

Introduction

The word “radical” in the title was selected to resonate with those in contemporary Christianity dissatisfied with what they find available to them in the denominational marketplace. The word “radical” is usually associated with someone whose dissatisfaction had risen to the point where change is sought. While there are many reasons to be dissatisfied, this book is primarily intended for those who seek greater truth and love than they have encountered so far.

We can contrast our church experiences with New Testament descriptions of peace, joy, fullness, abundance, and love and we can come to think that something is missing or even that we have been cheated. Modern life infuses us with cynicism resulting from exposure to the promises of politicians, insurance companies, and advertising so that we reflexively assume that what we are told is hyperbole or just plain false. When we bring this reflex to our Christian walk, it often leads us to have lower expectations. While most may accept a diminished, marginal, or partial “Christian” life that never seems able to deliver on the promises in the bible, some abandon Christianity completely, others withdraw into a life of isolation, and some even keep plugging away trying to find the right denomination, church, or video that can help them make sense of it all.

It is the intention of the writer to describe how the practice of Christianity came to be so often confused, inert, and unsatisfying. This is contrasted with how Christianity was supposed to work and can be made to work for the individual. Starting with the ideal, an understanding of how things became as they are can be used to tackle the subject of what can be done to overcome our present circumstances.

It is hoped that the Christian who struggles in his faith will be able, through understanding, to find a path to greater Christ-likeness (the objective of Christianity) and obtain the elusive descriptors peace, joy, and love. To this end, a wide range of subject matters will be considered to provide a context and foundation from which a broad understanding can be extracted starting with a brief summary of a biblical view of the history of the world.

The Foundation of the World

God created two realms, the heavens and the earth. He also created two groups of beings, angels and humans. The angels were created fully formed in a hierarchy and with degrees of power complete with knowledge. Humans were created with the ability to reproduce and with little knowledge. Both humans and angels were given free will.

One of the highest (more powerful) angels, Satan, took a third of the angels with him when he rebelled against God. Satan used deception to get humans to act on their own apart from God (passive as opposed to overt rebellion). As a result, that which was connected to God (man’s spirit) died that day and mankind has been separated from God ever since.

The fall of humans was not a surprise to God. God had a rescue plan for man made from before

he made the world. He would send his son Jesus to pay the price for the sin of the whole world. Rescue would be offered to anyone who would have faith (trust) in Jesus.

History - Sequential Failures - Ultimate Success

Mankind faced two big obstacles in obtaining rescue (through faith in Jesus) from the judgment that would come on all of us because of our sins. First, our disconnection from God creates in us a powerful inclination towards self-seeking and disinterest in being rescued. Secondly, Satan seeks his own interests which often include our exploitation and deception.

The years right after the fall of man into sin resulted in such a progressive degeneracy that God exterminated everyone except eight people in a worldwide flood. Next, God called out a man (Abraham) from whom he would build a nation (Israel) that was supposed to serve him to bring the knowledge of him to the world and be the people from which Jesus would be born.

The history of the nation Israel is not one of faithfulness to the calling of God. God allowed 5/6 of the nation to be conquered by the Assyrians and the remainder to be taken captive to Babylon for 70 years until they finally abandoned their idolatry. When Jesus came (400 years later), the nation failed to receive the offer of the Kingdom and the new covenant.

For the last 2,000 years gentiles have been allowed to become Christian but in a condition less advantageous than it would have been and will be when, through very adverse conditions, a remnant of Israel does receive Jesus the King and his kingdom.

Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? - Romans 11:12

Present Circumstances

Sometimes Christians think of Israel as a failure and the church as a success. However, both have fallen far short of what God has desired. One of the biggest reasons for our failure is losing interest in God because we do not think we need him.

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. - Deuteronomy 6:10-12

One might think of contemporary Christianity as in two parts. The first part is Christianity as lived out in third world conditions. Here there is a sort of purification in adversity that protects Christians (sometimes even as they are being martyred) in a similar way that David was purified in heart in his youth as he fled the wrath of Saul who was trying to kill him.

The second part of modern Christianity can be seen in Western civilization. Here prosperity has

so corrupted Christian practice it is like David later in his life when he became so distant from God that he had a woman's husband killed so that he could have her for himself.

It was necessary for Satan to hijack Christianity and use it to build Western civilization so that he could obtain the technology to enslave the world. The ability to control who is allowed to buy and sell (described 1900 years ago) can only be achieved with the technology developed in the last 30 years.

Satan turned Christianity into a sort of mechanical machine and used it to imprint a collectivized systems approach to nations, trade, and education to such an extent that today it is difficult for us to even conceptualize Christian practice outside of an organizational system. This is why when we read the New Testament we so often get the impression that we are lacking what they had. This is because the bible describes relational life not organizational life.

The Need for Radical Change

Some Christians seek change because they are searching for deeper truth. Some seek change because they seek deeper love. However, there may be soon a growing number who seek a more authentic Christianity because, like a young David, they seek a refuge from a world growing increasingly hostile.

Most western Christians have grown accustomed to the soft comforts of their familiar church practices and do not see any need for change. Eighty percent of their children leave the church. Mathematically this indicates that traditional Christianity is dying out. Some churches embrace the world in an attempt to appeal to those attracted to the world. However, as churches become more worldly, there seems increasingly little need for them.

Western civilization brought unprecedented prosperity to the world. However, like a rocket that has reach apogee, a rapid descent is coming into view. Increasing difficulties in life, especially directed towards Christians, may motivate many to choose between the world and Jesus.

Regardless of whether a person seeks change or finds himself driven to it, having a broad understanding can be helpful in avoiding some of the potentially painful consequences of making blind changes (jumping out of the frying pan into the fire). To help provide understanding, the first part of the book will address how Christianity is supposed to work. The second part will discuss how things got twisted around. The last part of the book will address how an individual can deal with some of the obstacles common to contemporary Christians.

Section One - How it is Supposed to Work

Chapter 1 - Truth and Love

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But

speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: - Ephesians 4:14-15

Truth and love both describe the nature of God. These also define both the path and destination of our Christian journey. It is difficult to think that something so clear can be made so difficult. The biggest reason Christians have for so often been diverted from this path is that Satan has constructed the world to appeal to our old nature that seeks after self. For example, truth is often divorced from love so that it is diverted into self-righteous smugness. Love can be divorced from truth so that we can be led into self-stimulation and sensation. For these reasons it is essential to have a solid foundation of understanding so that any radical changes we pursue are more likely to bring us closer to God rather than further away.

The bible describes the imbalance that can occur and we should be mindful of how important both truth and love are.

If with the tongues of men and of messengers I speak, and have not love, I have become brass sounding, or a cymbal tinkling; and if I have prophecy, and know all the secrets, and all the knowledge, and if I have all the faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing; and if I give away to feed others all my goods, and if I give up my body that I may be burned, and have not love, I am profited nothing.- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. - Romans 10:1-3

Truth and love will be considered in detail alternatively so that a deeper understanding of each can be achieved. However, it will be important to remember that these operate together.

Chapter 2 - What is truth?

In one of the most ironic moments in history, Pilate asks Jesus “What is truth?” His question was rhetorical, but he was posing it to the only person in history who is truth. Pilate’s musing was in response to a statement of Jesus that gives us some additional insight into truth.

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. - John 18:37

There is a condition called being “of the truth”. It is this condition that allows us to respond to the words of Jesus. There is a lot of argument about whether this condition is brought about by choice, election or some combination. However, regardless of the mechanism of origination, a heart that responds to Jesus is on a journey to seek, find, and grown in truth. It is the beginning of radical Christianity.

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. - 2 Thessalonians 2:10

Those who do not have eternal life and will “perish” are missing the key to following truth because they have not received the “love of the truth”.

Much effort has been put forth to cause people to misunderstand the word “love”. The biblical definition is more about giving than taking. In a larger context, it is about selflessness and the sublimation of self. Applied to truth, it is the elevation of truth over oneself. We can see an example of this perspective with John the Baptist.

Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. - John 3:28-31

Truth is God himself, his spirit, his son, his word, and his desire for us. We can see the value God places on someone who seeks truth;

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it. - Jeremiah 5:1

As we consider what the bible says about truth, we get a picture of intent and activity much deeper than a set of principles or doctrines.

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. - John 4:23

For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth. - Psalm 33:4

O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. - Psalm 43:3

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. - Psalm 51:6

Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. - Psalm 86:11

He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. - Psalm 91:4

The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. - Psalm

145:18

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. - Proverbs 23:23

As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth. - Daniel 9:13

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. - John 3:19-21

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. - Psalm 119:104

Ultimately truth is the very character of God and what he desires for Christians to be as they are made more into the image of Christ.

Chapter 3 - What is love?

The bible uses three words translated “love”. Eros for physical intimacy, Phileo for brotherly love, and Agape for self-sacrificial love. The modern idea associated with the word love includes affections, desires, lusts, expectations, attractions, and romance. The bundle of emotional sensations commonly called “love” today makes it difficult to understand what the bible means when the word is used.

Satan’s media resources (particularly music, for its emotional appeal) had a major emphasis on promoting this distorted view of love in the 1920s and then again in the 1950s-1970s. The first time was a general assault on marriage. The second time was a full court press contributing to the baby boom generation becoming the most selfish and self-centered generation in centuries.

To help untangle the distortion of the meaning of “love”, we can examine what the bible says about it.

Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. - 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

The word translated “love” here is agape (self-sacrificial love). The understanding of love both deepens and expands as we come to understand that it is the very nature of God and is expressed towards us.

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. - 1 John 4:16

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

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. - John 3:16

It has been said that the cure for the “disease” of adolescence (selfishness) is parenthood. The implication being that the natural inclination towards the selfishness of a child fades with the responsibility for his own children. It is natural for children to see in their parents those that love and care for them. This is why God is called our “father”.

When we substitute emotional feelings for “love”, we become more a consumer than a giver. Our attempt to stimulate our own emotions can become like a drug addict craving that which never truly satisfies. A child can become a parent when he has grown to be complete (mature) and no longer has need to be taken care of himself, but can care for others. The Christian also becomes complete when he is no longer driven by deficiencies within himself.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.- 1 John 4:18

The word “perfect” (teleios) is better translated “complete”. Complete love (perfect love) is love with no self seeking. With little investment in self, there is little to fear. The idea of the emptying of self can sound like some sort of spiritual suicide and be seen as repugnant. It might be if self was not being replaced with Christ-likeness.

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. - Ephesians 3:19

Radical Christianity is setting out to accomplish what the bible tells us is desired for us, the replacement of selfishness with love which is to become Christ-like.

Chapter 4 - Jesus the Source of Truth

Jesus declare three things about himself

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. - John 14:6

1. The Way. The word used here is one for “road” the implication being that there is a journey or transition that in itself denotes change. However, the personalization indicates that this change is not possible without Jesus and that he is the means by which this journey is undertaken and completed.

2. The Truth. The Life. It can be helpful to combine these two items as it helps to flesh out a deeper understanding. Too often we only consider truth that to be what is right and life to be the eternal life we get in Christ and gets us into heaven. It can be helpful to see these operate actively as dynamic, expanding, and pervasive forces that infuse us and bring us closer to Jesus.

Since Christians are of the truth and “hear” the voice of Jesus, Jesus is critical to the process of changing us and bringing us out of our old life of self and into our new life in him.

Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. - John 10:25-28

Jesus described how he imparts eternal life by equating it to the life sustaining properties of bread. Many people mistake the illustration as a sort of cannibalism. However, since Jesus is called the word of God, it should be understood that we are to take in this word at least as vigorously as we eat bread to sustain our physical life.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. - John 6:51

Peter also found the illustration confusing however, he remained faithful to what he understood.

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. - John 6:66-68

And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. - Luke 4:3-4

We can see that God works through his word, with his Son, and by his Spirit to infuse us with truth to purify us and draw us nearer.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. - John 17:17

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. - Isaiah 55:10-11

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things

to come. - John 16:13

That which flows from God is truth and is vital to us as water. When we turn from God, we become unable to receive or keep that with which he would fill us.

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. - Jeremiah 2:13

Jesus is more than just an example for us. He is the word of God and truth. When we eat bread we break down the carbohydrates and distribute them to every cell in our body so that we can extract the energy we need to live life. When we take in truth (the word of God (Jesus)), we are infused with truth, the living water that saturates us with eternal life.

Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. - Matthew 28:20

Chapter 5 - Jesus is Love

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 8:39

Jesus is our example of love. We can see that the love of God fills Jesus and is extended to us.

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them. - John 17:26

Just as truth is dynamic and not static, love also fills, unifies, and flows. Jesus offered the greatest sacrifice for us so that we could be born again in him and receive eternal life.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. - John 15:13

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. - John 10:17-18

The love of Christ is to be our example.

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. - Ephesians 5:2

The hallmark characteristic of love is selflessness. We can see that Jesus understood when his death was immanent that it entailed more than physical death. We cannot understand what it means to be “made sin” or how much more than death would bearing the sins of the whole world be. However, Jesus knew what was coming and still surrendered all.

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. - Luke 22:41-44

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. - 2 Corinthians 5:21

A father that forgoes his own interests to provide and care for his family or a mother who endures the wearying demands of caring for hers demonstrate the beginning of the path of love. Setting aside self is the start of love. Jesus shows us the complete emptying of self and total dependence upon the father is not wearisome, or burdensome.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. - Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus extends his love to us and calls us to follow him. Giving up self can seem burdensome and unrewarding because of all the things we desire for ourselves. However, as we grow in truth and understanding, most of the things that at first seem appealing are recognized for the actual harm they bring. For example, the person who suddenly obtains wealth finds that each of the things he purchases become objects that require maintenance and attention from him such that what time he has is devoted to the things he has bought. In a way, he becomes their slave. Things we would have, people we would use, positions we would achieve, fame we would obtain, and power we could have all consume and destroy leaving an empty life. Love is an emptying of self that would destroy us and a filling with all that which truly enriches and endures.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. - Hebrews 12:2-3

Jesus had planned to surrender his life for our sakes even before the world was created. He emptied himself of everything and placed his fate in the hands of the father so that he would be a channel for us to also trust in God.

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. - 1 Peter 1:19-21

In Jesus we have a path to God by faith. It is a path of love. It requires the loss of everything as the world sees it, but is the inheritance of everything as God sees it.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it

is the power of God. - 1 Corinthians 1:18

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, - Philippians 3:7-8

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, - Ephesians 1:17-19

Chapter 6 - Being Sanctified by Truth

Being “sanctified” (set apart) through truth is more than a positional condition. It is an active process that is observed in every instance where a person changes doing one thing for something else taking him closer to God. For example, truth contributes to greater perception and discernment. If a man were to observe a young woman behaving seductively or dressing immodestly, it might stir the passions of his flesh. However, if the man is led by truth, he might instead have sorrow that someone’s daughter was so far from truth as to be reckless in the conduct of her life and headed towards empty or even painful consequences.

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil. - Proverbs 16:6

Those who continuously apply truth to what they observe and perceive, find that their ability to discern continuously increases.

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. - Hebrews 5:14

Truth is the character of God. As we grow in truth, we draw nearer to God.

The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. - Psalm 145:18

Radical change is sometimes obvious in the life of a Christian

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. - 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Sometimes radical change is still profound but less obvious.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. - Luke 1:17

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. - 1 Peter 4:1-2

There is a degree to which we need to participate in our sanctification. The mortification (putting to death) our members (that in our flesh that inclines us to self-seeking) is more a matter of death through starvation (neglect to feed). This process is continuously observed in our choices which are also seen in that which is “put on” and that which is “put off”.

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: - Colossians 3:5-10

Chapter 7 - Love - Emptied of Self, Filled with God

Truth can keep us from harmful entanglements, but love can overcome that within us that would harm us.

We start from a position of alienation from God. That which is from our “natural” man is harmful and ultimately self-destructive.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. - Romans 7:18

For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. - Proverbs 1_29-31

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: - Ephesians 2:12

It is when we become Christian by trusting in Jesus that we receive regeneration. That which died in Adam and Eve (their spiritual nature and connection to God) is reformed in us. It is here that God comes to dwell in us. We now have within us two elements in opposition to each other.

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

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. - Galatians 5:16-17

This dual nature of a Christians like riding in a car with two engines and two gas tanks, but one set configured to take us only forward and the other to take us only backward. If we try to fill both gas tanks, the car will tear itself apart. One “tank is filled with “self” (the one that feeds the engine that takes us backward). The other tank is filled with love (selflessness) and takes us only forward.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. - Romans 8:13

The Christian life is not achieved by only letting the fleshly “gas tank” run empty. We need to fill the other tank as well. It is difficult to think of how something is “filled” with selflessness. However, it is by emptying of self that a filling from God can occur. In fact, as self is emptied, it is to be replaced with God himself.

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, - Galatians 4:19

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. - Ephesians 3:19

Much of the Christian life is supposed to be about being “filled”.

And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; - Ephesians 5:18

For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; - Colossians 1:9

This gets to the heart of why many people see Christianity as a sort of fairy tale, because it seems to describe things that few who claim Christ ever experience or demonstrate. It is the purpose of this book to offer a way to “cash in” on the promises of the bible and actually live according to what is described. The first step is to understand what is possible for the Christian. The next step is to understand why this is so often not achieved. The last section of the book describes how some of the obstacles can be navigated so that the goal of Christianity can be achieved.

