

COURT FILE NUMBER **QBG-SA-00766-2022**

COURT OF KING'S BENCH FOR SASKATCHEWAN

JUDICIAL CENTRE **SASKATOON**

PLAINTIFFS **CAITLIN ERICKSON, JENNIFER SOUCY
(BEAUDRY) and STEFANIE HUTCHINSON**

DEFFENDANTS **KEITH JOHNSON, JOHN OLUBOBOKUN, KEN
SCHULTZ, NATHAN RYSAVY, DUFF FRIESEN,
LYNETTE WEILER, JOEL HALL, LOU
BRUNELLE, JAMES RANDALL, KEVIN
MACMILLAN, DAWN BEAUDRY, NATHAN
SCHULTZ, AARON BENNEWEIS, DARCY
SCHUSTER, RANDY DONAUER, JOHN
THURINGER, MILE TWO CHURCH INC., THE
GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN, JOHN
DOES and JANE DOES**

AFFIDAVIT

AFFIDAVIT OF MARK DANIEL DRAPAK, SWORN/AFFIRMED MARCH 18TH, 2025.

I, MARK DANIEL DRAPAK, of the City of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, MAKE OATH AND SAY:

1. I have read the Affidavit of Caitlin Sheridene Erickson sworn March 13th, 2025, and have herein adopted the following definitions used in same:
 - a) **“Church”** – Saskatoon Christian Centre Inc., presently known as Mile Two Church Inc., situated at 102 Pinehouse Drive in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
 - b) **“CCA”** – Valour Academy Incorporated, which currently operates the school run by the Church, previously operated as Christian Centre Academy and then Legacy Christian Academy.
 - c) **“Proposed Class Members”** – all the former students that attended CCA and/or the Church.

- d) “**Steering Committee**” – the committee of Proposed Class Members who provide assistance, guidance and advice in pursuit of this action.
- e) “**ACE**” – the Accelerated Christian Education Program used at CCA.
- f) “**PACEs**” – Packets of Accelerated Christian Education workbooks, typically around 40 pages in length, each of which takes a student approximately two weeks to complete.
- g) “**Faith Healing**” – the act of being prayed over to cure ailments or perceived ailments.
- h) Keith Johnson (“**K. Johnson**”) was the head pastor of the Church the entire time that I attended CCA.
- i) Ken Schultz (“**K. Schultz**”) served as the Director of CCA when I first started attending in 1991. K. Schultz is currently criminally charged with two counts of assault with a weapon pursuant to Section 267 of the Criminal Code, two counts of sexual assault against a minor pursuant to Section 271 of the Criminal Code, and one count of invitation to touch pursuant to Section 152 of the Criminal Code.
- j) Lou Brunelle (“**L. Brunelle**”) served as the principal when I first started attending CCA in 1991.
- k) John Olubobokun (“**J. Olubobokun**”) was a director of CCA from 2002 – 2009 and was an elder in the Church. J. Olubobokun is currently criminally charged with nine counts of assault with a weapon pursuant to Section 267 of the Criminal Code.
- l) Nathan Rysavy (“**N. Rysavy**”) was a teacher at CCA.
- m) Duff Friesen (“**D. Friesen**”) was my teacher until the summer of 1999, and then later became the principal of CCA. D. Friesen is currently criminally charged with 11 counts of assault with a weapon pursuant to Section 267 of the Criminal Code.
- n) Jim Randall (“**J. Randall**”) was an elder in the Church when I started attending CCA in 1991.
- o) Randy Donauer (“**R. Donauer**”) was in a leadership position at CCA and the Church.
- p) Shian Klassen (“**S. Klassen**”) who was the Church youth lead.
- q) John Thuringer (“**J. Thuringer**”) was an elder in the Church during my time at CCA and the Church.
- r) Jim Lee (“**J. Lee**”) was in a leadership position at the Church.

s) The Affidavit of Caitlin Sheridene Erickson, sworn March 13th, 2025 (“**Caitlin’s Affidavit**”)

2. I am a Proposed Class Member in this action and as such have knowledge of the matters hereinafter deposed to. The evidence contained in this Affidavit is based on my personal knowledge or on information provided to me, in which case I indicate the source and believe it to be true.
3. I am a member of the Steering Committee that was created to provide assistance, guidance and advice in pursuit of this action.
4. I was born May 27, 1981, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I, along with my brother Michael, were raised by both of my parents until 1990, following which I was raised by my single mother. My parents were both congregants of the Church at the time I was born. My father left the Church after my birth, and my mother continues to remain a zealous congregant of the Church to date.
5. I have been advised by my father, and I verily believe it to be true, that he left the Church shortly after I was born due to his disagreement with the messages being preached at the Church. Specifically, my father disagreed with K. Johnson preaching that corporal punishment should be used to discipline children, and the Church’s belief in Faith Healing. Attendance at the Church was a matter of contention between my parents and played a significant factor in their decision to divorce and separate.
6. My parents separated in December of 1984. Immediately following their separation, I was in the primary care of my father, and my mother had regular parenting time with me and my brother. My mother’s parenting time regularly occurred on weekends. My parents were involved in a custody battle over my brother and I which went to trial in 1986. As a result of that trial, my father was awarded custody of me and my brother, and my mother was awarded access for three weekends per month and one additional day each week.
7. Despite my father leaving the Church, my mother insisted that I, and my brother, would continue to attend the Church. We were members of the Church throughout our childhoods,

and we attended the Church's nursery, the children's services, and the youth services as we grew up in the Church.

