no power to satisfy its possessor. When you compromise to get something, you lose what you compromised to get. You keep what you gain when you get it in the right way. Judas Iscariot went back to the chief priests with whom he had bargained for the life of Jesus and begged them to take the money back. And they said, "What is that to us, see thou to that." So he threw down the money, went out and hanged himself.. .and the Bible says his bowels gushed out (Matthew 27:5; Acts 1:18).

Not everybody who lies or steals or betrays dies as horrible a death as Judas. They don't always die like that in the physical way, but all of them die before their death day. All of them die while they're still alive. All of us who do

anything wrong suffer a form of death even before our bodies die. And we ultimately lose whatever we have gotten through wrongdoing.

Do What You Can

When Judas rebuked Mary, Jesus rebuked him and said, “You let her alone. You let Mary alone because she has done what she could.” The implication is — Judas, what have you done? Have you done what you could? You’ve had access to Me for nearly three years. You’ve been one of My chosen twelve apostles. You were selected to be the treasurer. You have been given an office of high honor and respect. You’ve been in charge of the funds for our support and for carrying on the work of God. What have you done, Judas Iscariot? Mary hath done what she could. What she could, she did.

This is a marvelous truth, that you’re not asked to do what anybody else does. You’re asked to do what you can do. When you do what you can do, God looks upon that as the maximum of your giving. Your seed of faith will be multiplied back with as large a harvest as anyone’s...because you have done what you can.

“She hath done what she could,” Jesus said. “She hath anointed My body for the burial.” Notice that Jesus didn’t say she hath anointed My body for death. He said she hath anointed My body for burial.

What is going through Mary’s mind? Mary has followed Him as the Son of God. She has believed in Jesus in the face of public indignation. She has opened her home, her life to Him. She has sat at His feet. She has believed in Him. She has trusted her life to Him. In our language today, Jesus has become the Source of her being, of her life. Through Him she has hope, she expects miracles. She’s seen the miraculous through Him. She has seen Him do wonders that no mortal man ever did. She has seen Him raise the dead.

Raising the dead and resurrection are two different things. Her own brother Lazarus had been raised from the dead, but he would die again. Resurrection is more than being raised from the dead. It is the renewal of your total life — body and soul and spirit reunited forever, so that you will never die again. That she had never seen.

Seed-Faith Giving

Mary had seen the mighty miracles of Jesus. She had poured out her love in acts of giving. That’s what Seed-Faith really is.. .your love made into an act of giving.. .giving that is motivated by the love of God in your heart. That’s what

Seed-Faith giving is.

There's a difference between Seed-Faith giving and Seed-Faith living.

Seed-Faith Living

Seed-Faith living consists of acts of giving which spring from your love and which develop into a way of life.

38

Your whole living experience becomes a Seed-Faith project in which you plant of yourself through your whole life. Seed-Faith living goes beyond mere acts of time. Seed-Faith living becomes your life as a seed of faith to plant. Your life is a poured-out gift. Mary's life is lived in Seed-Faith. .. her home and her life are opened to Jesus. She sits at Jesus' feet and listens.

After Death — What?

Her anointing of Jesus goes beyond life. She's seeing Jesus between death and resurrection, she's seeing Him in His burial. She's seeing Him in His committal to the tomb.

Perhaps the greatest shock is not the death hour of the loved one but the committal of the body to the ground...earth to earth and ashes to ashes and dust to dust. Going into the ground, back into the ground from whence our bodies came when God created us from the dust of the earth. Burial means your loved ones are gone, they're out of sight. You may wander around the cemetery and stand before the marker. You may see the ground under which they lie, but they are gone.

To one who does not believe in Jesus, that is all there is. I remember a beautiful young communist, who was our tour guide in Moscow. Eventually she and I entered into a conversation about God, about Jesus Christ, about life and death. In response to her statement that communists do not believe in eternal life, I said, "Well, ma'am, when you die, what will happen to you?"

A look of apprehension came over her face, she shrugged and said, "Well, Mr. Roberts, when I die, I'll just be dead. That's ail, I'll just be dead."

Then she asked, "Mr. Roberts, when you die what do you think will happen to you?"

I said, "Ma'am, I'm going to rise from the dead. Jesus Christ is going to

give me a resurrection. I'm going to have eternal life. I'm going to live forever."

She looked thoughtful and then very quietly said, "Mr. Roberts, you're a happy man. You're a happy man." I said, "Yes, I am. Because I know that when I die I will live again because Jesus Christ is my Lord."

Beyond This Life

Mary sees beyond this life when she anoints the feet of Jesus. Her act suggests that there's more to death than death. There's more to death than funerals. There's more to death than a grave cut in the hillside. There's more to death than tears. There's more to death than a shroud. There's more to death than final words. There's more to death than a commitment to the ground. There's more to death than that. She's looking for the death of death and for the life of life.

Mary takes the best she has, the choicest seed that she can ever plant. She takes the rarest, most expensive perfume and pours and spills it all without counting the cost, without even remembering what it costs, just knowing it's the best thing in the house. She kneels and dries the feet of Jesus with her hair.

Judas says, "Why do You let her do this, Jesus? That perfume cost a lot of money. Why don't You sell it and give the money to the poor?"

Jesus said, "Judas, you let her alone. She has done what she could. She anointed My body for the burial. She sees something beyond the burial. She sees that I'm going to conquer death, that I'm going to rise, and that she's going to rise to life eternal."

This expression of Seed-Faith, this giving of Mary, this faith in everlasting life is her memorial forever. Jesus is saying that when you give with an eternal purpose, you get an eternal memorial. He says that when you give with a momentary purpose, your memorial doesn't last very long. He says when your giving is not very costly, it doesn't buy very much. He says you get back what you put in. If you give only a small part of yourself, you reap that kind of harvest. If you want a great harvest, give your greatest and your best.

Life After Death

As you receive God's love, let that love flow like water bursting through a dam, like a river overflowing its banks, like rain coming down in sheets arid buckets. Just open up and let the love out, wrap yourself in Jesus Christ, the Source of your existence, the Source of your being, the Source of your total supply.

We give because we love, we love to give, and we expect great miracles. We expect miracles in our lifetime and we expect the greatest miracle of all, to live beyond the grave. I look to the day when Christ shall come in the resurrection, when He shall come in glory and speak to the dead in Christ who will rise from the grave shouting, Hallelujah! I'm looking to the day of the Rapture when Jesus shall call His people and we will leave this earth. We will mount up with wings as eagles to meet Christ in the sky. I look forward to this. I believe I will live forever. I believe there's life beyond death. Do you believe this?

Live In Eternity Now

How you live in this life affects your life forever... now and in eternity. Your integrity and honesty and sincerity is not for the moment; it's a seed planted for eternity. It is much better to fail a test than to cheat to pass. Take the "F," because that you can make up. Cheating leads to more cheating. Lying leads to more lying. Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver, after he had been stealing for a long time. He'd been asking for something for nothing. He'd had his hand out a long time before. He had paved the way for the final act of his own self-destruction. It's better to lose today so that you may gain tomorrow. It's better to lose something in this life in order to gain Christ for eternity and to have everlasting life.

Eternity seems so far away. One day Rebecca said, "Daddy, eternity is not something out yonder. We are already in eternity. Isn't eternity forever and hasn't it always been forever with God?" I had to agree. We're in eternity. We're in it now.

Heaven Or Hell

Every seed of faith you plant is down payment upon the resurrection. Every bad seed you plant is down payment upon hell, upon losing your life forever. All the bodies that die shall be raised from the dead, according to Jesus...some to everlasting shame, some to the joy of the Lord. They'll hear the voice of God and they'll rise. Whether people believe in hell has nothing to do with the fact of hell. Some people like to believe they can step in front of a speeding car and not be hurt. But they will be hurt just the same. There's a lake of fire and there's a hell. Whether anybody believes in it or not, there's a hell. One way I know there's a hell is by the one right here on earth. There's hell everywhere, everywhere you turn there's separation from God...which is what hell is. There's torment. . .which is what hell is. There's weeping and wailing

and gnashing of teeth. I know there's a hell because there's one here.

I know there's a heaven because heaven is here at times. Sometimes heaven gets so close it kisses you and you feel the sunshine of its glory on your face. You know that you know that God is real. You know there's a heaven, because heaven is in your heart. Heaven is a place of peace and you have God's peace in your heart now. Heaven is a place of joy and you have the joy of the Holy Spirit in your heart now. Heaven is life and you have the life of Christ in you now.

Seed-Faith is more than an act of giving from time to time; it must go beyond that to become Seed-Faith living. I must make my life a seed of faith that I plant. Even though I fail and stumble and don't always understand, I must somehow learn to pour out my life as Mary poured out the perfume. No matter how costly it is, I must pour it out.

Sometimes after much traveling and preaching I don't sleep because my body hurts or my mind won't quieten down. One morning at 4 o'clock, having tossed in bed for hours, I finally said, "God, where are You? Where are You, God? Where are You?"

Someone heard me relate that and said, "I'm glad you said that."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Because I say that myself."

Give Yourself

Now you may give yourself in a different way from my way. When you take a stand for Christ, something may come against you that hurts. That's pouring your life out. That's coming to grips with your death and resurrection. That's coming to grips with what Seed-Faith living really is — a continual opening up of yourself. The most important thing is coming to the place of giving, no matter what the cost, whether we live or die.

In the book of Esther the Jew, Mordecai, uncle of the young Queen Esther, tells her to beg her husband, the King of Persia, to lift the death ban laid upon all the Jews in the kingdom. Although Esther was a Jewess herself, she thought she would escape because she was queen. Mordecai said, "Don't believe you'll escape because you are the queen. You won't. Who knows but that you may have come to the kingdom for just such a time as this." She replied that the law of Persia required that one be bidden to come to the king. If she were to go in without his bidding, then she could be put to death. Finally, she realizes that

the lives of thousands of her people are at stake, as well as her own. Esther asks for prayer and fasting. Then she says, “Whether I live or whether I die, I’ll go in. I’ll go in.”

I think that’s where you have to come. She saw that by her action many lives would be saved, including her own. Seed-Faith is important not only because it affects other people favorably, but also because it affects you favorably. Seed-Faith helps meet somebody else’s need, as well as meeting your own needs.

A Seed Of Faith

Let me tell you something very personal. The first crusade Evelyn and I ever conducted in the big tent was in June 1948, in Durham, North Carolina. We’d never used the tent, which seated several thousand people. We had used nearly all of our money. I hired men to help me put up the tent. I tried to tell them how to raise it, but it wasn’t long before we realized we couldn’t raise the tent.

The ads were already in the paper but we didn’t have the tent up. And the next day we didn’t have the tent up. And the next day. By then we had run out of money. I went to the motel and said, “Evelyn, how much money do we have in this world?”

She answered, “\$90.”

I said, “Give it to me. I have to have it to hire men to get this tent up.”

She gave it to me, I spent it, but we still didn’t have the tent up any farther than just above my head. I was walking around inside that tent and it felt like it was 130 degrees. Sweat was pouring down my body when I finally fell on my knees and acted like a real human being. I began to bawl. I didn’t cry, I mean, I bawled.

A man walked over and said, “Brother Roberts, what are you bawling about?”

I said, “Brother, I can’t get the tent up and I’m out of money. I’m called to preach, to win the lost, to pray for the healing of the sick, and I can’t get the tent up. I don’t have any money and I’m at the end.”

He said, “Preacher, you just stay right there.”

He passed his hat among the workers and rushed back, saying, “I’ve got a few dollars here. I’ll be right back. ”

But he wasn't back for three or four hours. Then he came in with a little scrawny dried-up kind of man and said, "Preacher, this man used to put up circus tents and he can put up this tent."

I looked at that little dried-up fellow and thought, "Brother, you'll never get the tent up." He didn't even come to my shoulder. They told me to move away, sit down, and watch them.

And that old tent started going up. Finally it was up. Even though we were late we announced it again and the people came. The man who had found the circus man was a big fellow, about 6'4", with a huge smile. He came on that opening night and said, "Now we're going to see God heal the people. We're going to see God do it." And we did see God do it. We had 800 people the first night and 9,000 on the last night, which was three weeks later.

There was a school for the deaf near Durham, and during that crusade God opened the ears of those little deaf children. People in the audience cried like babies and so did I, because I'd never seen that kind of miracle. And the whole city was stirred. North Carolina was stirred. Whenever I go back to North Carolina now there are enormous crowds.

It's amazing what that one crusade in 1948 did to a state, and what it did to me. From that moment on, this ministry really blossomed. Whenever Evelyn and I were on the East Coast the man who had helped me would come to the crusade, always talking about miracles, about what God was doing, about how God was blessing him. Somehow that man reminds me right now of Mary, when she took that bottle of perfume and poured it in love upon Jesus' feet, anointing Him for His burial. My friend had that kind of spirit because he was looking for the healing of the people. I bless that man because maybe without him I wouldn't be here. Maybe we never would have gotten the tent up. You talk about a seed of faith... he really planted one to meet my need!

Prayer

Dear Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord, I pray for many miracles. And now, dear friend, I pray that Jesus of Nazareth will just flood your soul with His love. You'll feel that love gushing up from the deepest part of your being. You'll feel like you want to love someone, to give to someone. You will know that beyond this life there is a resurrection and that in this life you will see resurrection. . .in healing, in answers to prayer. You will see resurrection when God changes you, when God makes a way for you where there is no way. And I pray that God will lift you up. I pray that God will heal you from the crown of

your head to the soles of your feet. I pray that God will put your finances in order, that God will put your family in order, that God will put your life in order. I pray that God will give you a new lease on life and fill you full of His Spirit now and forever. Through Jesus Christ, I pray, I believe, and I expect many miracles in your life. Amen and amen.

Chapter 6, Seed-Faith Living In Our Human Relationships

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: Philemon 1

How would you feel if your relationships with other people, particularly with someone you love, had deteriorated so much that you couldn't even converse anymore? Maybe you're already there with somebody. What if you could claim no rights as your very own? What if you felt you were not being treated like a real human being? What if people tried to make you feel like you were a piece of property and once in a while you even felt you were? How would you feel if you became so angry, so full of bitterness, that you began to steal and to become involved in violence? How do you think you would feel? What would you do?

Bruised And Battered Relationships

What is the answer when relationships get so bad it seems like you're forever separated and all you can do is speak ugly words or obscenities toward another? Or you try to hide or you're full of bitterness, not only toward yourself but toward the whole world. These are serious questions, and there comes a time when everyone in the whole world, including myself, asks them.

Now when we talk about the miracle of Seed-Faith, we usually think about putting in some money for the Lord to multiply that money back. What about problems and relationships that have nothing to do with money? How can Seed-Faith giving or Seed-Faith living work miracles in human relationships which have deteriorated, sometimes beyond human repair or human recovery? In this lesson I'm going into something far deeper than money. I'm going into those areas of life where your relationships may be so bruised and battered that you're not the same human being anymore. You become a moral cripple, a spiritual cripple, or an emotional cripple. You become a spiritual thief or a moral thief. You're broken in some way. How does Seed-Faith work in broken relationships?

Master And Slave

Well, let's read a book in the Bible that deals with the issues of your life in the NOW. We're going to find Christ's answer, the miracle of Seed-Faith, for our human relationships. St. Paul wrote the book of Philemon. Philemon was a Roman citizen. He owned a slave named Onesimus. The slave had robbed his

master and fled to Rome. There Onesimus meets Paul and is won to Christ. He finds a new freedom and is now willing to go back to the old relationship he had hated so much that he had really wanted to kill his master. Now he wants to go back to heal this relationship. He wants something better, something really right.

A Letter From Paul

Paul writes this letter to ask Philemon to take back the slave who's done him a great wrong. Paul knows the problems involved. He knows that Philemon, the former master, has legal rights and could even have Onesimus put to death. In this letter Paul pleads for this young man's life. I want you to watch for the Seed-Faith concepts in this letter. Paul starts off by saying, Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ... Now it takes a pretty tough person to say, "This is who I am, a prisoner. And I'm writing you this letter from jail." But Paul says, "I'm a prisoner of Jesus Christ." He never says he is Rome's prisoner, though he was a prisoner in Rome. He says he is Christ's prisoner. Paul, a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and Timothy our brother, unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer... Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother (Philemon 1:1-7).

Now watch Paul as he starts his Seed-Faith project. Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ to enjoin thee that which is convenient, Yet for love's sake I rather beseech thee. (I really cry out to you, brother.) Being such an one as Paul the aged. (I'm not young anymore, I'm not the young evangelist who was at your house, who won you to Christ years ago, Philemon. I'm old now and I'm in jail. I'm now a prisoner of Jesus Christ.) I beseech thee for my son Onesimus. He knew when he mentioned the name, Onesimus, Philemon might see red, might be upset. So he calls Onesimus his son to sort of soften the blow. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds. (Whom I have led to Christ, even though I am in chains myself.) Which in time past was to thee unprofitable. By the way, Onesimus' name means profitable, and St. Paul says in times past he was unprofitable, but now he's profitable. He's got the meaning of his name back. But now (he's) profitable to thee and to me: Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels: Whom I would have retained with me, that in thy stead he might have ministered

unto me in the bonds of the gospel.

He's saying, "Philemon, maybe you ought to be here standing by me. Really I would have liked to keep this young fellow by my side to minister to me in your place, But without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit should not be as it were of necessity, but willingly." Now what Paul is asking his friend to do is not to be done as a debt owed but as a seed sown. That's really the way I interpret it. Paul is not requiring him to do this as something owed, but he's asking Philemon to do it willingly. For perhaps (Onesimus) therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord? If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself.

(Not as a servant, but as a brother. And finally receive him as you would me.) If he hath wronged thee...(Paul could just hear Philemon say, "If he's wronged me...why he robbed me!") If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account; I Paul have written it with mine own hand, I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how thou owest unto me even thine own self besides. ("Philemon, I won't remind you of that.")

You know our classes in psychology and communication here at ORU could really learn from Paul as he starts boring in and settling an issue..."My precious brother; how I love you, Philemon." He's moving in now. "I've written this with my own hand," he says, "and I'll pay whatever he owes you. I'll pay. One thing, however, I won't do is tell you how much you owe me."

Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh (me) in the Lord.

Having confidence in thy obedience I wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say.

Now that's believing the best in people, isn't it? That's holding up the beautiful thought of doing the right thing and believing that the person is going to act that way. Very different from saying, "Well, I know you won't do it." Paul says, "I just know you're going to do it; in fact, I know you'll do more than I say."

But withal prepare me also a lodging. In other words, he's saying, "By the way I'm going to come by and check on you and see how this comes out. " Fori trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you...The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Did you enjoy that little book? I think it's a star in the New Testament. I've loved it for years. I've preached from it in our crusades, but I've never delivered the Seed-Faith message I'm going to share with you now.

We Are One In Christ

As a slave to a Roman citizen, Onesimus had no legal rights. He could not own property; he could not travel; he couldn't even worship unless his master permitted him to worship. There were millions of slaves throughout the Roman Empire which was in power during the lifetime of our Lord and St. Paul. Christ had proclaimed that He had come to set the captives free. In Christ, St. Paul said, there is neither bond nor free, we're all one in Jesus Christ. That's in Galatians 3:28. There's neither slave nor free, we are one in Christ.

Now that was a revolutionary idea to be introduced into a slave system. Many Christians who owned slaves did treat them as members of their family. Master and slave worshiped and took Holy Communion together, ate together, and worked together. They were one in Christ.

Agape

Philemon had accepted Christ under St. Paul and was practicing the Christian faith in his life. Onesimus, the slave, was not a Christian, so he couldn't understand the new meaning of love that Christians were introducing into the world.

Agape, the Greek word for love, means to love someone without regard to his worth. To love him whether he's slave or free, just to love him without expecting anything in return. There is a different Greek word for erotic love, and another one for brotherly love. Agape, which means love without regard to the worth of the object, is what God did when He so loved the world — a mean, wicked, hell-bent world — that He gave His only begotten Son. He loved a worthless world. He loved the world without regard to its worth. He loved it because He believed He could bring worth into the world.

Agape, the great word of the new Christian faith, could not be understood by a man like Onesimus. How could Onesimus relate to a man who owned him? Yet Philemon had accepted Christ and was trying to practice his faith through love, love for his slave.

Onesimus could not stand it. Full of bitterness and anger he threw off his bonds one day. He did a most dangerous thing for a slave to do in the Roman Empire — he robbed his master. Then he fled to Rome, the greatest city of the

world. It was filled with millions of people and Onesimus could be inconspicuous there. He spent several weeks or possibly months in Rome.

The Wrong Source

Onesimus had changed his source from dependence upon his master to dependence upon his stolen money. I can just imagine what happened next. His source was wrong, his source ran out, and his life fell apart. Then one day in Rome he heard the name Paul, which instantly brought back old memories. Why, he remembered many times ministering to St. Paul's needs while he was a guest in his master's home back in Colosse. And there he'd seen that Paul was an unusual man, that Paul talked about giving and loving. And he had believed Paul. Probably Paul was the only man in the world that Onesimus did have confidence in.

When you've been brutalized as a race or brutalized as an individual, it's difficult to believe in anybody. Even here in America it's difficult for those who have been brutalized to believe in the sincerity of other people's words — to believe they are wanted as a human being. To believe that they are accepted, regardless of their station in life or the color of their skin. Probably the most difficult thing in the world is to believe in anybody after you've been brutalized. Yet Onesimus had believed Paul's words, and Paul had become a symbol to this young man, a symbol that something can be done. When Onesimus learned that Paul was in prison, he made his way there. I can see him sobbing out his story to Paul who begins leading him to Christ.

Now let's talk about Paul. Paul says he is a prisoner, a prisoner of Jesus Christ. Yet he's also a prisoner of Rome. It all began back in Jerusalem, where he was arrested in the Jewish temple under false charges. He was imprisoned, mobbed, and almost killed, and then taken to Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast, where he was a prisoner for two years. He defended himself before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa. Finally Paul appealed his case to Rome, which he was entitled to do as a Roman citizen.

Every Roman citizen, wherever he was on the earth, if brought to trial and dissatisfied with the way the trial was being conducted, could make an appeal. It's similar to our being able to appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States. So on the basis of his Roman citizenship, Paul appealed his case to Rome. There, he was imprisoned for another two years.

A Prisoner Of Jesus Christ

Paul never did admit, even while he was in a Roman jail cell, that he was a prisoner of Caesar or of Rome. He did not admit that men were able to imprison him, though chains were on his ankles and wrists. He would not agree that they were responsible for his being in prison. He said, "I'm a prisoner of Jesus Christ." He said, "I'm here because of my Savior."

Now that's a whole new kind of world to live in. To Say:

"I don't agree with this world.

I don't belong to this world.

I'm not the property of any nation or group or individual.

I belong to God.

I'm God's.

My body and spirit belong to God."

Paul is saying, "I'm not a prisoner of Rome, though it looks like I am because Rome's jail is all around me and I've got its chains upon my body. I can't walk around anymore. I've lost my physical freedom. But I'm really here because of Jesus Christ. I'm here because He wanted me here and He wanted me here for a purpose. He wanted to use my life for the glory of God. That's why I'm here."

Whose Work Are You Doing?

Not very long ago a very well-known minister, his wife, and I were talking about the work of the Lord going on throughout the world. They shared their dreams with me, the work that God had called them to do in different parts of the earth. Then he said, "Brother Roberts, I want to ask you a question. Everywhere I go people seem to think that you just sit in your office and dream up new projects, back-breaking financial projects. By the time you get one done, you've dreamed up another. And they just think that all you do is sit in your office and dream up these big projects. I want to ask if that's really so?"