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: - Colossians 1:27

Chapter 8 - The Value of Truth

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding. - Proverbs 23:23

We can see some of the value of truth inversely by considering the effectiveness of lies. The promulgation of the idea of evolution is only part of the war Satan is waging against truth in general. We know that the bible tells us that Satan is the father of lies. We can also see the effectiveness of his strategy to eliminate truth in the success he has had in getting people to accept relativism as the basic way to look at life.

Fifty or sixty years ago it was not unusual to find people getting into fist-fights over politics or religion. This was not so much admirable, but reflective of a time when most people thought what was right and true was worth fighting for. Today, this seems primitive and almost laughable because currently one of the greatest social sins one can make is to make someone feel bad. Society has changed from truth based to feeling based. In a world that has no room for absolutes (like truth), the very idea of God seems a poor fit.

Truth cannot be truth if it is not absolute. This has not been a good time for Christianity because the bible calls four things “truth”, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as well as the bible itself. These are the only absolutes and that by which all other things can be judged. When relativism is adopted, that which is absolute is rejected. The rejection of the absolute is a rejection of God. We can see how a reverence for truth was useful for the Bereans;

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. - Acts 17:10-11

Following truth is important for several reasons. It is the path of salvation because it leads us to eternal life in Jesus who is our Savior.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. - John 14:6

It takes us out of the realm of relativity which is ruled by the passions (feelings) of the heart.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? - Jeremiah 17:9

It frees us from the enslaving power of sin

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? - Romans 6:16

It frees us from being manipulated by Satan;

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. - 2 Timothy 2:26

It is the only true freedom

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. - John 8:31-32

Truth is the way to escape the fate that awaits those who seek only self. Self is consumptive, corruptive, and destructive. The worst elements are more observable in things like heroin addiction and alcoholism. However, the guy sacrificing his family to get a promotion, the girl in a bar trolling for attention, or the student badgering her parents to buy clothes that her “friends” will find acceptable are all examples of lives headed towards an emptiness of self that the passing years only make worse.

Truth illuminates a path out of the bleak and darkening life towards which selfishness propels us. Truth allows us to see the path that leads to Christ who is truth and in whom we can have life eternal. Truth also shows us that the only real happiness is in the selflessness of love seen in giving rather than the selfishness seen in taking.

Following a path of truth allows us to build up layers of experience that bring us to ever increasingly deeper levels of truth and closer to our Savior. However, some Christians are presented with a “package” of denominational doctrinal dictums that they are told are “true” and are presented as a substitute for experiential truth such that by acknowledging them as true one can benefit from them just as if they had had the experiences themselves. Sadly, spiritual maturity is not obtainable through someone else doing the “heavy lifting”.

Radical Christianity is a call to examine our Christian faith and practice and follow the path of truth wherever it may lead. It is a process that starts with a recognition of the value of truth and taking up the responsibility to seek and grow in truth. Growing in truth is a process of coming closer to our Lord and Savior.

Chapter 9 - Love is a Choice

Consider a husband and father whose wife suggests that they consider home schooling their children. The husband cannot but help include the desirability of the second income his wife could supply into his calculations. This is illustrative of the choices we make everyday (big or small) .

For many people, daily choices seldom involve anything religious. For them their religion has more to do with the hour they spend on Sunday at church listening to a sermon and singing three hymns. However, the radical Christian has to involve his faith in every aspect of his life. In regard to love, he has to consider if his choices serve selfish or selfless interests.

Almost every purchasing decision has to include a consideration of who is being served (self or others). Another major category of decision making is how to spend time. The bible gives us as an example a picture of how Jesus made the choice to set aside that to which he was entitled to show the greatest love.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: - Philippians 2:4-9

The word "robbery" (plunder) here is a little unusual. It is used to convey the intensity of desire one has to hold on to what one has. Here the image draws upon the the picture of a thief who often has a greater desire to hold on to what he has stolen than the original owner.

A guy who taught religious law once asked Jesus how one got eternal life. Jesus asked him what was written in the law (his field of expertise). The man quoted the Old Testament law;

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.- Deuteronomy 6:5

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD. - Leviticus 19:18

Jesus told him that he was right. However, the man may have been embarrassed by this instruction in his own field of expertise and went on to ask who was his neighbor. To this Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, ending by asking which of the three men in the story was "neighbor" to the injured man. The response was the one who showed mercy. Jesus responded go and do likewise. The point was that "love" was exercised by choosing to show mercy.

So much of the human experience is bound up in the lessons we learn about what we have to do to get what we want. For example, a baby learns to cry to get fed. A toddler learns that to get a desired toy away from another child stealth of force can be used. As we grow we learn how to get praise or punishment from parents. The marketplace and employment also drive home the lessons of methods of acquisition.

The problem for the people of Israel and even Christians today is that we often apply this thinking to our relation with God and we seek to discover the requirements for us to earn his favor. One can understand how much more difficult it would be for the people of Israel, since they were specifically given the Law, but we both often miss the fact that we are in truth unable to keep even the simplest rules much less earn our way into God's favor.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. - James

2:10

Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. - Galatians 3:24

The verses cited by the Jewish law scholar both make reference to love (selflessness). This has to be the basis for our relationship with God and each other. From this comes humility, gratitude, and a clarity of vision that better sees truth.

Many of our routine daily choices are made reflexively. This reflects something deep inside of us that is manifest when faced with making a choice. It is almost like having a computer program operating inside of us. The Christian process of sanctification is like continuously rewriting the program code so that we learn to have different reflexes.

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: - 1 Peter 1:22

Our process of sanctification (reprogramming) is accomplished through “obeying the truth” and results in a love of our fellow Christians that has no pretense. A pure heart and pure soul result from being reprogrammed by truth and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 10 - Using Truth as Measurement Standard

Jesus gives us an example of how one can test for the presence of truth.

And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. - Matthew 21:23-27

In considering how to respond to Jesus’s question, the idea of what was true was never considered. Truth had no role in their deliberations, only what effect they could obtain. Their disregard for truth freed Jesus from being obligated to respond to them. The position they held gave them the authority to ask, but their practice (disregarding truth) nullified that to which their position entitled them.

The Bereans were able to measure truth by using the standard of the bible (this is why Satan works so hard to get people to see the bible as unreliable). We can also see where Jesus (who is called the word of God) is also used as a measurement standard.

An illustration was once made that God works in us to be more like Christ like a blacksmith working a piece of iron. He plunges it into the fire until it is made malleable by the heat and then places it on the anvil so that his blows can change the shape. This happens over and over until the thing being worked on begins to take the desired shape. (us made more like Jesus)

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.- Romans 8:28-29

We know that all that happens to us is for good (not necessarily comfort, prosperity, or ease) so that we be conformed to the image of Jesus. The radical Christian recognizes this process and seeks to surrender to it rather than resist it.

Chapter 11 - The Love of God

Most are familiar with the biblical declaration of God's love for humanity;

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. - John 3:16

However, we should not limit consideration of God's love to this declaration because it tends to make us see the love of God as a static singular event. Just as truth is a dynamic, flowing, and pervasive extension of God, so is love.

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. - John 14:23

Consider the love to abide (live) within us. We continuously disappoint, frustrate and quench the work that God would have within us, yet he still patiently endures our successive failures so that we might eventually turn more to him and away from ourselves.

It is perhaps when we consider the love of God, that we can more clearly see the difference between the popular idea of "love" (as a feeling) with the biblical idea of love as a choice.

Paul expresses in a prayer for the Ephesians that they be "rooted and grounded in love".

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. - Ephesians 3:17

Paul refers to a love that we can "know" yet passeth "knowledge". The Greek word "ginosko" translated as "know" has an element of experience that is not fully present in the English.

However, it is intriguing that we shall experience that which passes beyond experience.

A picture we can derive from this prayer of Paul for the Ephesians, and by extension for us, is that the Christian life starts with trusting in Jesus (faith) which allows Christ to live (dwell) in our hearts with a result that we are established (rooted and grounded) in love such that we are more and more able to know the love of Christ which allows us to be filled with the fullness of God.

As Christians we are vessels of God's love. We have God living in us and his love can be seen through us.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. - 1 John 4:7-12

Chapter 12 - Humility - The Destination of Truth

The life of king David, the second king of Israel, is an example of how truth and humility work. When David was young he was anointed king when the first king was still ruling. The first king, Saul, spent years seeking to take David's life. Many of the Psalms were written by David who was constantly on the run from the men Saul sent to kill him. Truth was to be found in the reality that his life was at risk and only the protection of God kept him alive. This situation produced humility because there was no other option. David had to live in humble and grateful dependence upon God.

After Saul died and David had ruled as king for years, he faced no more threat to his life. It is a king's job to control things and as the years passed, David came to see no restrictions on what he could have happen. He went so far as to arrange to have a man killed so that he could have the man's wife for himself. Even then, he still had no idea that he had done anything wrong.

God sent Nathan to tell David a story about a rich man who took away the lamb of a poor man. When David expressed anger for what the rich man in the story had done, Nathan accused David by telling him that he was the rich man in the story. Because David was still "of the truth", he understood what he had done. Psalm 51 was written by David to express the sorrow he felt when he came to understand his sin.

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. - Psalm 51:6-10

In his later years, David came to understand truth not of necessity or circumstance, but face the cold truth of his own nature. Most of us only slowly come to understand the degree of sinfulness within us and the degree of majesty of God. As these two levels of understanding increase, one can only grow in true humility.

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. - Isaiah 64:6

As we grow in truth (draw nearer to God) we can only grow in humility. In a way, humility is the measure of the progress we have made in understanding truth. It is also the gateway through which we receive grace from God.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. - James 4:6

While truth gives us direction, and humility, gives us the capacity to receive God's grace, it is the passion of our heart that is the engine that drives us forward.

Chapter 13 - Humility is the Foundation of Love

Spiritual growth requires a transition from thinking first of ourselves to thinking first about others. Both love and truth bring us to humility.

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: - Philippians 2:2-5

Christian maturity is a process of becoming settled. With the peace and assurance we have in Christ, those fears and ambitions we had when we were less mature slowly fade. This transition can be seen when Paul tells us that his circumstances are relatively irrelevant.

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. - Philippians 4:12

Paul also gives us an example in that even the prospect of death no longer agitates or frightens.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. - Philippians 1:21

As we more and more live for Christ, and look forward to our being with him, our concerns, contentions, and striving in this world diminish. As a result, we have a freedom that allows us to seek after the advantage of others.

Both truth and love bring us to humility. It is essential to build this foundation for the most difficult task Christians are given, to love one another. We are specifically instructed in the New Testament twelve times to love one another. This is perhaps because we are so un-loveable. Perhaps one reason for the attractiveness of running a church as a mechanical system is that it prevents the relational exposure that might require us to tolerate each other's abrasiveness.

The mini-series "Band of Brothers" illustrates the selfless love that adverse circumstances can bring out. It presents a picture of comradery that develops with people who might not be able to stand each other in other circumstances. In one scene one soldier asks another why he has kept his parachute with him. His response was, "Since it is made of silk, I wanted to give it to my fiancée for her wedding dress". He then said, "I guess you are surprised that I am so sentimental". His friend replied, "No, I am surprised you think we are going to survive".

A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. - Proverbs 17:17

All of the instruction we receive as Christians should bring us to the point where from a humble heart we can show the love that God has shown us to our fellow Christians.

Whereas the object and purpose of our instruction and charge is love, which springs from a pure heart and a good (clear) conscience and sincere (unfeigned) faith. - 1 Timothy 1:5

This then becomes the sign of authenticity of the hand of God in our lives.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. - John 13:34-35

Humility, like love, is a process of emptying self. Love is also a process of filling. As by faith we have become a new creation, we are able to be filled with the love of God and show this love to other Christians which shows the world the authenticity of Jesus and his work.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. - John 17:20-23

Chapter 14- Love and Truth, an Active Relationship with God and Service to Others

There is an expression that comes to us from the Revolutionary War, "Going off half-cocked". This described someone in the heat of battle whose excitement led him to forget to prepare his rifle properly and as a result, he found himself in a dangerous situation.

It is not unusual for a new Christian to become similarly enthusiastic. A young man once, upon

recently becoming a Christian, was so excited that he decided he would write down the superiority of his new faith in a format similar to his recent college experience (including with footnotes). He then gave this paper to his relatives so that they could also be similarly persuaded. It was not received well.

In this example the young man had the best of intentions, but was acting in his own strength, using worldly methods, and was insensitive to those he was trying to reach. The objective of the Christian life is activity. However, it has to be God directed activity. Some fearing doing something wrong end up doing nothing. This is not an acceptable alternative.

The young man in the illustration had several options. He could have done nothing, gone off half-cocked as he did, waited until he was more mature, or sought the counsel of an older and wiser Christian. Wisdom would counsel that people are more attracted by what they see in the life of someone they know than a well crafted scholarly thesis. Love is more clearly shown by treating others individually and not as a group. Also, to gauge the receptivity of a person by seeing if God is working in his heart.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. - John 6:44

A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. - Psalm 127:1

The objective of the Christian life is more than just getting to heaven. If this were the case, as soon as someone became a Christian, he would die. It would seem cruel to leave someone in this evil world when it was not necessary. The reason we remain is because there is work to do.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:10

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

Sometimes Christians can founder not sure of what to do or how to do it. One can move blindly in the Christian life and often encounter painful corrections. Some attempt to avoid painful consequences by parking themselves somewhere out of the way. However, not participating is not considered an acceptable Christian condition.

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: - Revelation 3:15-17

We are encouraged to activity in our Christian life. Even blind activity God can correct and redirect. It is when we are indolent that we give God little to work with.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. - James 1:22-24

Sometimes as a Christian begins to grow in truth and love he listens to all sorts of teaching and participates in all sorts of worship experiences. He needs to be aware of the danger of living as a Christian consumer (self-directed activity). There are tremendously powerful and deep experiences in the Christian life. However, they are consequential. If we attempt to pursue them directly, we risk an ineffective Christian life that focuses on what we take in more than what we give out.

If we consider the activity of Jesus as our example, his first priority was not to enrich himself with experiences. He even put off necessary rest because of his compassion. He poured himself out for us.

And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. - Mark 6:30-36

One of the first mistakes a Christian can make in acting on his desire to put his faith into practice is to rely on the inclinations of his flesh to determine what “good” he should do. Another mistake is to rely on a leader to tell us what to do. The key to activity in the Christian life is to be led by the Spirit.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. - Romans 8:14

There is that within the heart of a Christian that illuminates and responds to things of the Spirit.

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

It is the response of our spirit that aids us in discerning the actions we should take.

And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? - Luke 24:32

There is that in the heart of a Christian that “burns” (resonates) with the word of God and the person of Jesus. The natural inclination of our heart is towards those things that serve self, ambition, lust, greed, fear, or vanity. In contrast, for the Christian, there should be a growing desire to draw nearer our Savior. Having been born again and receiving a spiritual nature, allows

us to expand this new capacity we have so that it can be filled with the Holy Spirit. This investment allows us to hear a new source of motivation, those things God's Spirit directs us towards.

A man once visiting a church at a fellowship time noticed an elderly woman sitting by herself off to the side. In conversation he asked how she was doing financially. Her hesitant response was that she was having some difficulties. He was able to provide her some small assistance.

This example illustrates the confluence of the opportunities God brings into each of our lives with the call we each have to love one another. Christianity is a call to action, but not as the world acts. In the example, the action was love. It was not so much the giving of a little bit of money as it was the concern that asked about needs. This illustrates love in action.

Love and truth are not two static destinations that once achieved can be checked off a list of accomplishments. They are rivers of living water that flow from God through us to others. Because they are dynamic and continuous, we need to maintain our connection with God by continuously and diligently "seeking".

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. - Hebrews 11:6

The bible gives us a picture of the actions we should demonstrate in our "seeking".

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; - Proverbs 2:1-12

If one considers the active verbs receive, hide, incline, apply, criest, liftest, seekest, and searchest, one can begin to get an idea of the level and type of activity expected from the Christian. Most of these verbs describe not only action, but also intensity. However, these exhortations to action are all related to the individual Christian in his relationship with God.

If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. - James 1:5-8

The Christian whose passions have been correctly directed towards his relationship with God is ready to recognize the opportunities to show love towards other Christians that the Lord may bring across his path. It is the life of Christ that begins to be seen in us,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. - Galatians 2:20

The ultimate expression of the Christian life is to show the love of God to others.

Section Two - Things that Hinder

Chapter 15 - Our initial Handicap

In section one, we established the foundation of the Christian life by examining how things are supposed to work with particular emphasis on truth and love. Few Christians find and follow a direct path to Jesus and Christ-likeness. For most of us, there are obstacles that must be overcome. This section will provide the radical Christian with an understanding of why and how he may have come to such a disadvantageous circumstance.

Using the word “radical” to describe Christianity usually causes people to think of a crazed zealot shouting at everyone. However, the thesis of this book is that what the bible describes as normal or expected Christianity only seems “radical” when contrasted to the type of traditional or institutionalized Christian “cruise control” that is common today. The word “radical” is selected to impart both a sense of urgency as well as intensity in a call to examine what most of us have come to consider as minimally acceptable Christian living. It is always good when reviewing a subject to start with a standard against which we can make comparisons. Here the bible helps us to understand what was expected for each of us when we became Christian.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: - Ephesians 4:11-13

Any Christian who is honest will admit that he falls woefully short of the desired path expected of a Christian, which leads to Christ-likeness. In fact, often we have come so far from this standard that we see it not as an expectation, a possibility, or even something that can be partially accomplished. Rather, we often have come to see these verses as describing a vague ideal like the movie character E.T. telling a child “Beeee Good”.