8. My brother and I were initially enrolled into Saskatoon's public school system. I attended public schools in Saskatoon from kindergarten until the end of grade 4. In 1990 my mother gained custody of me, with her having gained custody of my brother years prior, and I began attending CCA in January 1991. I was a student there until June 1999.
9. While attending CCA, my name was Mark Gerald Daniel Wilson. On July 26, 1999, I changed my legal name from Mark Gerald Daniel Wilson to Mark Daniel Drapak. I was always identified as Mark Drapak before this legal name change.
10. CCA was a private K-12 school operated by the Church. I, and many of my classmates, considered CCA to be part of the Church, and the Church to be part of CCA. They were both considered one body or entity. CCA and the Church occupied the same building and mailing address. There were times that CCA events were held at various locations related to the Church, like an elder's home. CCA was staffed and operated by leaders and congregants of the Church.
11. When I began attending CCA in 1991, K. Schultz was the director and L. Brunelle was the principal. D. Friesen was my teacher at one point and went on to become the principal at CCA. The Church also ran a nursery, children's services, youth services, and a post-secondary Bible school called Faith College. Many of the individuals involved in those operations were also staff members of CCA, including K. Schultz and J. Olubobokun who both were staff members of Faith College, and N. Rysavy who directed the Church's children's services.
12. K. Johnson was the pastor of the Church and the operating mind behind the Church and CCA during my entire attendance from 1981 to 2001. He was the head of all church-governance and spiritual matters, and he spoke often of his role as the God-chosen head of the Church and CCA. K. Johnson claimed that he heard from God on the behalf of congregants of the Church. He claimed that God would never tell a congregant anything without telling himself first. K. Johnson appointed elders of the Church, who would in turn

report back to him. The elders, their wives, and other leaders of the Church strictly followed and promoted K. Johnson's doctrines.

13. K. Schultz, and J. Olubobokun were elders of the Church when I attended CCA, along with J. Randall. Additionally, there were several leaders of the Church such as R. Donauer, J. Thuringer, and their respective wives. All of these Church leaders also acted as counselors for Church congregants and for students at CCA. K. Johnson promoted these individuals to the congregation as examples of "Godly Christian families" and role-models.

The Culture of the Church

14. Pastor K. Johnson was the authoritative leader of the Church. He wrote a publication titled "Biblical Church Government" and spoke on occasion about his absolute authority in all Church governance matters. He sermonized from the pulpit that "you can vote me in, but you can never vote me out". He claimed to the congregation that God called him to Saskatoon and to the Church.
15. The elders of the Church were the second highest ranking officials of the Church. They would often claim to speak on behalf of K. Johnson and/or claim to be performing duties or issuing directives on behalf of K. Johnson.
16. K. Johnson and the elders promoted sexism in the Church by sermonizing that men are the heads of households, and women were required to submit to their husbands. We were told that all women are weaker than men and naturally inferior. Women were considered to be lesser than men within the Church, and children, especially female children, were the lowest form of congregants in the Church. Younger children had to submit to youths in CCA and the Church, and to elder teen volunteers in children's church. We were told by the leaders of the Church that this hierarchy of submission was said to be for protection against Satan and the evil world.
17. Girls in the Church and at CCA were pressured to grow up to become wives, mothers, and homemakers, who raised their children at home while being a submissive wife to their working husband. Teen girls, including classmates of mine at CCA, were told to dress

modestly because a male might otherwise be tempted sexually. We were told that the way females dress themselves could set themselves up to be sexually assaulted.

18. K. Johnson directed single mothers to ask male leaders in the Church to come into their homes and to discipline their child if those children were resisting paddlings. Men from the Church entered the homes of single parents, regardless of whether they had been invited in. These men invaded the privacy of the members of the household, disciplined children, and on some occasions removed children from these homes and families. The following occurred at our home while we were growing up:

- a. L. Brunelle entered our house and attempted to take me and my brother out of our home. My father has advised me, and I believe it to be true, that he got into a physical altercation with L. Brunelle inside our home as L. Brunelle attempted to physically remove me from our home. During this incident, my father called the police to plead for help.
- b. S. Klassen entered my house and bedroom and attempted to access my computer but failed. He returned another day and removed my computer from my bedroom and placed it in his office at the Church. He then retrieved me from the classroom at CCA and demanded that I give him my password. He then directed me to show him the location of my personal diary file. He read my diary in front of me and commented on his disapproval of the contents.
- c. J. Lee entered my home and physically removed me from the house on the day that he took me to Canaan Land in Big River. I was 15 years old at the time. This was at the direction of pastor K. Johnson, elder K. Schultz, and youth pastor/school teacher S. Klassen.