I said, "No, it isn't true. I don't dream up anything. I never have. I wanted to once. I tried to and couldn't. When I was a young man I had my own dreams and they certainly didn't include God and His dreams. They were mine. But I lost those dreams. I came to Christ and He spoke to my heart. Since then, I don't do anything on my own. I don't have any personal rights anymore. I don't do anything until God speaks to me. And I don't consult with any living human being, not even my wife. I may afterward, but never before.

“That is the way I am and the way I’m led. I didn’t ask God to give me a healing ministry. I didn’t ask Him for anything. I didn’t choose Him at all. He chose me. I wouldn’t have chosen Him. I certainly wouldn’t have chosen the healing ministry, the hardest ministry in the world. It may be the greatest, but it’s the hardest. Ask any minister who prays for the sick or any doctor who treats the sick, ask anybody who deals with the sick all the time. I’ve been a sick man myself, and I know how difficult it was for anyone to deal with me when I was sick.

“I never asked to build a university. I didn’t conceive it. As a 17-year-old boy I wasn’t capable of conceiving a university like this. God put this in my mind. God gave me His dream and told me to build Him a university. I didn’t ask God to let me build Him a medical school. I’d be out of my mind to ask Him for that, because it’s the toughest assignment of all. God spoke in my heart. God told me to build graduate schools of medicine, dentistry, law, theology, and business. I didn’t choose these. I didn’t ask anybody. God spoke them in my heart. And so I’m building for Him. I’m carrying out His dreams.”

Your Dreams Or God’s?

Now why am I saying this? Because when Onesimus came to St. Paul in prison, Onesimus had no legal rights. Paul did. At that moment Onesimus had personal rights, but Paul had none. Paul had given up his personal rights to Jesus Christ. The very reason he was in prison was because he had no personal rights. He didn’t have to serve God. He didn’t have to preach the gospel. He didn’t have to stand up and give his witness in the temple in Jerusalem. He didn’t have to travel for God. He didn’t have to love anybody. Nobody forced him to love anybody. He had given up all personal rights to himself and accepted Gods authority, even as Jesus Christ gave up all His personal rights to the Father and said, “Not my will, but thine be done.”

Let me tell you, I’m talking about something I don’t fully understand, but I want to. Can you get further in this life carrying out God’s dreams, or get further in this life carrying out your own private dreams? Can you dream a dream and be glad when it comes true?

Have you ever gotten something you thought you wanted and then not wanted it after you got it? It’s like the little boy playing with a pet snake. When he put his hand in the cage, the snake bit him. Oh, the snake was pretty, but not so pretty once his hand touched the snake. And I’ve been there. I’ve reached for things that I really wanted, things that had nothing to do with God. I didn’t ask,

“God, do You want me to have this?” I didn’t open my Bible to study what the Bible teaches. I didn’t give up my personal rights or let God take authority over my life. I took what I wanted. I’ve done that from time to time, and since I’ve been a Christian, too. But every time I’ve gotten something that way, I haven’t really wanted it. In fact, at times I have thrown it away, fled from it.. .because it never works.

Whose dreams are better? God’s or mine? God’s or yours? Is there any real freedom at all outside God? That’s a philosophical question great people have been arguing over throughout the ages. You and I are face-to-face with that question in our society today, even though we have passed laws to banish slavery and bring in equality. But I can tell you right now that unless you dream God’s dreams and get under God’s authority and learn how to love and give, nothing will work. It’s never going to work, not in this world.

Some people think they can find the formula to success or freedom outside God, but they can’t. People wear certain colors or say certain words or knock on wood, believing that those things will bring them luck. They will only lead you into superstition.

Bound Or Free

Between Onesimus, the so-called free man, and Paul, the so-called prisoner, there’s a world of difference.

Because of his relationship with Philemon, Onesimus felt he didn’t have life. He thought he would feel free when he was no longer a slave, when he was free to walk in Rome with money jangling in his pocket. Then he thought he would feel free, not bound.

Do you think Paul was a prisoner of Rome? He said he wasn’t. Paul could say, “It’s true I’m a prisoner. It’s true I can’t walk throughout Rome as I want to walk. I can’t travel throughout the Empire. I can’t go from town to town and preach anymore. It’s true. But I’m a free man. I have freedom. But you, Onesimus, don’t have freedom. You look like you’re free, but you’re not. You’ve got money and you think that you’ve got the price. But that’s not the price that will buy either life or freedom. It’s true I don’t have any money right now and I can’t go out and buy what you can buy. But I can buy what you cannot buy. And I can buy it with my love.”

What Is Freedom?

So what is freedom? Well, going beyond the physical, freedom has a lot

of meanings. I am free when I am not jealous of someone or covetous of something. Freedom is not wanting to be a part of something wrong. Freedom is refusing to be a part of hurting or lying or stealing. Freedom is not desiring someone else's wife or husband. Freedom is being free from sin. And you can not buy the real kind of freedom.

Rich Or Poor?

This reminds me of the poor young man who fell in love with a rich and beautiful girl. The girl's family felt that because their backgrounds were dissimilar, the marriage wouldn't work out. So they tried to have the marriage annulled. After the judge heard the girl's parents so vehemently give their reasons for annulment, he called the young couple to the bench and said, "Young people, can you tell me why I should not annul your marriage?" Almost simultaneously they replied, "Well, judge, we can give you a wonderful reason. We love each other." He said, "Yes, you love each other. But what's going to happen when you don't have a place to live or you don't have food? How are you going to sustain each other, as poor as you are?"

The young man drew himself up and said, "Judge, we're not poor. We just don't have any money."

The judge said, "You know, this marriage is going to make it and I'm not going to annul it."

Oh, I know a lot of people who have money, but they're poor. O brother, they're poor, they're poor. Some of them might wipe their feet on you but they wouldn't shake your hand and smile at you and call you brother. I know some poor people, too, who are like that. I know people both with and without a lot of money who love the Lord and practice Seed-Faith giving and living. It's not the amount of money you have or don't have. It's what you have inside your heart. Do you believe that?

Who Is Free?

I can just see Paul and Onesimus talking to each other. One of them is a prisoner, the other is supposedly a free man. Onesimus has thrown off his bonds. But which one is the prisoner? Which is the free man? It isn't long until Onesimus realizes for the first time that the Christian faith is real, that it is the answer. He sees that he can't buy his freedom with violence. He begins to realize there is another kind of freedom that doesn't depend upon where you are physically. It depends upon what you are on the inside. Jesus Christ lived under

His Fathers will, accepted God's authority over His life and death...Jesus, the most completely free man.

Let me say this. In the game of checkers each player tries to get his checkers to the opposite side quicker than the other player. Well, the little piece of wood called a checker is really moved about by the players. I've discovered that when I really let Christ have my life, I'm almost like that checker. The only freedom I really have is the freedom to obey.

Obedience Is A Big Word To Me

I believe that when God tells you to do something, you should OBEY. I don't always obey perfectly, but I try because obedience is a big word to me. Say it to yourself. OBEDIENCE IS A BIG WORD TO ME. There are many times I feel that I am being moved about by God, as though I had no choice. I know I have a choice. I know that, theoretically speaking, I can say no to God. But you reach a point with Him when His dreams are your dreams. You want Him to move you about, even though sometimes it hurts your pride because you want to have your own way. Yet, when it gets down to the nitty-gritty, it's obedience. I've lived in obedience and I've lived in disobedience. I've lived on both sides and I can tell you, obedience is better by far than disobedience. If you want to be miserable, be disobedient to God.

A young man who's lying on a hospital bed tonight could tell you what it feels like to disobey God. He negotiated a business deal of over a million dollars, and to make a million dollars was what he'd dreamed of since he was a little boy. He's lying on a hospital bed and only one person comes to visit him, only one. Not even his parents or his closest friends are there. He's lying there, a millionaire before he's 25 years of age. I got word last week that he is a most unhappy young man — so miserable that it's virtually impossible for the doctors to help him. He's found that his million dollars can't buy him healing, because in his spirit he's disobedient to God. He became disobedient to his parents. He became disobedient to authority. He made his deal but he disobeyed the Lord.

The Lord doesn't make anybody obey Him. He sometimes makes you willing but He doesn't make you obey Him. This young man is miserable and he may not make it. I am praying for this young man, because I want him to make it. We're praying that he'll be willing to become obedient and live under God's authority. Once you accept it, God's authority is so precious. Once I accept it, it's really not a problem at all. The big problem is believing that God is the Source of our lives.

Jesus Changes Lives

As Paul leads Onesimus to Christ, a great light and freedom comes surging up inside him. I know how he felt. I know the night when Christ came into my heart. I know what I felt. I felt the Spirit of God coming into my limbs and up into my being, into my heart. I thought I would explode. My soul was on fire with God's love. I wanted to love everybody. Everyone looked different, even my mother and father. As a young man I had run away from them. Oh, I just wanted to take them in my arms, and I did. We were crying and laughing and praising God. I mean, Christ really came into my life.

So I know how Onesimus felt.

I know when the light came,
he could see.

I know when freedom came, he could breathe deeply.

I know when new birth came, he could live.

I know when new understanding came, he suddenly saw everything in a different light.

I know, because that's how I felt and that's how everybody feels when Jesus changes their lives.

Dearly Beloved Friend

Probably Paul takes some time to see if Onesimus really is a new creature before he writes a letter. It's the one I call the Seed-Faith letter.

Dear Philemon, my dearly beloved friend. Here in the prison of Rome I have met your runaway servant. I have led him to Christ. I know he stole from you. I know he ran away. He found his way to my prison and he discovered what life is all about. Christ has taken control of his life and now I want you to take him back. Dear brother, make your love an act of giving and your act of giving an act of living. I want you to regard him no longer as a servant but as a dear beloved brother. Receive Onesimus as you would receive me, Paul.

Seed-Faith Projects

Paul asks Philemon to receive his former slave as a dearly beloved brother. Think about how you treat a dearly beloved brother or sister. Or about how you would treat an honored and beloved apostle like Paul. That's the Seed-Faith project Paul gives Philemon. Paul promises to repay any money stolen by

Onesimus. He also reminds Philemon of his spiritual debt to Paul, as he had introduced him to Jesus who had changed his life.

Then Paul says to Onesimus, “Now here’s your Seed-Faith project. I’ve written this letter by hand. Take it, and go back to Philemon.” Now that’s a tough assignment.

“You mean, go back to the man who once owned me?”

“Yes.”

“You want me to go back to the man I stole from?”

“Yes.”

“You mean you want me to take this letter to him?”

“Yes.”

St. Paul was telling Onesimus to go back to the man he despised. He was to put the letter in Philemon’s hand and do it as an act of Christian love.

That’s Seed-Faith giving, an act of repairing your relationship. So here are three Seed-Faith projects. First, Onesimus is to carry the letter back to his former master and face up to what he had done — look him in the eye and say, “I did it, but I’ve come back to face the music.” Second, Philemon is to receive this young man, not as a slave but as a beloved brother, even as Paul himself. Third, is Paul’s own Seed-Faith project to pay back any money owed to Philemon. Put it on my account.

Beloved Brother

Tradition has it that when Onesimus approached the great estate of Philemon his courage began to fail. Several times he stopped and almost ran away again but he went on, one step at a time. When some of the other servants saw him they rushed out, wanting to know why he was returning. He shared with them his story, saying, “I’m going in.” When Philemon was told that Onesimus had returned, he and three Roman citizens walked out to Onesimus. Tradition has it that Philemon said, “Onesimus, my beloved brother, won’t you come in?” And he bent down, took off Onesimus’ sandals, and washed his feet. A servant usually washes his masters feet, but here the master washes the dust of his slave’s feet. Then Philemon said, “Come with me, brother, I want to take you to the guest chamber where Brother Paul stays. This is going to be your new home.” When the meal was announced, Philemon said, “Brother, you sit here. This is where Paul sits.” And then he said, “Would you ask grace, beloved brother?”

What Do You Need?

What does it all mean? It means that Onesimus is truly free because in obedience to God, he returned as a slave. God multiplies his seed of obedience into a harvest of freedom. And the slave becomes the beloved brother, a person of infinite worth, a child of God.

Do you believe that the Christian experience really works? YES! I say it does. Plant seeds of love; let your giving become a part of your living.

Make Seed-Faith A Way Of Life

What is your need?

Do you need to be free from bitterness?

Do you need to be free from anger and violence?

Do you need to feel freedom in your spirit?

Do you need to be free from envious feelings?

What is your need?

Do you need emotional healing or healing for your soul or healing for your body?

The Bible tells us to pray one for another that you may be healed, that the healing you ask for another may also come to you. It's a Seed-Faith prayer. Let me pray with you.

Father, I come to You, not in my name or in my own strength, but through the mighty and incomparable name of Your Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. And I thank You from the bottom of my heart for the love of Jesus. He has freedom for us. He has healing for us. He has a new life for us, so I ask for many miracles.

And now, dear friend, I pray for you. I pray that Jesus Christ will burst into your heart like the morning sun, that light will come into your heart. I pray that freedom will ring throughout your being. I pray that your soul will have a new birth. I pray that the healing hand of Jesus will touch you from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet and you'll be healed by the power of God. I pray that Christ will be the one who dreams your dreams and that His dreams will be your dreams forever. Through Christ I pray, and I believe, and I expect many miracles in your life. Amen and amen.

Chapter 7, The Love Of God

Guest Sermon: Dr. Robert Frost Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: St. John 14

Our first guest speaker for this Holy Spirit course is a man who met Christ while studying to become a biologist. Later when the charismatic experience, the baptism in the Holy Spirit, entered his life, he really came afire. I've read his book, *Aglow with the Spirit*, three times. It mirrors a life that really has glowed in the Lord, not only here but around the world. Dr. Frost taught at Baylor Medical School and was chairman of Natural Sciences in the formative years of Oral Roberts University. Then he felt the call to go to various parts of this nation and the world where he has given his witness. He has been a guest speaker here once or twice since then and has always carried the anointing of the Spirit upon him. His life in Christ has touched me to the deepest core of my being. I am honored to present to you my friend in Christ, Dr. Robert Frost.

☆☆☆

The Love Of God by Dr. Robert Frost

The promise of the Father is a beautiful promise, isn't it? It is also a wonderful promise of power, of purpose, of beauty. The overall theme is the love of the Father. There was a time when I felt just a little apologetic talking about something so basic as the love of God, until I discovered that there are times when we really begin to question the love of God, the love of our Heavenly Father. I don't know how many times I've heard people say, "Well, I know in my head that God loves me, but I can't seem to feel it in my heart."

"Tell Her That I Love Her"

When God began pouring out His Holy Spirit in the early '60s, I remember a minister's wife coming to our home. She wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I shared with her just about everything I knew, and yet she couldn't seem to find release. I'd talk a litde more and share a litde more and pray a litde harder. All the while, the Lord kept prompting me to share with her that He loved her. "Tell her that I love her."

I kept arguing with the Lord saying, "Now, Lord, look, this may not go over half as well as You think. You don't just go around telling ministers' wives that God loves them; it would be an insult to their intelligence. She's known that

from Sunday school.”

The Lord didn't even bother to argue with me. He just kept saying, “Tell her that I love her.”

So finally I broke down and said, “You know, I just feel that our Heavenly Father himself is saying to you, ‘Dear lovely daughter, you mean much to me, and I want you to know that I love you.’ ”

She broke down and wept and sobbed so that I could hardly believe what was happening. And then came her story.

“You know, for a whole year,” she said, “I've been going through a wilderness, a desert that's been very, very dry. And I've become confused and full of questions. I've even come to the point where I began to wonder if God loved me anymore.”

A Life Relationship

You know, I'm discovering that most of my problems have nothing to do with theology, as important as theology is. Usually my problems are related to my having forgotten just how much my Father loves me. Just about every time. The Father represents fatherhood which implies sonship and daughterhood. This is a life relationship born out of love, and our Father wants us to know the truth about how much He loves us, because from that love comes life.

The enemy will try to deceive us at every point. Scripture says he goes about trying to deceive the elect; that's us. Yet I can remember reading that passage many times, imagining the elect all over the world who were being deceived. I felt so sorry for them. Then the Lord said, “You know, that's what they're thinking, too.” Because the mark of deception is not knowing that we are being deceived. Why does the enemy try to deceive us concerning the truth about the love of God? Because our relationship with our Father is going to be limited to the extent that Satan succeeds. Our Christian walk in life is based upon two foundational steps, both described in this familiar little song:

“Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus.”

Trust And Obey

Trust, faith, confidence, obedience, submission, and surrender. I thought, “Now that's IT!” All of our problems relate to the fact that we don't trust and we don't obey. If there's a yearning, if there's a longing for something missing in your life, if you're thirsting for an answer in a salty situation, come to Jesus in

obedience and drink in faith, and out of your innermost being shall flow rivers of living water. This flow is ongoing and continuing and based on your trust and obedience. So, obviously, doubt and disobedience will break the flow.

It Takes More Than Two Feet To Walk

I thought, “Now that wraps it up rather neatly, doesn’t it?” Then the Lord reminded me that it takes more than two feet to walk. Do you know that it takes more than two feet to walk? An astronaut, high in the heavens, has two feet. Yet he can’t walk from one compartment to the next. Why not? Because his two feet are not on the ground. Being above and beyond the earthly pull of gravity, an astronaut has to pull himself from one place to another. The Lord was saying that it takes more than two feet to walk — it takes the ground. There’s a ground upon which these steps rest and from which they arise. What is that ground? What could be more basic than trust and obey?

It Takes The Ground Of Truth And Love

Then came the thoughts. When it comes to your walk in life, the ground for faith, trust, and obedience is the ground of truth and love. Furthermore, the two always go together. You cannot separate truth from love or love from truth. Our Heavenly Father not only speaks and ministers to us from His wisdom and truth, but He also ministers to us from His affections. When we listen to God, we listen with our heads and also with our hearts. When the two on the road to Emmaus discovered that it was Jesus with whom they had been walking, they said, “Oh, now we know! No wonder our hearts burned within us.” His words just seemed to cause their hearts to leap forth in flames. They were stirred, they were moved within. Not only were their minds enlightened, but also their hearts were stirred within.

I’m utterly convinced that our Father ever and always ministers to us in truth and in love. And you cannot separate the two. Now sometimes you will minister or receive knowledge about the truth apart from love. That’s different. In fact, when truth is separated from love, it can become a sword that pierces the heart. I have done that and afterwards the Lord told me, “Instead of ministering truth and love, you ministered only knowledge which was spiritless and lifeless and you hurt them.”

Some of us have been on the receiving end of truth ministered without love. Ever had someone say, “How are you doing?”

“Well, you know, I’m having a problem.”

“Hang in there, fellow. Remember all things work together for good.”

Although that’s true, it isn’t ministered in love. Then, of course on the other hand, sometimes we minister love without truth, which may be little more than sentiment or pity. God’s love disciplines and corrects and redeems. The enemy knows that our walk will be limited if he can deceive us concerning the truth about our Father’s love.

Love And Obey

Isn’t it true that in some of your earthly relationships there are those who love you without reservation or qualification? I love my wife and she loves me. I have failed her on occasion. I have hurt and disappointed her. But nothing has ever turned off her love. I would trust her with my life. With love comes a confidence, a trust, a willingness to be open. If I know that you’ll love me regardless of what I say or do, that it won’t change your love for me, that your love is without qualification, limitation, or reservation, then I can trust you. Furthermore, I’ll want to please you. To those who love you like that, you can say, “Their slightest wish is my command,” which is to say you want to please them, you want to give them joy and satisfaction and pleasure, you want for them what they will and want. Not because you have to. Jesus says, “If you really love Me, you’ll keep My commandments.” Why? Because you have to? No, because you will want to as an expression of love. He who first loved you calls forth love in your heart and that love expresses itself in trust and obedience.

Now if you try to trust and obey, without the ground of love, it’s going to be heavy. It’s going to be forced. Have you ever tried to force your faith? Have you ever tried mentally to believe? I will to believe, I am going to believe. I have discovered the less faith I have the louder my prayers become. Almost like I’m trying to push God, tell Him where the problem is. I can tell when I’m trying to force my faith because I become tense and my head may begin to ache. If we obey, submit, yield, and surrender to God for any other reason than love, it’s going to be heavy. We’ll always be under condemnation. I’m convinced our Father wants us to know how great His love is, how lasting, how enduring, how marvelous, how wonderful is His love, how convicting is His love, then how convincing is His love for us in Jesus. How forgiving is His love, how releasing and delivering and healing is His love. It’s that kind of love. It’s not a soft, sentimental, compromising kind of love with big daddy upstairs just overlooking.

God S Love

Jesus, who is the Word, demonstrated the love of the Father. His love was shaped and fashioned and formed by Mary into a little baby, and that love grew up, walked around, worked in a carpenter's shop, learned lessons in the synagogue, and was baptized in the Jordan by John. God's love went out speaking and ministering and healing, bringing hope and release to people who were hurt and bewildered and confused. It lived itself out to the limit on the cross, the most wonderful, beautiful, glorious, and, at the same time, awful, terrible, expression of the love of God. Jesus upon the cross crying out, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me? Father, Father." In His humanity, He who knew no sin, became sin that we might be made the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). In Him God gave everything. There wasn't anything left in heaven to give after He gave His son. Jesus is the ground. I can trust Jesus. No wonder the enemy wants to deceive us.

I think there are three basic causes for a faulty relationship concerning our understanding of the love of our Heavenly Father. Number one is our tradition, our Christian and theological tradition, particularly Western Christianity. Number two is a faulty father relationship on earth. And number three sometimes occurs after a bitter disappointment in life. You come to the conclusion that if God really loves you and is really concerned about you He wouldn't allow this to happen. Because of one or maybe two of these causes, subconsciously or even consciously, you feel that God's love is a love with reservations.

Theological Problem

I am coming to the conclusion that the Early Church believed more deeply in the love of the Father than I had thought. Reading the epistles recently, I've noticed how much there is about the Fatherhood of God, far more than I ever thought. Through the power of the Holy Spirit Paul was lifted beyond the earthly and temporal and natural, into the third heaven. The revelation was almost as if the Father bared His very heart, as if Paul were allowed the privilege of putting his hands on the heart throb of the Father himself. It changed Paul's whole life and it's changed ours, too.

I'll always remember taking a course in modern physiological instrumentation at Baylor University College of Medicine about the function of the heart and circulation and blood pressure. On one field trip to a nearby School of Veterinary Medicine we performed certain studies on a horse who had an incurable disease. The horse felt nothing when the doctors opened up his chest cavity and exposed his beating heart. We crawled up on the large animal

operating table and onto that horse and held our hands on the throbbing, pulsating, beating heart of that living creature. I'll never forget the sensation of that pumping center of life.

Father Love

It's almost as if the Father allowed Paul to grasp, to feel, to see into His heart. Paul makes a distinction be-

tween God the Father and Jesus the Son. You can see this more clearly by substituting the word "Father" for "God." This passage is from Ephesians 1:4-5, 9-10 (TLB).

Long ago, even before he made the world, [Father] chose us to be his very own, through what Christ would do for us; [Father] decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault - we who stand before him covered with his love. [Father's] unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus Christ to die for us. And [Father] did this because he wanted to! [Father] has told us his secret reason for sending Christ, a plan he decided on in mercy long ago; and this was his purpose: that when the time is ripe [Father] will gather us all together from wherever we are - in heaven or on earth - to be with [Father] in Christ, forever.