We can ask ourselves how we have come to accept a cartoon version of what the Christian life should entail. If we consider some of the difficulties Christians face in attempting to live a normal (what is now considered radical) Christian life, we can begin to see how we came to be

so distant from our Savior and the path he would have us walk. It can be helpful to consider some of the categories of obstacles that confront the Christian.

1. A poor, incomplete, or erroneous idea of what Christianity is and how it is lived.
2. An inherited legacy of Christian tradition that misdirects us.
3. A crippled ability to trust in the bible.
4. Concerns with and interest in the things of the world.
5. Unrestrained fleshly inclinations.
6. Pharisee-like self-righteous smugness of achievement.
7. Diverted into scripted roles defined by organized systems.
8. Being unaware of the traps Satan has set out to ensnare Christians.
9. Having been diverted from individual inquiry into passive dormancy.
10. Being unaware of Christian alternatives and options.
11. Having been conformed to the patterns of the world.
12. Inhibiting influences from friends, family, and coworkers.

If what we have come to practice is not real Christianity but some cartoon version of it, the “radical” part is breaking with that which has diverted us, seeking that which is true, and drawing closer to him who died for us.

Chapter 16 - Who wants to change?

Since radicalism is about change, it is natural to ask why anyone would want to change. We all are driven at some level like animals to seek pleasure and avoid pain. The Greeks observed this in what was described as a “philosophy” of Hedonism. This was somewhat modified into Epicureanism by the observation that limiting pleasures could help a person live longer to enjoy even more pleasures.

For those who desired “virtue”, the path of Stoicism required enduring discomfort and even pain so that a person, by his strength, could demonstrate his superior character. In a way, the TV characters on the show “Star Trek” of Spock and McCoy, representing logic and emotion, demonstrated these two approaches to life.

In reality these are not two distinct paths nor are they even specifically chosen. The person who endures discomfort does so because there is a greater or overriding sensation derived from the satisfaction that one has accomplished or maintains a chosen condition. We make changes in life to get what we want and avoid that which we don't.

If we were to consider a young girl with anorexia we might be puzzled to understand how someone could slowly starve herself. It can help to consider two aspects of the girl's life. The first is that she has anxieties she has come to associate with her weight. The second, is that these anxieties are alleviated through the satisfaction she gets from the control she can exert over her eating. Like the Stoic or even Mr. Spock, she endures and can even savor her physical discomfort as it has come to be interpreted by her as proof that she is in control. This sense of control can be so important to her that she may not be persuaded to change her actions even

when her life is at risk.

Consider the father who is a strict even excessive disciplinarian. He has come to see that controlling his children is his responsibility (as opposed to teaching his children to control themselves). He may see his children fear, resent, and even come to distance themselves from him. Yet he is unable to consider any change because to do so would risk the assurance he derives from being certain he is doing the right thing.

A more common example to consider is a person who was raised in a church and sits in a pew every Sunday. He may have no particular anxieties and in fact may actually feel pretty comfortable with the direction and momentum of his life. It would be difficult to convince such a person to undertake the experience of anxiety associated with change as he cannot imagine a destination of greater comfort than he presently enjoys.

Most people achieve an equilibrium in life that balances things that motivate change like pain, discomfort, and anxiety with habits we acquire to control ourselves and environment. As the years pass, we are less and less likely to consider anything that might disturb this point of balance for our life. We may even come to accept what has been called "lives of quiet desperation" rather than risk "upsetting the apple cart".

There are a variety of circumstances and environments that a Christian can come to. He can be drawn to the emotional stimulation of rock bands or Charismatic expression. He can find smugness and self-righteousness in legalism or social justice. Even the low-key traditional approach can keep him comfortable and isolated. In a way, Christianity has brought to the marketplace a variety of brands that can satisfy almost any inclination.

Since there are so many denominations offering almost every possible way to express one's faith, it would seem that nothing else would be needed. Some move through the available denominations looking for the best day care, coffee bar, or convenient parking like savvy Christian consumers. Some are seek the denomination that "got it right". If the primary motive force in the life of a Christian is comfort, satisfaction, being "right", or even sensation, there is little need for "radicalism". However, among the dissatisfied are a small group of Christians stirred to seek that which touches the soul, truth and love.

This is where radical Christianity is needed. Most denominations declare that they have the "right" way to live the Christian life. They usually have a doctrinal statement listing declarations they say are true. The problem is that truth is not something that can be reduced to a static two-dimensional declaration with which we are supposed to agree. Truth is the living vital power of God that works in us to make us like Jesus and draw us to himself. Even "love" can be twisted into attempts to make those lost in sin feel good about it or for a person to have an almost drug-like experience of "worship". It is the growing dissatisfaction with a sort of substitute Christianity that drives the radical Christian to seek authenticity even at the risk of discomfort.

Chapter 17 - "We have met the enemy and he is us." - Pogo (a Walt Kelly cartoon character)

And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. - Matthew 26:40-41

Perhaps the single greatest obstacle we face lies within us. The bible calls it the “flesh”. There is that associated with our physical bodies that inclines us to seek ease and comfort. Satan has made great use of this vulnerability. For example, he can get people to consistently vote for the political philosophy of socialism (the proposition that everyone can have everything all the time).in spite of its proven failure (Zimbabwe, South Africa, Venezuela, and the Soviet Union). Truth seldom can resist the emotional desire to be taken care of. The mind might recognize a lie, but the heart so much desires the false promise of comfort and ease that truth is often rejected.

At the level of the individual, our desire to avoid the anxiety of uncertainty and accept the comfort of assurance that we are going to heaven leads us into almost any “Christian” practice that makes minimal demands and offers certainty and assurance. Our willingness to cling to that which comforts is more a measure of the weakness of our flesh than our thirst for truth.

The bible gives us an intense look at the problem of the flesh in the letter to the Galatians. These new Christians had listened to those who were telling them that they should be circumcised in order to be “real” Christians. The appeal was to achieve assurance in their faith by adding works that they could do. This same dynamic is found in every instance of Christian legalism. The problem is that anxiety and uncertainty is alleviated by our sense of accomplishment. In reality, we are supposed to take our uncertainty and anxiety to the Lord in faith such that we grow in faith. This results in a stronger faith in God instead of a faith diverted into trusting in ourselves.

The entire Christian life is to be lived by faith and dependence upon God. We can see a picture of how devastating to the work of God in our lives it is when we start to trust in (have faith) in what we can control.

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. - 1 Corinthians 1:17

The idea that we have the power to “make the cross of Christ of none effect” is sobering. This Christian life can only be successful when God works in us. This work is greatly hindered when we neglect the work of God and substitute our own ideas and objectives.

Frequently we can come to think more of our Christian life in terms of milestones of our own accomplishment (sacraments, church attendance and activities, or financial support) such that we give little or no consideration to the work God would like to accomplish in us.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. - Philippians 2:13

There is a fragility to the work of God in us such that our inclination to trust in our own works or ideas or that of others can slow, frustrate, and even inhibit God’s work in us. We can see this happening in Galatia.

Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? - Galatians 3:3

The influence of the flesh might be summed up as selfishness and self-seeking. Jesus is our example of the opposite of selfishness, which is love.

And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. - 2 Corinthians 5:15

Chapter 16 - Our Adversary Satan

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. - Isaiah 14:12-14

Just as Jesus is our example of selfless love, Satan is our example of consumptive selfishness. The Christian attempting to become radical and follow the path the Lord has for him needs to understand his own disinclination (the flesh) as well as the obstacles placed in his path by his enemy Satan.

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: - Luke 22:31

We know that Satan uses his power to influence religious leaders in such a way as to frustrate God's work.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. - John 8:44

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. - Acts 20:29-30

Satan uses those who serve him (knowingly or unknowingly) to shape the course of the world so that it will serve his purposes. One of his purposes is to collectivize the whole world so that he can leverage his influence over it. He has made use of organizational systems even to using Christians to advance them. This was not God's plan as he even intervened in human affairs creating different languages so that we would be limited in our ability to collectivize.

And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go

to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. - Genesis 11:6-7

Probably the most significant imprint Satan has made on Christianity is to get us to collectivize ourselves in organizational systems.

We can see that Satan sets the course of history (insofar and only so long as he is allowed by God)

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: - Ephesians 2:2

Considering how extensive the cumulative influence of the world is on us, we should spend some time examining some of its construction and how it was designed to divert us from God.

Chapter 18 - What is the World?

Satan has limitations. He cannot be everywhere at once. Part of his drive to collectivize the world is to be able to leverage his influence through human hierarchy. To achieve this level of collectivization, he has created social institutions that have the momentum to draw people in, shape them to his purpose, and use them to impart a sort of “life” making an organization a sort of nascent organism.

The bible describes what it calls the “world” as something hazardous to Christians.

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. - James 4:4

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. - John 15:19

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. - 1 John 2:15

At the time of Jesus, human activity was either within families, between families, or with a group of those who had wealth, political influence, legal influence, prestige, or military power. It would take centuries for Satan to grow these social threads into the pervasive organizational social systems they have become today.

An example was once given about the appeal of socialism. One can imagine a Christian asleep in the back seat of a speeding car. If he were to suddenly awake, he would see someone he trusts driving the car and be able to return to his slumber. The person who does not believe in God is like a person asleep in the back seat of a speeding car who suddenly awakes and sees no one at the wheel. He will clamber over the seat to take the wheel himself. Those who are attracted to the world are those who see in it a reality greater, more useful, and more tangible than God.

Consider some examples of those that operate within this realm.

Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. - Luke 18:22-23

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. - Matthew 6:24

But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. - Matthew 11:8

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. - Luke 12:19

For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. - Matthew 14:4-5

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; - Matthew 26:59

Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? - John 7:48

The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. - Acts 4:26

The world has been designed to resonate with the flesh. It seems attractive to the flesh and appears to offer anything one could want.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. - 1 John 2:16

Satan sets the course of the world. His objective is to leverage his influence through getting the whole world into a collectivized system that he can control. The final control system is to be able to determine who is allowed to buy or sell.

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. - Revelation 13:16-17

At the time of Jesus Satan had only a portion of humanity woven into his control system.

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a

lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. - John 8:44

The history of Western Civilization is the history of Satan hijacking Christianity first to form it into an organizational system and then to use it as a template around which to build a collectivized economic, political, educational, and military system that he could use to control the world. The defective character traits observed by those in the world at the time of Jesus have been expanded to, first the aristocracy, and then the general populace until now when these traits are the norm.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. - 2 Timothy 3:1-5

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. - 2 Timothy 3:13

Chapter 19 - The Truth Will Set You Free

There is a danger for the Christian to be drawn into the world and its systems to such an extent that his walk with the Lord is crippled if not halted all together. For this reason we are admonished to seek to guard our minds.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. - Romans 12:1-2

One of the most effective mechanisms Satan has employed is public education. Age segregated indoctrination achieves a level of social pressure towards worldly conformity that could not be achieved otherwise.

We are drawn into the grasp of the world by our desires of the flesh. We are vulnerable to deceptive promises of wealth, prestige, and power. God created the natural world, but Satan has constructed an artificial one called society. Most people today are raised in this artificial world, we are mostly inculcated with the values of the world. Knowing no other reality, we seldom question that which surrounds us. There are usually only three ways one can break free from the grasp of this artificial world.

1. Trauma. Being abused as a child, suffering as a victim of crime or war, experiencing a health crisis, combat, or other major intrusion of reality can shatter the Potemkin-like facade of the delusions Satan has led us to accept.

2. Old age. As we near the end of life, we can begin to see that we made some poor choices. For example, chasing after and investing ones life in feminism, business success, political activity, social justice, or social prominence may lead a person to neglect, delay, or even avoid building a family only to discover that what one valued in youth pays no dividends other than the loneliness and bitterness of a wasted life.

3. Seeking truth. The power of God in the life of a Christian can open his eyes to the deceptions Satan has used to advance his world systems. Like those around the boy who cried out, “The Emperor has no clothes”, Satan seeks to keep silent those who might arouse others to see truth.

A woman at a social event once mentioned in conversation that she had recently gotten her degree in psychology. A little later in the conversation she mentioned the phrase “inner child” to which one person responded with a chortle. She reacted in puzzlement and asked why the person would have such a skeptical reaction. The scoffer said that there was no such things as an “inner child”. If there was such a template of human perfection from which remedial connection could be obtained we would have some idea of how it originated, where it was kept, and the mechanism of its operation. He also said that there was no support for such a concept other than the wish it were true. Her response was to say, “If that is true, then ...”

The story above illustrates how someone can come to not only believe something, but have it so integrated into their understanding of the world that it is relied upon. The woman in the story was only just beginning to question one of the things she had been taught for the last four years. It would have been overwhelming for her to make the leap that most of what she had spent her time and money on for those four years was also not as true as she had been led to believe. There is a line from a movie where the actor Jack Nicholson loudly declares, “You can’t handle the truth”. To some extent this applies to those of us taken in by the massive influence of the artificial world Satan has constructed. The solution is to keep following truth step by step so that we ultimately become free.

The woman in the illustration first considering that there might be other things she was taught that are not true might lead her to investigate other assertions, slowly building a case of experience and discovery that could grow into increasing and expanding doubt. The difficulty arises when truth leads one to have to face the discomfort of unraveling that upon which one has come to rely. For example, if one has placed one’s future hopes on a career in psychology, undertaking consideration that the entire field is flawed, might be too big a step to take.

From a Christian perspective the entire field of psychology is flawed by a basic misunderstanding of human nature. Many theories of psychological behavior are predicated on the assumption that people are basically good. However, none even consider sin or the influence of the flesh. However, even if one is not a Christian, the few surveys conducted regarding the effectiveness of psychological therapy often show it no different that doing nothing. People are unlikely to follow truth when it could upset that in which one hopes, has come to trust in, or provides comfort.

The difficulty a recent graduate may have in considering that what she has paid dearly for (in time, effort, and money) may not have been worthwhile is a picture of the difficulty a Christian

can have in considering that the traditions he has received may not be the best foundation to live the Christian life.

We can measure the weakness of our faith by the reluctance we have to embrace truth. Truth does indeed “free” us. However, being freed from everything we have come to trust in of the world can cause a lot of anxiety unless we have placed greater faith in him who is truth.

Chapter 20 - Methods of Entanglement

In the fictional story, Gulliver's Travels, there is described a shipwrecked traveler (Gulliver) who awakens to find himself on a beach secured in place by thousands of small ropes by the people of Lilliput (each about six inches high).fearful of what such an unrestrained giant might do. This picture can serve to illustrate the many ways we have become bound to the world systems administered by Satan.

There are four main categories of worldly conformance that have a profound influence over what we accept as true.

1. How we are raised. Like an abused child or dog that does not know there is any other way to live, our early years forge a way of looking at life that does not easily change. Satan had to rely on the slow method of incrementally getting each generation to adopt his changes to shape the next generation. With public education, media, and disconnected parents, Satan can much more rapidly configure each generation to his values, beliefs, traditions, and habits.

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. - Proverbs 13:24

2. What is popular. Once what is absolute and true is lost or diminished, the only other standard is what everyone else is doing. When one first enters an alien environment like the military, school, or a new job, one experiences the anxiety of not knowing what to do. The default tactic is to do what the person in front of you does. If it is wrong, at least there will be two of you in trouble. It is the rare individual that can escape public education without a deeply ingrained reflex to follow the herd.

But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. - Matthew 11:16-17

3. What experts say. One of the primary reasons Satan had for instituting an educational system was so that he could have a source of people he could use to authenticate his alternative truths (lies). For example, if he wants to declare the bible is unreliable, all he has to do is have a “scientist” declare that evolution is true or that there was no world wide flood. This sort of intellectual bullying has been successful to undermine the faith of many Christians as well as fuel the faith of those who follow his alternative religion of secularism.

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, - Romans 1:22

4. The information in which we are immersed. Like the bars of a cage, the daily and constant bombardment of information from media, either directly or echoed through friends, builds a conceptual context for perceiving the world around us. This influence programs us to reflexive behavior to such an extent that we learn to avoid prohibited speech and to align ourselves with what is expected. We even parrot the attitudes that are presented as worthy and bully others with scorn and condemnation who fail to similarly conform.

Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. - 1 Corinthians 15:33

It is difficult to fully appreciate how powerful the forces are to which we are continuously exposed from our earliest days. A prominent man of the World War II generation once spoke condescendingly of his parents generation. He said that their siblings and cousins were their best friends. In contrast, he saw himself as a sort of “citizen of the world” with many friends beyond what he saw as his parent provincial roots. It seemed to have never crossed his mind that his “friends” were more a result of his being chairman of a major corporation than attracted to his charming personality.

One might see in history specific points at which the grip of Satan tightened on the world. The collectivization of the world has advanced to such a degree that all Satan has to do to get the desired result is flip a switch.

Chapter 21 - Seeing in History Evidence of Satanic Influence

Our modern world is a complex tapestry of thousands of threads woven by Satan over centuries. Some of these threads can be seen by examining five historical events. We can see how deeply we have been imprinted by Satan in that some of these events are held in cherished esteem. It may be difficult to consider that Satan had a hand in them. The degree of difficulty reflects some of the need for a “radical” application of truth to our lives and our understanding of the world.