19. When I was 15 years old, I was sent by the Church to a faith-based rehabilitation program called Canaan Land, the details of which I will provide later in this Affidavit. While at Canaan Land, I was brought by J. Lee to the home of Matthew Heibert, who was 15 years old at the time, and observed J. Lee physically removing Matthew from his home where he lived with his single mother.

20. We were told by the Church that children are inherently flawed with sin and need to have their will broken. Children needed to be disciplined to stop responding to their own senses. Children's perspectives were not to be believed over adults. Children did not have rights except for those which were given to them by their parents.
21. Children in the Church were taught to obey their parents and authorities without question. We were told to simply obey authorities instantly. When children responded to adults or older youth with answers such as, "yes sir" and "no ma'am", it was held out as proof that a parent was training and disciplining their child to show instant obedience and respect to an adult which was commended by the Church.
22. The Church preached that homosexuality was sinful and a perversion that would result in the person going to hell. We were taught by the Church to confront homosexuals so that they could repent their sin so that they would not go to hell. I was programmed by the Church and CCA throughout my childhood to be homophobic. CCA and the Church did not allow attendance by people who claimed or practiced homosexuality. We were often told that CCA would never have a homosexual teacher in their school.
23. K. Johnson and the Church preached that some people are homosexuals because they have a demon and that we could deliver these people from homosexuality with prayers and exorcising or "casting out" their unclean spirit.
24. K. Johnson and the elders also regularly made racist remarks in their sermons, usually directed towards indigenous people. They would make remarks regarding the center of Saskatoon being filled with indigenous people who are "drunks, addicts, and savages".
25. In addition to hateful messages directed at certain groups of people, K. Johnson regularly sermonized on messages of fear. K. Johnson prophesied that if parents did not "parent properly" their children by following his directions and his system, then sickness and tragedy would befall their families.
26. The Church preached about "the end times," an imminent rapture, the torture of Christians who miss the rapture, and the torment of hell for eternity. We, in the congregation, were

told that paddling children would deliver them from hell. We were told to live every day like it was our last day on earth before we get raptured to heaven.

27. The Church took extreme positions on seemingly benign things such as music and media. Listening to certain music such as hard rock was considered worldly, filthy, a sin of the flesh, and Satan worship. Non-Christian books and media were called the tools of Satan, and we were instructed to avoid all secular media and worldly information.
28. Members of the Church were made aware that they must submit to K. Johnson's demands, or else they would not be permitted to stay at the Church and would have to find a new church and a new community. Congregants who did not submit to the pastor or who spoke negatively about the Church were required to repent to K. Johnson, or their families would be excommunicated from the Church and CCA. K. Johnson would preach to the Church that something bad might happen to the families that left because they were no longer under the protection of the Church and its pastor.
29. The culture of the Church and the culture of CCA were one and the same. K. Johnson preached in the Church that the only two institutions authorized by God to train children are the church and the home, but not schools. Therefore, the stated purpose for the Church running a K-12 school was to ensure that the children of the congregation were still receiving the training they would receive at home and at Church while they were in school at CCA. K Johnson's influence extended beyond the Church and into CCA and the homes of congregants.
30. Child training programs written by K. Johnson were sold to members of the congregation, and it was an expectation that parents would discipline their children at home in the same manner that we were disciplined at the Church and at CCA. Institutional training of children occurred in the Church and CCA, along with intensive training at home, to the point where many children, including myself and my brother, did not have a safe place free from the threat of corporal punishment.
31. One of the stated primary goals of CCA was not to educate students but rather to train students with "Godly Christian character". Students and parents were told by leaders of the

Church and CCA that if students have Godly Christian character, then their education will be taken care of.

32. K. Johnson described CCA as a place that seeks to nurture children using discipline. He wrote in a publication which he sold in the Church titled "Life's Priorities" that the word "nurture" means to "discipline." Attached hereto as **Exhibit "A"** is a copy of this publication. K. Johnson preached in the Church that "in [CCA] we apply the board of education to the seat of learning", making reference to the practice of paddling students.