If you want to follow that little study through sometime, see how your appreciation of the Fatherhood of God deepens. As we move from the first century into the second, third, and fourth centuries, Eastern Christianity moves westward where the Greek Scriptures are translated into the Latin. Western thought, which is rational, analytical, methodical, and legal, influences the translation from Greek into Latin. Many theological interpretations were put into that translation, and it's interesting that much of our Western theology rests upon this.

Early Christian thought is found in the Eastern church of today. The emphasis begins with Father, whose heart is filled with love and grace, a Father who realizes that we, His potential sons, are sinners. He doesn't overlook sin, but because of His love He wishes to do a redemptive work not only in our lives but in this whole world. The whole creation is to come into the glory of Father's redemptive purpose.

Somehow things shifted and a more legal approach began to creep in. When I was growing up I heard far more about God as Judge than about God as Father. There is a sense in which man is in sin and under condemnation, but if you begin with Father, His judgment will always be right and true. His discipline

and chastisement is always with redemptive purpose. Father never ministers discipline out of retaliation or vindictiveness; He ministers discipline for His redemptive purpose. We are told in Lamentations 3 that God has no joy in the affliction of man, that His heart is grieved. The Father loves you with an everlasting love. You can't turn it off. There's not one thing you have ever done, said, or been or that you can ever do, say, or be that will turn off God's love. You can reject His love, you can ignore His love, you can depreciate His love, but you can't turn it off. God is Love and He is going to love.

Sometimes you have to be assured of this. If you have really fallen and failed and sinned, who is it easier to go to, your Holy Heavenly Father or your Redeemer Brother, Jesus? Most of us would say, "Why, my Redeemer Brother, Jesus." Now there's a sense in which this is right because He himself said, "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," and there is but one Mediator between God and man. But there's another sense in which the enemy perverts the truth, because if he can't keep you from the truth he'll keep you in half truth. If he can't keep you in half truth he'll add something to distort the truth. You may have a feeling that somehow if you could just get to Jesus, maybe Jesus will go to the Father and get Him to change His mind. You may imagine Jesus saying, "Now, Father, hold off just a little bit. Remember what I did upon the cross, Father? Now, Father, don't be so harsh."

You may not come out directly with these thoughts, but kind of subconsciously they're there. Somehow, you think, Father is a little less concerned; in fact, He may even be looking upon you with some contempt. You respond to Jesus, your Brother Redeemer and Savior. That's right. But you know, Scripture says God the Father was in Jesus reconciling the world unto himself.

There is a beautiful, wonderful, meaningful, powerful mystery in the Trinity. I think there are mysteries that maybe you shouldn't try to define too explicitly. God gives you glimpses and insights just as you need them. Sometimes unity of the Godhead is emphasized, sometimes the trinity. There is a sense in which the Father gave of himself when He gave His Son, for the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him bodily. There was something, if you dare to put it this way, there was something of the Father at the cross. Think of the agony of Jesus who knew no sin, taking upon himself the consequences of sin and in His humanity, feeling the apartness, the loneliness that sin brings, crying out, "Forsaken, forsaken, Father, Father." How did the Father feel? You can't have broken fellowship without two people being affected. Pain and grief were in the heart of the Father then; yet they had planned it together because they loved us so. Your Heavenly Father loves you, loves you with a desperate

love, an everlasting love.

As you begin to feel the Father's love, your perspective changes. I'll admit there are times when I have not felt the love of the Father. You try to do the best you know how, but where is God's love? You feel confused, bewildered in mind and heavy-hearted within. You learn how to handle these times as you realize that it's not a matter of how I feel, it's a matter of who He is. It's not a matter of how I think, it's a matter of what He has said. The Father said, "I love you."

Family Problems

Now let's take some other illustrations that have to do with faulty family relationships. Maybe your father left or died when you were little. My father died when I was three, and some kind of faulty concept of fatherhood did develop. Some people have been hurt or abused or ignored. Sometimes being ignored is worse than being abused, at least you're getting some attention. A young lady said to me at the end of a class, "What is a father? You've been talking about God the Father," she said, "and I haven't the slightest idea what a father is, what he's supposed to say, how he's supposed to act, what he's supposed to be like." She was serious because she didn't know anything about a father who wants to give His love and His life, a father who wants to guide and lead and direct, a father who wants to protect, a father who will correct in love. She didn't know what that was like. I didn't either.

As a boy I had an inferiority complex. I couldn't get up and read out loud in front of people. I never felt I was measuring up or had people's respect and approval. I've discovered that everybody suffers from feelings of inferiority in one area or another, at one time or another. I served God more out of fear than out of love. When I felt I hadn't measured up, which was most of the time, I had to check out my salvation every Sunday evening when an evangelistic appeal was given. It wasn't really very pleasant because I had to get up in my band uniform, set my saxophone down, climb over the people, over the railing in front of everyone, and make my way to the front. I would think, "Oh, no, I can't do it, I just can't do it, not again." And then the chilling thought would come, "Yeah, Frost, you'd let your pride send you straight to hell, wouldn't you?" So motivated by fear I would make another trip down to the front.

Twisted Concepts

One of the things that really disturbed me was missionary emphasis week, because I knew how it would end. There would be a call for full-time

Christian service and the least that I could do, if I truly loved the Lord, would be to give Him the rest of my life. I would sit there literally shaking on the inside and outside, breaking out in a cold sweat, fear rising, and my throat choking because I knew just as sure as I went down to the front that God would say, “All right, Frost, it’s to the heart of Africa with you, fellow.” We had missionaries who returned bringing big snakes and spears, and I could just see all the natives poking spears at me. I needed to know something. I needed to know that Father loved me and that His plan for my life would be fulfilling to me, that if He wanted me in Africa He’d put Africa in my heart so that I’d want to go, that it would be a joy. Scripture says He gives us the desires of our heart. Well, you see, I had a twisted concept. And I’ve discovered there are a great many others who have twisted concepts.

Recently at the end of a meeting a young man said, “Oh, I want you to pray for me. I’m having problems in relating to my father who is very demanding. He’s always been a success in everything — athletics, academics, business — and he expects his sons to follow in his footsteps, no alternative.” The young man went on to say he had all kinds of hostility, and then he said, “Someone prayed for my deliverance the other night.”

The Lord said, “Check that out with My Spirit.” So after talking a little bit I said, “What was this deliverance?” Because I wondered why he still had a problem if he had been delivered.

He said, “Well, a demon was cast out. ”

“Really,” I said. “Was there some kind of manifestation?”

“Yes,” he said, “I shouted out, I cried out with a loud voice.”

“What did you say?”

“I hate that man, I hate that man!”

Then this thought came to me and so I said, “Well, what man were you talking about?”

He said, “The man who was praying for me. He was shaking his finger in my face and saying, “Come out, you demon of witchcraft, come out!’ ”

I asked, “Who did that man remind you of?”

He looked at me and said, “My father. I could just see him standing there shaking his finger in my face.”

I said, “You know, I really don’t feel in my spirit this was demonic at all.

I don't think it's too hard to explain. All your life you've been filled with resentment and frustration and hostility. Pressure had built up at that moment and here was a father figure shaking his finger in your face. At that point you broke and cried out. You know what God wants to do? Your Heavenly Father wants to bring a healing to your heart. He wants to wash you with His love. He wants you to understand your daddy. You know, your daddy's sick. Anybody who would be that forceful and dominating over his children has some problems in his own life. Your daddy needs to be healed. But you can't be a part of that healing until your resentment is all washed away. God wants to heal you." I went on to say, "Incidentally, your Heavenly Father will never, ever put obligations like that upon you. Father will never ask you to exercise faith that you don't have. Father will never ask you to walk in light that He's not given. Father knows you better than you know yourself. Father loves you. You trust His love and then you can obey, with joy in your heart." He began to laugh and cry. He hugged me and said, "You sure there's no more demons or anything?"

"I don't feel a thing." And he hugged me and squeezed me again and went away happy-hearted, with a healing deep inside.

Afterwards, in thinking about it I realized that I had become, for that moment, a father figure to him. Many times God ministers to you directly and brings healing in all kinds of ways to your life. But there are times when you have to be reached by your mothers and fathers in the Body of Christ. Do you understand what I'm saying? Sometimes I can't see Jesus unless I see Him in you. Sometimes I won't be able to find the Father unless I can feel His fatherly love coming to me through you. I have had fatherly counsel from Father speaking through some flesh-and-blood person. During my teen-age years my Sunday school teacher took that place.

Did you know that Father loves you? He loves you dearly. He loves you desperately. Father loves you and He proved it out in Jesus. For just a moment before we conclude this part, let's be quiet before the Lord. Holy Spirit, beautiful, wonderful Holy Spirit of God, You are here. The Comforter has come, not the tormentor, the Comforter has come. And He wishes to reveal Jesus to us. We sense and feel the presence of our Lord. He is here, Jesus is here, and He's with you and He's with me and we look full into His face and say with Philip, "Show us the Father."

We hear the words of the Lord himself (see John 14):

Philip, Philip, have I been with you so long and still you say show us the Father? Don't you realize when you look into my face that it's the features of the

Father that you see? Philip, don't you realize when I touch you that it's the touch of the Father, that the words I speak are the words of the Father, the works I do are works of the Father?

Philip, when I draw the little children up into my arms and bless them and hug them to myself, don't you realize that I am becoming the love of the Father made flesh? For He desires to draw you to himself just like that. You see, I come from the bosom of the Father and I know what the loving heart of Father God is like and I want to express that love to you. I want you to see it and to know it and to feel it.

Did you know that the love of the Father got down within reaching and touching distance when Jesus came? And Jesus is here tonight. I pray that you know the love of God wanting to heal, wanting to give you relief and release and forgiveness. That's what Father wants to do. He loves you. You are His son and you are His daughter. And Father himself says:

My children, I want you to know that as I look down My heart goes out to each one of you in love, for I see you as members of My family. And My son, My daughter, I want you to know that you did not come into this world by accident. I want you to know that you were wanted and you were loved, because you have ever and always been deep within My heart and My intention and My purpose. I couldn't wait for you to come into this world so that you might find your place in My family, that I might share My life and My love with you through My Son. You are loved, you are wanted. I love you, I want you. You mean much to Me. You are My dearest daughter. You are My son and I have a place and a plan for you in My family. I want you to know My love, clean and purifying, forgiving and healing, restoring and redeeming.

My children, My children, I want you to see that there's going to be an outward expression of the glory of the life of My Son. That life is going to cover the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. There is going to be a witness and I'm calling you.

And so, Father, we are going to be very simple and just say, "Thank You so much. Thank You that You proved it out in Jesus. There's so much I don't see, so much I don't understand, but this one thing I know, Father loves me with an everlasting love. And, Father, my heart is touched. I feel Your love and I let it do its work. I am tired of trying and doing and working. I just give up. I accept Your love, Father, I just accept Your love. I accept it, Jesus, and I love You back with all my heart. I love You. Praise Jesus."

Panel Discussion

ORAL: Amen.

Evelyn, I'd like to ask you a question. Did it come through to you that in order to love, the Father has to love through us?

EVELYN: Oh, yes, very definitely. The thing that really inspired me, Dr. Frost, was that God loves us regardless of what we do. He really loves us, and I think its very important for us to know that. Especially mothers who sometimes tell their children, "You must not do that, God won't love you if you do that." Well, that is not the truth. Yet children grow up with this concept of fear. You better not do this or God will knock you right off the face of the earth and throw you straight into hell. If you go to hell you go there by your own doing. We cannot properly love without God. I really believe that.

ORAL: Would you respond to that again then, Dr. Frost? **FROST:** Yes, once in Australia a wonderful lady, a Bible teacher, greatly used of the Lord, felt much of that fear. She said, "I know in my head that God loves me, but there are times I just can't feel it in my heart. " As we shared, and God brought things out from her past, she said that when she was a little girl her parents used to threaten her to try to get her to mind. They would say, "Now if you don't mind we are going to give you away to the Aborigines."

She said, "One day, to make the point very clear, they packed my bag and pulled me down the front walkway. I cried and begged and pleaded, 'O Mamma, Daddy, no, please don't give me away!'"

Sometimes her mother in frustration would say, "Now if you don't mind, God's going to punish you. " Later when she skinned her knee, her mamma would say, "See, I told you so."

Her concept of God was a stem, awful judge, who almost hoped to inflict punishment.

ORAL: You said that love could not be divorced from truth and of course Jesus said, "I am the truth. " Love is a living person, isn't it? And you demonstrated that by speaking of Jesus as being shaped in Mary's body, growing up as a little boy, and working in the carpenter shop. A student wrote in a paper, "It came to me that Jesus walked my life before me. Therefore, all I have to do is follow Him." **EVELYN:** Dr. Frost, would you explain a little bit more to us about redemptive correction?

FROST: Well, you know, here again our Father wants us to love Him,

wants us to worship and trust Him. You can't force anybody to love you and you can't force anybody to worship God, because inherent in the nature of love and worship is spontaneity. If you decide to go your way rather than God's way, God is hurt and grieved. There's an anger in His heart towards all that deters you from within or from without.

Let me relate something from my own life. I was raised in a Pentecostal church. I knew Jesus as my Savior and my Baptizer. When I got into college there was a great emphasis on critical and analytical thinking. We were in a tireless pursuit for truth, wherever and whatever it was, and our minds were to be sharpened to recognize and synthesize it. Evolution didn't bother me so much, but a course in comparative religions almost wiped me out. Gradually I began finding the ideas interesting. The teacher said all the different religions are different ways up the same mountain, the ultimate goal being God. I remember we defined God as the undifferentiated aesthetic continuum in which you lose yourself. It just warms your heart. I began thinking that these other religions have their books, their prophets, their mystical, sometimes even miraculous experiences. Maybe there is more than one way.

You know what God did? He let me go that way. I think He was hurt because He knew what was going to happen, but He didn't stop me. He didn't say, "Let's go down and rescue Frost and straighten him out." God let me go my way, even though He knew what the consequences of that way were going to be. God disciplines us, because He wants to bring us back into relationship of life and love and joy with Him. In my case God just let me run my course.

Do you know what happened? After a while, I began to live from the tree of knowledge which says, "I will center truth in myself. I'll be the master of my faith, the captain of my soul. I will determine what is good and evil for me." Real Christian education is not a tireless pursuit of truth. We have found it and the search is over. The truth is a person and that person is Jesus. That doesn't mean we turn our minds off. Now we begin to see the truth, which brings significance and purpose to every area of our life. To see all of that worked out will take forever. But the thing is, we start with Jesus as the cornerstone of our truth. If you start with yourself, you can see the limitation.

As I was looking at all the different roads up the mountain, I began to think maybe everybody's psyched up. In fact, maybe there's not even a mountain. Maybe there's no purpose or meaning to life at all. I got to a place of feeling very hollow and empty. When I came up against situations that were above and beyond myself, I had no one to whom I could turn.

Finally I came to the end of myself when I got into graduate school. One day on campus the Lord brought it all to a conclusion after He had allowed me to become miserable enough, hungry and thirsty enough. Sometimes I think the Lord lets us get into all kinds of salty situations of our own making. He won't make us drink, but He has a way of putting salt in our lives. I think it's important to come to a place where we want to drink. I turned to God and said, "I want You to take over the rest of my life. Now You make out of me what You want. I'm going to go Your way."

It was very simple. God was my Father, Jesus was my Elder Brother, and I could talk to God as my Father and to Jesus as my brother. Do you know what my next prayer was? A few days later on a Sunday afternoon I was in the dormitory feeling kind of lonely and I said, "Lord, I'd like to talk to You about something. Now that I'm going Your way I would like some companionship. In fact, I'd like to find a companion, somebody going the same way with You I'm going, so that we might go that way together."

I never will forget that moment. I prayed very simply with a sense of great expectation. I guess it was a seed. I didn't know how quickly the harvest would come. But I remember thinking, now that I've made my prayer I should exercise my faith, because I didn't think God was going to answer the prayer in the men's dormitory.

So I went to a Baptist church service in Houston, Texas. Afterwards at a young peoples service I met the young lady who later became my wife. I was still shy and felt inferior in many ways. You know the Lord has a lot of hurdles to get us over sometimes, but if we are really serious before Him, He does things in His own will and way. Well, my faith rose and I invited her to go crayfish hunting the next weekend. That was in the fall and we were married the following June. The thing is when we compared notes, we discovered something. She had prayed a similar prayer. She'd just come into a real living personal relationship with Jesus. And she prayed, "Lord, when it comes to marriage and a family, all I want is Your will. Now, if You want me to remain single, I am willing because You yourself will make up the difference and be my husband. If I am to marry, then I want You to choose my husband."

I've always felt that the Lord looking down on these two prayers said, "You know, I think I can do something about that."

We really need to understand that our Father loves us and has a plan and a purpose for each of us. Neither my wife nor I knew what was going to happen or where God would take us, but we've always moved with one heart, one mind,

and one spirit. I have always felt that she was a beautiful, gracious gift from my Heavenly Father to me. He knew that in my life He could do more through the two of us together than He could through us apart. **STUDENT:** Dr. Frost really spoke to me tonight. I liked what he said about God's love and I think it's important for us to remember that as God loves us, we have our part too. He doesn't give us love to lock up in our hearts where no one can see it or feel it. If we do that, our love will become old and musty and moldy. It's up to us to give it to others. Knowledge is nothing unless it changes lives, and if somebody has three Ph.D.'s without love, without Jesus, he might just as well have dropped out of kindergarten.

STUDENT: The thing that really stood out was that no matter how you feel or what you're going through, God's love is still eternal and He's not ever going to change. It really brought my mind to a Scripture in Lamentations about the faithfulness of God, that His mercies are never failing and they are renewed every day. The constancy of God's love toward me allows me to depend totally upon Him, knowing that He's concerned about everything in my life.

ORAL: Dr. Frost, would you comment on that?

FROST: The passage referred to is in the third chapter. It talks about the affliction of men being grievous to God. He doesn't find joy and delight in having to discipline us, but He knows that the outcome will be for our greater good. In His discipline, while there is pain many times, still there is redemptive purpose. He wants to bring us to a place where we say, "Oh, yes, Lord, You're right. I'm wrong." When we confess, Scripture says that He's faithful to forgive us and to cleanse us. He doesn't only forgive. I've thought of it like somebody forgiving another for having knocked over a bottle of ink on the tablecloth, but every time you come to dinner there's that big spot. God does more than just forgive. He cleanses us so that we can be restored to the joy of our salvation. Even Jesus learned much through obedience and suffering.

STUDENT: The thing that really impressed me was your saying that we show our love by trusting and obeying God. You can tell someone that God loves him but unless that person can see your trust in God's love, there's no way he can believe it. Especially people who have never felt love before.

FROST: The nature of love means there must be a lover and a beloved. There must be a giver and a recipient. There are two sides to love.

ORAL: You know, when Dr. Frost was talking his love was coming through so powerfully to me. People who are in the Lord's work in a public way often need that assurance, too. Just because you're doing God's work doesn't

mean that you don't need assurance of the Father's love. Talking about His love is one thing, but feeling His love coming back to you is another.

FROST: We never outgrow our need for God's love. I used to think that somehow older people got to a place where they don't feel like younger people do. The older I get, the more I realize there's something of the little boy and little girl living in all of us that needs to be assured and loved and wanted. I have discovered that's equally true for Christian leaders.

DR. EPPERSON: The Christian brotherhood should reflect the Father just as Jesus does. I've been hurt at times by people presenting God the Father as very different from God the Son. They say, "Well, I've seen God the Father. He's stem, He's judging." Yet Scripture says God the Son is the express image of the Father.

ORAL: And the brightness of His glory.

DR. EPPERSON: Right. The brotherhood itself can perpetuate false ideas about God. Instead of showing the love of the Father to each other, we may only be judging each other.

STUDENT: I think we can hurt people by ministering only knowledge to them and by not ministering through the spirit of love. It's easy to minister knowledge which comes from the mind and doesn't get us too involved in anyone's problem. But to minister love means to yield to the Spirit, which may involve us in the problem. **ORAL:** Would you say, though, that you can't minister with love alone, that it does take some knowledge to go along with it? That it's not either/or?

STUDENT: Definitely. We are to study and understand the Word because our faith actually comes by reading the Word. We need to have knowledge and yet be open to the Spirit in order to know how He wants us to minister to another.

ORAL: Dr. Frost, would you share one more thought, anything on your heart, before we pray with our friends? **FROST:** Yes, Scripture says that Jesus was tempted just as we are and that He knows and cares and understands our infirmities. Once I brought this to the Lord and said, "I think I can conceive of some situations I've been in that you've not been through. You are sinless and don't know what it's like to sin over and over and over again in the same way and then feel guilt and depression and condemnation." I get to thinking God's given up and had it up to here with me. That I've crossed the line of grace, and that's the end.

Do you know what the response was? It was almost as if the Lord said, "Little brother, listen, what I did not experience in My life, I did in My death." When He, who knew no sin, became sin and took upon himself the consequences of our sin...

ORAL: Oh, thank God. Reach your hand out to someone or put your hand on yourself. Let's really touch, not only with our hands, but touch with our heart. Let's express God's love as we pray together and let's expect miracles. I want to pray for you. I know what prayer means to people and I know what it means to me when people pray for me. Let's pray together.

Father, I thank You that You gave Jesus Christ to go to the cross to die for me, and that through His death He has experienced what I experience. He took on himself my sins and I thank You that through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ I have hope to live to my fullest potential.

I thank You and now I pray for people, for human beings like myself. I pray that Jesus Christ will become so real to you that it's like you're looking Him in the face. It's like you're feeling His hand on your shoulder. I pray you experience Him like that. I pray that you experience His healing hand.

When I pray for you, let me be an extension of His hand. I pray that God will heal you, heal you where you need to be healed. You may need to be healed in your body or your mind or your emotions. You may need healing in your relationship with someone dear to you. Or you may need a healing in your soul, salvation. You may need the Holy Spirit. I pray that God will give you the healing you need and that you will experience healing from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. You'll experience a healing of the whole man, the whole woman. Jesus will do it. By faith, accept and thank Him for it. Let's all just look up and say, "Thank You, Lord."

Chapter 8, The Good Seed And The Bad Seed

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson.-St. Luke 19:1-10

St. Luke is described in the Bible as a physician. St. Paul was so fond of him and trusted him so much that he called him the beloved physician. He traveled with Paul and became an accurate historian of the life of our Lord and of the new church.

Givers And Takers

What does it mean to become a taker, to be always on the make or on the take? What happens to your personality? What kind of person do you become if you never express your real thoughts, if your deep-down thoughts are always of taking. What happens to people who blame others for whatever failures they have...who develop a way of life of blaming others? What happens to an individual who falsely accuses a person or a group and uses them as stepping-stones to get where he wants to go, or get what he wants to get?

What happens to a person like that?

Are there people like that in our midst?

Am I that kind of person?

Are you that kind of person?

What does the Bible teach us about takers and givers? We just read about Zacchaeus, who was the chief tax collector during the time of Christ. In that time a publican or tax collector was hated and regarded as a sinner. Zacchaeus was a Jew, hired by the occupying Roman army to collect the taxes which Rome levied upon the Jewish people. The tax collectors pay was whatever he could collect above the rightful amount due Rome. You see, to make his living as a tax collector he not only collected what the Romans required him to collect, but he also extorted extra money for himself.