1. Homosexuality. Today many who claim Christ want to “support” homosexuality. They see it as an act of Christian love. They have come to misunderstand Christian love as what is felt rather than what is chosen and wish to make others “feel good”. Just as someone encouraging a teenage girl who is compelled to mutilate her flesh with cutting is not showing “love”, encouraging homosexuals to “feel good” about their situation is also harmful and not loving.

Homosexuality is largely a judicial punishment for those who refuse to even retain a knowledge of God.

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate

mind, to do those things which are not convenient; - Romans 1:26-28

Considering the increasingly rapid and widespread rejection of Christianity and God in the Western world, one might expect a huge increase in homosexuality. One could surmise that Satan had to scramble to get homosexuality considered acceptable in order to receive the large increase resulting from so many repudiating God.

The radical Christian seeks truth. As such, homosexuality is less seen as an inherent evil than a measure of the degree to which people have rejected God. The radical Christian is not angered by homosexuality so much as saddened. He is driven to prayer that some might be given the grace to see the truth and repent and turn to God who loves them and wants them to be saved.

2. Abortion. Going back a little further in social history, Dr. Benjamin Spock's Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care was published in time for the start of the US baby boom in 1946. This book was seen as expert advice by many suburban mothers in the 1950s. With an appeal to the maternal inclination to show love and affection and the reluctance to show discipline and correction, it contributed to the development of widespread self-indulgence for an entire generation.

Today we have the statistical information that shows fatherless homes result in children less disciplined and more inclined to suffer the consequences of a life given over to self-indulgence. The suburban culture of the 1950s was a strong step in reducing paternal influence in the home. The growing pursuit of "drugs, sex, and rock and roll" in the 1960s had consequences that in part led to the establishment of abortion as a legal right in the 1970s. In a way, self-indulgence became institutionalized.

The view that an unwanted pregnancy is a problem that can be fixed by killing the child, even today sounds harsh. The idea of preventing the "problem" by abstaining from fornication is not even considered worthy of discussion by most. Here, we have an example of where the discomfort of truth (killing children) can be resolved by delusion (they are not really humans).

3. Evolution. In the 1880s in the US there was a rapid expansion of both the number of colleges as well as those desiring to attend. These institutions were staffed by an elite almost all of whom subscribed to modernist enlightened views (atheist, agnostic, or at best Unitarian). The theory of evolution was made ready at just the right time to be promulgated by this new elite (priests in temples of the new religion). In essence it became one of the core doctrines of the new "religion" of secularism (the worship of man in general and self in particular).

The rapid acceptance and spread of evolution shows how effective Satan was already by the 1800s in using many so-called "scientific" discoveries to bully people into accepting alternatives to the truth in the bible (evolution exchanged for creation, psychology for sin, sociology for charity, and relativity for truth). These assertions, declarations, and pronouncements carried with them the power of "expert" authentication. However, most people did not look into the "scientific" support for these claims and took on faith what was said by these new "priests" as gospel.

“Scientific” pronouncements were passed down as gospel into the emerging factory school system with industrial efficiency so that, because of reduced parental influence, children could be programmed with new Satanic values as if they were products on an assembly line. Once these ideas were taken in, they were able to achieve the rapid conversion of the general population such that each successive generation more and more based how they thought on this new “religion”.

It was clever to include relativism with the new ideas. It grew to replace the very concept of absolute and truth. In its wake, one was left unable to argue against the deceptions of the new values, because now nothing could be called “wrong” anymore. Once entrenched, evolution could not be dislodged.

Satan was able to entice intelligent people to act as his agents of authority with an appeal to vanity, prestige, and position. As intelligent people were taken away from God (who is truth), they also lost connection to the source of wisdom (wisdom is from God).

Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, - Romans 1:22

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. - Psalm 14:1

As Satan was advancing his followers to assume positions of leadership, he had the extra advantage of crippling the faith of Christians because they allowed themselves to be bullied into thinking that the bible (particularly the creation account) was not true.

4. Democracy. Just as Satan had drawn in wealthy slave owners in ancient Greece to experiment with the democratic administration of the polis (city), he was able to appeal to the landed gentry of colonial America. These socially prominent men had often read the Greek classics and fancied themselves inheritors of their intellectual legacy.

Satan guided these men to react to poor British administration and taxation in such a way as to embrace these philosophies and constitute a new country based on these principles. In reality, democracy only appeared to work in America because of the high percentage of Christians and because of the preoccupation of many men of ambition with westward expansion which distracted them from applying their talents to exploiting their neighbors.

The many instances of applying democracy to non-Christians (particularly in Africa and the Mid-East) were tragic failures. The brutal nature of man was seen as early as the French revolution. Satan had attributed to the political philosophy of democracy the prosperity of the United States which in large part was due to the moderating influence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians. Even many Christians would come to have a sentimental view of democracy such that they would encourage other people to adopt it not fully appreciating the damage loosed upon people who are not Christian. It is sad that those Christians who owe their salvation to the love of Jesus would give the glory to democracy that was rightly due Christ.

5. Reformation. Satan often promotes one thing that is corrupt to make his alternative seem

attractive.

The first of Luther's 95 theses was in regard to Jerome's mistranslation of the Greek *metanoia* (change of mind) to the Latin *poenitentiam agite* (do penance). As a result, the thousand year old Catholic doctrine of penance was found to be in error. The idea to "reform" Christianity had the best of intentions. However, the reformers missed the fundamental problem, while error in doctrine and practice were often obvious (like the shakedown racket of indulgences), the very structure of priests (now pastors) doing the work of Christianity while everyone else went along for the ride still kept people from living real Christianity (each becoming more like Christ).

The social structure of an organized system with people as specialized components had been well established in the church by the time of the reformation. Afterwards, as denominations multiplied, this way of thinking would be carried to every aspect of human endeavor. After a hundred years of religious wars (during which a bad taste for religion of any flavor flourished) this organizational and systems orientation of the churches would easily expand with the Industrial Revolution into almost every aspect of life.

Every major historical event of Western Civilization was to advance the plans of Satan to bring us to the point we are. The religious wars of the 1600s provided fertile ground for the growth of the new religion of secularism (the worship of man in general and self in particular). This brought forth the so-called age of enlightenment. People who had turned their backs on God because of the foolishness of Christians began to see in themselves the ability to reason how the world should be structured. It is this view that has been in ascendancy as Christianity had at first been marginalized and then rejected over the centuries. Man has been led to believe that every step of history has been an advancement of human progress. Most of this "progress" has been in the area of comfort such as indoor plumbing, air conditioning, sanitation, and entertainment. Modern life can be seen as a sort of exchange. One way is to think that the uncomfortable and primitive has been exchanged for the luxurious and prosperous. Seldom considered is that also exchanged was the richness and depth of family life for the more sterile and anemic life in society.

It is impossible to catalog all of the interventions Satan has made in human history, but they all work together to lead us not into the utopian age he has often presented, but into slavery where even our ability to buy or sell is controlled by him.

Chapter 22 - Church History

So much of what we understand about Christianity comes to us through churches. The word church is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia* and was used to describe people who had been called out (originally for a meeting of city citizens to discuss a particular civic issue).

Today, instead of the emphasis on the people, the emphasis has been on the building, program, denomination, system, package of doctrine, or tradition such that there is a difference between what is now understood and what was initially understood about Christianity.

While what is available today has often be significantly altered, it did not take centuries for all

error to be introduced to Christianity. The Corinthians, Galatians, Laodiceans, and others were quick to foul things up.

At first, periodic political persecution and the infiltration of false teachers produced defensive reactions that resulted in the elevation of men of intellect, speaking ability, and ambition who then contributed to the formation of church as an institution. What is often overlooked in this process is that the average Christian was relegated to a peripheral involvement in the church. Sadly the average Christian was more than willing to avoid any demands actual Christianity might make for the assurance from the church that he was going to heaven in exchange for some minimal effort.

Once organizational Christianity was established, catechetical and cathedral schools were established to insure that new priests and administrators would continue to follow established patterns. This became the pattern for universities and even the public educational system.

Catholic religious practice came to be seen by most as rules and obligations mostly disconnected from daily life. Protestant religious practice often followed arcane intellectual theology so as to also seem disconnected from real life.

The Industrial Revolution brought the concept of specialization in application to labor. The inequities in the division between labor and management would be exploited for centuries. However, this had already been established in the church. Christianity had been turned into a profession for the clergy long before management of industrial processes had been imagined.

Theologians (both before and after the Reformation) worked as specialists in extracting truth. They failed to understand the nature of truth (its dynamic properties and that it flows from God into the life of each believer). They thought that by working sort of as miners in the bible, that they could find a nugget to pass along to those downstream. As they took the life out of truth, they themselves suffered and allowed their own intellect to lead them into increasingly arcane areas starving themselves of the life to be found in truth and producing that of little benefit to themselves or others.

The priests and pastors who dispensed the work of theologians also starved as did the people who relied on them to be fed as sheep rely on a shepherd. Christianity was supposed to be about each person directly connected to his Savior and not plugged into the end of a pipeline. By divorcing the laity (regular people) from an active Christian life, the Christian life became a weekly lecture about what we “should” do.

Christianity almost seemed hollowed out from the inside such that after the two world wars, it was often considered as of almost no practical value. As a result of declining interest, some churches attempted to embrace worldly entertainment, some followed a path of political and social “relevance” (political activism), and others tended towards exuberant emotional sensationalism.

Today people can come from such a diversity of Christian experience, that it can leave one mystified as to what is true. It is even more confusing for the new Christian or one who desires to

understand Christianity. It is at this point where “radicalism” can be helpful. We have come to inherit such a cacophony of “Christian” voices, that turning to the bible as a refuge is the best way to find a solid foundation from which to measure all with which we are presented.

Chapter 23 - Battlefield Earth

The phrase “Battlefield Earth” is from a book and latter film by Ron Hubbard, the founder of the cult Scientology. It was a poor attempt at science fiction, but the title does describe one way to look at Christianity in the twenty-first century. Satan sets the course of the world, for now and insofar as he is allowed by God.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: - Ephesians 2:1-2

Satan through his worldly institutions has created such chaos, that while many have abandoned Christ, many of those who would follow him have been led astray.

One might look at Christians today as if we were the walking wounded of a global battle in which we have been severely trounced. Some like zombies shuffle through the world shell shocked and buffeted by forces they do not comprehend. Others can be seen as having been taken prisoner and placed in what could be called POW camps that some churches resemble where members are parked in inactivity to sit out the war. Still others were so poorly prepared to engage the opposing forces, that they have been severely wounded and are now crippled.

Sadly, one of the more effective tactics of the enemy is to get Christians to attack each other. This is as tragic as it would have been for the Army and Navy to attack each other on D day instead of invading Normandy. The bible uses the illustration of combat to describe what “equipment” is available to the Christian.

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; - Ephesians 6:11-18

The objective for the Christian is not conquest, but a thorough, faithful, and resolute endurance, “to stand”. Sadly, most of us do not even know we are under attack or even when we are wounded or disabled. Most are seduced into a comfortable accommodation with the world where we represent no threat to the advancement of Satan’s plans.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. - 1 Timothy 6:12

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. - Hebrews 3:13

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. - Colossians 3:16

The “battlefield” illustration is useful in order to appreciate the forces arrayed against the Christian. Because each Christian is a part of the “body” of Christ, an attack upon any one of us is an attempt by Satan to harm Christ. One of the primary tactics is to get the Christian to trust in something other than Jesus.

And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, And said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? - Acts 13:6-10

In Acts we have a brief account of a man named Sergius Paulus who had expressed an interest in hearing the word of God. It was this seemingly innocuous act that led to him being targeted for attention. We can conclude that it was the use of subtlety and mischief to “turn” Sergius from the faith by the “child of the devil” Elymas that constituted the actual attack.

The key object of the attack of the enemy is faith (that in which we trust). If we can be led to trust in ourselves, the world, riches, friends, or anything other than Jesus, we can be crippled and taken out of the game. What Satan has been most successful in with Christians is getting Christians to trust in their church rather than Jesus. For example, some may believe (trust) that their membership in a particular denomination is what saves them. They may trust in their baptism as an infant. They may trust in a prayer they once said or an act such as “really repenting”.

By getting Christians just slightly diverted from trusting in Jesus, he can get us to sustain a “Christian” tradition that is a trap for others so that they also are led away from Jesus. If unable to divert faith, Satan will settle for being able to quench it. When Christians are made inert or directed into paths of futility, they can also be made ineffective for Christ.

We know that when Christians are judged for the rewards their work on earth has achieved, some will find that they were mistaken about the value of their efforts.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. - 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

In order for the Christian to extract himself from activities that produce “wood, hay, and stubble” he needs to understand where he is, where he came from, what is true and how to get there. This often requires radical change. Considering how many different snares, traps, temptations, and false teachings there are one might expect to take the occasional wrong turn.

Chapter 24 - The Case Against Denominations

Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? - 1 Corinthians 1:12-13

Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. - Philippians 2:2

Denominations by their very existence show a lack of unity among Christians. Satan has over the centuries influenced Christianity by exploiting our inclination towards the flesh to first turn Christianity into a procedural collectivized system, and then fragment it into smaller franchise brands so that the Christian became a sort of consumer shopping for a “best fit” Christianity instead of seeking to grow closer to the Lord in wisdom and truth.

The overall objective for Satan was to use Christians to build the civilization from which he could gain the technology to enslave the world. Having accomplished this, he now has to have this civilization sort of implode so that its functionality is not an obstacle to implementing the technology he used it to develop in the way he wants to.

The first step in making denominations was to turn Christian focus towards “important” leaders. This was done in several ways, but the basic process can be seen with the institution of the seminary. The word “theology” means the study of God, which implies a subject the understanding of which can be mastered as evidenced by obtaining a graduation certificate.

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. - 1 Corinthians 8:1

However, it was not just through the diverting of men with intellect or speaking skills into vanity that Satan’s plans were advanced. There was the contribution by every Christian who was willing to take a path of ease and comfort by letting the “leader” do the work of Christianity.

Satan has made great use of Christians with abilities encouraged to have a high view of

themselves. Calvin, Augustine, Luther, and countless others have all been led to put forth a package of doctrine that while intended to correct error often becomes just another franchise “brand”. The trap these men fall into is thinking they have it “figured out”. They may start with good motives but usually end up putting God in a “box”. As each “brand” of Christianity comes on to the market, it becomes just another denomination implying it has the “right” package.

In the movie “The Truman Show”, the title character is a young man whose whole life has been televised from birth (the fact of which he has been kept unaware). He has been kept in an artificial town thinking he has been making choices when he has been manipulated to remain. In one scene (a flashback to when he was a child in school) he declares his ambition to be an explorer. The teacher quickly declares that there is no point because everything has already been discovered.

Denominations have a similar suppressing effect on Christians declaring that smarter people have already done all the exploration of the bible and God and that there is nothing for the Christian to do but sit down, shut up, and do what he is told (similar to the instruction he has received for 12 years in public school). If instruction is offered, it is expected to reproduce what has already been declared.

A man once talking with a friend who was becoming frustrated with his criticism of traditional church practice. He finally said, “OK, what would your system be”? The difficulty the man had in answering using “system” terms led him to conclude that what might be called organizational (denominational) Christianity could not accommodate what might be called relational Christianity. The difference appeared so great to him that a radical search for unencumbered Christianity would have to be made outside denominational boundaries. Denominations often act like a religion machine intended to move product with as little difficulty as possible. Relational Christianity seemed incompatible with mechanical Christianity.

Denominations by their very existence create disunity by declaring themselves “right” and others “wrong”. Denominations often quench the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christians by discouraging independent inquiry and substituting a finished product made by others as a substitute.

Chapter 25 - Traditions

Most Christians grow up in a Christian home or otherwise inherit a Christian tradition usually expressed in one denomination or another. This is how most people come to their religious inclination. However, inherited religion is often like a borrowed suit that does not fit very well.

A Muslim was once asked to describe the strength of his beliefs. This inquiry was made using an illustration describing a couple who were fervent in their religion, attended every event, and their home life was dominated with their religious practice. Calling these an example of level one religion, a further inquiry was made suggesting that the children of level one parents who were raised in this religion might observe all of the events, rituals, and other requirements, but lack the passion and zeal of their parents. These might be called representative of a level two religion.

Finally described were the children of level two parents as making a minimum concession towards the religious requirements, being somewhat familiar with the most significant aspects, but otherwise more interested in the commercial, entertainment, and social aspects of the world. This could be called level three religion. The man was asked what level Muslim he was. His answer was level three.

Eighty percent of children raised in Christian homes will walk or drift away from the faith. This more than anything else testifies to how damaged Christian life has become. These children may have come to see Christianity as something abstract, theoretical, or even imaginary. They may have been presented with doctrines that were difficult to agree with. They may have seen no logical reason to continue in a tradition that consumes resources such as time and money and offers no apparent benefit.

If one considers what holds families together, necessity often looms larger than affection and love. In times of adversity children will often cling to their families and family traditions. However, in times of prosperity, children often will leave home finding greater attraction in economic opportunities, or even a life of dissolution such as with sex, drug, and rock and roll.

Denominational brands had success in the market place because they could offer the comfort of assurance in religious matters carried forward with the generational inertia of family associated traditions. As society becomes more of a draw than family, one might expect to see a proportional decline in interest with all denominations.