Practices of the Church

33. Children were paddled both in the Church and in CCA. K. Johnson's child discipline teachings insisted that good parents would begin spanking their infants to discipline them from the age of zero. The Church even sold wooden paddles for use on members' children, alongside print materials and audio/video teachings on how to properly paddle a child. These items were prominently displayed in the Church's store. I observed different sizes of wooden paddles and K. Johnson's publication on child discipline, titled *The Child Training Seminar*, being sold in an area of the Church which was visible to adults and children. A copy of *The Child Training Seminar* by K. Johnson's is attached as Exhibit "F" to Caitlin's Affidavit.
34. The Church and its leadership pushed a belief that we could use our faith to heal those who were sick or injured, and we were instructed not to put our trust in doctors. Congregants would claim publicly that they stopped their medication or treatments against their doctor's recommendations or without consulting a doctor, and these people were lauded within the Church for having faith in God. We were told by Church leadership that if we had faith, we could heal people who are sick by placing our hands on them. Sometimes this would be used to test someone's faith on another congregant who was perceived as being sick. When it inevitably failed, both people faced humiliation unless the sick person pretended that they had been miraculously healed.

35. Occasionally it was preached in the Church that God had told someone that they need to stop relying on medicine and doctors for themselves or their child. This was endorsed and promoted by the Church leadership.
36. We were told by K. Johnson that sometimes people had demons and satanic spirits within them, and that if we had faith, we could perform an exorcism to deliver them from those demons. Demons were said to be the cause of some individuals' homosexuality, sickness, poverty, lust, confusion, and other things.
37. The Church and CCA would often make us pray in tongues. We were instructed to speak in repetitive gibberish which only God could understand. Sometimes a person in the Church would claim that God gave them the interpretation of the gibberish and that person would tell everyone what God was saying.
38. Church members were constantly told in sermons that they needed to give 10% of all their income to the Church, however, people were regularly pressured to give much more than 10% of their income. Offerings were taken in almost every service, and sometimes multiple times per service. Offerings were also constantly taken in children's church, despite children not having a means of income. I felt pressure to give money to the Church even as a child.
39. Children were instructed to obey older/elder authorities at any cost, including with their very lives. The biblical story of Jacob and Isaac was used as an example that even if your parent wished to sacrifice you at God's altar, children who obey and submit to their parent or an elder at the Church or CCA would be miraculously saved at the last second if they had faith.
40. In children's church and youth church, we were often publicly humiliated by our youth leadership and threatened into showing over-the-top expressions of praise and worship. We were directed to jump up and down, dance, shout, sing loudly, raise our hands, and act fanatically. If we did not follow this instruction to outwardly display a manic jubilation during worship, leadership would call us out publicly in front of the whole group.

A Totalitarian Institution

41. CCA and the Church behaved as one entity. CCA and the Church occupied the same building, and church activities often utilized the space in the school, such as the gymnasium. Similarly, CCA would utilize the space in the Church, such as the worship centre. Staff at CCA were highly involved in the Church. I saw my teachers all day at CCA, and then again for multiple hours at the Church and during prayer services on weekdays and weekends.
42. Parents were manipulated into placing their children into CCA by K. Johnson and the elders of the Church. K. Johnson would preach that the forces of darkness would attack the children of the congregation if they did not hold the Godly values that CCA taught. K. Johnson used the parents' fear, and the fear of their children, to manipulate congregants into enrolling their children at CCA, to attend the Church often, and to follow K. Johnson's intensive home training.
43. K. Johnson wrote a publication called "Life's Priorities", which is attached to this Affidavit as Exhibit "A", wherein he said, "If we all work together, I can guarantee you that our children will turn out right!" He further states "This age is coming to a close, and our precious children are the only eternal possessions we have. They are the targets of the most subtle attacks ever devised against mankind by the forces of darkness."
44. K. Johnson and the Church provided members of the Church with a path to have children grow up entirely within the Church:
 - a. It was preached within the Church that newborn babies were to be trained at home by the mother of the child.
 - b. During church services, on-premises childcare was provided for children of all ages, from infancy to late-teens. This included a nursery, children's church, and youth church groups.

- c. School-aged children would attend CCA during weekdays. CCA also required students to regularly attend the Church. Almost every peer of mine was also a member of the Church. Very few students at CCA attended a different church.
 - d. When we graduated from CCA, we were pressured to pay and enroll into the Church's Bible college, Faith College. Due to the poor quality of the education that we received at CCA, many of my classmates, myself included, did not graduate from CCA with the academic qualifications to attend other post-secondary options, such as university.
45. The Church held regular church services and/or prayer services most days, occupying a minimum of eight hours per week. Church services ran for at least two hours per day on Saturday evenings, Sunday mornings, and Wednesday evening. Prayer services occurred for at least one hour on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. As a student growing up in that environment, it felt like our entire lives were spent in the Church.
46. Sometimes, services at the Church would be held twice every day for one or more weeks. Services would extend until late at night and resume the next morning. The school day at CCA would be postponed to accommodate a late evening service or an early morning service.
47. When I reached adulthood and finished school at CCA, the youth pastor, S. Klassen, approached me at the Church and gave me an ultimatum that he claimed was issued from pastor K. Johnson. I was required to enroll in Faith College for the following academic year, or else I would be excommunicated. I refused and I was immediately escorted out the door and excommunicated from the Church. S. Klassen told me to "never darken the Church's doorway again." I was not permitted to return to the Church following that incident.
48. The culture at CCA was to not talk to, or have fellowship with, people who had "left" the Church, or who were not members of the Church, because they did not share our Church's religious or doctrinal beliefs. That could include family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and other members of society. We were instructed by the Church to try to