Publicans were known as oppressors of the people, particularly the poor people. Sometimes they couldn't handle the rich, but they could tromp all over the poor. Zacchaeus, the publican, had gotten himself into a situation where he was one bad seed, planted. He had become a totally bad seed. Now that's getting pretty lowdown, isn't it? To the extent that about anything he did was a bad seed, and whatever he planted turned out to be something negative and bad.

The Pull Of Good And Evil

Now there are two sides to Zacchaeus. On the one hand, he was stealing the people blind. And on the other, he was aware and interested in the man named Jesus of Nazareth. Zacchaeus had a strong urge to see this extraordinary man. Here, I suppose a psychologist would have to say he had two natures. One was the bad nature of reaching out to plant bad seed all the time. And the other was reaching out to God through Jesus Christ.

The Pull Of Love

The love God had for a man as mean as Zacchaeus couldn't be turned off. And that love went with Zacchaeus wherever he went until at last it brought him to Jesus. Zacchaeus wanted to know the kind of love that followed him...love that was always wrapping itself around him, love from which he couldn't get away. Now that's some kind of love. That's God's love. No matter how bad you are, you can never turn off God's love. His love just stays on and follows and keeps reaching, reaching, reaching for you.

It was good seed and bad seed in conflict. It was God's love reaching out to him...it was Zacchaeus' bitterness striking out at people. No matter what he did or how far away he went from the right path, the love of God was always there.

Freedom Of Choice

It's hard to understand how God puts up with what's happening in the world. Why doesn't God stop all the wars? Well, He'd have to take away man's free moral choice. Man would have to become like a robot or machine, because as long as human beings have the power of choice, they're going to choose to do a lot of bad things. So in order for God to wipe out all wars, He'd either have to take away our choice or else end the whole thing. Well, He did that once by permitting the flood, but that did not stop the evil in man. The kind of world we have is the kind of world that people choose it to be.

But there's another kind of world, a smaller world. It's the world you live in as an individual. This world is touched by love, God's love. In this world God's love zeros in upon you. God works to stop wars and make a better world by zeroing in upon the individual so that His love wraps around that person. When God's love reaches the deepest part of a person, his own choice brings him to a decision for his life to be changed. And that's the way God changes the world.

Because of the crowd and because Zacchaeus was of small stature, he

was unable to see Jesus. He couldn't work his way through the crowd, and so he climbed into a tree. There he sat on a limb looking down to see Jesus. Have you ever wondered what Jesus looked like? Scripture doesn't say. Therefore, it must not be important for us to know the physical characteristics of Jesus. I've known people who claimed visions of Jesus, dressed in a certain color, or having a certain color of eyes. Well, maybe that's the way the person needed to see Him. But the Bible doesn't indicate anything about His physical characteristics other than that His visage was marred. There was a time in His life in the Garden of Gethsemane and then on the cross, when his face was beaten and slapped and marred.

The Good And The Bad Seed

Zacchaeus was able to see Jesus in the flesh. Sitting on that tree limb looking at Jesus, a lot of thoughts must have been going through his mind. What kind of man am I? What kind of human being am I? Why am I what I am? On the one hand there was the irresistible attraction for Jesus of Nazareth and on the other, a compulsive urge to rob the poor, to falsely accuse people, and so enrich himself. And there he sat. Then all at once Jesus Christ looked up and saw Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus looked down and saw Jesus. Their eyes locked. Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." Immediately the Scribes and Pharisees, the religious hypocrites, began to murmur that Jesus was going to be the guest of a man who was a sinner.

The Bad Guy

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, but these people didn't understand that in order to save sinners you had to relate to sinners. Sometimes you can get so self-righteous that you'll have nothing to do with the unrighteous. You have no point of mutual concern. Here Jesus was willing to be a guest in the house of a man who was the chief of the tax collectors and, therefore, regarded as the number one sinner. He was the one that ordered the trials. He was the man that trumped up the false charges. He was the man that sent people to prison if they couldn't pay their taxes. He was the bad guy. And now Jesus was going home with him.

But when the love of Jesus touched Zacchaeus, a miracle took place in this man who stood in the presence of Jesus. Zacchaeus said, "Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Scarcely had he got the words out of his mouth when the Master said, "This day salvation is come to this house."

Four Times Over

It's a great story. What does it all mean? First, it means that this man found a new Source for his life. What was the old source? Depending upon his own wits. He transacted his business by devising new ways to cheat people, falsely accusing them. A family told him how much they had earned. Then he accused them of earning more so that he could extort more taxes from them. It was a false accusation and the extra amount of taxes went into his pocket. That's the way he got rich. When he made a complete turnaround of his life, he said, "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Not once, not twice, not three times, but four times.

This man was not bound by any law. Yet now he was not only willing to reimburse his victims but also willing to do it four times over. Now that says something about your Source. That says something about God. It says that God has a nature and God has a method. What is the nature of God?

The Nature Of God

Jesus Christ described His Father in these words in John 3:16. He said, "For God (or My Father) so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. " The nature of God is love, love that becomes an act of giving, an act of giving that involves the best that God has, His only begotten Son — a giving that is off the top, not off the bottom, a giving that takes the life of the only Son He had. God had lost man and now He needs to restore man. And that was a need God had. God's nature is to give for a desired result, which is, that none shall perish but that all shall have life eternal.

Suddenly this man Zacchaeus had that same nature. One moment he had the nature of putting people down, of taking from them, of thinking of them as objects only, of exploiting them. The next moment his whole nature was changed and he wanted to give half of his goods to the poor. He's thinking of his victims, those he has harassed, and now he wants not only to make things right but also to go beyond that four times over. He has discovered the nature of God, whose nature has become his nature. He's also discovered the method of God, the way God works.

God's Method

During my teaching on the miracle of Seed-Faith I have said many times,

“Find out how God works, how God does things, and then learn to do them the way God does.” Maybe no one can ever learn that perfectly, but if you make an effort to learn how God does things and try to do them the way God does, then you have the nature of God at work in your life. I know there are people who have the nature of God, they are filled with love, but they don’t use God’s method. Now this is a very important point to you and to me. Having the nature of God, which is love, is one thing, but having the method of God is another thing. It’s important to know who God is and it’s important to learn how God applies His love, how God demonstrates His nature, how God does things.

The Bible says God is love. You understand love when you see it in action. Love is not love till you give it away. Love has to become an act of giving. It’s something you do, something you give. What is love unless you know what to do with it?

Just as soon as Zacchaeus felt the love of God, he wanted to give, and to give like God...profusely. Have you ever thought of how God gives in nature? When He causes it to rain, His rain falls on the just and the unjust. Have you ever thought of how God gives His love? He always overgives. He always goes beyond what is expected of Him.

His method is as important as His nature. God’s method of showing love is to love the person for himself, not because he is good or bad, rich or poor. You see, God loves you and me whether we are good or bad. He loves us when we are good and He loves us when we are bad. Does that mean God approves of badness? No. God loves us. He hates the badness but loves the person. He hates sin but loves the sinner. I think He hates divorce but He loves the divorced person. I think divorced persons sometimes feel the whole world has turned against them. There’s a terrible loneliness and they feel unloved. While God may not agree with that divorce, God loves the person who is divorced. God hates murder but He loves the murderer. Do you know that one of those He saved on the cross was a thief? He loved the thief as a person. That’s God’s nature and that’s also His method.

God’s Nature Becomes His Method

God’s nature and God’s method must become one in you, or at least you must get on the track of God’s nature, which is love. You must develop the method of God’s love, which is in profusion, which is copious, which is going beyond, always going beyond, never stopping short.

He Received Jesus Joyfully

Zacchaeus developed a new Source to trust...God. His old source had made a thief of him, had made a false accuser of him, but then he discovered Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "He received Jesus joyfully." Some people have just enough religion to be real miserable. But here's a man who was worse than anybody in this room, worse than anyone I can think of, and yet he was able to turn around in an instant. Is it possible for the love of God to change a person in an instant? Can a woman or man or youth turn his whole life around in an instant? He can if the love of God touches him deeply enough and if he responds to that love with enough joy. That is, if he just openly, gloriously, joyfully says, "Yes, God, I want to be like Jesus and I want to live my life like Jesus would have me live it. I can't be Jesus but I can be me, and Jesus can be in me so that He can work through me. I can use His methods. I can use His ways. I can use His words. I can have His nature and his methods combined in me." I think that's what Zacchaeus did.

Give Joyfully

He instantly began to give. I think it's difficult for most Christians to learn to give joyfully. One reason is you're taught wrong. You're often taught to give because you owe it, or because you are a good church member. You've lost that original joyful anticipation of just standing on tiptoe, just looking around the corner to see what's going to happen next. You need to be excited about giving — you say, "God, look, I'm ready to go!"

Zacchaeus didn't wait for Jesus to say a word to him about restoring what he had stolen and correcting his false accusations. The moment he received Christ joyfully, he said, "I'll give half my goods to the poor. I'll restore fourfold to anyone I have falsely accused."

Why are there so few real Christians in the world and so many professed Christians? I think many have never really come to know Christ or to learn about His method. How Jesus gives off the top, gives of His best, gives beyond what is expected, never stops short.

You can't turn God's love off. You can't change His nature. "I am the Lord thy God, I change not." He's everlasting love, love that keeps on loving. Which doesn't mean you approve of wrong conduct nor does it mean you can't stand up and say something's wrong. But it does mean you still keep on loving, and keep on loving, and keep on loving. How could a marriage ever fall apart if the husband and wife just kept on loving and loving, even though they had disputes and quarrels and fusses and fights and disagreements? "I love you, I

love you, I love you” becomes an act of giving. If you keep on giving of yourself, how could your marriage ever fall apart? Some people say marriages are made in heaven. I think they are made in love.

From Worst To Best

I also believe that Zacchaeus began to expect many miracles. Immediately Jesus said, “This day salvation is come to this house.” He had gone home with Zacchaeus. Jesus not only came into his life, but He came into his house. What about your house? Jesus is in you, but is He in your home? And I ask myself, Jesus Christ is in Oral Roberts’ heart, but is He in Oral Roberts’ home? Is the Spirit of God in my house? I’ve been in homes where I could feel the presence of God the moment I entered. I’ve been in homes where I’ve felt the presence of the devil. Jesus went home with this man, who was able to change from the worst to the best. He was able to give his best, rather than take the best.

A Memorial In Heaven

Now let me give you two examples. One is in Acts 10. The story is told by St. Luke, the beloved physician. He tells of a man named Cornelius, a captain in the Roman army. He commanded over 100 Roman soldiers and was in charge of the Roman garrison in Caesarea, on the coast of Palestine. He was a man who worshiped God with all the knowledge he had. This incident happened right after Christ had been crucified, although Cornelius didn’t know Jesus Christ as his Savior. Let’s read the tenth chapter of Acts, verses 1-5:

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius...a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms (gifts) to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him,

Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it,

Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter.

And the Lord sent Peter to him to show him the way to salvation and to faith in Jesus Christ. Cornelius’ prayers and gifts had become a memorial in heaven. You know, we build memorials on this earth...a building or a gift of flowers or money. But this man’s memorial before God in heaven is composed

of his prayers and his giving.

Can one get into the kingdom of God by giving? Is giving one of the ways that one comes to God? Some would say, “No, that isn’t possible because that would be buying your way in.” But isn’t giving different from buying? Can you get into the kingdom of God by giving? Zacchaeus said, “Lord, the half of my goods I’ll give to the poor and those I’ve falsely accused I’ll restore fourfold.” That’s the moment Christ said, “This day salvation is come to this house.”

In this particular instance, Zacchaeus’ passion in life was taking from other people. They were his source. If you are a taker, you’ve got to become a giver in order for Christ to say, “This day salvation is come to this house.” Some people who profess Christ never amount to anything/or Christ because their nature is not changed. It’s made too easy. There isn’t enough change in the heart.

Rich Land And Poor Land

Now the other incident is in the book of Genesis, the story of Abraham and his nephew Lot. As they traveled toward the Promised Land, their families and their herds of sheep, goats, and cattle had prospered and multiplied. When they separated, Abraham said, “Lot, I want you to look in any direction. You take your pick and what you leave, I’ll take.”

Lot looked and saw a well-watered plain, very beautiful and pleasant. He looked the other way and saw only hard, rocky ground. Lot said, “I’ll take the well-watered plain,” and Abraham gave it to him.

The Good Seed

Abraham was left with dry and barren soil to try to make a living, while Lot marched off into the distance toward the good water and the good soil. This is Seed-Faith living, giving the best to your brother. This is planting a good seed. Abraham did not make soil or water his source. He trusted God to take care of him upon unproductive land, trusted his Source to be greater than the barren land.

The Bad Seed

Lot chose the well-watered plain for his source. What happened? Sodom and Gomorrah were part of his land. Lot moved his people into those beautiful cities where homosexuality was widely practiced. The men of Sodom tried to sexually assault even the angels who came down. God rained fire and brimstone

down on Sodom and Gomorrah and wiped them off the face of the earth. He told Lot to take his wife and daughters and flee. Lot's wife was so in love with that city that she looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. Lot hid in a cave with his two daughters. They said, "Our family may die out," and so incest was practiced. There was sexual intercourse between father and daughters. One of them had a son named Moab, and the other daughter had a son called Ammon. They were the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites, who were the enemies of the Israelites. Lot sowed the bad seed by taking the best, rather than giving the best.

You never know how a single bad seed can be multiplied to bring misery upon yourself and your family. Neither do you know how much a good seed can mean. Zacchaeus knew because Christ went into his home.

Seed-Faith Living Is Receiving God's Nature And Learning His Method

Let me ask if you feel as I do at times, that you need help from God and that only God can help you. Do you ever feel you have a special need of God? What is your need? Let's turn ourselves to our Source, God. Let's accept His nature and learn His method of operation and expect many miracles.

Father, in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, our Lord and Savior, we come to You. We remember how we were sinners, how we were takers, and how even now we have to come back to You for forgiveness and cleansing. We pray for many miracles.

Dear friend, I pray that Jesus Christ will just fill your life with His nature, that the old nature will pass away and the new nature will come into your heart. I pray that by His help you'll learn His method, His way of doing things, which is loving and giving, expecting good things to happen, opening up yourself and letting the good come out, loving beyond measure.

I pray that God will open your life and so fill you with himself that you'll never be the same again. Be healed in your emotions, be healed in your personality, be healed in your spirit, be healed in your body, be healed in all of your efforts, through Jesus Christ I pray. I believe and I expect many miracles in your life. And everybody said amen.

Chapter 9, How To Take A Bad Seed And Turn It Into A Good Seed Of Faith

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: 2 Kings 5

In this lesson on the miracle of Seed-Faith I'm going to share with you some of the things we face every day of our lives. From the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed to sleep or struggle through the night, we face some of these problems. This lesson has to do with the eternal principle of Seed-Faith and how we can use it every day for God's glory and for our own advancement in life.

The first thing that happened in this story is, somebody planted a bad seed. Somebody stopped giving and started taking. And it was Naaman, the commander in chief of the armies of Syria. His armies had overcome Israel. He had captured a teen-age girl and brought her back as a slave girl. She became a servant, or slave, to Naaman's wife. The Bible calls her a captive. Now then here is a human being who is reduced and diminished, forced into a position as a slave. She must do exactly as she's ordered. She has no legal rights, nothing of her own. She's a slave.

Now the history of slavery goes a long way back in the human race. There was slavery long before Christ came and so it has been throughout the centuries since Christ. Two or three years after the landing at Jamestown, boatloads of slaves were brought over. Captives, not really human beings from the standpoint of freedom or opportunity. Captive.. .what an enormous burden to carry! To be regarded inferior, to be forced to serve so-called superiors. What an enormous burden for a human being to carry! What a temptation to become bitter and allow bitterness to become a consuming passion.

Bad Seeds Become Poisonous Weeds

There are all kinds of slavery. People get control over you and diminish you as a human being. You aren't free to be your real self. And out of that comes much bitterness. It happens in marriage when one dominates the other. The man dominates the wife or the wife dominates the husband or the children dominate the parents or the parents dominate the children beyond their right as parents. There are wife-beaters. There are children-beaters. Little children are beaten half to death by a father or a mother. There are child-molesters. There are people like this in the world, people striking at others from the bondage they are under. Not only has bad seed been planted toward them, but the devil also tempts them to

start planting bad seeds back. And the old merry-go-round starts and round and round you go, sowing bad seeds. Poisonous weeds grow and you're in the whirl of despair.

Right now in this country and in the world, you know what we have? Controlled chaos. And sometimes it's uncontrolled chaos. It's amazing how the Bible can present a simple story that reveals so much about ourself and about our world. We don't even know the name of this teen-age girl, but we know that she did a great thing. So amazing and astonishing that we look upon it and wonder how she could have accomplished it. She planted a good seed. In the midst of all the bad that had been done to her, she planted a seed of forgiveness. She shared her knowledge of God with the man who captured her. She said, "Would God that my lord, my master, were with the prophet who is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy." After the capture Naaman lost his health. He developed leprosy.

Well, let's think of leprosy as something which we can't control, that sucks the life from our being, that reduces us to nothing. For example, we read about Naaman who was the commander in chief of the armies of Syria. He was a man of great honor and regard, but he was a leper.

What are you when you lose your health? What are you when you lose respect? What are you when something goes out of your life that's been holding it together? What are you when something bad develops in your existence that you can't control? What are you? He was a great man, but he was a leper. How was he ever going to have a ray of hope? Would he ever have a chance to be a man again? Would he be recovered? Or would he be forced into isolation from his family and his friends? In that day, when a leper approached human beings he was required to cry out, "Unclean, unclean," so that people would not get near him. Would that happen to this man? What was going to happen to him?

A Seed Of Faith

The little captive maid of Israel had a secret that she was willing to share. She overcame whatever bitterness had developed in her heart because of the wrong done to her. She opened up the way for a life to be spared, for a man to be healed, for a human being to be restored, for a man to be put into a position where he could right his life again. She planted a seed of faith which began with a seed of forgiveness.

A Message From The Lord

If you think it's easy to forgive, just try it. It may be easy to say, "Oh, I'm sorry," but it's hard to mean it and change your behavior. I was just talking to a young wife in Tulsa. She'd been listening to my lessons on the miracle of Seed-Faith and had been planting seeds of faith. Then one night she and her husband had quite a fuss and fight in their home. It was a quarrel that had been growing over many months. Things got pretty bad and the husband stomped out of the house. She went into her bathroom and began to pray. "Lord, I know that I'm partly responsible for this. I know there's something I'm not doing that I should be doing. I want to plant seeds of faith, but I have to admit that I have some bad feelings in my heart towards my husband."

Then the strangest thing happened. The bathroom lights began to flicker. So she went into her bedroom, still praying. She noticed the bedroom lights began to flicker. She opened the door of her clothes closet. That light was also flickering. She said it was really eerie. She said, "Lord, I don't know what this means. Maybe it's an accident that they're flickering, but it's a testimony to me that I've got to get right. I want You to know, Lord, how I feel about my husband. I really feel good toward him, and I'm sorry that I have done what I have done, and I'm going to plant seeds of faith in his life regardless of what he does after he returns."

"I had no more than gotten the words out of my mouth," she said, "when the lights quit flickering and burned just as steadily as ever. I got a message from the Lord that it was time for me to plant Seed-Faith for my marriage."

Is it possible for the energy you give off through your emotions to have power over inanimate things? Well, I do know this, forgiveness has an impact, an impact that can be lifesaving. Last night Evelyn and I read a letter at dinner. I would like to read it to you.

Letter

Dear Mr. Roberts, this is a difficult letter to write as I hardly know where to begin. I am reading your book, *A Daily Guide To Miracles*, because our seven-year-old son insisted that I let him write for the book. After he saw your TV Special from Alaska, he was determined to get this book.

When he received the book through the mail, he was so excited he started trying to read it on his own, asking me to help him with the correct pronunciation of words every now and then. My husband was out of town so I headed our devotions that evening. Our son said, "Mother, please read some from my new book in our devotions tonight. Mother, please."

God had really been dealing with me for quite some time. I was full of questions that I couldn't find the answers to. As I read your book to our boys that evening, I really felt the love and warmth of God.

After the boys were in bed, I continued to read. Now I am reading it daily. Needless to say, I receive wonderful blessings as I read slowly, absorbing all the wonderful truths it contains. I am praying for God to show me the seeds I should plant for our needs.

God Is Turned On To Me

This morning I read the section entitled, GOD IS TURNED ON TO ME. I felt I must plant my seed today. I have felt very strongly that I should write a friend to ask forgiveness. Brother Roberts, for many years I have had ill feelings toward a certain person. This year, as I tried to understand why I felt as I did, I realized I was wrong. And, oh, what a painful thing to do; to admit you've been wrong for a long time. But, oh, what a wonderful feeling once you've planted the seed of asking forgiveness. I have asked that person to please forgive me. I must admit the devil really tried to keep me from writing the letter. But I'm remembering who my Source is. I'm planting the seed and God will take care of the rest. If I ever have the opportunity to see that person, I will gladly tell him again.

I can't begin to tell you how God has worked in my life as a result of reading and practicing the truths in your book. I can hardly wait to finish it. Also my husband is reading it every night as part of our devotions. I can see that it thrills him, as well as our children.

Give Mrs. Roberts our love. We're praying for you and your ministry because we think it's tops. Good luck in basketball.

Now that woman has gone through a tremendous experience. And think about what went from her to another human being whom she resented. She released her resentment when she wrote, "I'm sorry, please forgive me."

A Seed Of Forgiveness

Think of the other side, think of what the other person felt. Maybe the person didn't accept the confession. Maybe the person did. You can't always guarantee that a person will accept your apology. But you can always guarantee that your apology will release you from resentment.

Although the little maid was the one that was sinned against, she made the first effort and planted the first seed. I think she planted that seed out of her

need. I think she needed something. I think she needed deliverance from something that was negative, that was building in her life. You can imagine the boiling pot inside her, being forced into a position of slavery. But she threw it aside. She rose up and planted the seed of forgiveness. Then she went beyond that. And there's often a place beyond forgiveness, which is sharing God.

Share God With Others

What did she know about God? Well, she was a little girl from Israel. She knew how God dealt with the Israelites. She knew the mighty miracles God had wrought through the prophets and kings of Israel. She knew God was alive and working miracles. She knew God was on the side of health. She knew God loved people who did not love Him. Now that's a lot to know.

When you know that God loves people who don't love Him, you know a great thing. In the New Testament Jesus teaches us that...

the rain falls upon the just and it falls upon the unjust.

God loves people who don't love Him; therefore, we can love people who don't love us.

So this young woman shared her knowledge, "Would God my lord were with the prophet who is in Israel, for he would recover him of his leprosy." Even though he had done her wrong, when she saw him dying, her love flowed to the surface and became an act of giving. She planted her love as a seed of faith. She believed in God, the Source of all healing. She said that if Naaman, the commander in chief of the Syrian army, would go to Israel and meet the prophet Elisha, he could be recovered of his leprosy.

What is locked up in you and me right now? What good is stored up that you have not shared? What seed do you possess that you've never planted? What apologies have you never made that ought to be made? What apologies have you accepted? Which is stored up in you, good seeds or bad seeds? Which seeds are you planting? Which ones are you valuing more? The bad seed or the good seed? You know when I talk like this, I feel the words coming right back to me. What have I to share with another human being? What gift of life can I impart? What word can I say in a time of need?