Sadly, many denominations thrived in the same way that many Wisconsin families are dedicated Green Bay Packer football fans. One's dedication was inherited and served as a common denominator for social interaction within a group.

Denominations that attempt to compete with the attractions of the world by adopting its values (such as declaring homosexuality or abortion now favored instead of prohibited) often find that they are rejected even faster. It would be like if the Green Bay Packers relocated to a different city. Betrayal shatters the influence of tradition.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. - Matthew 15:9

Doctrinal variability is a significant indicator that what one is receiving from a denomination is of man rather than God. The reason is that God is truth and does not change. However, just because a particular denominational tradition is less fluid, does not necessarily mean that it is closer to the truth. Regardless if one finds tradition comfortable or consistent, the radical Christian is always seeking truth. In away, the radical Christian is uncomfortable anywhere but truth.

Chapter 26 - Surveying the Damage

Having given some brief consideration to many of the ways the Christian is hindered, attacked,

and even subverted, we can review the list of impediments given at the beginning of this section. We should be better able to consider how these circumstances arise with a view towards how they might be dealt with.

1. A poor, incomplete, or erroneous idea of what Christianity is and how it is lived. There are historical, denominational, traditional, and Satanic reasons that there is so little correct information about the Christian life. The same reasons explain why there is so much bad information. The person beginning to suspect there is something more than that of which he is aware or suspects that he is not on a correct path may begin to read about alternatives, seek other denominations, or even watch some videos. However, he should not neglect studying the bible and prayer as the one he seeks has provided these specifically for him.

2. An inherited legacy of Christian tradition that misdirects us. If one lives a comfortable suburban life, one may not see much need for anything significant in his religious life. However, when a tragedy such as a death, serious illness, rebellious child, divorce, or other calamity arises, one might find praying to a saint or attending a church service to be unsatisfying. This is often because we may have come to consider our religion like a fire extinguisher (to be used in case of emergency).

3. A crippled ability to trust in the bible. If one has been tricked or bullied into accepting assertions that the bible is not trustworthy, he can find himself cut off from the very source of truth he needs.

4. Concerns with and interest in the things of the world. We often see activities such as education and employment as the mechanisms we need to navigate to insure our income and future. It is this trust in the world to provide for us that can lead us to consider religious faith as an “optional extra”.

5. Unrestrained fleshly inclinations. The sensual life is consumptive. There is little room for anything that does not provide sensory stimulation. When a society has accepted and even institutionalized things like casual fornication as “living together”, it reflects a powerful social current drawing people to indulge in selfishness.

6. Pharisee-like self-righteous smugness of having achieved completion. There is that within the human heart that is satisfied by the assurance that it is special, superior, and to be envied. While one can find opportunities to feed this character defect in things like political and political activism, it is sad to see it so often in religious circles.

7. Diverted into scripted roles defined by organized systems. Many sincere Christians have come to see their committee work, service as an usher, grounds maintenance, or other systems function as service for the Lord. It is sad that too often this work can prevent the ministry Christians could have towards each other. When Christians function as a body, they are better able to minister one to another. When Christians function as components in a machine, they grow distant from the head (Jesus) and from each other.

8. Being unaware of the traps Satan has set out to ensnare Christians. Having adverse

experiences can cause someone to be cautious and skeptical. Conversely, someone who has had prosperous and comfortable experiences can be excessively trusting and accepting. Given our historically unprecedented level of prosperity, it should be expected that many Christians would be vulnerable to trusting in Christian doctrines and practices that divert them from growing in Christ-likeness.

9. Having been diverted from individual inquiry into passive dormancy. Many churches do not react well to inquiry. They may see in it a challenge to their authority or leadership and counter with coercive pressure to remain silent or passively accept that with which they are presented.

10. Being unaware of Christian alternatives and options. Many people may feel that their particular denomination or tradition falls short of what they would like to see, but do not know what other denominations offer or even the availability of things like house church, one-to-one fellowship, or bible study.

11. Having been conformed to the patterns of the world. A person with school experience has come to understand they have to shut up, sit down, and do what the teacher tells them. When this reflex is brought into a church, the person may not actively seek after the things of the Lord. A person shaped by the consumerism of the world may come to church to evaluate his experience in much the same way a movie reviewer would rate a new movie release.

12. Inhibiting influences from friends, family, and coworkers. The Amish understand the power of shunning (using the fear of rejection by family and friends to coerce desired behavior). If someone considers doing something different than others expect, he should be ready to endure their discouragement.

Section 3 - Navigating Hindrances

Chapter 27 - Building a Solid Foundation, the Bible

A radical Christian is one who seeks to actually put into practice what he reads in the bible. He usually comes to this perspective from awakening from some denominational slumber. He may have to swim against the current of those who would impress upon him their idea of what he should do. Before any confrontation or radical changes, the newly radical Christian is advised to first seek to grow in an understanding of the bible.

The bible will be critical because it will act as a compass (that to which everything else should be compared). Some people think that studying the bible is like learning Trigonometry, that it requires mental skill and hard work. Actually, the bible is the only supernatural book. God (who is the source of wisdom) works through it to help you understand it.

Some of the bible can seem tedious and even boring (Leviticus and Chronicles come to mind). To start with, the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus and Paul's letters to the churches are a good place to get interesting information.

It is useful to start with a high-lighter to mark those passages that stand out. It is interesting that years after starting to study the bible, a person can find a particular passage meaningful and see that it is between two passages that had been previously highlighted. This indicates what might be called a “layered” effect of bible study. One finds a sort of slow deepening understanding of the bible which parallels a persons growing understanding of God.

1. God loves me.
2. God wants me to love him.
3. God wants me to love others.

It is helpful to review some of what the bible says about itself, to help us understand that this is not so much a book of facts to memorize, but a supernatural connection with God himself through his words and by which he can work in us.

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. - Isaiah - 55:10-11

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. - Psalm 119:11

NUN. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. - Psalm 119:105

Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. - Psalm 119:133

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. - Proverbs 30:5

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. - Luke 4:4

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. - John 6:33

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. - John 8:31-32

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. - 1 Thessalonians 2:13

Chapter 28 - Is the Bible True?

Because the word of God is so important to a Christian, it is the object of persistent attack by Satan. He has woven a massive assault using evolution, scholastic textual and so-called “higher”

criticism, and even social criticism for failing to match current trends in popular thought (that he is directing). Some Christians get sucked into pointless arguments attempting to prove the bible is true. While it can be helpful for those weaker Christians to have someone defend the bible and rebut the facetious arguments of those who attack it, we should remember that these arguments are put forth not to find truth, but to obscure it. If one has placed one's trust in Jesus, no further "proof" is needed.

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. - 2 Timothy 1:12

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: - 2 Timothy 3:16

Christians are called the "bride" of Christ.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. - 2 Corinthians 11:2

One can imagine the character of someone who would whisper suspicions and doubts about a husband's fidelity to a wife in order to weaken or even destroy a marriage, this gives a picture of what Satan attempts with his machinations.

Jesus is called both "the word of God" and a "solid rock". That these two are combined in the person of Jesus gives a solidity to our faith that should withstand the accusations of Satan.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. - Revelation 19:11-13

To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. - 1 Peter 2:4-8

We can draw comfort and strength knowing that Jesus is the living "stone" and word of God. As we are joined with him and Christ begins to be formed in us, we also become living stones.

We come to understand that the bible is not only true, but it is truth and from it we can gain insight to the character of God and by it are sanctified (separated) from the corruption in the

world.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. - John 17:17

Chapter 29 - Which Bible Translation is True?

In one last attempt to hamstring the Christian's faith, Satan has gotten many to attack each other over which bible translation is best. This might seem humorous to tribal people who have no bible in their own language and as many do not read anyway, have only heard the gospel and became Christian.

While the gospel can be presented without a written bible and people can become Christian, Christian maturity and the ability to discern error are critically dependent on biblical familiarity.

Brief textual survey

The bulk of Greek manuscripts and scripture portions are called Byzantine because they were mostly collected from around the city of Constantinople (the capital of the Byzantine empire). The main Latin translation used from about 400 AD was the Vulgate compiled by Jerome from many of these same documents. When Constantinople fell to the Muslims, many Greek scholars brought their manuscripts with them when they relocated to the west. This infusion of Greek spurred Erasmus to make a new Latin translation correcting some of the errors in Jerome's version. Erasmus used the new printing technology to compile a Greek version that, after several revisions, came to be called the Textus Receptus (TR) or received text. This was largely used in making the King James Version (KJV) English translation in 1611.

In the late 1800s, a new Greek compilation was put together to compete with the Byzantine texts. It was based on two manuscripts (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) which were called Alexandrian manuscripts. Scholars and academics pronounced this a superior source even though there were some major differences between it and the TR (such as not including the end of Mark 16). Most newer translations today are based on the Alexandrian derived Greek.

There appear to be two main groups making exclusivity claims regarding translations. The modern group seems to claim expert knowledge in their advocacy of the Alexandrian Greek. The KJV only group seems a little reactionary in claiming the purity of that translation. The KJV people often do not even allow other TR translations. Both groups can seem smug and self-righteous.

Computer software like eSword can be useful to compare different translations when attempting to explore a particular verse. However, in general the version that is easiest to read and understand is the best one to start with. The Amplified version can be helpful in expanding on word definitions to help in understanding. The Wuest translation is helpful to get verb tenses even though it makes the reading in English a little more difficult. One should be cautious about versions like "The Message" which is not a proper translation at all.

Chapter 30 - Bible study

If someone is completely unfamiliar with the bible, starting with a children's bible can be a helpful way to learn about bible stories. For those who have been through Sunday school and may already be familiar with the bible stories, a study in one of the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John) can be a good starting point.

Many churches offer a weekly bible study. Many Christians conduct a bible study in their homes. Making a few phone calls can usually turn up a bible study that would have open enrollment. It can be intimidating to show up cold at an established group. However, often the person contacted by phone would be willing to provide a point of entry.

Christian bookstores often carry commentaries where a scholar has collected various views on each verse of a particular bible book. For example reading a commentary on the Gospel of John might have a verse presented with four or five different views on its interpretation. This can be a good exercise in discernment by seeing how ones own interpretation measures up against others.

With the Internet, one can now view various bible studies online. Like anything else, there are a wide variety of opinions. Even a good teacher will have some peculiarity or pet issue, but it can be helpful to see the shortcomings of others as it inclines us not to lift them up as "super" Christians.

As a Christian grows in the use of bible study tools such as commentaries, concordances, and lexicons, he can do word studies, topic studies, or other approaches to letting the word of God wash over him and reach increasingly deeper within him.

There are two basic approaches to bible study. The first is the traditional scholarly more intellectual approach using study tools and aids. The second is a meditative approach that touches the heart and produces reverence, awe, and devotion. Some who have taken the first approach have neglected the second and end up as sort of Christian "smarty pants" (puffed up with knowledge but deficient in love).

If a Christian finds the attempt to study the bible boring, tedious, incomprehensible, or nonsensical, he might want to make sure he actually has saving faith.

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

The person who has stopped breathing will be dead soon. If he receives artificial respiration, he can continue in a state of potential vitality. However, the ideal state is for him to begin breathing on his own. This can be illustrative of bible study for the Christian. We can be sustained by the instruction from the bible by others, but we are in better Christian health when we are able to be filled from the word directly.

This illustration can perhaps help us get rid of the association many of us have of bible study

with school work. The bible is not a subject to master, but a source of life sustaining vitality.

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. - Luke 4:4

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. - John 6:35

Christians have often been led to believe that they are required just to be passive receivers of what the “clergy” has determined what it is that they should know. The bible tells us we have the responsibility to judge those who would presume to teach us and reject those who are in error. This responsibility cannot be fulfilled until we have a solid understanding of truth, the bible.

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, - Colossians 2:18

The bible is truth. It is our protection from those who would deceive us. It is a source of spiritual life. It is active and transformative. The Christian drawn to make radical changes in his life is encouraged to have this solid foundation as the reference point to which all else is compared.

Chapter 28 - What to do about church.

A man once led a bible study for boys convicted of crimes in a detention facility. Frequently the boys would ask what church they should attend. The man was saddened because he could not tell them which was the “right” church or the “best” denomination. He warned them that almost any church they went to, they would be identified as “youth” and sent to a youth group where they would go bowling or roller skating and have a pizza. They would have little instruction in Jesus, the bible, or how to live as a Christian.

A man once visited a church as was identified as a visitor by another man whose job was to make sure that new visitors received a complimentary coffee cup. It was a nice cup and the man had a sincere desire to be helpful in making sure that the cup was received. However, it seemed to the visitor that relational “love one another” Christianity had been replaced by a sort of mechanical “process one another” Christianity. The scripted and programmed character of organizational church systems often inhibit the relational character that Christianity was to have originally.

Many Christians find themselves in a church like the boys in a youth group or the visitor with the new coffee cup, faced with activity, but no presence of Christ, filling of the Spirit, growth in truth and love, or manifest presence of God. This can produce a growing hunger for the things of the Lord that activity cannot long mask.

Sometimes a person can change churches or denominations, find better bible instruction, or an opportunity to serve. However, often a Christian becomes restless in the constraints of scripted

and regimented Christian activity. As a Christian considers “radical” change, it can be helpful to first explore the possibilities where he finds himself.

There are two prominent features of the Christian life, learning to be like Jesus and serving others as Jesus would. Once the limitations of organizational systems are encountered, the radical Christian often seeks out individuals. One can seek an older wiser Christian that clearly shows the light and love of Jesus in his life. A request can be made of that person to help him learn to know Jesus as well as he does.

Considering how hard it is to find someone who shows the love of Jesus from whom one can learn, the second task (ministering to other Christians) is somewhat easier. In any given church there are most likely those on the fringe who are lonely, isolated, or overlooked by the activities, events, programs, and procedures. Often the elderly find themselves relegated to the sidelines. Here, just showing an interest in a person can be a considerable gift and ministry.

As one grows closer to Jesus, the limitations and expectations of church become less significant. The cultivation of relationships with others in the church, at different churches, and outside of church become the fabric of a less restrictive and deepening Christian life.

Chapter 29 - Being Different

It was not too long ago when doing something different than others was to bring intense criticism. The reason is that there is an implicit expression of worth (better or worse) when someone does something different. People can feel that you are insulting them by declaring that what they are doing is “wrong”.

Henry Ford and the phone company declared that you could have their products in any color you wanted as long as it was black. By the 1950s radical appliance manufacturers were able to offer a choice of colors, either harvest gold or avocado. In the 1960s Satan began to shut down the idea of modernism which carried the imprint of uniformitarianism and replace it with post-modernism which was expressed in relativism. This has made it somewhat easier to be different. For example, there is much more tolerance for those who choose to homeschool their children now than there was at first.

If a Christian family comes to be persuaded that they should leave family planning up to God, that they should teach their children themselves at home, or that they should dress modestly, they will still attract attention from those who are persuaded to do things differently. However, different behavior is more easily excused as a sort of consumer preference today than it would have been 50 years ago.

Christianity was always supposed to accommodate people who had differences of understanding. That is the entire subject of Romans chapter fourteen.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. - Romans 14:5

It should not be surprising, especially today, that there are so many different views of how to follow Christ. Things like spiritual gifts, sabbath observance, dispensationalism, tithing, bible translation, and election have been used to make powerful divisions in the body of Christ.

So much effort has been put into declaring what is “right” that we have lost sight of the truth and love that was supposed to be the defining characteristic of followers of Jesus.

Chapter 30 - Being Persuaded

So much of contemporary Christianity is oriented towards being “right” that often Christians encounter coercive forces that restrain, restrict, and impede the questioning and seeking that should define the Christian walk. Like a wrestler who demands that an opponent cry “uncle” to show he has been defeated, many take a combative view towards fellow Christians seeking those they can conquer and bring into compliance.

The use of the word “persuaded” in Romans 14:5 sheds a lot of light on the nature of the Christian walk. The individual Christian is a sort of independent Christian consumer of Christian teaching. He hears different doctrines about Christianity and evaluates them (assuming he has some biblical understanding) as to if they are going to lead him closer to Jesus. It is expected that many different Christians following many different teachings will be at many different points in their journey to Christ.

Some attempt to exercise autocratic rule over Christians using such biblical declarations as:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: - Hebrews 13:17a

The Christian who has developed the biblical skills to dig into the word a little deeper may find that a translation of the Greek that conveys obedience may not capture the the full meaning.

Obey = peithō = to be persuaded

Have rule = hēgeomai = to go before, lead the way, hegemon (leading a confederacy of entities)

Submit = hupeikō = no longer resist, to give way, to yield

This could produce a better translation “stop resisting and allow yourselves to be persuaded by those you have chosen to follow”

For Christians to be persuaded, they have to be seeking, evaluating, and comparing what they are being told with what they have come to understand in the bible. The Christian is cautioned not to see Christianity as binary (those who are right versus those who are wrong). When this happens, the Christian may think that he no longer needs to be searching since he has arrived at what is right. As long as we fall short of the image of Christ, our Christian walk is incomplete and we need to continue our seeking.

A bible teacher was once discussing end times when a student asked him why he took a pre-

tribulation position. The man made reference to 1 Thessalonians chapter four and showed that the context went into chapter five where Paul wrote “we are not appointed unto wrath”. The teacher told the student that he saw this as supporting the view that Christians would not go through the tribulation. He then told the student, “If you have a different view, tell me your reasons from the bible and maybe I will be persuaded. This illustrates a more healthy Christian perspective of following truth.