recruit those people to come to our Church and that we should not spend time around them otherwise, because their worldly ways would influence congregants, especially children, negatively. After I was excommunicated, nearly everyone that I knew from the Church and CCA stopped contacting me. It was extremely isolating.

49. K. Johnson preached that habitual absence from the Church's activities meant that a particular congregant was "bad" and that the person "can't survive". In K. Johnson's publication, "Life's Priorities", it stated that "In Paul's day it was bad to miss church on a regular basis, but it is even worse now". The book further states "Paul knew what very few people seem to know today - the importance of faithful church attendance. The Church will survive without you and me, but we can't survive without the Church. Multitudes of well-meaning, good-intentioned people are experiencing great difficulties in their lives because they are forsaking the assembling together of the saints."

50. Several students at CCA, myself included, were patients of a family doctor and of a dentist who were congregants of the Church. Other congregants included a police officer and a practicing lawyer. They all enrolled their children into CCA. Their attendance at the Church and CCA was pointed to as proof that these trusted professionals in society condoned or endorsed everything that the Church and CCA was doing as being both acceptable and legal.

CCA School Practices

51. CCA had a culture and set of rules that was unlike those of the public schools that I had previously attended. I found the culture and practices at CCA unusual and challenging to adapt to.

52. It was required that my family complete a Student Application Package before I was enrolled in CCA. The package consisted of the following documents:

- a. Student Application Form;
- b. Student Statement of Cooperation;
- c. Parental Statement of Cooperation;

- d. Scriptural Discipline Form;
- e. Medical History;
- f. Financial Commitment Form; and
- g. Parent Commitment Form.

Attached hereto as **Exhibit "B"** is a true copy of the Student Application Package completed by me and my mother on October 25, 1990. My father did not sign any of the documents in my Student Application Package.

53. Classrooms were called the "learning centres" and were generally silent except for panpipe music which was played softly via speakers in the ceiling. Students were not permitted to talk or make noise while in the classroom. Each classrooms had a long standing desk called a "scoring station" which was in the middle of the room, along with a small filing cabinet containing "score keys".
54. We students sat at rows of carrel desks which CCA called "offices" but were essentially small cubicles. There were partition walls at the back and on both sides of the cubicles which prevented us from seeing anyone in an adjacent cubicle. We were not allowed to turn around or communicate with our classmates while sitting at our cubicle.
55. There were about 7 learning centres and they were referred to as "levels" instead of traditional grades. Students spent an average of two years in each level before moving up to the next level.
56. CCA extensively used the ACE program and Saskatchewan Association of Independent Church Schools ("SAICS") materials in its academic program. We sat in the individual cubicles throughout the school day and completed individual workbooks called "PACEs" from the ACE system. The staff who worked in the classrooms were referred to as "supervisors" and "monitors". Students at CCA were almost entirely self-taught using the PACEs booklets. Classroom staff did not teach students but rather, they primarily attended to small flags that students placed on the tops of our cubicles when we needed to ask for anything, or to dismiss us for lunch or recess.

57. If we asked for help understanding the PACEs, we were often scolded for not finding the answer to our question in the workbook. Throughout my time at CCA, when I asked for help from teachers, I was often told to re-read everything in the PACE booklet carefully. I overheard classmates in all levels being provided with the same response when they sought help from teachers. Students could also receive discipline for asking too many questions, and for forgetting what we were going to ask after waiting for the supervisor to respond to our flag for assistance.
58. We were required to bring our workbooks to the scoring station and mark our own schoolwork using the answers contained in the score keys. This was called the “scoring procedure” and included various details such as how to mark errors, how to go about making corrections, and how to “rescore” the corrected answers.
59. The staff at CCA often threatened to paddle us students if we made a marking mistake or deviated from the scoring procedures, which was considered a “scoring violation” and was considered cheating.
60. We were required to pledge allegiance to a Christian flag.
61. We were required to listen to the staff sermonize to us with Bible-based sermons at least once per week.
62. Students were required to wear dress clothes and dress shoes except when in gym class. Males were required to wear a dress shirt with a collar and dress pants. Females were required to wear a dress or a skirt and blouse. While I attended CCA a mandatory uniform was introduced. We were told that boys needed to look like young men and that girls needed to look like young women. Everything from our haircuts to our shoe styles were prescribed and scrutinized.
63. Girls were particularly scrutinized about their clothing and were made to kneel before staff on occasion to confirm that the length of their skirt or dress was appropriate. They were given discipline in the form of a demerit or sent home to change if their clothing was deemed inappropriate. I witnessed this occur on multiple occasions while attending CCA.