I remember just a few weeks ago someone asked me a question about God's healing power. The question was asked in a cynical way. "Mr. Roberts, do you really believe that God heals people today?" I was in a group of high-up people, cynical about God, and my first thought was to push off that question

and protect what little reputation I have with them. But I found the strength inside me to say, “You ask me what I think of healing? I want to tell you that I live and breathe because of healing. Healing became my breath. God restored my lungs, filled with tuberculosis. I talk because God heals. He healed my stuttering tongue. Yes, I definitely believe in God’s healing power.”

Do you know a change came over that group of people? I never dreamed that a group of people so cynical could warm up so fast. It was evident to me that these were hungry people and their cynicism was only outward. Deep in their hearts they wanted to hear a sure, firm, experienced voice tell them that God heals. The whole atmosphere changed, and different ones asked me to pray for a loved one or to drop a note to this individual and so on. This turned out to be a healing meeting right there. Now it’s amazing what you can give to people. And it’s terrible to see how you sometimes withdraw.

“There’s Nobody Home”

I remember when I was first going to college and having a hard time with speech. I was asked to read the 23rd Psalm in an assembly. Now that was an easy assignment because I knew the 23rd Psalm, but it was not easy from the speaking standpoint. I was to interpret it, to give the mood in which the Psalm was written. When the time came, I didn’t show up. You know why I didn’t show up? I got scared. And you know why I got scared? Because I stuttered. And you know why I stuttered? Because deep inside me I had fear. I felt inferior. And I’d feel deep inferiority when I started to talk, and the words would stick in my throat and I couldn’t get them out. When this happened, a lot of people would snicker and laugh. After awhile I didn’t want to talk. So I didn’t show. The guy whose name was Oral, which means spoken word, got silent all of a sudden. And I made an F.

But there was a day when I realized that the feeling of fear inside me could be dealt with by a greater power. Fear might knock on the door but I could open it and say, “There’s nobody home. ” I began to believe that God could loose this tongue. The first time I ever spoke publicly, when the words flowed out of me, was an unforgettable experience. I was almost listening to myself. As I talked I kept thinking, “Is this me? Can this be me?” It was a miracle! When fear and inferiority were taken care of by the power of God, I could square my shoulders, look people in the eye, and speak. Even now, if I let fear slip in the stammering really gets bad. I still have some stammering.

I spoke to hundreds of students at the University of the Pacific in

Stockton, California. During the talk I told how God had healed me of stuttering, but I had stuttered a time or two during the speech. In the question-and-answer time that followed, one bright young lad jumped up and said, “You said you were healed of stuttering. Why do you still stutter?” The only thing I could think of was that maybe God left a little of it there to remind me that without Him I couldn’t talk at all.

A Change Of Life

Well, the young lady put in a seed of faith that set in motion a chain of circumstances that caused a leprous man to move toward healing. There were detours because he didn’t listen good. The maid said to go to the prophet Elisha but he went to the king of Israel. She told him only to go but he loaded himself down with all kinds of gifts. He didn’t know who the Source of healing was, just as many of us don’t know who the Source of healing is. Finally he arrived at the right place in pomp and ceremony, but the man of God didn’t come out at all. He just sent a message saying, “Go down to the River Jordan and dip seven times and your flesh will come again. You will be clean.”

This angered Naaman, who said, “I thought at least the man of God would come out and strike his hand over me and do some great thing. Why he sent only a word to me. If I’m going to dip in a river, I may as well go back to Damascus where the rivers, at least, have clean water in them.”

But you see, he had missed the whole point. He thought the river was going to heal him. And if he had to go into a river, he didn’t want to go into the Jordan. In the first place, it’s a dirty river; and besides, it’s an Israelite river.

The Jordan River was the final crossing point from the bondage of Egypt into the land of freedom, the land of promise. When the Israelites crossed the river, they came not as slaves but as the children of God. Washing in water is symbolic of spiritual cleansing, of a new way of life. Maybe the river signified to Naaman that the Source that directs all of life is God. That he had to reckon with God in all of his dealings. Finally, that he’s going to come, as it were, face-to-face with the reality of God. And God is a fact of life. He’s a fact of existence. He’s the reality of existence. Maybe he knew if he washed in it, it would change his way of life. And I say to everyone, including myself, that the biggest reason people don’t turn to God is they know it means a change of life, a turning away from the old life of having your own way.

You know, it’s not the occasional mistake you make that’s bad, it’s the way of life you develop that will get you. It’s not the occasional anger, it’s the

way of life that you build up, going through life angry and dealing with your problems in anger and rage. God wants to change your way of life, get you into a new rhythm, make you a new creature. The Bible says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

What God wants is a new creation in you. He’s dealing with your way of life. That’s what rules and regulations are for, to teach you a way of life. When you live the right way, those rules and regulations don’t bother you because you don’t even know they exist. If you don’t steal, a law against stealing doesn’t bother you. If you don’t tell lies, a rule against lying doesn’t bother you. If you don’t cheat, a rule against cheating doesn’t bother you. People are forced to live under laws when their way of life is wrong.

The laws are for the unjust. When a person is doing the right thing, he never thinks about laws. He never thinks about running a red light. He never thinks about going too fast through a school zone. I mean, he just automatically slows down, because it’s his way of life to conduct himself in the right way.

Do It God’s Way

When you turn to God, you are saying you are through with your own futile efforts of guiding your life. However smart you are, you wind up in a dead-end street without God, the ultimate Source of everything, including health. He may use different delivery systems, but they’re all from God. All healing is divine in the sense that ultimately God is the Source of all health. So whether healing comes through medicine or through prayer or through both, it’s divine healing because it ultimately comes from God.

Now there are many people like Naaman, who do not want to follow directions and obey, who want to be healed their way, not God’s way. There are those who pray but refuse medicine. There are those who take medicine but refuse prayer. You should do both...pray and take medicine. They’re just different delivery systems of God’s healing power, for God is the ultimate Source of all healing, whether it comes through medicine, prayer, or some other instrument.

The significance of the River Jordan is the change that needed to be made in Naaman’s life. Then the servants of Naaman planted a good seed by saying, “Father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn’t you have done it? Well, isn’t it easier to go down to the river and dip seven times and be cleansed?”

You never know what good word you say is going to be the right seed planted. Sometimes it's a pat on the shoulder, sometimes it's a smile, sometimes it's a word of encouragement, sometimes it's a rebuke. A good seed was planted. Naaman went down to the River Jordan and dipped himself seven times. The number seven in the Bible stands for completeness. Naaman decided to take God's way, His particular delivery system for healing. When he recognized God as his Source, he understood the River Jordan was not the healer. The River Jordan signifies a changed life...a life turned over to God.

Who Is Your Source?

I can tell you from experience that remembering your Source is not always easy. I think it's the most difficult part of Seed-Faith, to remember that God is your Source. It's so easy to think the teacher is your source to make a grade, or to think the boss, job, or customers are your source. It's so easy to forget that God is your Source. But when you forget, you don't know where to turn or what to do.

I deal with people all the time, particularly through their letters, whose lives have gone to pieces because they don't know who their source is. "Brother Roberts, I've lost my job, I'm beside myself." "Brother Roberts, my business is falling off, I'm facing bankruptcy. What am I going to do?" I hear from students who are hurting from all kinds of problems.. .broken courtships, failing grades. And somehow I try to tell them their Source is God, who is bigger than any problem. Do you believe that? If you have God as your Source then you have a job, no matter if you've lost your job or your business or whatever. You still have God, the Source of everything in heaven and on earth.

When Naaman came up out of the water, he was a changed man. By obeying the prophets instructions to dip himself seven times, Naaman had given up his old way of life. This giving up was Naaman s seed of faith to expect a miracle. I think you can only rightfully expect a miracle when you know you have sown the right seeds, the good seeds of faith. If you don't sow seeds of faith and make your love an act of giving, you can't expect miracles. If you don't have a source for your life, you are like a piece of driftwood. No matter if you have a job or money or this or that, if you don't have God as your Source you are a piece of driftwood. The devil will trick you, people will take advantage of you. You'll wind up behind the eight-ball, you'll lose out.

But when you find your Source in God, when you open up in love and faith, when you sow seeds out of your needs, when you start expecting a desired

result from God, then I tell you, MIRACLES ARE GOING TO HAPPEN.

The Power Of Faith

The Bible says Naaman's flesh came again like the flesh of a little child. It's hard to believe that the hands of a grown man can become like the flesh of a little child. Have you ever touched a little child? Have you ever put a little child's cheek up against yours and felt his tender flesh? It feels like beginning. It feels new. It feels fresh. It's hard to believe that God changed the leprosy and made the man's flesh soft and new, like the flesh of a little child.

One night I watched a television special called The Incredible Machine. You could look inside a man's body, at his organs, even his brain. Then the camera flashed to a living man who stood before a little toy electric train. It was all hooked up and ready to go. Wires were attached from the man's forehead and on down to the apparatus that ran the train. The man willed through his brain for that train to move. And the energy impulses came through his brain down through the wire to the converter that led to the electric train. The brain energy was converted into power and the little electric toy train took off and started going around and around. That's hard for me to believe, that the energy impulse of the brain could be converted into power sufficient to run an electric train round its track. Immediately I thought, the energy impulse of the brain is transformed into power to run an electric train on its track in the same way the energy force of your faith is released from your heart to achieve a desired result.

God transforms your faith into power, POWER that changes a living situation, that puts life in dead tissue, that causes leprosy to disappear, that causes the flesh to become the flesh of a little child, that causes a blind eye to see, that relaxes a stiff leg.

In our last seminar a student of Oral Roberts University said a simple little prayer for a blind woman. Her sight was restored and she said, "I can see, I can see!" On Sunday when she came through the prayer line, I said, "Can you really see?"

She said, "Oh, yes, I can really see."

Then I laughed and said, "What are you doing in the healing line?"

"I just want to be sure."

What happened to the little maid when the victorious, healed, changed, new man came home? Do you think Naaman kept her in slavery? Do you think the seed of faith she planted out of her own need worked a miracle in her life?

The Bible doesn't say, but the whole principle of the Bible is freedom, equality as human beings, treating each other like human beings ought to be treated. And I believe that the little girl's seed of faith not only helped Naaman to be healed, but also freed her from captivity.

Now, let me ask you a personal question. Is everything all right in your life? Is there something wrong? Will you touch someone and let me pray with you? And let this prayer be a prayer that gets results, for I am going to pray for you with my mind, with my heart, and with my faith. And I'm expecting miracles.

Prayer

Father, in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, our personal Lord and Savior, I come to You in behalf of a human being who's struggling with something — who can't get over it and who can't get out of it. I ask for miracles.

Let's open our heart, let our love become an act of giving, let our faith be released, and let's expect miracles.

And now, I pray that Jesus Christ will put His hand upon you from your head to your feet. I pray that He will loose you and free you from whatever form of slavery that's binding your life. If it's a disease, I pray God to cast it out of your being. If it's a fear, I pray God to remove that fear and replace it with courage, strength, and hope. I pray God will help you with the very problem that's tormenting you right now. And I believe, I believe God is doing it, I believe God has already begun to do it. I believe you are on your way to a miracle. Through Jesus Christ I believe and I expect that miracle in your life. Amen and amen.

Chapter 10, What Is Faith? By Dennis Bennett

Guest Sermon: Dennis Bennett.

I want to present to you a man of God, Dennis Bennett, Rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Seattle, Washington. This is the man upon whom the Holy Spirit fell in 1960 at St. Mark's Church in Van Nuys, California. That news was a spiritual bombshell in our time. It was reported by Time Magazine and other leading magazines throughout the world. He has a message, but more than that, he is a message. He is a message from the Lord Jesus himself, through the power of the Holy Spirit. I thank God for this man. I'm only sorry his lovely wife Rita was unable to attend. But we hope some day to have both of them back. Would you welcome Dennis Bennett.

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What Is Faith? by Dennis Bennett

Well, it's really a great privilege to be here. I was delighted to receive your invitation. I haven't been to ORU for at least five years. And it's a place one likes to come. As I said to President Roberts, the skyline is getting more impressive all the time. This class is called the Holy Spirit in the Now, which is really a great title because this is what's happened to many of us. We are becoming more aware of the Holy Spirit working in the now.

As a member of God's frozen people...many are cold, but few are frozen, as the old saying goes. It's an old joke, but I still laugh at it. But, you know, it really isn't true. We Episcopalians are not nearly as frozen as you think. And we're getting warmed up, I'll tell you that. But I do represent, I suppose, a kind of intellectual approach to the Christian faith which says if you have it together intellectually, then you understand the faith. Faith is regarded as something to be understood. It's a set of propositions, principles, statements. That's an intellectual understanding of faith.

Although it is important to have an intellectual understanding, that alone is not faith. Experience is the overwhelmingly important thing.

Two Ways Of Knowing

There are two ways to talk about knowledge. Imagine a young boy coming home from school one day very excited and saying to his mother, "O

mother, I met this wonderful fellow! He came to school and I know we're going to be great friends. I really like this boy, and we became very well acquainted. I really feel I've got a wonderful new friend."

And the mother might say, "Well, Tommy, that's very nice. I'm glad you have this new friend. Now, what is his last name?"

"I don't know. His first name is John."

"You don't know his last name? Where does he live?" "Well, I don't know."

"How old is he?"

"I don't know."

"Where does he come from?"

"I don't know. He just moved here and started school today. I met him and we had a wonderful time together. " "But you don't know anything about him. Does he have brothers and sisters? What is his father's work? How tall is he?"

"I didn't really notice."

Finally the mother might say, "Well, but, Tom, you don't know this boy at all. How can you say you feel you're going to be good friends? You can't tell me anything about him."

And the boy might say, "Well, Mom, I don't know anything about him, but we had a lot of fun together today. We just clicked, we liked each other. And I know we're going to be friends."

That's one way to know someone. Another way is to know about God through theology. I believe that theology is a very important study. I know one thing, if you don't have a good one you're going to have a bad one. Because you're going to make up your mind what you think about God. You're going to have a theory about God. You meet Christians who say, "Well, I'm just not interested in all this theology and doctrine stuff. I'm just interested in knowing the Lord and following Him."

That's beautiful and yet, you know, it frightens me because I know they're going to have a doctrine. And if they don't get a good one, they're going to pick a bad one. So many Christians, good and wonderful Christians, meet the Lord, have a wonderful experience, and then go off on some side track because they weren't taught good doctrine. So I'm not putting down doctrine at all. But I

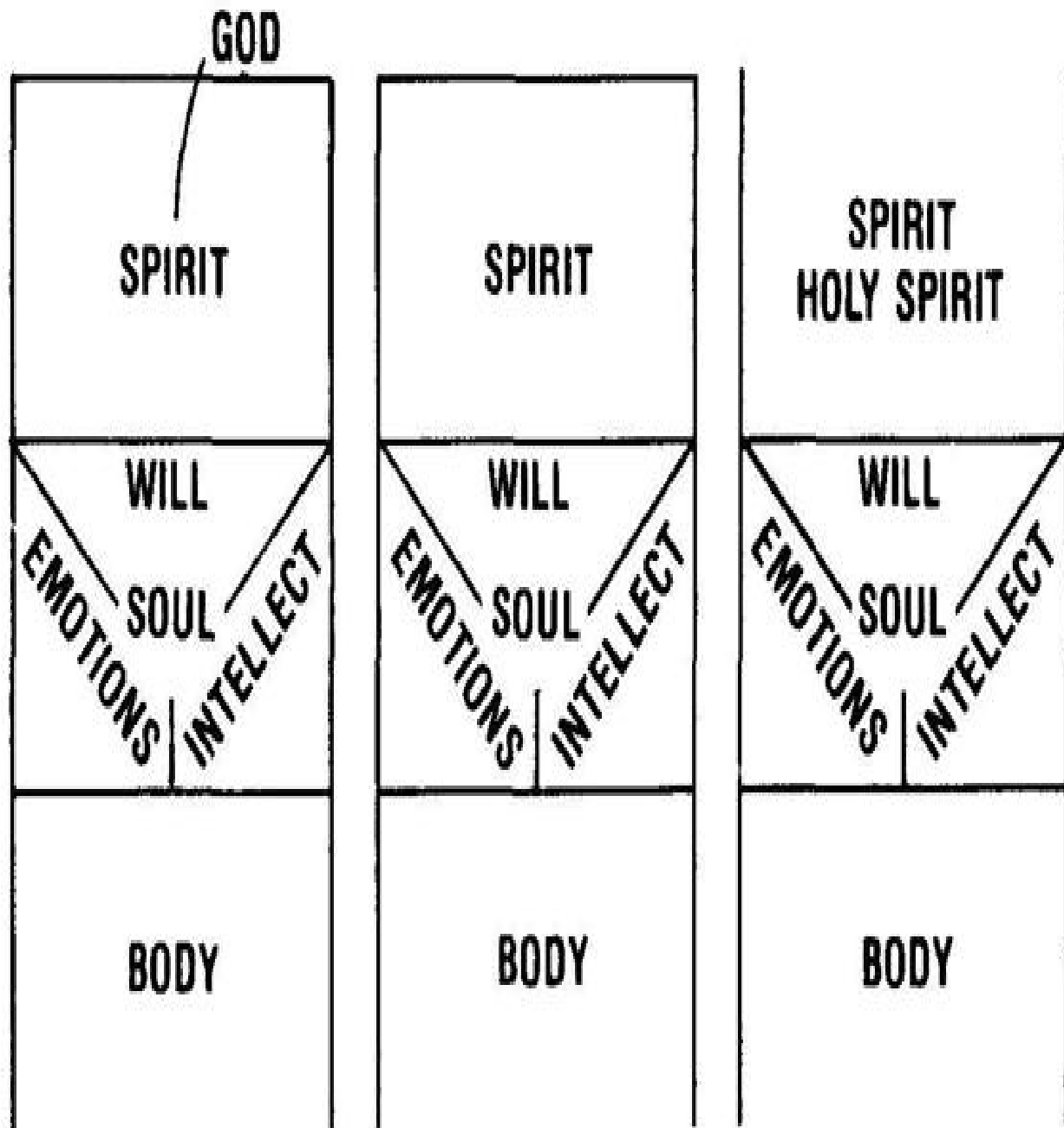
am saying that doctrine alone is not enough. That's just like having a map but not going anywhere. It's exactly like that.

I'm a pilot. I like to fly small planes. If I plan a trip from Seattle to Los Angeles in a small plane, I want some charts. I spend some time laying out my course and planning my refueling stops. What would you say if I planned the trip, put away my charts, and then said, "Well, that's that. That's all I have to do, just get out the charts and plan my trip. It's all taken care of." You might say, "But you haven't gone on the trip. You haven't had the experience." On the other hand, if I try to make the journey without charts, I'm likely to be in bad trouble rather quickly. And so it is in the spiritual life. You need both experience and doctrine.

I want to talk about that combination in my life. Sixteen years ago the Lord found me and I found a broader experience of the Lord. Now I was already born again, regenerated, saved, whatever term you want to use. Jesus became real to me when I invited Him into my heart. I was eleven years old. I remember that and there's no question about it. Sometimes one of my friends will say, "What really happened to you when you had this experience of the Holy Spirit was that you finally got saved."

But I say, "No, no. You can't tell me that, because when I was eleven years old I became aware of the Lord Jesus Christ. He definitely did something inside me. He came to live in me in a way that I knew He was there."

Spirit, Soul And Body



This diagram shows the threefold nature of the human being... spirit and soul and body. It's a very important teaching. The Greek word for soul is psuche or as we put it in English, psyche. A psychologist is one who studies the soul, the psuche. A psychiatrist, a doctor of the psuche, tries to cure the soul.

The soul is divided into the will, the emotions, and the intellect. If you don't know you have a soul and a spirit, you're liable to have a terrible time. A person goes to a meeting, receives the Lord Jesus, gets turned on, and everything

is just great for a while. Then he suddenly discovers there's a war on. The battle may be the losing of his temper or saying or doing something he knows he shouldn't. The old devil comes around and says, "You see, you thought you were a Christian, didn't you? You thought you were saved and born again and all that. Now look what you said. Look what you did."

Very often the person who thinks he has only a spirit and a body says, "Oh, I guess I lost it. My spirit got turned on to the Lord but now I guess it got turned off, so I'll have to get saved again."

Then when the evangelist comes back, this person tries to get saved again. Or he may blame it on his body. "Well, it was just my physical being." He gets to thinking that the material world is where the evil is. "If it weren't for that evil old body of mine, I wouldn't do these things. My spirit's OK, but my body is bad."

Scripture says man has a body, a soul, and a spirit. Paul says, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). (Read Hebrews 4:12.) The very beginning of the Bible says, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). Notice, by the way, God did not breathe His Spirit into the dust, the body; He breathed His Spirit into the man's spirit. Man was created in the image of God, in his spirit. That's what makes you human. You have a spirit.

An animal has a soul. Now if you don't think animals have souls, then stop and think for a few moments. Does a cat have emotions? Yes. I don't like to meet a cat when it's being emotional. Does a cat have will? Yes. Cats are mostly constructed of will, you know. Does a cat have intellect? Yes. My old cat had an intellect. We named him Linus, because as a kitten he dragged an apron around with him all the time. How he loved that apron! But, anyway, ole Linus could outthink me. He outsmarted me on a number of occasions. He was an animal with a body and a soul, but different from a human being because he didn't have a spirit. God made man in His image and gave man a spiritual nature so that he could respond to God.

The Spirit Dies To God

First of all, God sought fellowship with man. That's why God gave man a spirit, so that He could have fellowship with him. Man destroyed that fellowship, his spirit died to God when he said to God, "I don't trust You." This may be an oversimplification but basically that is what man said.

The Deadly Question

Using the serpent, Satan said, “Did God tell you? Hath God said?” Satan loves to ask questions like, “Did God really say that?”

Whenever the enemy comes around with that kind of question, you should say, “Get out of here.”

Of course Eve said, “No, No. He didn’t say that, He said this.”

And then Satan put out his great temptation, “God’s holding out on you. If you reach out and take the fruit of that tree, you’ll be just like God. There are tremendous things that God’s holding back from you. He wants to keep you underdeveloped like a little baby. He doesn’t want you to grow up. He doesn’t want you to be big, to know it all. If you reach out and eat of the tree of knowledge, then you’ll be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Oh, my, how I could go on from there to show what has happened to man in his attempt to be God ever since. When man broke the fellowship, God couldn’t do anything about it. If you say to your friend, “You know, I don’t quite trust you. I don’t really think you want the best for me,” you’ve lost a friend right there.

Your friend can’t do anything about it. He may not get angry with you. He may say, “Please don’t feel like that. It isn’t true.”

“Well, I just feel that way, you see,” you say.

What can your friend do? What can he say to you? How can he change that situation? He can’t. There is nothing he can do about it. The friendship is broken. When the fellowship was broken between God and man, man ceased to relate to God in the spirit. The spirit didn’t die, but it died to God. Man’s predicament from then on is spiritual death.

Spiritual Death

That’s what’s the matter with the world. I mean, really see this if you haven’t seen it before. That world out there, what’s wrong with it? It isn’t misbehavior that’s wrong with it, it’s spiritual death. There are a lot of nice people in this world. There are a lot of people out there who behave better than a lot of Christians do. There are a lot of people out there who have more natural human love than a lot of Christians do. That’s our shame. There are a lot of people out there who are more honest and who treat you better than a lot of Christians. Some of the worst cheating I’ve experienced in my life has come

from fellow Christians, I'm sorry to say.