“Don’t tell me what to believe, tell me what persuaded you so that I may also be persuaded.”

Chapter 31 - Those who lead

Because we are all born ignorant and helpless, our earliest development is in relation to those who care for us and teach us. As we mature, we come to take independent control over our own lives. This natural progression within the context of family has been hijacked by Satan into which he has inserted his own agents and systems. The school teacher as an agent for the state injects values and expectations into developing children among other things (such as the cultivation of debilitating self-indulgence, crippling insecurity outside one’s cohort, and the ego inflating view of history that man is perfecting himself) a willing compliance to designated authority.

Those who pastor churches may not be aware that many who attend their churches are crippled by their exposure to public education to be excessively dependant. While Satan needed to have an almost endless supply of compliant components for his various organizational systems, when these begin to fill churches, pastors should not rejoice with those waiting to do what he tells them.

There are many forces on a pastor to manage a church (particularly a denominational franchise brand) in a way that enhances his prominence and subordinates those who attend.

1. Denominational template. Seminary can imprint a pattern of church organization that is expected to be maintained. This also can imprint those outside the denomination particularly through the expectations of church members.
2. Ego. Being the center of attention can be quite flattering. Such attention has been deadly for rock musicians, Hollywood starlets, and politicians. It would be expected that pastors would not be immune to its corruptive influence.
3. Financial emphasis. The need for a salary and building sustain the mechanical system approach to church organization because it is a system that is fueled by money.
4. Evangelism as a Ponzi scheme. Membership recruitment can initially receive emphasis out of financial necessity, but become an end in itself as competition in the marketplace for attendees among a dwindling population is essential to replace the 80% of children lost to the world.

The pastor can use his considerable influence to direct the people in his church into compliance

with those things that help him keep his machine running and even expanding. This organizational momentum can prevent a pastor from considering the biblical expectations of him.

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. 1 Peter 5:1-4

Peter cites both money and ego as potential problems for church leaders. Peter also mentions that the flock should be “fed”. This carries a particular emphasis for Peter because of what Jesus told him.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. - John 21:15-17

The word “pastor” (shepherd) is used once as a noun in the New Testament.

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: - Ephesians 4:11-12

Grammatically the word “pastor” is joined to the word teacher such that pastoring is understood to be accomplished by teaching. We further see this in the instruction Paul give Timothy.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, - 2 Timothy 2:24

It is important the a pastor learn that biblical “teaching” is not the same as what he received in seminary or the sermon/lecture he gives on Sunday mornings. The word teach (didaktikos) had a less sterile classroom image when it was used in the time of Jesus. Even in the Hellenistic secular world teaching was considered to be instruction in morality and virtue. This instruction was done within the context of relationship with the teacher demonstrating what was to be learned.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. - Philippians 3:17

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. - 1 Corinthians 4:15-16

We can see a little of the process of teaching with regard to the admonition given to older women.

The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. - Titus 2:3-5

Here we see that act of pastoring (shepherding through teaching) accomplished by means of a personal relationship as well as practical instruction of “how” as well as “should”.

The radical Christian is one likely to be taking action to seek out instruction and grow closer to Jesus. The pastor of a church might be the first person you would turn to to follow this path. It is important to be aware of all the limitations pastors can be saddled with.

1. No time. It is said of the game football that it is 50,000 people who desperately need exercise watching 22 people who desperately need rest. Frequently churches are structured such that the pastor has so little time available, that he is unable to do more than provide cursory contact with anyone.
2. Prisoner of his role. Some pastors see a potential problem if they give any time to someone in particular because others will condemn him for favoritism. In a way, the pastor is held as a social hostage as access to him is considered an indicator of social prominence.
3. Organizational agent. Even if the church is not part of a denomination, administering the church as an organizational system can produce similar results. For example, pastoral counseling might just consist of an interview and subsequent referral to whatever external resource has already be established.
4. Limited depth. The structure of most churches is often such that the pastor himself has no opportunity to grow in his faith or knowledge of the Lord. As a result those who approach him with their desire for greater insight, understanding, and wisdom, may find the well more shallow than they thought.
5. Potential opponent. A pastor may see someone dissatisfied as a potential trouble maker. Many pastors see the smooth operation of their programs, events, activities, and routine as proof that they have been faithful in their ministry. Someone being led to seek greater depth in their faith can be seen as “upsetting the apple cart” and be targeted for coercive force to be compliant or encouragement to move elsewhere.

Some pastors make a valiant effort to live their faith in spite of the the obstacles and limitations with which they are faced. It is a good idea for a Christian who is becoming radical to be aware of the limitations he may face in being “fed” by his pastor. Particularly those who would compel him to “obey” their instructions rather than teach him through persuasion.

The radical Christian may have to face the fact that he will have to “feed” himself. The availability of public sources of instruction, while not relational, can be useful such as books, videos, and the Internet. While it would be nice to find someone who could be a spiritual “father” to us, God still is faithful.

When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up. - Psalm 27:10

Chapter 32 - Church control systems

If a denomination has as a distinctive characteristic that they have gotten it “right”, they will most likely act to quash anything contrary as it would be by definition “wrong”. As a result, the pastor or priest becomes, as a franchise holder, a sort of policeman whose job it is to detect and correct deviations from the brand.

One control method is membership. While not explicitly mentioned in the bible, church membership can be a powerful tool to achieve compliance with expected standards. While today there are specific legal and tax issues with membership, the coercive elements were observable at the time of Jesus.

But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. - John 9:21-22

And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. - Acts 2:44-45

For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. - Romans 15:26

As the collective funds were depleted by the church in Jerusalem, they had to depend on the donations from other churches. Here is a classic example of bad leadership on the part of the Jewish leaders. The rulers of the synagogue by their active persecution and boycott of the church in Jerusalem were successful in preventing the nation from accepting Jesus, preventing the nation from receiving the blessings of the new covenant, bringing the destruction of the temple in 70AD, and causing the people of the nation to be dispersed for 1900 years. While not all bad leadership results in such devastating consequences for the world, it should be remembered that there are still consequences for which we will be held accountable.

It may be advantageous for a radical Christian to skirt the membership issue through infrequent attendance or if challenged to accept membership, deflect the issue by declaring that one is still studying the issue from the bible. There may not be any edification resulting from arguing about the biblical basis for church membership.

Avoiding membership can also be useful to avoid being assigned (pigeonholed) duties such as

usher, building maintenance, nursery work, or committee participation that can consume a resource like time and accrue little in terms of eternal reward.

The idea of exclusion was to remove the effects of un-repentant sin from corrupting the assembly as well as to motivate the sinner to abandon his sin.

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. - 1 Corinthians 5:11

The exercise of exclusion in the form of excommunication was operated by the institutional church in the medieval period similar to how the Jews used it as a coercive tool to attempt to force the early church in Jerusalem to abandon Jesus. Sadly, that application of force was seldom done out of love to help a brother repent of his sin.

Even today, the Amish practice of shunning has more as an objective maintaining the purity of the traditions, (rather like a cult) than the restoration of a sinner. Similarly, the Baptist practice of alcohol abstinence has at the core the desire to control. The further a group of Christians gets from the love and truth of God, the more likely they will impose systems of social control on others.

While social or peer pressure takes a more formal shape with membership issues, even something as slight as a disapproving look, condescending attitude, or dismissive gesture can work to manipulate, bully, or coerce others. There can be an advantage to be in a larger church where a radical Christian can more easily escape the direct attention of those who would seek to control him.

It can be difficult to negotiate social connectivity in the midst an organizational system. One might think of churches as distributed along a spectrum of conservative to liberal where what might be called conservative churches would be more likely to have declared rules governing dress and conduct (no smoking, drinking, dancing, card playing or movie going) while what might be considered the more liberal end of the spectrum might be defined as unrestricted personal expression. It would be a mistake to think that, while they are less overt, the liberal end of the spectrum does not have its own expectations and codes that can be just as harshly enforced.

The radical Christian is not encouraged to confront, rebel, or flaunt control systems. It is advisable to avoid them and controlling people as well. The radical Christian seeks out relationships with individuals (some from whom one can learn and others with those to whom one can minister).

When churches lose sight of Christ, they develop the same manipulative social structures found in street gangs, professional organizations, academia, cheer-lading squads, or activist groups.

Some churches may tell Christians that everything that can be known about God has already been figured out so that all the Christian has to do is acknowledge that the doctrines with which he is presented are true and observe the required actions (i.e. church attendance, giving, sacraments, etc.). The radical Christian takes it upon himself to dig deeper in the word and takes it at face value.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:4-8

One might expect that if the Christian life is defined by progressing in Christ-likeness, then the character qualities described by Peter would be expected of every Christian. Peter further describes these qualities as being essential for the work that our Lord has for us.

It is interesting that we might be “partakers of the divine nature”. The word “might” indicates that it is not a forgone conclusion that Christians will be partakers. It is by means of “promises” that the possibility exists. We can see that love is in God’s nature.

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. - 1 John 4:16

It is possible for a Christian to exist with little or no love.

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Here are some promises that we can consider that may help set aside the selfishness of the flesh so that we are able to choose and show love.

The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy. - Psalm 145:20

I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. - Proverbs 8:17

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. - John 14:21

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the

love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. - Romans 5:3-5

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 8:38-39

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. - 2 Corinthians 13:11

In addition to the opportunity to partake of the divine nature (love) by the promises of God, we have the parallel opportunity to escape the corruption of the world.

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. - 2 Timothy 2:22

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. - James 1:27

When Peter uses the word “diligence” in regard to all of the character qualities we are to add. We may picture in our mind a sort of “rolling up our sleeves” so we can get to work. This may not be an accurate picture of the process. Our character deficiencies are not the result of negligence that we can remedy by just addressing the issue. For us to improve ourselves would be as unrealistic as for us to single-handedly build an aircraft carrier. It is God working in us that accomplishes this transformation. The results (fruit) produced by this work are;

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. - Galatians 5:22-25

The key to having God’s Holy Spirit produce fruit in our life is our singular contribution, “having crucified (put to death) the flesh”. This is the same setting aside of self that is the basis for love (listed as the first fruit of the Spirit).

For most of us, the setting aside of self is a slow process. Like the formation of a pearl, it is done slowly over time and in layers.

The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression. - Proverbs 19:11

Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. - 1 Peter 3:9

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him

have thy cloke also. - Matthew 5:39-40

Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? - 1 Corinthians 6:7

Each day we encounter what Shakespeare called “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”. Each of these encounters provides us with an opportunity to chose a response. For the unsaved and carnal (of the flesh) Christians, our reflex is an automatic expression of self (outrage, anger, annoyance, irritation, etc.). However, for the Christian, there is an opportunity to chose a different response.

In a way, a person’s life is the sum total of the choices he has made. For the Christian, each choice to forgo the desire of the flesh starves it a little (puts it to death) and gives room for God’s Holy Spirit to work in transforming our character.

Chapter 34 - Putting On and Putting Off

For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. - Galatians 3:27

The “diligence” Peter spoke of as our contribution to our character transformation is less the effort to achieve a goal, than the sustaining constancy to make difficult choices. The advantage is that as we more consistently choose to “put on” the Lord Jesus Christ, the easier it becomes until even the idea of “putting on” the filthy rags of the flesh is revolting.

The idea of taking off and putting on clothing is used to illustrate our role in the process of our sanctification. We can think of two sets of clothing in our “closet” of life. One set is appropriate for our old nature that manifests in ungodly behavior. The new set of “clothing” is appropriate for the life we are now called to live.

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. - Colossians 3:12-14

Clothing might be seen as the interface with which we engage with the world. Our selection of clothing is often made with regard to warmth, protection, and the tasks we undertake. The “clothing” described in Colossians are not things we can accomplish as tasks, but manifestations of a choice. This is summarized in verse 14 with the word “love”.

The good qualities listed in Colossians 3:12-13 that we are to “put on” all flow out of the selflessness of love described in verse 14. When faced with a situation where we could chose forbearance or retribution, our fleshly hurt might motivate us to chose retribution, but our love (selflessness) helps us to chose forbearance.

At the core, Christians have a divided nature. That with which we were constituted prior to salvation can still operate to frustrate our Christian walk. It is key to the radical Christian life to understand this division so that we can choose to “put on” the new nature.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. - Galatians 5:16-17

Our spiritual nature is given us when we are born again. It is by this that we receive eternal life and our connection with God. Part of the change associated with radical Christianity involves transitioning from infant Christianity to mature Christianity such that that which was born of God in us grows to the full measure of Christ.

The decision to put on or take off indicates the option to do so. Our new birth frees us from the compelling power of sin so that we are actually able to choose.

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. - John 8:34-36

Freedom is the opportunity to choose that results from our will being set free from our fallen nature. However, spiritual birth without spiritual growth produces a situation where our will is too heavily influenced by our old nature. Our putting on and putting off choices are severely limited by a lack of spiritual growth.

When we have grown spiritually, we find our choices flow easily from a desire for the things of the Lord. The Christian life is so much easier when we have grown to understand, appreciate, and recognize much of what the Lord has done and continues to do for us. Gratitude and humility become portals for the flow of God’s grace.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. - James 4:6

All too often some who attempt to live a deeper Christian life attempt to do so in their own strength. This is doomed to fail as the qualities of the spirit can only be mimicked by the use of the flesh. For example, forbearance might be simulated by suppression of anger, but often at the expense of incurring a bitterness that can poison a soul.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; - Hebrews 12:15

True and godly desire flows from a heart that has been transformed and remade as our spirit matures.

Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: - 1 Timothy 1:5

Chapter 35 - Let the Word "Let" show us What is Expected of Christians

How and when to engage "will"

There are a variety of methods to use in studying the bible. An interesting one is the "word study". This is a process of selecting several verses that use the same word and extracting from them a deeper understanding of how the word is used.

Radical Christianity needs a clear view of what we are supposed to do as well as what we are supposed to allow. Too often we think of the Christian life in terms of accomplishment. However, much of what we are to do is to stop interfering with the work of God in us and to act to support it. Consider how we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts and let the word of Christ dwell in us richly.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. - Colossians 3:15-17

If we consider "peace," we can think of it as the absence of contention or conflict. From a worldly perspective this is often accomplished through negotiation, accommodation, and compromise. The peace we have with God is that we are no longer under judgment for our sins and also have life eternal. The peace of God does not buy temporary calm, but is the assurance of forgiveness and eternal life.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. - John 14:27

The peace of God can rule in our hearts to remove fear. This is a peace that transcends circumstance. As this peace is established and rules in our hearts, it becomes a solid foundation from which character qualities such as forbearance can spring.

The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? - Psalm 118:6

We are also to "let" the word of Christ can dwell in us richly which can only happen if we immerse ourselves in it and allow it to work in us. For example, we can let it work by reading and studying the bible. We are sanctified by the work of the word which is truth. As we are led deeper and deeper in truth, we grow in wisdom and understanding. We lose the ignorance that fuels the lack of unity between Christians.

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. - 2 Corinthians 13:11

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. - John 6:63

It is easy for a Christian to forget or become distracted from the awareness of God's work in us. Too often we take a view of the direction the bible gives us to "let" as an invitation to a passive Christian life. The idea of "will" and "do" indicates that while God is in control and establishes the direction he would have us go, we are to respond in action as well.

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. - Philippians 2:13

Quench not the Spirit. - 1 Thessalonians 5:19

As the concerns of our worldly life grow larger in our daily life, we can forget that there are things we are to allow, things we are to disallow, and things we need to be active in supporting. It is our distractions and focus that can bring us to frustrate and even halt the work of God in our lives.

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

Let not then your good be evil spoken of: - Romans 14:16

Here are two verses that both deal with how other people see us. The first verse deals with how those in the world view our actions. While all too often those who claim Christ parade their works for the approval of others (sometimes giving support to the claim Christians are hypocrites), this verse deals with the other end of the spectrum, those who desire to remain unnoticed. The use of the word "let" indicates that we are to forgo contrivance to conceal such that what we do can be seen for what it is.

The second verse uses the word "let" to also forgo something. This use is more narrow in that it applies to that which is observed of us by other Christians. The context is "meat sacrificed to idols", but the application might also serve for more contemporary activities such as drinking alcohol or gambling. The verse does not mean that we need to contend with other Christians for our "rights", but that we forgo that which might offend.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. - Matthew 5:40

It can be difficult to tolerate injustice in the world, particularly when it happens to us. The admonition to "let" (allow) others to disadvantage us is difficult to accept. However, behind it is a larger truth that it is the Lord who ultimately provides us with a "cloak" and we should not consider our provision to solely be of our own accomplishment.

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: - Matthew 6:3

We have an admonition to not be too controlling in our generosity. By this we come to have a more reflexive charity (from the heart).

But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead. - Matthew 8:22

We can also see that we are not to become too involved with the activities and expectations of those who are not saved (non-Christian) because such engagements can divert us from following Jesus. The word “let” in this instance would convey the idea of disengagement.

Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. - Matthew 15:12-14

We can also see that responding to or entanglement with those who are lost is not profitable. Those who are on their way to destruction are not on the path of light and truth. Here the word “let” carries with it a warning in addition to the idea of disengagement.