64. There were no labs or workshops. Instead, we read about practical concepts in our workbooks.
65. There was no library except for a small shelf of approved books. Use of the public library was not allowed during school hours and was discouraged by CCA and the Church.
66. CCA did not provide students with sex education. Instead, we were taught that abstinence was required until marriage, and sex was for reproduction. CCA and the Church told us that sex outside of marriage between one man and one woman would lead to consequences and tragedy such as AIDS and teen pregnancy. We weren't allowed to have boyfriends or girlfriends of the opposite sex.
67. CCA employed a privilege system in which students could earn the ability to have longer breaks and mark their own workbook answers without requesting prior permission. The privilege system was based on demerits or discipline received, a student's ability to quickly memorize passages of the Bible, and academic performance.
68. CCA exerted multiple forms of punishment on students. Demerits were issued for any little thing that students did contrary to the CCA's rules. Demerits could accrue into additional disciplinary measures and threats, such as the loss of privileges (i.e. longer breaks, being able to score our own PACE work without having to put up a flag or a cube and get permission to do so, and/or being able to attend the games room called the privilege room), detentions, paddling, or expulsion. Staff at CCA would control a student's access to the privilege system by issuing demerits. After receiving four demerits in a day, students would receive a more severe punishment. Demerits could accumulate rapidly and could set students up for more serious discipline. As an example, on one occasion while I attended CCA, I was given demerits for forgetting my communications envelope that was to be provided by students to their parents, leaving a gym shoe in the car, and not placing my chair properly the day before. This resulted in three demerits which I received all at once, before the day even began. For the rest of that day, I was under threat of being paddled if I did anything that resulted in another demerit.

69. CCA did not provide students with a full list of actions that could result in discipline, or what type of discipline would be used for particular actions. New rules seemed to be made up, and umbrella terms like “being rebellious” and “being disrespectful” were often used to issue punishments to students.

Personal Experiences of Abuse at CCA

70. In 1991, when I was 11 years old and in my first month as a new student at CCA, I asked my teacher if I could be excused to go to the washroom. My teacher, Ms. Harrison, informed me that we were required to use the restroom during recess and that I would be issued a demerit if I went to the washroom during class time. I was afraid that using the washroom would put me one demerit closer to being paddled, so I attempted to hold in my urine for as long as I could to avoid getting into trouble. I was in pain and felt discomfort from holding in my urine, until I eventually lost control and urinated in my pants while still in the classroom and in front of another classmate. It was not irregular for students to urinate themselves while trying to hold in their urine until we received a break. In 1992, when I was 12 years old, I observed a classmate wet herself while we were waiting to be dismissed for recess.

71. My brother was physically and mentally disabled after suffering from meningitis as a baby which left him with permanent brain damage. My mother was unable to work due to the level of care that my brother needed, and was dependent on benefits from Social Services as a result. Still, my mother was required to pay hundreds of dollars per month in tuition payments and school fees for my attendance at CCA despite her limited income from Social Services. She also performed custodial work in the building to trade her services for unpaid tuition fees. My mother has advised me, and I believe it to be true, that she felt that this was worth the effort as CCA advertised itself to be a superior education and atmosphere compared to other schools, and the Church pushed a message that attendance at CCA was in the best interests of my brother and I.

72. As a form of discipline, I was often paddled in the principal’s office. Before going into the office, I would have to sit in a waiting area, which adjoined the principal’s office and a school hallway. The chair in the waiting area was placed immediately inside of the entrance

from the hallway and the waiting area door was always open, which made any waiting student fully visible to any other staff or students walking down the hallway. I often observed my schoolmates seated on that chair, and usually with a distressed and humiliated expression on their face, or attempting to hide their face from view. I personally felt shame and embarrassment when I was made to wait for a paddling and people saw me sitting in the waiting room chair.

73. I was paddled on at least seven occasions while attending CCA. Attached hereto as **Exhibit “C”** is a copy of my Personal Services Record from CCA detailing several times I received paddling as discipline. The paddling sessions were ritualistic, and each paddling session lasted several minutes.