It isn't a matter of going to a person and saying, "Hey, look, if you would change your behavior and be good like me you could be a Christian." Christianity is NOT being good. That's not what it is. Some of the biggest problems in the world today were begun by good people. Communism is a corruption of human altruism. A person becomes a communist because he's desperate to do something to help people. Most committed communists got that way because they were idealists. Communism is the result of idealism, not of selfishness. Facism comes from selfishness, but communism comes from idealism. Human beings who are desperate to do something for the people of this world sometimes take a very wrong turn and become communists. I believe communism is of the devil, but it's the devil's lie to an idealist that makes a communist.

Christians Are Not To Condemn The World

The problem for the people out there in the world is they're dead to God. And it's very simple for them to come alive to God. All they have to do is receive Jesus. It's a waste of time to condemn the world. Christians spend so much of their energy condemning the world. "Have you heard what's happening here? Did you see the papers? Oh, my, aren't they terrible!"

God said to Abraham, "In your seed shall all families of the earth be blessed." Our orders do not read, "Go forth and condemn the world. Draw in your skirts and keep yourself to yourself and be a holy club and live in glory until Jesus comes to get you." Praise God, Jesus IS coming to get us, but He isn't coming to get us out of the mess. He put us here to do something ABOUT the mess.

I'm afraid a lot of Christians today use the concept of the rapture of the church with the idea that they're gonna be gotten out of this mess, and that it's no place for a Christian to be. I've heard people say, "I've got to get another job because the people there are just terrible. They drink and smoke, cuss and gamble. It's no place for a Christian to be."

...But To Save The World

The Lord Jesus Christ would say, "Oh, yes, that's exactly the place for a Christian to be. Those poor sad miserable people don't know how to live. You're here to teach them how to live. You're not here to condemn them for their behavior. You're here to tell them about Me, so they can be happy, so they can

rejoice. Then they won't need all that other stuff. It will fall off them like autumn leaves from a tree. " It's important for our faces to shine with the love of God.

So the problem is spiritual death. God could not reach man. Spiritually man had cut himself off. So what did God do? He came in the body. Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. When the whole story was over He blew the lid off. Jesus rose and conquered death and sin. He opened man's spirit again to God. Hallelujah!

God's Spirit Lives In Us

And it's because of Jesus that God's Spirit is able to come to those who want Him. And now man is in fellowship with God. Wouldn't it be terrible if all that Jesus had done was restore us to the innocence of Adam? How long do you think it would have taken you or me to blow that one? How long would it have been before we fell again? Thank God, He didn't just bring us back to the innocence of Adam.

No, this time He came to LIVE in you. You are not born with God in you but God comes to live in you by the Holy Spirit. You become a born-again Christian, your spirit joined to the Holy Spirit. If you have received Jesus as your Savior, the Holy Spirit is living in you now. In your spirit.

...Not In The Soul

You might say to me, "Well, Dennis Bennett, I don't FEEL Him there," or "I HAVE felt His presence but I don't feel His presence much of the time. Why is that?"

That's because you're living in your soul. You're still spending most of your time where the world spends all of its time, at the level of the soul. Most of the time the unsaved man lives in the soul. He tries to think his way through. He tries to feel his way through. He tries to will his way through.

...Not In The Body

You may be living at the level of your body. You want to feel good, but you feel only frustration. How sad that many Christians still spend most of their time living in the soul or in the body. That's why Christians often don't look much different from pagans. And that's also why the world hates and rejects what has been presented as Christianity. Now, that's where persecution's going to come from. Unless Christians can show people something different from what they've seen, they don't want Christianity. They see it as negative and

destructive. They see it as a teaching that has fostered a critical, sour, frozen, bound-up land of personality. They really do. Freud said, "Let's get rid of this religion."

And the communist says, "Religion is an opiate, a destructive thing."

...But In The Spirit

Christians have not really shown the Holy Spirit. When people see the Spirit of God in you, they will be attracted to the light of God. Too often you don't let the light come through. I believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit releases the indwelling life of God in you. The Holy Spirit, who is in every Christian, breaks forth and you begin to live in your spirit.

Where Are You, Lord?

When I was the rector of a large church in Los Angeles thirty years ago, I knew that Jesus was in me but I didn't experience Him very often. Because, you see, I was still thinking as so many Christians do, that the Lord was up in heaven some place and He popped down every once in a while and manifested himself to me. You have heard Christians pray, "O Lord, where are You, Lord? Come down, Lord. Send down revival, do something, Lord. Where are You?"

If they'd stop and listen they'd hear the Lord saying, "I came down two thousand years ago. I went back to heaven and then by the Holy Spirit I came down to stay, and I'm here. What are you hollering about?"

When I was eleven years old I said, "Jesus, come live in me."

And He said, "OK." So He did.

In Hebrews 13:5, Jesus said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Yet we say, "He will live in me unless I goof."

Jesus did not say, "I'll be with you always, unless you do something especially bad." He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

Internal Security

I'm not teaching eternal security, I'm teaching internal security. They're different. I'm not arguing the point now of whether you can ever drive God away. What I am saying is that as long as you want Him, He isn't going to desert you. That I know. Jesus is not in the deserting business, no matter what kind of mess you get into. He isn't going to desert you if you're willing to turn back to

Him and say, “Lord, I’m sorry. ” He’s here and He says, “I will never, never leave you. I will never, never forsake you.”

But you see, this hadn’t sunk into me. I had invited Him into my life way back and He’d been in my life since then. Every once in a while I’d get in tune enough so that He was able to let me know He was still there. And I’d say, “Oh, I sense the presence of the Lord, isn’t that wonderful! I wonder how that could have happened.” And all the while He was inside me. Isn’t it sad that I really didn’t know He was in me? Do you know that He’s in you now? That He wants to be released?

Let Me Out

Years ago when our family had been praying about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, all three of my children were baptized spontaneously in the Holy Spirit one night in our living room. Just spontaneously, no one laid hands on them or anything. The power of God was there and He broke free in them.

But sixteen-year-old Steve couldn’t quite accept it. He struggled for a week or two. Then one morning he said, “Mom, I had the strangest dream. I dreamed I had God locked up in a closet in my bedroom and He was calling to me through the door, ‘Steve, when are you going to let Me out of here?’ ”

Now that’s a good dream, and I recommend that you listen and find out whether God has been shouting through your closet doors. “Mary, Dennis, Joe, whoever, when are you gonna let Me out of here?”

So when I was pastor of this big church, I met some people who knew something I didn’t know. You see, these Episcopalians had noticed something in one of their friends, an Assembly of God layman. “What have you got? You’ve got something!”

And he said, “Well, I guess you mean the baptism in the Holy Spirit.”

They saw something in this man. They said, “You’ve got something. You’ve got a joy, you’ve got a love, you’ve got a peace. That’s what we want.”

He said, “All right,” and prayed for them.

Baptized In The Spirit

They were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Something happened to them. They got turned on, and when I met them later I said, “What have you got?” After they told me and I thought it over for about three months, I said, “I want it.” And when they prayed, something happened!

I received the baptism in the Holy Spirit just as the Scriptures teach. I spoke with new languages. I'm pentecostal. I absolutely believe that speaking in tongues is part of the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It distresses me to find that many are playing this down more and more. I really think that if you don't speak and pray in the Spirit, you're going to miss a great deal of freedom in your Christian life. I think you need to speak in tongues many times a day, every day of your life.

If you don't speak in tongues and want to, all you have to do is start. That's something people don't realize. Speaking in tongues is simply what happens when a Christian lets the Holy Spirit guide his voice. It isn't the Holy Ghost speaking. He doesn't have to speak in tongues. It isn't God suddenly taking over like a ventriloquist. God doesn't do that kind of thing.

When you decide to say, "Well, Lord, I'm gonna start using my voice and I'm gonna trust You to give me a language," then it will happen. I know this is true.

God's Spirit flows through all parts of your body. The body expresses itself in three basic ways. Through your legs, that's where you go. Through your arms, that's what you do. Through your voice, that's what you say. And the voice is the most important. The Psalmist says, "Let my mouth be filled with thy praise" (Psalm 71:8). The Holy Spirit is simply saying, "I want to flow out of you through your voice, your mouth." He wants to, so let Him.

Come And Drink

When I received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, I allowed the Holy Spirit, who had been living in me for thirty years, to flow through my soul and through my body and through my voice out into the world. In His way. I didn't tell Him what to do. I didn't tell Him what to say. I began to be all of a sudden aware that God was in my innermost being. Jesus said, "If you're thirsty, come and drink." Now that's inflow, isn't it?

Millions of people drink of the living water, but they don't realize that Jesus also said, "The water that I give you will be in you a well of water springing up unto everlasting life" (John 4:14). And, "If you trust me, if you believe in me, out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Now that's a different motion. The first was an incoming, this is an outpouring.

And what's the baptism in the Holy Spirit? It's the outpouring. That's what I believe it is. It's the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, flowing through your soul and out to the world. Not just speaking in tongues, but through ministry.

Places we go and things we do, healing the sick, casting out evil spirits, proclaiming the Word of God. Saying and doing the things Jesus said and did. That's what the baptism in the Holy Spirit is.

Jacob's Ladder

In Genesis there is a striking story about a ladder and a man named Jacob, kind of a tricky guy in his early days. Jacob was a man God could use because Jacob was open to God. He had a dream one night in which he saw a stairway or ladder going up into the heavenly places. In the last two verses of the first chapter of John, Jesus refers to Jacob's ladder when He says to Nathaniel, "You're going to see greater things than these, Nathaniel. You're going to see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." Jesus is saying, "I am Jacob's ladder. It represents Me and upon Me the angels of God, the glory of God, will come up and down. Man will come to God on Me and the glory of God will come down to man on Me."

Jesus In The World

"The works that I do shall ye do also; and greater works than these shall ye do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Why did He go to His Father? So the Holy Spirit could come and live in us, so the Holy Spirit could be poured out on all flesh. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us because of Jesus. He said, "Because I go to My Father, you shall do the things that I do."

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are simply Jesus still at work in the world. The gifts of the Spirit are simply the power of Jesus still flowing through His people, ministering to the world. The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus still being manifested in this world through His people. Scripture says, "You are just like Him in this world." Jacob's ladder represents you and me in the world. You are a little Jacob's ladder pitched between heaven and Main Street in your hometown.

I am a little Jacob's ladder pitched between heaven and 1428 Olympic Avenue, Edmond, Washington, or wherever I am. The foot of the ladder is where I am. The foot of Jacob's ladder is wherever you are, brother and sister. And the glory of God is supposed to be coming down that ladder and pouring out from you to heal the sick, to give the word of knowledge and wisdom, to speak the word of God in prophecy, to minister as Jesus ministers. Then the world will see the love and joy, the peace and glory. You are baptized in the Spirit when the Holy Spirit breaks out from your locked closet and begins to flow up through your body and soul and out into the world.

Hang-Ups In The Soul

The whole key, the key to freedom in the Christian life, is to release the Lord. The body can interfere if you're hungry or in some kind of physical stress. But most of the hang-ups and blocks are in the soul. And the devil loves to work in this soul area. He just loves to tickle your emotions. The Holy Spirit has a hard time getting past some of your emotional hang-ups. If you hang onto anger and impatience, He says, "I can't work through this. I can't flow through this."

The Holy Spirit is blocked because of emotional hang-ups and also because of intellectual hang-ups. And that includes false teaching. If you've been fooling around with the occult, the Holy Spirit will be blocked until you renounce these wrong ideas in your intellect. The devil loves to throw intellectual doubts at you so that you say, "Now until this question is answered, I can't go any further." He just loves to get you to say that kind of thing. Ignore him. When the devil starts asking questions, just say, "You go ask Jesus, because this place is under new management. Just go ask Jesus."

The devil loves to get you to set your will in an "I-know-this-is-the-way-to-go" attitude. The Holy Spirit says, "Be reasonable. Do it My way."

If you say, "No, Lord, You don't understand. I want You around in case I get in trouble, but I think I know the best way to do this certain thing," then the Holy Spirit can't flow. You have cut Him off.

I've been ministering to a dear friend for several years now. He's a wonderful man, a highpowered retired businessman who is determined to become a free Christian. He wants to be free in the Spirit, and he's going to do it if it kills him. He makes long lists. He asks, "Do you think I should do this? Do you think I should try harder here? Do you think I should pray more? Do you think I should do this and that and the other thing? Or maybe I'm not committed enough."

I answer, "No, all these things are wonderful, but the main thing you've got to do is relax and release the Spirit of God in your life. Begin to trust Him and let Him flow out from you. Let Him be in you what He wants to be. Let Him express himself in you and through you. This is the baptism."

Let God Flow

And notice, dear friends, this is a way of life. Just as salvation is a way of life. You begin to be saved when Jesus comes into your life. He comes in and He is your Savior, but He saves you every day. He saves me every day in many

ways. So the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a way of life, keeping the gates open. I find it a difficult technique to learn because I'm always getting in the way. But it's the only technique really worth bothering about in life.. .learning how to open up and let God come through. Getting out of His way and letting Him flow.

It's easy to get saved, it's easy to get baptized in the Holy Spirit. But I don't find it easy to walk in the Spirit. That's because of me, not because of God. It would be easy if I could always relax and let the power and love and Spirit of God flow through me.

It's been wonderful to be with you here, Brother Roberts, and great to be back. Thank you so much.

Panel Discussion

ORAL: Father Bennett, that was absolutely supernatural, it really was. It was a supernatural manifestation of light from God. When I looked over at my darling wife Evelyn, her face was and is shining.

EVELYN: I just wish he could have gone on another hour. I thought this statement was interesting, "God couldn't get to us through the spirit, so He came through the body." I've never heard it expressed like that before and it's just a beautiful thought that He came through the baby Jesus, through a body. It throws a whole new light on why Jesus came to the world.

ORAL: God incarnate, God in the flesh, our flesh, and working back up to our spirit through our body, because that's all we could understand — our spirit being dead to God. Dr. Howard Ervin, what stands out to you? **ERVIN:** Looking at the sketch of body, soul, and spirit,

you see that the fruits of the Spirit come to life in your spirit. Both the fruit and the gift manifestations are totally and wholly supernatural and should flow from the spirit through the soul, through the body, and into the world. We become lopsided when we place too much emphasis on one or the other. Too much emphasis on the gift manifestations will make us fanatical. Too much emphasis on the fruits and we lose the power of God.

BENNETT: What fascinates me is that the Lord recognizes our physical nature. He created us physical, as well as psychological and spiritual. All these parts of us make up a normal human being. Sometime I really want to write a book on the many times in the Scripture that our Lord is eating. The Eucharist itself, the Holy Communion, is a meal. Notice how many times important things happen in the New Testament at a meal or just after a meal.

Zacchaeus came down out of the tree and Jesus said, "I'm going to have lunch with you today." Zacchaeus went off to tell his wife. When Jesus met him in the front hall, He said, "Salvation is come to this house." Zacchaeus said, "I'm going to give the half of my goods to the poor and restore anything falsely taken fourfold" (Luke 19:1-10).

When He met the woman at the well, He said, "Give me to drink" (John 4:7).

Jesus and the disciples had just eaten a hot breakfast of bread and fish when Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" (John 21:12-17).

Just before this breakfast the disciples went fishing. Peter says, "I'm going to go fishing. Nothing else to do. Apparently Jesus is gone. He hasn't been around."

Jesus had risen from the dead. The disciples had some experiences with Him, but they hadn't seen Him for a while. So Peter and some of the disciples went fishing. They didn't catch a thing all night. When you go fishing without the Lord telling you to, that's what happens, of course. And in the morning as they came to shore, they saw Jesus.

Now if I were making up the story, I'd have Jesus, the risen Lord, floating six feet off the ground, all sparkly and supernatural and very unearthly. The disciples would fall on their faces. They would have been fasting, cold, hungry, and miserable. That would have been my notion of an ideal spiritual condition, you see.

Jesus knew better. He knew human beings, and so the first thing He said to them was, "Come and eat." He wasn't floating six feet off the ground. He'd caught, scaled, and cleaned the fish. He'd built a campfire and was broiling the fish. Whether He had the angels help Him, I don't know. But I don't think He did. He probably did it with His own two hands, probably enjoyed doing it. And the very first thing He said to those fellows was, "Come and have breakfast." It was only after breakfast that He said, "Peter, do you really love Me?"

False religion usually tends to become very otherworldly. Christianity has both feet planted firmly on the ground, heads firmly in the clouds, you see.

ORAL: In balance. As Jesus lives in your spirit, He takes over and flows from spirit, soul, and body and then up from body, soul, and spirit to God. It's a constant flow. **BENNETT:** Back and forth, up and down the ladder. And the spirit is always in heavenly places. I may be feeling very crummy as far as my soul or body is concerned; nevertheless, my spirit is seated in heavenly places.

Because the Bible says so. We are seated in heavenly places. But if I don't realize that I can be in heavenly places, then I'm operating on a lower level.

ORAL: Evelyn, did you know you were a little Jacob's ladder?

EVELYN: No, I didn't really realize that. How does the body get in the way of the flow of the Spirit? **BENNETT:** Well, I believe the body is basically an innocent thing. Let me tell you the story of the Irishman who was trying to ride the donkey. After he put the saddle, stirrups, and bridle on the donkey, he got into the saddle. The donkey began to kick. And he kicked and kicked until finally the donkey succeeded in getting his hoof in one of the stirrups. The Irishman looked down and said, "Be-gorra, if you re going to get on, I'm going to get oiF."

It seems to me that this is a pretty good analogy with the body. If we let the body or the soul get in the saddle we're in trouble. It's the soul that makes trouble for the body. It's the soul that teaches the body to like narcotics and all kinds of bad stuff. It's the soul that encourages the body to overeat.

ORAL: So what do you do about it?

BENNETT: You let the spirit direct the soul. When you are in fellowship with God in your spirit, then God can straighten out your soul, which in turn will correct your body. I don't think you can work much on the level of the body. So often, you know, when people meet the Lord, they have all kinds of terrible habits on the physical level. You can work on a man for alcoholism, for example, but if you don't work on him at a higher level than the body you won't make any headway. AA knows that. The first thing AA says to the alcoholic person is, "You've got to acknowledge that you are powerless and that a higher power than you has to start working." This is acknowledging the spirit.

STUDENT: I would like to direct a question to Father Bennett. You spoke earlier of the importance of intellectual understanding. I'd like to know to what extent your intellectual understanding can go before it conflicts with your spiritual understanding. Jesus said we must come to Him as children, simple, and not try to understand but to accept through faith.

BENNETT: It depends on what you do with the intellect. I have met men of great intellect, who were as simple as little children. In fact, many really great scientists have been like that, real believing scientists. The simplicity lies in the fact that, whatever else you know, you do know God. And I know God can whisper more in my ear in two seconds than all the learning a man can tell me in two millenniums.

I don't ignore human knowledge, but the minute I begin to believe human knowledge has something final to say, then I'm in trouble.

STUDENT: Then what is the importance of our intellect? **BENNETT:** Well, let's put it another way. What would happen if we didn't use our intellect? Could we put it that way? If we just went on in our personal relationship with God and didn't stop to think about it at all. In one way I think it would be great. It would be just wonderful if Christians really could do that, if we could be like little children going along saying, "Praise the Lord. I don't understand all of this but it's wonderful."

But you know, we're not going to do that because God's given us an intellect, and if we don't train it properly it's going to mess us up. I think we've got to pay attention to what God wants us to do with our intellect. Now I'd say here at ORU you are receiving intellectual training safely because it's being related to the spiritual truths. Now in most schools, which are pagan, you are in danger of learning that human intellect is going to replace everything. You're going to become very proud of your great intellect. This is the opposite of the little child, isn't it? The Bible doesn't tell us to be childish — we are told to be childlike.

Jesus said, "Be like a little child." And Paul came along and said, "Be no longer children," and clearly they're not contradicting each other. Jesus said, "Be childlike," and Paul said, "Don't be childish." Not ever to use your intellect is to be childish; however you can train your mind and still be childlike.

STUDENT: Well, I can understand that. It's how you use your intellect.

BENNETT: Yes, what you do with it.

STUDENT: I'd like to say that I can really relate to what Father Bennett has been talking about because I've had a lot of trouble recently in my emotions, letting Satan in my emotions and my will. One thing I've learned is that praying in tongues lets Jesus' love and the Holy Spirit flow through me. It helps me to control my emotions and understand God's will.

I've found that as I grow in God and release His love, I also receive more love and am more open to people. I see more beauty in people. Always before I tended to see the bad in them, but since I've become a Christian, I see the good and not the bad in them.

BENNETT: Praise the Lord, that's great. When you praise the Lord and pray in the Spirit and in your own language, you begin to express the life of the Spirit and give the Spirit a chance to flow. And as He begins to flow, He begins

to break down and wash away the problems. We don't really have to deal with the problems because they disappear in the flow of the Spirit. It seems indirect but it isn't, it's very direct.

EVELYN: I want to hear Dr. Ervin say what he thinks the Bible means when it speaks of sins of the flesh.

ERVIN: As briefly as possible, sins of the flesh are the expression of the natural appetites of the body. In the unsaved person these natural appetites have no controls. It's like a heating system without a thermostat. And it is only when the Holy Spirit takes residence within us that these controls are then supplied.

Prayer

ORAL: Father, in the name of Your Son Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Savior, we come to You and we come for many miracles, for without miracles we'll never make it. The miracle of Your grace to change, the miracle of Your presence to make life worthwhile, the miracle of Your power to deliver us from the bondage of the devil. O God, we ask You for many miracles.

And now I pray that the power and love of the Holy Spirit for you will come upon you and deliver your soul and your body. You'll feel His healing power going through you from your head to your feet. You'll feel His power helping you with your marriage, helping you with your dating, helping you with your finances, helping you with your job, helping you to be a whole person. Through Jesus Christ I pray that the Lord will give you a new life, beginning now. Amen and amen. And everybody said Amen.

Chapter 11, The Prayer Language Of The Spirit

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: 1 Corinthians 14:1-15

Prayer Language

Have you ever heard of the prayer language of the Spirit, the praise language of the Spirit? Have you ever spoken in tongues and known what that experience really means in your life? Have you wondered about it? Have you puzzled about what speaking in tongues meant to the early Christians 2,000 years ago? You may know people who speak in tongues but don't know the value and validity of the experience. A careful study of 1 Corinthians 14 teaches about the Holy Spirit praying with your spirit to reveal God's wisdom. Let's read 1 Corinthians 14:1-15, line upon line and precept upon precept, to understand St. Paul's teaching.

Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

So likewise, ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak in to the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me. Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. For if I pray in an unknown tongue,

my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Paul writes to the Roman church,

Chapter 8, verses 26 and 27:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Not As We Ought

St. Paul states a fundamental fact concerning prayer in Romans 8:26,27. He says prayer is necessary for human survival, that we need divine help to enable us to pray because within ourselves we do not know what to pray for as we ought. Now there's a big "ought." As we ought, as is necessary for us to have whole lives, as is necessary for us to communicate with God and for God to communicate with us.

Paul frankly says we don't know how or what to pray for as we ought. I've never met any Christian who didn't admit that. I'm the first to admit it. Sometimes maybe we do know what to pray for. But more often we don't know what to pray for as we ought. St. Paul spoke from his own experience and knowledge of prayer, from his experience with other people who prayed, and from the knowledge given to him by the Holy Spirit, who said that we know not what to pray for as we ought.