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: - Matthew 20:26-27

Considering how often we elevate a particular person (or seek elevation ourselves), it seems that we do not often fully appreciate to what extent we harm them as well as ourselves. By insisting on honor, reverence, and prominence for one who would minister to us, we hinder him. In this, Jesus is our example as he was not a “respector of persons”.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. - Romans 14:5

One of the biggest difficulties Christians have is to make allowances for differences. We are admonished to restrain ourselves from attempting to apply pressure on other Christians to conform to our practices and expectations.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; - 1 Corinthians 3:19-21

Here the word “let” takes on a prohibitive sense. The application would be that anyone in the assembly (church) who follows the course of the world as seen in the glorification of man should be admonished and corrected. To prevent contamination by vanity and what might be called prestige within the assembly.

Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. - 1 Corinthians 10:24

The ambitions of the greedy and self-seeking are to be curtailed within the assembly as well.

Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: - Ephesians 4:26

Even when we have an intense emotional reaction to something, we are not to feed or continue it so that it extends into the next day.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: - Philippians 2:5

While “let” is sometimes a passive allowance, it also often requires our active participation. Consider that it is the objective of our Christian life to become more like Jesus. Part of this process is the transformation of our mind (thinking) to be like Jesus. We should not be found to hinder or neglect this process.

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; - 2 Corinthians 10:5

For this process to progress, we need to be engaged actively and consistently.

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, - Colossians 2:18

We are also called to be vigilant in assessing those who would teach us. It is interesting to note that the idea here is that the individual Christian is responsible for avoiding false teaching. The idea of the “flock” of a denomination being protected from false teaching is not presented. Such attempts to configure Christianity this way can lead to an attenuated ability to think and act individually.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. - James 1:2-4

There are things we endure and allow to change us even though we might want to struggle against them.

It can seem difficult, especially earlier in our Christian journey, to figure out what we should allow or disallow. Sometimes we are convinced to adopt a set of rules which can seem easier. (One should consider that this did not go well of the Galatians or the Pharisees). The Christian life is not about becoming smart enough or educated enough to figure it all out. It is about allowing God to work in us to make us more like Jesus. The best way to help God with his work in us is to immerse ourselves in his word.

BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. - Psalm 119:9

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As

the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. - John 15:3-5

Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word. - Psalm 119:148

As we consider the various ways we make choices in our lives based on the work God would accomplish in us, it can seem overwhelming. It is important to remember that What seems difficult is largely because we have not matured to the point where we are more proficient. A toddler might feel intimidated if he were to consider running a marathon.

Our prayer should not be so much for an easier life, but a mature life that can more easily deal with all that the Lord would accomplish in us.

The radical Christian understands that change is essential, even change that is difficult. Many struggle with Christianity because they try to follow the rules and try to do everything in their own strength. Some try to redefine Christianity to make it easier. The more difficult the Christian life looks, the more it indicates that what needs to change is that within us. The radical Christian understands that it is mostly that within us that needs to change.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. - Romans 12:1-2

Chapter 36 - What is Worship?

Most of us have some idea of worship as a musical event such as congregational singing, a choir, band, even orchestra or even a sing along with recorded music. While during such scripted and “orchestrated” events a Christian can have an opportunity to reflect on God, real worship extends much past these narrow confines.

But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: -Exodus 34:13-14

The Hebrew word *shâchâh* is used here for worship and means to prostrate oneself (before rulers or a god). The word is frequently used of the obsequence given to things of awe and reverence.

And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven. Deuteronomy 4:19

We can see from the use of the Hebrew word *’âtsab* (carve) for the manufacture of something (cakes in the shape of a star) to honor something is also called worship.

And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men? - Jeremiah 44:19

The idea of prostration is carried forward into the New Testament with the Greek word *proskuneō* used for worship.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. - Matthew 2:1-2

We get a somewhat different perspective on worship with the use of the Greek word *sebomai* meaning to revere or adore.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. - Matthew 15:9

We get another sense when the word worship is used of people *doxa* (glory, dignity, praise)

But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. Luke 14:10

Another word for worship is *latreuō* (to render religious homage)

Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? - Acts 7:42

Still another word *eusebeō* (to be pious, respectful) is used to describe pagan piety.

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. - Acts 17:23

At the lower end of the “worship” spectrum we find *ethelothrēskeia* (piety, often insincere).

Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. - Colossians 2:23

There is also a word translated “service” *latreia* that means an act of obligation due one’s god and can also be translated worship.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. - Romans 12:1

In modern church services there is a portion of the time allocated to group singing. It may be the more conventional three hymns or the more contemporary choruses projected on screens with guitar and drum accompaniment. These intervals provide church attendees the opportunity for emotional expression. This is what is usually understood today as worship.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. - Colossians 3:16

There is a place for musical expression in Christian assembly. However, the emphasis seems less about an orchestrated musical experience and more about Christians ministering to each other. For example, if one Christian would tell another that he was planning on skipping his time reading to his children so that he could go see a ball game, another Christian might “admonish” him by singing a phrase from the song “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”, particularly the phrase, “and the things of this world will turn strangely dim”.

Song is a particularly strong way to couple emotional and rational content. When two Christians have a common musical vocabulary, they are able to evoke in each other responses that touch both heart and mind. When this is done in love (selfless concern for others), the grace of God is revealed. How the heart of God must be gladdened to observe his grace working in our hearts showing love to each other..

Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world. - James 1:27

Here the word “religion” is *thrēskeia* (ceremonial observance, worship) and can be also translated worship. Here a musical experience is less emphasized than a demonstration of compassion.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. - Matthew 9:13

The Pharisees saw their religious duty (worship) to be keeping the law and objected to the association of Jesus with those who were neglecting the law. Jesus instructed them to consider that in the word of God was an instruction not to limit worship to law keeping, but by extending compassion, one is also honoring God.

Many of the Psalms were written with the idea of musical accompaniment. However, often included with musical notation is the word, *Selah*. The word is an interruption of the music such that the idea of “stop and listen” or “pause and consider that” is conveyed.

I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah. - Psalm 3:4

What is often lost today in the idea of worship is true reverence, awe, and even fear.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his

commandments: his praise endureth for ever. - Psalm 111:10

The idea of prostrating (falling on one's face in complete surrender) oneself is such an alien idea to most today, that it is difficult to understand what the bible is trying to tell us about our obligation to God. It can be helpful to consider life in ancient times. If a king were to appear, one would lay prostrate on the ground before him. This was because the king could have you killed, your family, or seize everything you owned at his whim. There were no "rights", legal process, recourse, or appeal. Fear was the natural, logical, and rational response to the threat one faced.

Perhaps the closest we come today to this total fear are those young men sent into combat or abused wives. Fear is a good way to drive out all other considerations. There can be a clarity and focus on what is essential and important. Without a clear and accurate understanding of God, it is difficult for us to "worship" free from a sort of self-stimulating emotional consumerism.

Fear is the proper response for all humans in the face of a God who will judge us according to our works. Fear should be transformed into the deepest reverence for God, who because of his mercy, has taken Christians out of judgment.

One of the most significant areas in which Christians fall short is reverence for God. When we allow our consideration of God to drift away from the reality of the majesty, power, glory, and awe he is due, we harm ourselves. We weaken one of the elements we need to maintain humility. We begin to see in ourselves and the world a more ready source of provision and sustenance. Our faith weakens and the testimony of our lives becomes less clear.

Peter in writing to Christians about to undergo persecution told them to "sanctify" the Lord God in their hearts. Sanctify (to set aside as holy) the Lord God is to reassert the position he is due in our life and at the core of our being. This was Peter's instruction to survive persecution.

But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: 1 Peter 3:14-15

The radical Christian should have a growing reverence for God as his knowledge and understanding of the nature of God increases. He may not find opportunity in church "worship" activities to give expression to this reverence. However, in consideration of the spectrum of "worship" found in the New Testament, there is room for all sorts of expression from prostration to mercy, to service, to charity, to sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts. However, it is in our love, compassion, and service to fellow Christians that this "worship" is most clearly manifest.

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. - Romans 14:8

As the radical Christian matures, his thoughts become more based on his awareness of God such that there is almost a constant stream of thoughts expressing gratitude towards God. In a way, our thoughts begin to become integrated with our growing understanding of God and awareness

of his hand in every aspect of our lives. As a result, we engage in almost continual “worship”. For the Christian, worship becomes a constant practice. We we have fellowship with other Christians, we can share our thoughts and express them through the emotion of song or through words that describe our growing awe, reverence, and worship of God.

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; - Colossians 3:23

Chapter 37 - Service

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: - Ephesians 4:11-12

The radical Christian may not find Christian leaders who can provide the instruction that will equip him to minister to others. As a result, he may have to seek out such instruction on his own through books and videos or identifying those who are more advanced spiritually than he is and asking them to help him draw nearer the Lord. However, throughout the process, the radical Christian is advised to remember that it is with the goal of ministering to others that he receives instruction.

"He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep, when he is sure to be recompensed with that which he cannot lose" - Jim Elliot

A man who had been involved in church youth work was once asked he if had observed typical worldliness in the youth with whom he had worked. He said that he had seen it, however, there were a few exceptions. When asked what the exceptions were, his response was that there were a few youth who had a concern for others.

Christian maturity is marked by love (selflessness). When we are less driven by those things that serve self, we are more content, fulfilled, and completed. As a result, we are more available to consider the needs of others.

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. - Philipians 2:4

Those who do not know Christ can get rather frantic as they try to accumulate things for themselves (riches, experiences, notoriety, admiration, etc.). Yet, all come to the grave. The Christian has the certainty that all that he has he will lay down only to inherit true riches and eternal life.

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. - 1 Corinthians 2:9

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, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. - Matthew 6:19-21

As a Christian matures and seeks opportunity to minister to other Christians, he should be aware that there are others desiring to control and direct his desire to their purposes. For example, church administrators are always on the prowl for those they can enlist to serve the mechanical system of their church machine. Many organizations seek to obtain financial support from those who have a surplus (and sometimes from those who do not). Often Christians are browbeaten to evangelize, almost like with the recruitment zeal of a cult.

The radical Christian can see that he has to seek the Lord's leading in service to others. This requires active seeking (prayer) as well as growing discernment. As a Christian matures and is less concerned about self, he has the opportunity to observe and engage with others. If he inventories those things that the Lord has already provided him, he might consider how that could be used in service to other Christians.

A young person may not have accumulated much to share with others, but often has the strength of youth. He might consider an elderly widow and ask if she needs help raking the leaves from her property in the fall. An older woman (whose only resource was time) might ask a harried young mother if she could use someone to watch her children so she could get some other chores done.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. - Galatians 6:2

Wherefore comfort one another with these words. - 1 Thessalonians 4:18

But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. - Hebrews 3:13

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: - Hebrews 10:24

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. - 1 John 4:12

Even if a Christian has no money, transportation, or relational connections through which he could minister to others, he should be aware that his prayers on the behalf of others have great value before God.

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. - 1 Peter 3:12

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. - James 5:16

Some would persuade the Christian to allocate his resources (time and money) to noble sounding

causes such as feeding the poor. Some even are persuaded that they can contribute to ending poverty.

For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. - Mark 14:7

However, Christians have a priority to serve other Christians first

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. - Galatians 6:10

When considering what, when, how, where, and who to serve, it can seem puzzling. This shows how much we need to have the Lord's leading in our lives. Consider the waste of resources if we undertake something in our own strength without the Lord's direction and provision.

A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. - Psalm 127:1

It can seem easier to have someone else direct us and determine what and how to serve the Lord. However, we should remember that it is we who will be judged for how we used what the Lord provided.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. - 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. - 1 Corinthians 3:8

It is possible that we lose reward because we listened to someone we shouldn't have.

Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, - Colossians 2:18

There are limitations as to what can be done for others. Even Jesus lamented that those in Jerusalem were disinterested in what he had to offer.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! - Luke 13:34

One of the most difficult things to consider is that others may have no interest in what you offer.

Further, some may be harmed by good intentions. If a Christian won the lottery and wanted to help other Christians with gifts of money, he would soon discover how ungrateful people are and how people are often corrupted by the deceitfulness of riches.

Real service to others has their edification (being built up) as a goal. We have a tendency to view difficulty and hardship as evil and see ease and comfort as a solution. Our effective ministry to others has to be with a view to that which helps them grow in Christ.

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. - Romans 14:17-19

As the radical Christian matures in love, he begins to feel compassion for the needs of others. It is this extension of love between Christians that is supposed to demonstrate to the world what is unique about Christianity.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. - John 17:22-23

To grow in Christ-likeness is to grow in love. We can see that this love is alive (because it dwells), that it is from God, and that it is supposed to be passed on.

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? - 1 John 3:17

Chapter 38 - Knowing God's will

Many Christians struggle with knowing the will of God. This can seem strange when one considers all the ways God has established to communicate with us.

1. His word. The bible is the first place to start when beginning to understand what God expects, desires, and hopes for us.
2. God in us. As Christians, we have the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit dwelling in us. As we allow their work in us, we begin to discern and appreciate their direction.
3. Nearness. As we mature in our faith, we drawn nearer to God. This proximity is a measure of the degree to which we are becoming Christ-like.
4. Prayer. The bible is God's primary way to communicate with us. Prayer is our primary way to communicate with him. As we draw nearer to God, our prayers reflect greater earnestness and intensity.
5. Spirit leading. The Holy Spirit is specifically cited as acting to direct our path.

When we consider how distant humans have become from their creator, it should not be surprising that for new or immature Christians God also seems distant and remote.

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. - Ephesians 2:12-13

There is a distance from God that produces in us ignorance of him and his will. We have in Christ the opportunity to draw close to God and in such close proximity be able to more clearly see that which God would have.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. - Romans 12:1-2

The phrase “reasonable service” is similar to what one might consider the typical or routine religious duty of a pagan who would offer a sacrifice at the temple of his god. In comparison, the Christian is expected to similarly offer this routine service to his God. While the pagan would offer an animal (the bulk of which he would get back to consume or sell), the Christian is expected to give himself and hold nothing back. As a result, the Christian will then be able to prove (dokimazō - test or discern) the will of God.

His word.

There is that in God’s word that directly shows us some of his will.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. - 1 Timothy 2:3-4

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. - 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

We can see much of God’s will in the laws he gave to the nation of Israel. Some of it is specific to the function of the nation of Israel, however, much of it contains that which can apply to all.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God

in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's. - Exodus 20:3-17

There is so much available to us through God's word that one lifetime is not enough to take in what it can supply.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: - 2 Timothy 3:16

From the word of God we can receive that of God's will such that we can see the path he would have us take.

NUN. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. - Psalm 119:105

God in us

The radical Christian is not one to settle for an incomplete or immature Christian life. With God dwelling in us and us abiding (living) in God, we have access to the source of wisdom, the source of eternal life, as well as light in darkness. It is this illumination that helps a Christian see what God's will is for him both generally and individually.

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. - John 12:46

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: - 1 Corinthians 1:30

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. - John 15:4

For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. - Philippians 2:13

Nearness to God

Our salvation (faith and trusting in Jesus) is our first step in drawing near to God.

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. - Ephesians 2:13

The process of drawing nearer to God is described by James as being parenthetically bracketed by humility.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. - James 4:6-10

But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works. - Psalm 73:28

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. - Hebrews 7:19

Prayer

One might expect that nearness to God is also accomplished through communication. While initial Christian communication with God is often centered around requests, as we mature we often find that increasingly greater time is given to thankfulness and adoration as we come to understand more of who God is and his love for us.

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: - Isaiah 55:6

The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. - Psalm 145:18

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. - Jeremiah 29:12-13

We sometimes elevate our will over God's such that our prayers are like a "to do list" for God. When we ask in the name of Jesus (by whom we have access to God), we are making a request consistent with the character (name) of Jesus.

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. - John 15:16

Jesus gives us an example of yielding in prayer to the will of God.

Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. - Luke 22:42

We are not limited to only praying for ourselves to increase in knowledge and understanding, but also for others. It can be a powerful ministry to be in prayer for our brothers and sisters in Christ that they also would grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, - Ephesians 1:15-18

Spirit leading

While we know that when we become Christian God himself comes and lives in us, it is the particular work of the Holy Spirit that is emphasized as active within us to direct us, change us, and help us become more like Jesus (this would include knowing the will of God).

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. - Romans 8:26

We also receive instruction in spiritual matters from the Holy Spirit.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. - 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

We need to make sure that our path through life does not impede the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. - Ephesians 4:30

Quench not the Spirit. - 1 Thessalonians 5:19

The Holy Spirit aids us in knowing things of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. - 1 Corinthians 2:12

The radical Christian begins to recognize that there is that in the conduct of his life and the choices he makes that can aid in his nearness to God and his being able to receive clarity in how he should speak and act.

Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. - Colossians 4:6

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say. - Luke 12:11-12

The Christian life is not about being clever enough to discover God's will. It is not about being strong enough to contend for God's will. It is about being humble and faithful and walking by God's Spirit in truth and love. Just as a child grows to know his father and his father's will, we grow to know God and his will.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. - Romans 8:14

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. - 1 John 3:1

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. - Galatians 4:6

Chapter 39 - Doctrine

The word "doctrine" simply means teaching. When a Christian feels a stirring to go deeper in faith, he usually has already been exposed to various teachings (doctrines) about Christianity. Often he may suspect that what he has been told about Christianity or Christian practice may not be fully correct. It is often these suspicions that motivate a radical approach to Christianity.