- a. The general process started with me being shoulder-tapped at my desk by a school staff member and directed to go to the principal’s office.
- b. After a period of waiting, I was called into the principal’s office and directed to sit.
- c. The principal, L. Brunelle, would accuse me of having done something wrong and told me that I would be hit with a wooden paddle as punishment. He would specify how many “swats” I would receive, or in other words, how many times I would be hit.
- d. L. Brunelle would call another staff member into the office to watch before he retrieved a wooden paddle which he kept at his desk.
- e. L. Brunelle would then direct me to stand up, turn around, bend over, and to place my hands on the seat of the chair I was previously sitting on. He would tell me not to move until all the strikes were given.
- f. He would place his hand on me, near or on my tailbone before giving me swats with the paddle. I would feel a series of hard, painful strikes on my buttocks from the paddle over the span of a few seconds.
- g. L. Brunelle would then direct me to sit in the chair again and excuse the adult witness from the office.

- h. He would return the wooden paddle to his desk and offer me a tissue if I was crying. If I was not crying, L. Brunelle would inform me that if I was purposely refusing to cry it was considered a form of rebellion and that he would paddle me more for being rebellious.
 - i. L. Brunelle would inform me that he loves me, and would lead me in a prayer to God. After the prayer he would excuse me from his office and direct me to return to the classroom.
- 74. On at least five occasions within my time at CCA, I was accused of incorrectly grading my own schoolwork. I was told that the inaccuracy of my grading or marking was considered sinful and required punishment. I was paddled on each of these occasions, receiving three swats each time.
- 75. On at least one occasion, L. Brunelle accused me of lying about my gym clothing and gave me three swats with a paddle as discipline.
- 76. On at least one occasion, L. Brunelle accused me of taking another student's glasses and gave me three swats with a paddle as discipline.
- 77. Each time that I was paddled, I was afraid that my parents would find out, but CCA and the staff never informed them. I am advised by my parents, and I believe it to be true, that they were never contacted by CCA before or after any of the occasions that I was paddled.
- 78. The entire process of being paddled created anxiety and fear in me and left me with a lasting humiliation in addition to tender skin, bruises and welts. I remember feeling shame and humiliation sitting in the waiting room outside of the principal's office before being paddled. This was especially so when other students walked by the room and could see that I was waiting to be disciplined. Then when I was called into the room to be paddled, I often was so afraid that I would shake and tremble.
- 79. After being paddled I would have to return to class and try to resume learning, but I usually had trouble concentrating afterwards because of the pain that lingered in my buttocks and

the soreness I felt when sitting at my desk. Depending on how long the bruising lasted, this soreness would be present for multiple days after being paddled.

80. Sometime in 1992 or 1993 when I was about 11 or 12 years old, I was in the boys locker room following gym class. My classmates and I were showering when I noticed that one of my classmates, Eric, who had recently been paddled, was lingering in the locker room before beginning his shower. As I observed Eric, I noticed that he appeared to be delaying his shower until most of the other boys had left the room. When he finally showered, Eric left his underwear briefs on and sidestepped into and out of the shower, keeping his back facing the wall. He chose a shower located in the corner where nobody would be able to see his back. Eric had deep purple and yellow bruising that extended beyond his buttocks and onto his legs, which was visible despite his efforts to hide it. Other classmates that saw the bruises immediately looked away. None of us acknowledged his bruising. It was a part of the culture at CCA that we did not speak about discipline that we or others received.
81. In addition to paddling, I experienced abuse of a semi-sexual nature while attending CCA. On one occasion when I was about 13 years old, L. Brunelle accused me of stealing a classmate's underwear. He led me into the boys' changeroom where my classmate was waiting. L. Brunelle directed me to strip naked and hand the underwear that I was wearing over to my classmate. During the exchange my classmate and I were both naked from the waist down in front of each other and L. Brunelle. I had not stolen my classmate's underwear, and the underwear that I had been forced to hand over was my own.
82. On one occasion when I was about 14 years old, K. Schultz, then the director of CCA, called me into his office. He accused me of masturbation and directed me to answer to him as to whether I was sexually attracted to my female schoolmates. I was apprehensive about how to answer as there were strict rules at CCA about boy/girl relationships and I was nervous that saying I was attracted to my female classmates could result in me being paddled. Alternatively, CCA had a negative view of homosexuality, and I was nervous that saying I was not attracted to my female classmates could result in accusations that I was either lying or a homosexual, which could also result in me getting paddled. I felt like there was no option for me to answer the question and be safe from getting paddled.