At times prayer is a joy, but at other times prayer is a difficult exercise of the spirit and mind. Sometimes it seems virtually impossible to pray. The words return to you, something squeezes your heart and blocks the words. Afterwards you feel you haven't prayed at all. You feel you've not expressed yourself, that something inexpressible within yourself is hidden or held back. You may feel like you're lost, that you can't find God.

Yet you're not alone. The Holy Spirit himself helps your weaknesses, your very weakness in expressing yourself. One of the Holy Spirit's functions is to help you with that weakness, to help you to be strong in prayer. And people who are strong in prayer get results for their lives. God responds. A powerful prayer is not rhetoric, just words coming out of your mouth.

Prayer Of Power

Our Lord prayed in a tremendously effective way. Paul prayed in a very effective way. Such prayer is made possible by the Holy Spirit. And in a very real sense, it is the Holy Spirit doing the praying. The Holy Spirit himself prays through you, and you merely enter into His prayer. Now if you can learn to enter into His prayer, which is in your behalf, then you are praying with power. You may have experienced the Holy Spirit praying in you, either in tongues or in your own language. Then you feel in harmony with the Holy Spirit. The words come out, the thoughts go up to God, and you have that soul-satisfying experience of praying and knowing that God hears. You know that you know that you know. You rise up inside and you face life with a positive attitude. You're able to think better, you're able to plan better. You're able to have better relationships with people. I could go on and on with the benefits of such praying.

Bogged-Down Prayer

Yet there are times in my life when my prayer life is so bogged down that everything seems futile. I can't make it. I find myself saying, "God, why, WHY is this happening to me? What have I done to deserve it? Why is all this negative stuff coming at me?"

Or I believe God wants me to do something and I have feelings of terrible inadequacy. I'm just filled with such a feeling of inferiority that I know I can't do it.

Praying In The Holy Spirit

And yet when I get into the spirit of prayer, the Holy Spirit praying through me, then everything looks different. The feelings of inferiority just fall away. I'm able to square my shoulders, look the problem in the face, and say I can lick a den of wildcats. And I really mean it, feel it, know it, know that I can do it through the power of the Holy Spirit. I can't describe that power other than to say it's an awe-inspiring, overwhelming sense of the presence of God. And God CANNOT be defeated. God is on the winning side, and I'm on His side. And we're marching together and we're going to get it done. Oh, what a feeling! You just wish you had it every second of every minute of every hour of every day of every week of every month of every year of your life. Do you agree with that? You know you need the power of the Holy Spirit to pray like that.

Staying Converted

I think it's easier to get converted than it is to stay converted. I think the one-time experience of repenting and believing on the Lord Jesus isn't nearly so much of a struggle as it is to go on day by day, facing the problems of life, becoming a disciple.

Seems to me, in my life at least, that's a greater struggle than that one time of facing up to myself as a seventeen-year-old, repenting of my sins, and becoming a Christian. It took a lot of courage for me to do that, and it took a lot of needs in my life for that to happen. And I had to come to the brink of absolute futility. To be converted to the Lord and filled with His Spirit is a great experience. But I tell you it takes a lot more courage to continue against the tide of sin and to keep on making the right decision for the Lord. It takes more now than it did the night I was seventeen. And I need the Holy Spirit more every day.

“I Will Come To You”

In Romans 8:26,27 Paul says that the Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses. He searches our hearts. He intercedes for us and for the saints, according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit is the intercessor who helps us.

In St. John 14:18 Christ said, I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. “I will send another comforter, one co-equal with myself. The Holy Spirit, coequal with Me, the Son of God. When I leave, I will send Him. And when He comes, He will guide you into truth. When He comes, He will enable you to do greater things than I've done.” Why? Because then Christ would have been lifted out of His earthly existence, out of the human limitations of a fleshly body, out of being limited to time and space and death itself. He would have ascended to the heavenlies. Christ says when the Holy Spirit comes, He will be in you. And now the Christ Spirit has returned in the power of the Holy Spirit.

While Christ was on earth He was with the people. There's an awful lot of difference between having sacks of groceries all around you and having some of that food inside your stomach. And there's a whole lot of difference between having the Holy Spirit with you and having Him in you. That is what Paul is talking about, the Holy Spirit being in you and really enabling you to pray.

Love Is The Best

1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, says that without love we are nothing, but with love we are everything. Paul begins the fourteenth chapter by saying, “Follow after love.” Now a much better word for love here is Jesus or God, for God is love. And love is something you give. Love is an act of your giving,

giving something of yourself — your time or talent or money or concern.

The best part of yourself is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit sheds His love abroad, He scatters it in your heart. He sows seeds of love and when that happens, then you start giving. And that's when God really happens to you. God happens to a person who gives love. You can say you have Him all you want to, but if you don't show love, the people around you know that God is not in you. But when God happens to you, then His love is spread abroad in your heart and you start giving it. People may not call it God, they may not call it love, but they recognize it as something good.

Desire Spiritual Gifts

Paul starts off by saying, "Follow after God, after Christ, after divine love and desire spiritual gifts." He says desire, not seek after, spiritual gifts. It's wrong to seek a gift of the Holy Spirit. It's much better to seek the Holy Spirit, the giver of the gifts. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit are resident in Him, and when He's in you the gifts in Him are in you also. Whichever gift you need at any moment for a particular need in your life is at the fore, it's there already. That gift is right there, ready to be manifested in your life. Why would you run around saying, "God, give me this gift or give me that gift," when the Holy Spirit is already in you? The Holy Spirit manifests the gifts as He wills to do so. (Read 1 Corinthians 12.) Be in an attitude of desiring the supernatural workings of God in your life, which are what the gifts of the Spirit are. Desire spiritual gifts.

In this letter St. Paul deals with a serious problem for the Christians living in Corinth, a corrupt and idolatrous city. Part of their worship of heathen gods was sexual intercourse with the priestesses of their temples. This worship in the temple was consummated by a sexual act with women who gave themselves over to demons. Now that was the real core of their religion in Corinth when St. Paul came preaching the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

The people who were converted out of all that idolatry came into a clean life. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They were given a marvelous prayer language expressing the deepest longing of their hearts to God. They came to know the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are mentioned in the twelfth chapter. The gift of the word of knowledge, the gift of the word of wisdom, the gift of faith, the gifts of healing, the gift of working of miracles,

the gift of prophecy, the gift of discerning of spirits, the gift of tongues,

and the gift of interpretation of tongues.

Tongues

Speaking in tongues was the most desirable of the gifts to the Corinthians who had lived flamboyant lives of sin. The Corinthian Christians misunderstood the gift of tongues. Some thought the gift of tongues and the prayer language were the same. They were rising up in their church services and speaking in tongues without interpreting. The people around them couldn't understand what they were saying. It was creating a lot of confusion, just the same as it does today in some places.

The Bible tells us to get understanding, to learn something of the life and nature and will of God. To learn how God does things and then do them as He does. Otherwise, our spiritual exercises may bring us some kind of emotional release, but they're really of no help to anyone else. So that leaves you with your love locked up in your heart. And it's no good locked up. It's never really love until it's made an act of giving.

The Corinthians had love, they had the Holy Spirit. They had a genuine experience with God, but their cultural background worked against them. They had brought some of their old cultural hang-ups into their new relationship with God. They didn't understand that an interpretation must follow speaking in tongues in the Body of Christ, in church. Interpretation is given so that people can understand. Otherwise, they are confused by unintelligible words.

Follow after charity and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church.

Now, I want you to notice when Paul is speaking of the individual and when he is speaking of the church. If you don't spiritually discern the difference between these two, you'll never get through this chapter. It will never have any true meaning for you. There are many sincere Christians and many sincere preachers of the gospel who have never gotten through this chapter successfully. They have all kinds of hang-ups, because they have failed to distinguish between the individual praying privately in tongues and the gift of tongues, which is praying for someone else.

Seek The Holy Spirit

The prayer language of the Spirit is for yourself. Praying in tongues for your own benefit is not the gift of tongues, not at all. I can't manifest any gift unless the Holy Spirit gives me the power to do it. If I asked Him for a gift for ten straight years, the Holy Spirit's answer might be no. I've never sought the gift of healing. I never seek the gift of the word of knowledge. I never seek the gift of tongues. I seek the Holy Spirit. And only He can decide when the gift of tongues or gift of healing or any other gift is to be manifested in my life.

Prayer Language

When I come to a moment of prayer or praise and I can't make it, then the Holy Spirit enables me to pray in tongues, to praise God in tongues, and to interpret back to myself. This has nothing necessarily to do with anybody else. I'm edified. I'm lifted up. I'm strengthened. I'm released. God gives my intellect the interpretation so that I have understanding. At that point I understand what God wants to do in my life.

Paul wrote this chapter to teach the Corinthians an intelligent form of prayer and praise and song to God. His purpose was to open their understanding so that they could know God's will in their lives. Individual tongues is the prayer language of the Spirit, which I have for myself and which you can have for yourself.

Gift Of Tongues

When the gift of tongues is manifested through a person, it must be interpreted so the meaning can be given to those who are in the prayer circle. Otherwise, nobody will understand. Paul said, "I'd rather say five words in my own tongue than ten thousand in an unknown tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:19). If the words are meaningless to the hearers, they do not benefit from tongues without interpretation.

Verse two, He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God. I want you to notice that speaking in tongues is not horizontal. It is not man to man, not person to person. It is a vertical, valid, valuable experience. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

In The Spirit

Four times this little phrase “in the Spirit” is used. Here in 1 Corinthians 14:2, Paul very plainly says, He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God...howbeit in the spirit he speaketh. He speaks in the Spirit.

In Ephesians 6:18, praying in the Spirit is the seventh piece of the divine armor we’re to wear. St. Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord by putting on the whole armor of God in warfare against the devil. He tells us the various pieces of armor to put on. The seventh piece is praying always in the Spirit. This term “in the Spirit” always means tongues. In the Spirit. That’s in the Holy Spirit.

Another place “in the Spirit” is mentioned is in the little book of Jude, verse 20. Praying in the Holy Ghost. In the Spirit.

And the fourth time is in Revelation 1:10. St. John says, I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day. I was in the Spirit...in the Spirit. These are four times that “in the Spirit” is mentioned.

So when you speak in tongues you are speaking to God. Tongues are to God, words spoken in the spirit. They are mysteries to your own mind. Why? Because your mind is incapable within itself of reading your own spirit. Your intellect simply cannot think deeply enough to go down inside your spirit, and your spirit is what you really are. You remember in Romans 8:26,27, St. Paul says the Holy Spirit searcheth the heart. The human mind can search but it cannot know the spirit; that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

He Searches The Heart

Sometimes you have a hurting inside but you don’t know what the hurting is. Haven’t you had that experience? You have a puzzle, a question down deep inside. You may be carrying a hurt that you’ve had since you were a child. You may have been hurt by someone, or you may have hurt someone else. You may be carrying grief. You may have lost a loved one or lost a friend. You may have made a very bad mistake which is grieving your spirit, hurting you. You know it’s there. But as you pray your mind can’t bring it up. It takes the Holy Spirit to bring it up. So the Holy Spirit helps your weaknesses. He helps you to pray.

Edification

In verse three, Paul says, But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men. That’s a horizontal experience. That’s person to person. He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification (that is, to build them up), and exhortation, and

comfort. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself.

I always wonder about people who knock that. They say, “Oh, tongues is just to build up yourself. ” Well, what’s so terribly unimportant about helping yourself? Jesus taught us to love other people, to love them as we love ourselves. He taught us to love ourselves. We temper that by our love for other human beings. I think it’s terribly important to be spiritually built up. It’s important to help yourself. And I’m grateful that through tongues I can build up myself. I don’t understand those who downgrade that. It’s like refusing to eat because the food is just for them. They send it off to the starving people in Asia or Africa. Well, you keep on doing that and you’ll be needing somebody over there to send you some food to keep you from starving. There are many things you need for your own benefit. It’s wrong only when you don’t share and when you don’t love others.

Prophecy

Notice Paul says, He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church. Prophecy includes foretelling, preaching the gospel with inspiration, and divine utterance. On the spur of the moment the Holy Spirit inspires the inner spirit and works through the intellect so that the words from your lips are hot off the wire, right out of heaven, a divine utterance. You don’t conceive it with your mind. You don’t think it up. It just comes through. That’s prophecy.

Prophecy is also a confirmation of something in your life. It’s not directional. You have to be careful about prophecy, lest someone prophesy that you’re to go to China tomorrow. Well, I’d suggest you get other confirmation before taking off for China just because of a prophecy. And yet we are told not to despise prophesy-ings. We ought to take them, but to put them within the whole context of God’s help and guidance.

Then the next verse, I would that ye all spake with tongues. Now personally, I don’t think he would have said that if he thought it was impossible for everyone to do so. I just don’t think St. Paul was dumb. As a matter of fact, he was the most intellectual man in the New Testament. He was the smartest and probably the best educated. He could write plainly. He could think clearly. He could reason well. He was educated so that he could think in an intelligent, commonsense way. Some people get an education and that’s all they get. They don’t learn how to reason or think creatively or use their common sense, and that’s a bad kind of education.

So when St. Paul says, I would that ye all spake with tongues, I take that seriously. I respect St. Paul. I respect a man who's writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When he says, I would that ye all...I think he means it. I wouldn't tell you to do something if I thought you couldn't do it.

Paul said, I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Notice now he's back to the church. You have to notice when he's saying "I" and when he's saying "we." When he's saying "I" and speaking of an individual experience, he's talking about the prayer language of the Spirit. He interprets to himself. It doesn't require interpretation for other people. But when he talks about the church, then he plainly tells the proper way. Paul says prophecy is more effective in church because it's always in the language of the people.

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret.

Prophecy is more important than an unintelligible tongue. But if there is an interpretation, then that certainly is the equal of prophecy.

Love One Another

I don't think anybody should run around talking about tongues as if it made him superior. The very fact that you pray in tongues is because you need to pray in tongues. It's wrong to believe that a person who speaks in tongues is a better Christian than one who doesn't. I know some Christians who don't pray in tongues, that live a better life than some of us who do. We should appreciate each other, whether we pray in tongues or not. St. Paul said we should love one another. Will you say amen to that?

Edify The Church

Then, let's go on to verse six. Now, brethren, if I come unto you, speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? If I, Paul, come into your church, the body of believers, what profit will it be to you if I speak in tongues? I will just confuse you. So when I come, I shall speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or in instruction in the teachings of the Bible. And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what

is piped or harped? Even when inanimate objects make sounds, the sound has got to make sense. And I'm sure that an insect is understood by another insect.

For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? Paul is referring to the walled cities of that time. There were watchmen on the wall, day and night, who warned of an approaching enemy by a trumpet blast. When the people heard the trumpet sound a certain way, they got ready to do battle.

So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air... Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

Paul says we don't understand each other any more than we would understand a foreign language. Have you ever tried to talk to someone who doesn't understand your language and you do not understand his? You just don't get anywhere.

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that you may excel to the edifying of the church. St. Paul is speaking of the value of the Body of Christ, the body of believing people. Whatever is said or done is to be in love, to help and profit the Body of Christ. Now that puts a tremendous responsibility upon us. Whatever we do, we are to intend it for good so that it will be of benefit to others.

Pray To Interpret

Now we get to the meat of the matter in verses 13, 14, and 15. Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. Paul switches from the church back to the individual. He is saying, "When you speak in an unknown tongue, pray that you may interpret." For you to interpret, not somebody else.

I'll always remember the first time this happened to me. It was right out here on these grounds with the squirrels and rabbits and trees. There were no buildings. I walked over these grounds, knowing that God had called me to build Him a university, but not knowing how to do it. And my heart was saying yes, yes, but my mind was saying no, no. Did you ever get into a yes, yes, and no, no proposition? Yet I was praying out of my heart. Trying to understand why God called me to do something I was incapable of doing. As I walked, I began to pray in tongues. I prayed in tongues until I felt released, although I still didn't have any answers.

Then I began to pray in English. And all at once, it dawned on me that I was interpreting my own language. And in a moments time, I understood...I understood how to build a university. I understood how God could take somebody like me and build this university. I shudder to think what would have happened had I not discovered the interpretation of my own tongue.

You'll see in the next verse how important it is to do this. With God leading me, I sort of stumbled on to it that day. For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What should I do then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. Now why did Paul pray in tongues first and then pray with his understanding? Why didn't he pray with his mind first and then with his spirit?

The Human Spirit

St. Paul understood that he had a human spirit which had been born again and filled with God's Spirit. He understood that the spirit is independent of the mind and the mind is independent of the spirit. But they belong together, and the connecting link is the tongue.

As an example, there is a reservoir full of water up in the hills. In your house you need a little faucet that's connected to the pipe that goes to the reservoir. When you turn the faucet on, the water flows for your need. The faucet is a servant of both the reservoir and the person who needs the water. The tongue is a servant of the spirit and it's a servant of the mind. Your spirit is connected with the Holy Spirit, who is the great reservoir of all answers, answers to all human needs and problems. Your tongue can turn on the Holy Spirit.

Hold out your left hand. Let it represent your human spirit. Put your right hand out. This represents the Holy Spirit. All right, now squeeze your left hand. Do you feel that force? Squeeze your right hand. Do you feel that force? Put them together. Now squeeze. Don't you feel more power?

How To Interpret

St. Paul was trying to get the Christians of Corinth to unite their human spirit and their mind with the Holy Spirit. You start your prayer in tongues in your innermost being, in your spirit, and then you let your mind receive the interpretation from God. Let God speak back to your intellect so that you understand. You pray with understanding and you praise God with understanding. Praying in tongues brings up whatever is deep inside you. Then you interpret your utterance for yourself. You bring the praise or prayer up from

the deepest part of you. First pray in tongues, then pause, and pray in English. And it'll come right to you. You'll be guided into understanding as you pray and praise in your own language.

God wants you to originate your reaction to life first in your spirit, not in your mind. You prefer to start in the mind, because you want to think the problem through. You think you can find the answer. And the whole world's in a mess because man reacts to problems intellectually rather than spiritually. First in the spirit, releasing the prayer language. Let it come out. Then in the mind by interpretation. Miracles of understanding would happen if man tried to understand first in the spirit.

Panel Discussion

I'd like to introduce my panel to you. My darling wife, Evelyn. And Richard and Patti Roberts.

EVELYN: I liked what you said about the prayer language being one way God has of expressing His love to us. He allows us to pray in the Spirit so that we can converse with Him and He can converse with us. He's a God of concern and a God of love. He really wants to communicate with us.

ORAL: Yes, He lets us pray in the Spirit, with our spirit. Then we pray with our understanding in the Spirit. And we have two delivery systems of prayer; one in the Spirit with our spirit, which is tongues, and one in our understanding or intellect. God delivers understanding to our spirit and He delivers understanding to our mind. He loves us. He wants us to understand. He wants us to respond to life with our spirit. Is this what you're getting at?

EVELYN: This is what I'm getting at. I think Paul is telling us in this chapter that the Lord loves us so much that He gives us a way to reach Him. And then at different times He also gives some of us special gifts for the edification of the church. Are all of these gifts available to a Spirit-filled Christian?

ORAL: Well, all the gifts are in the Holy Spirit and so if the Holy Spirit is in you, then all the gifts are also in you. **EVELYN:** Are they available to you when you need them? **ORAL:** Yes, there is nothing parents have that they wouldn't willingly share with their child. But they know they must be wise in giving. Love has to be tempered with discipline and judgment. They share with their child in an intelligent way, just as God shares intelligently with His children.

For example, I don't think God would manifest a gift of healing in a

person who doesn't care for the sick. I really don't. I don't think He would manifest the gift of prophecy in a person who ridiculed or despised prophecy. That's why I think we have to depend upon God's wisdom to manifest a gift. I have never asked God for the gift of healing, Evelyn. I don't now. You know, I always pray that I'll be continually filled with the Holy Spirit. I care for the sick. To begin with, I have a natural feeling for them. I think it's natural for God to manifest His gift of healing through me from time to time. But it's His gift, not mine. Because I have the Holy Spirit, these gifts are available to me when I need them.

EVELYN: Yes, He probably gives us the gift that most conforms to our nature or work.

ORAL: Oh, I think every medical doctor who is really effective as a doctor has the gift of healing. He may not call it that, but every physician or surgeon that I've ever talked with has at some time needed something more than skill. And at that time something inside comes up, and they're able to do things they didn't learn in medical school or anywhere else in the world. At that moment God is manifesting the gift of healing.

I certainly am thankful for the natural. And I'll take it till the supernatural comes. And when the supernatural comes, I'll add it to the natural and take both of them. And when the supernatural ceases, I'll be glad to have the natural.

RICHARD: You said two things that really stuck with me. In my mind they're summed up in two words... relationship and understanding. First of all, my relationship with God begins in my spirit. It does not begin in my mind. I begin my relationship in my spirit. Then my understanding is released through tongues.

You said you were walking across the campus and praying. You felt better, but you really didn't have any more answers. You still didn't understand. You were released within yourself. I have felt that many times. I've spoken in the Spirit and felt released, but I may not necessarily have an answer or an understanding. It's in interpreting back to your intellect that you get the understanding.

When you talked about the reservoir, I remembered Jesus said that when you believe on Me, out of your belly shall flow rivers of living water. Doesn't it also say the waters would be flooding up within you?

ORAL: Yes, this is the way you can obey Paul's command to pray without ceasing, to pray in the spirit, in tongues. **PATTI:** I really appreciate the

distinction between the gift of tongues and the prayer language.

ORAL: You see, people have a hang-up on that. The release in an unknown tongue is not the gift of tongues. **PATTI:** Right.

ORAL: The prayer language is always in you, day and night. But the gift of tongues comes and goes, as the need develops in the Body of Christ.

PATTI: Right. Well, I would like to talk about the prayer language. I think it integrates the whole person...body, soul, and spirit.

ORAL: The charismatic experience is being poured out today without regard to denomination, because God is determined to give this to His people. It's going to happen. I don't care how people misunderstand it and fight it. It's like a cork on the water. You put your hand on the cork to hold it under, but it will bob up in a different place. And that's just like the charismatic experience. It can't be put down, it can't be kept down, because God loves His people. And His people need this, need it desperately for the integration of the spirit and soul and body.

PATTI: I have always had a hunger for a greater depth in the Spirit. When I asked you how to interpret after speaking in tongues, you said, "Well, you just do it. That's part of the gift. When you just do half of it, you enjoy half of the gifts of God." I was raised in an atmosphere where the greatest emphasis was placed upon speaking in tongues. And I've had a lot of undoing to do in my head.

ORAL: What you're saying, Patti, is that speaking in tongues was held up as something within itself.

PATTI: Yes, it was. It was separated from the rest of the gifts.

ORAL: Like holding up a faucet as something in itself. The important thing is the reservoir full of water and the person receiving the water. Tongues have been held up as supreme. This gift is important only to the extent that it connects to the spirit. And the spirit flows through to God and back to the intellect where the need is. That's the importance of tongues. It's no more important than the faucet for turning on the water. The flow of water from a faucet is controlled just as speaking in tongues has to be controlled, has to be under your will. It cannot be an emotional jag. It must not be. That's what Paul was against.

Paul was for speaking in tongues in a controlled situation, under the will. Just like everything else is supposed to be under the will. Paul said, "I will pray with my spirit. I will pray with my understanding." He was determined to pray in

tongues and then to go from tongues to the real objective, which is to pray with his understanding, to understand with his understanding.

Let me ask a psychologist, Dr. John Tuel, how tongues play a part in life.