It is not uncommon for someone who becomes radical to think that he has found an error in the teaching of one denomination and switch to another because he has come to think he has found the one that is "right". One has to remember that all have some error.

The Christian journey is one of growing in truth. Sometimes this is found in changing from one denomination to another. For example, someone raised in the Roman Catholic denomination may begin to question the efficacy of praying to Mary. He may search the bible for information about Mary and find very little and nothing that supports the thesis that she was sinless, intercedes for those who pray to her, or was anything other than a faithful woman chosen by God for a particular task. Without biblical corroboration, it is difficult to support a doctrine other than by tradition or the addition of external sources.

But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. - Matthew 15:9

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. - Deuteronomy 4:2

The main problems with the denominational approach to Christianity is that by declaring that their distinctive doctrines are correct and others false, they enforce disunity. By maintaining the enforcement of their doctrine, they maintain a static approach to Christianity that inhibits individual growth in Christ-likeness. By rejecting all who do not 100% agree with their doctrine, a denomination rejects those who need to grow and mature and tells those who do agree that they have “arrived” at completion and have no further need for growth.

It can be difficult for a Christian radically seeking after truth as most other Christians have parked themselves in a particular denomination. To have the opportunity to interact with other Christians, one almost has to deal with the denominational doctrinal minefield at some point.

Baptism

It can be helpful to gain a perspective on doctrine in general by taking a look at one particular doctrine, baptism. Some denominations teach it is appropriate for infants and is the means by which God imparts grace to make them Christian, Others, believe that only adults should be baptized because only adults can understand what it means. Bitter and rancorous contention can exist between those who hold opposing views.

The radical Christian upon searching the scriptures might come down in favor of the adult baptism position. It can be a source of smug superiority to think one has discovered the “right” way to view baptism. However, there is also a further consideration of whether baptism is necessary for salvation at all. Most on the adult baptism view come also to conclude that it is not an obligatory grace imparting sacrament, but an ordinance that is supposed to be followed and is not in itself a means of salvation.

However, further consideration of the subject raises some interesting questions.

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. - 1 Corinthians 1:17

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. - Acts 15:19-20

Paul was not sent to baptize (although he did do a few baptisms). The Jewish church in Jerusalem declared that the only restrictions to be placed on Gentile believers were the restrictions declared in Leviticus for the Gentile sojourners in Israel. This did not include

circumcision or baptism.

Further complicating our understanding is that “baptism” is not an English word, but a transliteration of the Greek baptizo (to be immersed). This word is used both to describe water immersion as well as spiritual immersion (in the Holy Spirit).

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: - Matthew 3:11

Even further confusion arises if one asks if what is called the “great commission” was given to Israel or the church.

Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. - Mark 16:14-19

One might draw from the reference in Mark to baptism that it is essential to salvation. However, it is not included as a reason for damnation later in the passage. Also, it is not clear if what is described by baptism is water baptism or baptism by the Holy Spirit.

This consideration helps to illustrate the difficulty of trying to present doctrine as a complete package that has to be accepted or rejected. It can greatly benefit the radical Christian to maintain a category for doctrine that is defined as that which is not known and may, in this life, never be fully known.

Denominations often present their doctrine as a finished and complete package. This is often appealing because it sort of lets off the hook the Christian who would prefer to pursue other interests. The radical Christian is one drawn to dig into the bible and find out what is true. Denominations may be able to help out with the initial digging, but may be less helpful and possibly turn hostile if cherished doctrines are questioned.

A classic example of doctrinal conflict is between those who subscribe to election and those who subscribe to free will (often called Calvinism and Arminianism).

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. - John 6:44

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. - John 12:32

The radical Christian needs to be cautioned against picking a side. This tends towards a defensive self-righteousness that is detrimental to the love which we are to have towards other Christians. It can be better to consider how both could be true or how both could be explained all the while remembering that there is much that we are not going to be able to understand.

Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. - 1 Peter 1:12

Even the angels have a desire and curiosity to learn. It should not be surprising that there would be limits on what we can learn or understand. The radical Christian is cautioned to avoid the common trap of pursuing knowledge at the expense of love. This is one of the quickest way to achieve self-righteousness.

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. - 1 Corinthians 8:1

The radical Christian can benefit from evaluating and reevaluating the teachings he has accepted to make sure that he is growing both in truth and love. As his understanding and nearness to God increases, he may wish to modify some of the teachings he has previously accepted. This is to be expected when growth and maturity occur.

Chapter 40 - Fellowship

Women have an easier time making relational connections without regard to denominational distinctives. Men may face greater difficulty in that other men often use denominational agreement as a litmus test to extend fellowship. Even when denominational agreement is established, “fellowship” is often limited to talk about sports or politics at a church pot luck dinner.

There are many reasons for anemic fellowship even within churches today. The first casualty of prosperity is time. As a general rule, the more abundance a person accumulates, the less time he has available. One effect of limited time, is that one is inclined to only spend it where it will yield the greatest return on investment such as entertainment. One can set aside the hour (two with travel) for church once a week to fulfill religious obligation, but the rest of the available time is jealously guarded.

Another limitation on fellowship is that after having spent 12 formative years being indoctrinated and shaped by public school to fit into organizational systems, many Christians can only function in scripted roles. They often have diminished ability to take the initiative to inquire after others.

In an environment of general prosperity there are few ways in which Christians can minister to each other's needs. In a materialistic society we tend to measure everything in terms of money. If someone has a problem it becomes a question of which organization has the funds to solve the

problem. Some of this limited vision is a result of the world Satan has created which has also come to dominate church thinking.

The New Testament uses the phrase “one another” 43 times. Specifically, the phrase “love one another” is used 13 times. Considering the brutality and the health and economic hazards of life 2,000 years ago, it would seem that Christian ministry to each other would be vital. In contrast, today it often seems that even conversation with other Christians can be an annoyance.

Because of our materialistic orientation, we are often unaware of the other realms for Christians to function in. Even in the early church, there was an obliviousness to the realm of wisdom.

I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? - 1 Corinthians 6:5-7

What Paul describes is a church where wisdom is not recognized or valued. In addition, there was a lack of willingness to be disadvantaged.

The elevation of the material reflects a lack of faith in him who saved us and provides for us.

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? 1 Corinthians 4:7

If we can reduce the perception of the material back to its proper place in our lives, we become able to perceive that of real value, wisdom, love, and truth.

While a radical Christian may wish, upon entrance to a contemporary church, to rouse those slumbering in materialism to higher realms of perception, he needs to be aware that disturbing the complacent usually only brings animosity. Alternatively, seeking those who might also be breaking free from the constraints of conventionality is a better way to select those with whom deeper fellowship might be cultivated.

It is easy to measure and be impressed by worldly and material “success”.

For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: - James 2:2-3

Christian “success” might be measured in the love and patience shown by a nursery worker, the solicitations of someone seeking to minister to the elderly, or the Sunday school teacher who shows wisdom and insight from God over scholastic achievement. While many such may have no time to develop additional friendships, the radical Christian can always supply a word of

encouragement or even just recognition of the effort someone is putting forth.

The radical Christian is pursuing love (selflessness), wisdom, truth, and Christ-likeness. The degree to which he is successful will, sadly, make him less compatible with others claiming Christ. Modern denominations usually value compatibility (conformity) as a condition of fellowship. This works against Christian maturity as such growth often produces various stages of development in which significant differences can be observed.

The radical Christian sees differences as opportunities for or expressions of growth. Denominations often see differences as error which must be suppressed. In addition to the preparation the radical Christian should make for limited relationship opportunities, he should also prepare himself for aggressive encounters with those who take exception to his questioning or entertaining views that would be different from theirs.

Chapter 41 - Adversity - The Road Less Traveled

Many and perhaps most Christians see the prosperity and comforts of Western Civilization derived from technology as being blessings from God. It can be radical to suggest that it was not God's intention that we have an easy life, even as a reward.

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

Satan was able to lead humans into organizational captivity by appealing to the desire for things that were fast, cheap, and easy. By advancing a frantic pace of life, people are only finally able to spend time with their family when they retire only to find their family grown and moved on. The Industrial Revolution gave us many products at cheaper prices by disrupting family life, transferring us to urban enclaves, making us drones in corporate hives and factories, and turning us into commuters and consumers. A few hours on Saturday and Sunday (often taken by lawn care) and two frantic weeks of "vacation" a year is supposed to be the life of ease promised by the boon of technology. The debt for cars and home become a more secure enslavement than the chains of any serf.

If it wasn't for soporific effects of TV and the Internet, many would begin to question if the comforts of modern life were worth the price. When considering the "advantages" of modern life, there are some who intentionally chose a more difficult path. For example, in spite of the apparent advantage of having someone else raise your children, some parents (frequently Christians) chose to home school their children. This choice frequently means foregoing an income source and restrictions on time. (It should be noted that even having children at all is a choice resulting in difficulty that many prefer not to make).

There are two general categories of difficulties the Christian can face, natural and social. In the natural world (the one God created) there is sweat, disease, famine, hardship. This is mostly a consequence of Adam and Even having listened to the deceptions of Satan. One might think God, petty, vengeful, or un-loving because of his curse on the earth. However, one can see in the difficulties man now had to face the hand of a loving father who wanted to keep us from the

damage our unrestricted fallen nature would bring on us.

Consider two wealthy fathers of young men who both rebel against their fathers. One father chooses to cut off all funds from his rebellious son. The other father allows his son to continue access to his funds. The first son has to find a job to earn the money he needs to eat. The second son continues to finance whatever indulgences and whims he fancies. The difficulties the first son encounters help him come to understand reality and truth. The delusions and dissipations of the second son carry him increasingly further from truth.

To understand social difficulties we need to consider that Satan sets the course of the world (only for now and insofar as he is allowed by God). With the periodic initial persecution of Christians through Roman imperial declarations, Satan was able to shape Christian defensive reactions such that when he allowed Christianity to be officially adopted, those defensive constructs would then be used to shape what would become Western civilization.

Satan could not alter the natural world (however, he could use technology to mitigate some effects of the curse). Satan was interested in shaping the social world with the ultimate objective to collectivize the world under his control. To this end he created an artificial environment (not natural) called society through which he could exercise power and influence.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. - Matthew 5:10-11

And the Lord said, Whereunto then shall I liken the men of this generation? and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept. - Luke 7:31-32

One can observe in the last 200 years the rapid expansion of social influence and control and the proportional diminishment of the influence of family. This was largely accomplished through education, media, and economic forces. Today China represents the highest level of social control maintained by a government using technology to track and control each individual.

It would seem that Western civilization (Christians) have served their purpose in developing the technology to be used and is now in the process of guided self-destruction.

The Christian who chooses to be radical in his pursuit of knowing and following Jesus should be aware of the larger social world and its direction of movement. This can aid in avoiding the traps Satan has laid to capture and neutralize Christians.

1. Work-a-day world. Many Christian men and women have allowed themselves to be taken out of their homes (and subsequently be unavailable to counter the instruction Satan gives their children) through employment in corporations which incrementally subvert their values to maintain their employment. In addition, many Christians have allowed the idea of the “necessity” of well paid corporate employment to influence their decision to have fewer children

unaware of the number of abortions caused by oral contraceptives.

2. Political activity. Both liberal and conservative inclined Christians have found themselves entangled in the political web. Here the deception of the possibility of being able to control things is offered as the apple was offered to Eve (ye shall be as gods).

3. “Christian” activity. Going to seminary, setting up a Christmas pageant, selling candy for the building fund, or a youth group bowling outing are all examples of activity that channels Christians in ways the result in limitations on their effectiveness for Christ. In medieval times Christians who desired to served God were directed to become monks, nuns, or the priests. This limited the possibility they would have families or otherwise influence many others.

4. Entanglement of debt. Many Christians find themselves tied to the “necessity” of sources of income to pay for the decision to get a “nice” house in a good neighborhood, a reliable car, or a “good” education.

Satan has so ordered society in Western civilization to take young people and impress upon them a mind-set of the sequential inevitability of college, good job, nice house such that in mid-life as they reflect on where they are and how they got there, they can see no way to change to path they are on. To give up a job as an account executive for a marketing firm to become something like a welder, can pose a level of difficulty too high to imagine.

The apparent ease and advantage of the “good” life has been useful to Satan to entice Christians to entangle themselves in that which would rob them of eternal rewards. We can begin to appreciate how much faith is crippled by having followed that which seems to provide ease, comfort, and advantage.

Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. - Luke 18:22-25

Hardship and difficulty continually show to us our need of and dependence on God. Prosperity and advantage impress upon us the delusion of our own self-sufficiency. As a person radicalizes in his Christian walk, he may consider changes that have difficulties associated with them. We may have developed reflexive instincts to avoid the difficult and choose the easy that need to be examined.

Chapter 42 - Questioning

The radical Christian generally finds the easy path of being told what is true by a pastor or denomination to be unsatisfactory. He would like to evaluate things based on his own growing knowledge of God and his word. To illustrate this process we can examine one of the thousands

of propositions with which Christians are presented.

It is not uncommon for churches to adopt a system or program to help them evangelize non-Christians. This can be motivated out of a sincere desire to help those who do not know God, but it can also be driven by a less noble desire for the “success” that a larger membership would bring.

One technique that is used is to instruct Church members that those who are not Christian have to be first made to see their sin, and the way to do that is to expound the 10 commandments to them.

Some of the first questions that would arise in the mind of a radical Christian might be;

1. Are people brought to faith by persuasion?
2. Is a conviction of sin a prerequisite to conversion?
3. Would people be convinced they haven't kept the 10 commandments.
4. Are accusations of sin persuasive?
5. Wouldn't people generally respond to such an approach as if they were being insulted?
6. What role would God have in such an approach?
7. Wouldn't the presenter of the proposition imply that he is sinless?

Here are some verses that come to mind in regard to the subject of people coming to salvation;

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. - John 6:44

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: - 1 Peter 3:15

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. - 2 Thessalonians 2:10

The world of advertising is based on the concept of convincing people there is a problem and that your product is the solution. Most of the world religions are based on the idea of something you do so that you can get something you want. When viewing many of the testimonies of people who became Christian, one observes the consistent desire to find what was true.

A Christian who is becoming radical that attends a church where the program of evangelism through wielding the 10 commandments is being used may wish to avoid attempting to convince everyone else that they are “wrong”. It may be kinder to say that one remains unconvinced that it is entirely biblical. Christianity is supposed to accommodate those of different levels of understanding.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. - Romans 14:5

Unfortunately many churches are not accepting of differences. For this reason, it may work out that the radical Christian's church attendance becomes sporadic so that there is not much expectation of program participation.

It can be beneficial to question not only that which is new with which one is presented, but revisiting long held assumptions can often prove beneficial as well. It should not come as a surprise that maturing in faith will result in changes, modifications, and deepening such that what one believes is more a reflection of a dynamic process.

Concluding Thoughts

This book was not written attempting to convince everyone to follow a path of radical Christianity. However, for those being stirred or led to grow deeper in their faith, it can be a helpful resource to understand some of the difficulties that may be encountered.

Some may have been offended by the strong description of denominations. However, if we apply biblical measurement criteria (people becoming Christ-like) to churches, would there be any that could hold their head high.

It has been said that the two most productive areas in which to tell people about Jesus are hospitals and prisons. The two least productive areas might be country clubs and night clubs. Maturing in truth allows one to see past the superficial things of this world to things of eternal value.

There are endless "Christian" teachers who would tell you what you should do. However, Christianity is less about us doing and more about God working through us. The radical Christian is encouraged to grow in bible knowledge and discernment so that he can avoid the fruitless paths some would direct him towards, and rather be led by the Spirit of God.

Many, perhaps most, other Christians will not understand the desire of a radical Christian to dig deeper and draw nearer to God. Some may actively oppose your seeking and questioning. Nothing is to be gained from arguing with those who follow a different path. Rather those few you encounter who also seek are a rare and treasured encounter.

Jesus told Pilate that those who were "of the truth" would hear his voice. This is because Jesus is truth and his words are truth. This is the resonance that helps the radical Christian sift through all of that which is called "Christian" to find the occasional "nugget" of truth that he can retain.

Like a prospector, the radical Christian searches for that which is of value. He may scour books, videos, tape messages, sermons, or any source of teaching or exposition that would help him grow in understanding the bible and drawing nearer to God. As he matures, the radical Christian grows in discernment and can avoid taking in the "fool's gold" of that which is not of the truth or love. The time to seek the Lord is too precious to waste in arguments.

But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for

they are unprofitable and vain. - Titus 3:9

Many wars have been fought and lives lost as “Christians” have disputed regarding various doctrines over the centuries. While the radical Muslim may wish to kill those with whom he disagrees, the radical Christian rather seeks those from whom he can learn. If the reader has made it this far, he has probably gotten past a common Christian reflex of blasting anything with which he disagrees. This type of “bunker” mentality is common in those who have not matured. They often see allegiance to a group or brand as “faithfulness” rather than striving for Christ-likeness. They may see themselves on the defensive or as Christian “warriors” to combat error. Sadly many Christians fall into the trap of self-righteousness. One of the symptoms of this condition is smugness and contempt for others.

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: - Luke 18:9

In a way, one can see Christianity as under attack in the world today. However, the battle is the Lord's, not ours. The goal of radical Christianity is to draw nearer our Lord and Savior, to be filled with the love and truth that is in Jesus, and having matured to bear fruit in service and ministry to others.

And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. - Jeremiah 29:13

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. - John 15:8-9