DR. TUEL: Both my wife and I were filled with the Holy Spirit on the same day. In fact, it happened in Dr. Frost's living room in Santa Barbara. Our lives really began to change from that point. My wife moved ahead very quickly in the Holy Spirit, and I saw many changes in her life. My intellect got in the way, though, for several years.

When we first came to the Laymen's Seminar in December 1963, we experienced something marvelous in the move of the Holy Spirit. For me it really was like the completion of that baptism. Because at that point, I understood what the Lord was trying to do in my life, how He wanted to open up my entire being and use my intellect for His service instead of for mine!

ORAL: Did tongues have a part in that?

DR. TUEL: Definitely, yes.

ORAL: How?

DR. TUEL: As I began to speak and pray freely in the Spirit, my emotions and my motivation began to get into gear. I began to have the drive to do what God wanted me to do and to respond to His Spirit. Somehow in a way I can't fully explain, praying in the Spirit released something in me and helped me to respond to God.

ORAL: Let me ask Ben Uzzell, one of our basketball players, for his ideas.

BEN UZZELL: Well, sometimes I need to pray but I really don't know what to say. Then the prayer language helps me to relate to God.

ORAL: That's a powerful statement — it helps you to relate to God. And I should like to add that it helps Him relate to you. And in that relationship you start working on your problems. The problems don't disappear, at least they don't for me. They're still there. But I now have a working prayer relationship with God. And I have confidence that I can do some problem-solving. I can bring forth from myself the best there is. I can't be anybody else. High or low, smart or otherwise, but I can be me and let the best come out.

I just can't afford to die until God has my best. And I can't afford to die until I get His best. I've just got to live and be in relationship with God... God, I give You my best and I ask You for Your best. I want to be integrated in myself

and in You. When I leave this world, I want to feel inside myself that I have finished my course. That I didn't half finish it, I finished it. St. Paul could say that. He said, "I've finished my course, I've kept the faith. I fought the battle. And I'm ready. " Well, I'm not quite ready. Mine is not quite finished. And I don't want to die before I finish it. I want to be alive while I live. I don't want to be dead while I'm alive. The Bible says, "Be lively stones," not tombstones.

Prayer

Father, in the name of Jesus I thank You that Jesus went back to You and sent us the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who is with us and who is inside us. And I thank You that You allow us to pray with the spirit and to pray with the understanding so that we can know that we know that we know, through Christ.

And now, dear friend, I pray for you. I command the devil to take his hands off your life. Through Jesus Christ,

I command the devil to take his hands off your life. I command that sickness to come out of your body. You foul tormenting disease, you come out in the name of Jesus Christ. You foul tormenting spirit of fear, I command you, by the Lord, you come out.

And, Father, I pray that Your healing hand will come upon each one of us. I pray that God's hand will come upon you. That you'll be aware of the Holy Spirit flooding up from your inner being like living water. That you'll know this experience. That you'll live in it, day by day by day. And that you'll start experiencing life through your spirit and then through your understanding until the whole person starts relating to God and to life. I pray that prayer and I believe for it. And I expect a miracle in your life, through Jesus Christ. Amen and amen.

Chapter 12, Make The March Of Faith

Suggested Scripture reading for this lesson: 2 Kings 7

The Next Twenty-Four Hours Of Your Life

In one sense, this is one of the most tragic stories ever told in the Bible; and in another sense, one of the most glorious. This story takes place within twenty-four hours.

The city of Samaria, then the capital of Israel, was situated on a hill in the middle of a valley. An invading army had to come through the hills, out into the valley, and then up the hill to the city. Completely surrounding Samaria was a wall that made it very difficult for an enemy to invade Samaria. Because they had been unable to break through these defenses, the Syrians were encamped around the city of Samaria.

The city was blockaded and the food supply cut off. The people had nothing to eat, and in starvation some were eating the flesh of their own children. This is a desperate hour in the midst of a terrible situation, the city is in uproar, the people are killing each other for food. God made a twenty-four hour promise of food. He does this through the prophet Elisha, who sows a great seed of faith in delivering this message.

Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord, To morrow about this time (that's twenty-four hours later) shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

This means in twenty-four hours there'll be so much food that you can buy all you want for a few pennies. That's what it means. Today it's so scarce that if you had a million dollars you couldn't buy a loaf of bread. But things will change in twenty-four hours and food will be so plentiful you won't have to worry about it.

Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned (one of his aides) answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be?

This is a cynical, scornful, doubting statement. You say there's going to be so much food tomorrow that we can buy all we want for a few pennies. Well, if God should turn heaven into windows and just pour bread down, this might be.

And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. You see, this man had sown bad seed and it's going to reap tragic results. Now let's get into the next part, which is the real heart of what I want to share with you.

And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate and they said one to another; Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there.

For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another (listen to this good seed), We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. (The good seed is the desire to share the good news.) So they came and called unto the porter of the city, and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were...And the king arose in the night.. .And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord. And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him...That lord answered the man of God, and said, if the Lord should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

God Will Seed-Faith

Twenty-four hours of your life. The next twenty-four hours of your life. They're important because of who you are and what you hope and dream to be. They're important because there's a time in your life when God intends to do some great and mighty thing. And in the doing of it, there will be a deliverance of many people, groups, and individuals. God sees when a situation develops in the life of an individual or group. He sees where it's going. He sees there's going to be defeat and sometimes destruction. And in the midst of such a crisis, God always comes.

This is one of the hardest things for me to remember. When things get rough and my back is to the wall, it's hard for me to remember that God never fails to give a prophetic word of deliverance to show me the possibility of victory. It always happens but, as you probably know, it's difficult to remember. I think your first feeling is that things are so bad they'll never get any better. God tells you things may get worse, but they will get better.

Well, the people in Samaria were starving to death. Have you ever been hungry? Have you ever been near death through starvation? Perhaps you have been near death because of illness or mistreatment or a dreadful situation. This city was physically starving to death, and it represents the terrifically bad things that confront us and from which there seems to be no escape.

There are many forms of death. There are many forms of dying. One doesn't have to die physically to feel like he's dying. Sometimes I just feel like I'll die. I just feel like I'll never make it.

You and I must remember that in a crisis God will always Seed-Faith something from heaven. God will speak through somebody. You will hear God's encouraging word, maybe spoken within your heart. Or you may hear it from the lips of some other person. Something will be done or said that will be direct from God. And that word or act is meant to change the direction of your life, to turn you around.

A Good Word

When I finished last week's message in this session of the miracle of Seed-Faith, I had a very strong impression I was to give you this prophecy in 2 Kings, Chapter 7. I've let it run through my mind and heart for seven days. And I sense very, very deeply tonight that you need some good word within the next twenty-four hours. Something constructive and positive must be spoken in your

heart and my heart. And I believe that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will hear that word in the next twenty-four hours.

Three Responses

There were three kinds of people in that city. There were the distraught and the distressed who were starving to death. One incident in the sixth chapter of 2 Kings records the desperation of families that were eating the flesh of their children. We really can't understand this. But it shows how confusion can make people turn on one another. How neighbors can hate one another or how bad situations can get control of us so that we do terrible things to each other. Maybe we don't physically eat one another, but we walk over others.

There was a second group represented by one man, an administrative aide to the king of Israel. He heard Elisha's prophecy that there would be deliverance the following day. Tomorrow God's going to turn the tide. Tomorrow there won't be starvation, there won't even be hunger. Now, there is nothing to eat but tomorrow the city will be filled with food. The stores will be bursting at the seams and everyone's table will be loaded with all kinds of food. When this man heard the prophecy, he said, "Well, if God were to make windows in heaven, maybe this could happen."

Elisha quickly and intuitively understood this man's spirit. It was the attitude of his life, the way he had decided to live his life, doubting and cynical. You often meet people like this who don't believe in anything. They won't believe anything good about people or believe anything good about God.

The prophet said to him, "Well, sir, you will see it. And you'll see it with your eyes. You'll even smell the food. But you won't eat any of it." In our language he's saying, "This kind of bad seed grows and reproduces very quickly. You're going to reap what you sow. You will not escape it. And you will reap it so vividly and destructively that you'll die."

Now there was a third group represented by the four men who sat outside the gate. They were refused entrance into the city because they were lepers. As they sat there, they asked themselves a question, "Why sit we here until we die?" They said to themselves, "If we get permission to enter the city, we'll die there with all the other people. If we sit here, we're going to die too because we'll starve to death with everybody else. The other alternative is to get up and march against the army of Syria, the army of tens of thousands which surround the city. We four men will get up and march against them. And if they kill us, well, we're going to die anyway. We've nothing to lose if they kill us, because we are going

to die. If they save us alive, we shall live. So we have one small chance. Therefore, why sit we here until we die?”

You often hear the question, “Why has this happened to me?” You may have said to yourself, “What have I done to deserve this?” The lepers could have demanded an answer to such a question, “What have we done? We already have leprosy. Why are we being forced to starve to death? Why has this calamity overtaken us?”

But these four lepers didn’t say, “Why has this happened to me?” They didn’t say, “What have I done to deserve it?” They said, “Why do I sit here till I die? Why don’t I rise up and strike a blow for deliverance?” This is the kind of question everyone should be asking today.

The Bible says they rose up in the twilight, the time between sundown and dark when you can’t see very well. They rose up and marched out into the gathering shadows of night, marching against an enemy who lay in wait, an enemy whose avowed purpose was to destroy the people in that city. The four lepers made a march of faith. They planted seeds of faith.

Seed Planting

The farmer plows and harrows the hard crusty ground before he plants the seed. He then covers the seeds with earth and hopes for a harvest.. .hopes the seed will multiply.. .hopes that what he’s planted will come back to him a hundredfold or more. Then the seed-planter has to wait. He cannot rush the seed. He can plant it, cultivate it, and water it. Then he has to wait. Can you wait even though you feel you must act within twenty-four hours? If you feel you may never get to act positively again? If you know you have only twenty-four hours?

There’s Plenty Of Time

Well, it’s a lot like the story about the experienced surgeon and his new assistant. Something went wrong in the operation. They had to tie a blood vessel back together in something like forty seconds. The young doctor gasped, “Do we have enough time?”

The old doctor calmly replied, “Yes, we have plenty of time.. .if we don’t hurry.” That meant, calm down and there will be plenty of time.

When you feel anxiety in your heart about the next twenty-four hours, just remember that there is plenty of time. There’s plenty of time if you don’t get in a rush and fall into confusion...if you quit asking questions like, “Why has this happened to me? What have I done to deserve it?” Settle down and say instead,

“Why do I sit here till I die?” That is to say, “Why do I hang onto an attitude which will destroy me?”

Get Rid Of A Bad Attitude

Your attitude may be so bad that it can wipe you out in twenty-four hours. The devil is always looking for a bad attitude. Jesus says of the devil in St. John 10:10, “The devil cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.” So many times we forget that a bad attitude is more dangerous than a rattlesnake bite. To live with a bad attitude is living death. It may not mean physical death but it may mean the kind of death which squeezes the very joy of life from you. A bad attitude can turn you against the one you love the most, or the one who loves you the most. A bad attitude can turn your mind away from your work, away from your family, away from God. A bad attitude may express itself in the cynicism of the king’s aide who said, “If God were to open the windows of heaven and pour out all the bread, only then might there be enough in the city.”

Unbelief Is The Reverse Of Faith

It’s a terrible thing to be so cynical that you don’t believe. I think the person in the most trouble is the one who doesn’t believe — who maybe has lost the capacity to believe. Unbelief is really a reverse of faith. It’s the opposite of faith. Night is the absence of day. Drought is the absence of rain. Rain overcomes drought. You turn on one tiny light bulb, and light dispels the darkness. All the darkness in the world cannot put out the light of one little candle. If you have faith as a tiny grain of mustard seed, if you have just enough faith in your heart to believe that perhaps there’s a God somewhere who will help, if you have that much faith, you’re a million times better off than the cynical person, the negative person. A bad attitude is unbelief. It is not believing the Word of God.

The Bible says Elisha spoke the Word of the Lord God and said, “Tomorrow about this time,” in twenty-four hours, “God’s going to change the situation.” He also implied that God’s delivery system for food and deliverance would be through people. Guess who they were. The four most unlikely people in the world. Four guys sitting out there at the entrance of the gate dying with a dread disease.

A Little Bit Of Faith

Do you think God could lick a whole army with four men like these? At

times you feel your little faith certainly isn't enough to drive out whatever is tormenting you. You don't have enough faith to keep your marriage together. You don't have enough faith to make a good grade. You don't have enough faith for God to heal your limb, or heal your eye, or your ear, or a broken relationship. You don't think you have enough faith. But I tell you I get excited when I read about four leprous men getting up, marching against that whole army, and believing inside that something good was going to happen. These men didn't know they couldn't do it.

They're like the bumblebee. Scientifically, it's impossible for a bumblebee to fly. The scientists say the size of its wingspread is too small for the heavy size of its body. But the bumblebee doesn't know that, and so it goes ahead and flies anyway and makes a little honey while it flies.

It's a wonderful thing to believe, somehow to believe. You just don't know that you're licked. You just know there's a little bit of faith in your heart. And Jesus never despised a little faith, my friend. He never turned away anyone with little faith. He told them there was bigger faith. But He never turned away anyone with a little bit of faith. Now these four men got up in the coming night and marched toward the conquering army of Syria. There they go, arm-in-arm, just a bundle of bones, four hopeless leprous men, saying, "Why sit we here till we die?" Saying, "Well, let's get up and go." And so they march out in faith.

A March Of Faith

It was not the kind of march you put one foot in front of the other. Not the kind of decision in which you say, "Now let's see, let me analyze the situation. Here's what I'll do first. Then I'll take advantage of this and that's how I'll solve the problem."

No, these men simply got up and began to walk in faith. They could hardly stand up. They could barely walk. In fact, you can imagine them falling along the way, helping each other up, and holding on to one another. They march with the enemy lurking in the night, with danger and death in the air. But they march on. They may never make it, but they march on.

You don't have to be good looking or ugly. You don't have to be rich or poor. You just have to get up and start marching and believing and doing. Because faith is something you do and love is something you give.

God's Army

God in heaven looked down at the sleeping army of Syria. Why should

the Syrian army post sentries and watchmen in the night? They have blockaded the city of Samaria. No one can get in or out. The army sleeps. But God, who never sleeps, saw the four faith marchers and He said, "This is My army." And He said to the heavenly host, "You go down there." Suddenly the whole atmosphere was filled with angels and with fiery chariots drawn by horses of fire. Yes, I believe in angels. All of a sudden the Syrian army was awakened by the drumming hoof-beats of thousands of fiery horses. They saw the blazing light of these horses and chariots. They screamed, believing that the king of Israel had brought in outside armies. And the Syrian army rose and fled in the night.

"We Do Not Well"

When the four lepers got to the entrance of this tent city of the army of Syria, they could find no man. They went into a tent and found plenty of food. They began to eat. There were gold and silver, precious jewels, and changes of garments. They loaded themselves down. They dug a hole and hid the treasure. Then they went to another tent and did the same thing. Finally they said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. We're going at this thing all wrong. We're getting all for ourselves, gathering and hiding for our future security. We've forgotten the starving people back in Samaria. If we continue doing this, some mischief will overtake us. If we continue this, we're going to be sowing bad seeds. We're going to cancel out all the good seeds we've sown. So let us go back to the city and share the good news."

Sharing The Good News

So they ran back. They limped out, but they ran back, shouting the good news. Well, the city went mad with relief and joy. The people rushed out and discovered that the army of Syria was gone. There was plenty of food. And the prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled in twenty-four hours.

Holding Bad Attitudes

But the man who said in cynicism and doubt and unbelief, "If God were to turn heaven into windows and pour it from heaven, could this miracle happen?" was run over and killed. You may get run over if you hold such bad attitudes. How? In many ways. You get knocked off the right path. You get your hopes crushed. You get down, down, down into your down until your down is the down-est down you've ever been down in. Now that's getting down, isn't it? You look like an accident going off to happen. You look like the advance agent

of the grim reaper. You look like you've been eating sauerkraut and crab apples. You look like the face of a mule. You look like you've been down in the mullygrubs and drinking vinegar.

I mean it's tough when you get down like this. You die in your spirit. You die in your hopes. You give up and quit. And when you quit, there's nothing left for you in the world. Some people put a gun to their head and blow their brains out. Others withdraw from the human race. They withdraw into their terrible miseries. Others hate. They are filled with bitterness. Others try to kill. They murder because of this kind of spirit. People do terrible things when they get down and stay in this spirit of cynicism. This man got run over and was killed.

A Little Faith Is Big To The Devil

The Syrian army thought the four leprous men marching toward them were an army too great to stand against. What does this mean? It means your little faith, even as small as a seed, seems great to the devil. I mean you can shake him up.

Today I was at an important meeting of a great corporation in this state. The chairman of the board said, "Oral, I just finished the first chapter of your book, *A Daily Guide To Miracles*, and that first chapter says, 'Devil, take your hands off Gods property. I belong to God. Devil, keep your hands off me.' All day long I've said that, because I've had crisis after crisis after crisis. I made it through because I told the devil, 'Take your hands off me and off my company.' That one idea is worth the whole book."

Well, I said, "There are ninety more ideas in that book. Go on to the next one."

Yes, that idea is powerful. "Devil, take your hands off me. I'm God's property. I belong to God. Devil, you let me alone." Can you say it? "Devil, you let me alone. I belong to God."

Panel Discussion

EVERLYN: I was thinking about the three different groups of people that you mentioned tonight. The mass of people who were hungry, the king's aide who didn't believe, and the four lepers. Well, really there was one more, the prophet Elisha. So actually there were four groups of people.

ORAL: There were five, counting God.

EVERLYN: The prophet Elisha had no idea who was to bring that

prophecy to pass.

ORAL: That's a very important point, Evelyn. And we don't know which one of us God will use. How does He select? I think in instances like this, He chooses according to our attitude. Imagine those four men out there with that strong positive attitude. Yet they were unlikely looking prospects, weren't they?

EVELYN: Yes. You see, when God tells us to do something, it's not necessary for us to know how God's going to handle it. The important thing for us is to be obedient to God. You see, Elisha was obedient. He spoke the words of God, although he couldn't see how the prophecy would be fulfilled.

ORAL: He wasn't responsible before it happened. He could only deliver the word of faith, plant the good seed. That's all he could do, wasn't it?

EVELYN: Yes. Now think of the four leprous men, sitting out there, who were to bring to pass what Elisha said would happen.

ORAL: Think of someone sitting in this audience or you or me who's to bring to pass a promise of God. Some great and wonderful thing God has promised. Can you know who it will be? Sometimes I think you can.

EVELYN: Well, when God touches you to do a certain thing, you know it.

ORAL: Yes, you're talking about when God specifically touches you like that. But I'm talking about something else. God chooses people with right attitudes to do His work. The fellow with the bad attitude asks, "Why doesn't God ever use me?"

Have you ever asked yourself, "What kind of attitude do I have? And, what kind of attitude do I continue to have?" A good attitude is not a gimmick. Sometimes a person does something wrong, gets caught, and says, "I'm so sorry." But they're not sorry for what they did, they're only sorry they got caught. This is not true Bible asking for forgiveness, it's a gimmick. When you are truly sorry, the change in your heart is reflected in your whole attitude.

EVELYN: Yes, I am reminded of Jesus' parable about the fool who said in his heart, "There is no God." A person's attitude sometimes reveals that in his heart he doesn't think there is a God. He may not say that, but his attitude says it.

ORAL: Could the king's aide have changed?

EVELYN: Well, of course.

ORAL: Can you really change your bad attitude? **EVELYN:** I believe you can.

ORAL: Can you tell me one way you can?

EVERLYN: Well, the Lord came and gave himself for us so that we could change, not only our attitude but our whole lives.

ORAL: Yes. But how?

EVERLYN: To repent and ask for forgiveness.

ORAL: What is repentance?

EVERLYN: It means to be sorry that you've been going your own way. You turn and change and start going God's way. This is repentance. To be sorry, to change your mind, to say, "Lord, I'm sorry for what I've done against You and against my fellowman." This is true repentance.

The four lepers stumbled along, really too ill to move very fast, a lot like Christians. We stumble along, you know. We just really stumble along. Sometimes we're up and sometimes we're down. But our faith sounds loud to the enemy, something like these men sounded to the Syrians.

ORAL: Shattering to the enemy. Don't you think we think the devil is stronger than he really is? Christ said, "Resist the devil, and he shall flee from you." I mean, just one person resisting him. He thinks he's so tough, but it takes only one with faith in God to resist him.

Earlier I talked about twenty-four hours. First, because it was in the Bible. Second, because I've had a sense of the importance of a twenty-four-hour period. I've had this feeling a whole week now. Does that have any meaning for you?

EVERLYN: Yes, in twenty-four hours we can change our bad attitude to a good one. We can decide to get up and move when we're just sitting down and doing nothing. We can make a decision in our hearts to live the way God wants us to live, to be on God's side, to use what little faith we have.

ORAL: As we pray, I think we should look on the twenty-four hours we're facing and just sort of put our arms round these twenty-four hours and say, "God, I'm going to give You these twenty-four hours and I'm going to expect many miracles because I'm going to give seeds of faith in my life."

Prayer

Father, we too find ourselves sitting. We too find ourselves dismayed by bad reports. But, on the other hand, we know the Bible promises us deliverance, God's deliverance. We also hear, inside us, the warming sensation of an

impression from God. And we are people with promise, with hope, with faith. Even though it's little, we have some faith. And I pray that we can release the little faith we have to You, O Lord. For then I know that will be the beginning of a miracle. And I pray for that to happen to every one of us through Jesus Christ.

And now, dear friend, I pray, I really pray for you. I pray for you right now. I pray that these next twenty-four hours are going to bring the right change in your life. I pray that whatever bad attitude you have, it'll be replaced by a good attitude. I pray that God will fan your little faith into a flame of bigger faith. I pray that the power of God will actually happen in your life. And I'm believing. I mean I'm on your side. I care that something good happens to you. The seed I plant comes back to me. It goes to you, but it comes back to me too. And I pray for you. And I expect miracles for you. I really do, through Jesus Christ.

And everybody said amen.

Thank You

I am happy to send your copy of "Holy Spirit in the Now V". For several years I have been teaching this class at Oral Roberts University. And this book includes lessons from the fifth semester of that class. The other semesters are also available from my office here in Tulsa. They are — HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NOW I.

HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NOW II.

HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NOW III.

HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NOW IV.

(contained in the book A DAILY GUIDE TO MIRACLES) For your free copy of any one or all of these books, just write me,

Table of Contents

[The Holy Spirit In The Now V](#)

[My Personal Word To You](#)

[Contents](#)

[Chapter 1, God Has A Need To Give](#)

[Chapter 2, How To Get Into The Rhythm Of Faith](#)

[Chapter 3, How To Receive The Miracle That Will Meet Your Heeds](#)

[Chapter 4, Are You Rich Toward God?](#)

[Chapter 5, One Foot On Earth, One Foot In Heaven](#)

[Chapter 6, Seed-Faith Living In Our Human Relationships](#)

[Chapter 7, The Love Of God](#)

[Chapter 8, The Good Seed And The Bad Seed](#)

[Chapter 9, How To Take A Bad Seed And Turn It Into A Good Seed Of Faith](#)

[Chapter 10, What Is Faith? By Dennis Bennett](#)

[Chapter 11, The Prayer Lahghage Of The Spirit](#)

[Chapter 12, Make The March Of Faith](#)

[Thank You](#)