Canaan Land

83. When I was 15 years old, K. Johnson, K. Schultz, S. Klassen, and J. Lee sent me away to participate in the Canaan Land program in Big River without any explanation as to why I was being sent there other than “it would be good for me”. I am advised by my mother, and believe it to be true, that she was instructed to help me pack a bag and J. Lee arrived shortly after at my home to take me to Canaan Land.
84. Canaan Land in Big River, Saskatchewan, was a faith-based residential rehabilitation program for adult men with life-controlling issues such as substance abuse and addictions. It was established in Big River, Saskatchewan in 1993, modelled after another location in Alabama, USA. When I was sent to Canaan Land, it was being co-directed by K. Johnson and J. Randall, who were also directors of the Church. J. Lee was an officer and director and was responsible for running Canaan Land in Big River. J. Lee was a leader in the Church as well.
85. Canaan Land was advertised to congregants of the Church and students of CCA as a year-long intensive residential program meant to turn men into “disciplined ones” using faith-based programming, 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Canaan Land used Christian mind-renewal methods and strict discipline for “men that need correction in their life”. Staff at Canaan Land described it to me as “the Navy Seals of Christianity”. K. Johnson and the other leaders of the Church sent congregants and students to both Canaan Land locations, and I recall that there were adult men from the Church who were sent to, and returned from, the Canaan Land program in the USA. Canaan Land was used by the Church and by CCA to discipline and isolate students.
86. Other boys from CCA were sent to Canaan Land at the same time that I was. Despite being a location meant to rehabilitate adult men, those of us from CCA who were sent to Canaan Land were all 15 or 16 years old. For clarity, we were not the only participants in Canaan Land. While we were there, there were also fully grown adult men with substance and addictions issues, anger or behavioural issues, gang ties, or other problems, participating in the program.

87. I was isolated at Canaan Land for 26 months despite asking repeatedly to go home and despite it being advertised as a one-year program. I was never told why I had to stay passed one year. I was never told when I might return home and was held there against my will, but I did not have the means of returning home and was dependent on the staff at Canaan Land.

88. There were no teachers at Canaan Land. There was no classroom, library, art class, music class, physical education, or any other educational activities that were offered at CCA, except for our PACE workbooks. CCA shipped PACEs and SAICS workbooks and their score keys to us while we were at Canaan Land. We spent only two hours per weekday completing our PACE workbooks and marking our own schoolwork.

89. Instead of spending time on our education, those of us at Canaan Land were required to perform physical labor without pay, a few examples of which are:

- a. I was required to gather logs from the 100-acre forest for our own winter survival. The buildings were fueled by a wood-burning furnace. We had to gather and process more than a dozen cords of wood to last the season;
- b. I was required to maintain the lawn and property, including watering, fertilizing, and mowing;
- c. I was required to manually shovel and clear snow from the property and the driveway, which was approximately 150 – 200 meters in length;
- d. I was required to scrub and wax the kitchen and dining room floors on my hands and knees; and
- e. I was required to wash and clean the transport vehicles.

90. There were strict rules at Canaan Land that we were required to obey. A few of the rules were as follows:

- a. We were given a 30-minute telephone call to one family member once per week. This call was monitored by Canaan Land staff. Outside of this call, we were not

permitted to communicate with anyone outside of Canaan Land. The phone was stored in a locked room and was the only phone located at Canaan Land.

- b. We were required to agree to participate with everything the program asks us to do. We were not permitted to refuse work assigned to us by Canaan Land staff.
- c. We were required to accept and follow Christianity.
- d. Only pre-approved Christian books, TV, or music was allowed. There were no computers allowed at Canaan Land.
- e. We were required to keep everything clean and orderly.
- f. Showers were limited to three minutes in length.
- g. We were not allowed to swear, talk negatively, or talk about our past.
- h. We were not permitted to possess money that totaled more than one dollar.
- i. Every participant at Canaan Land had to share a room with another participant.
- j. Our possessions were searched and monitored.
- k. We were allowed to write and receive an unlimited number of letters, but all incoming and outgoing letters were monitored by Canaan Land staff.
- l. Family could be permitted to visit on special occasions if the visit was first preapproved by Canaan Land staff.
- m. We were not permitted to leave the premises unless escorted by staff on special occasions.
- n. Leaving Canaan Land without permission resulted in a restart of the individual's one-year committal.

91. The programming at Canaan Land was extreme. Our daily routine was highly controlled, and we were under constant, 24-hour supervision by Canaan Land staff.

- a. We were required to wake up at 7:00 a.m. every day and confess scriptural affirmations from a book.
- b. After breakfast we were made to perform prayers, worship, sermons, and a group Bible-study session until lunch.
- c. After lunch, youths were given two hours to work on our PACE booklets.
- d. After the brief schoolwork period, we were required to perform physical work-duties such as lumberjacking, lawn mowing, winter snow-shoveling, etc. Canaan Land was a property of approximately 100 acres, with a 200-meter driveway.
- e. We ate supper at 6:00 p.m. which marked the end of the workday. There would be some mandatory event for a couple of hours at 8:00 p.m. such as Bible study, book study, corporate worship, corporate prayer, or on weekends a church service in Prince Albert or Saskatoon.
- f. Lights out occurred at 11:00 p.m. and signaled the end of the day. When we awoke the following morning at 7:00 a.m. the entire routine would repeat again.

92. I have spoken with former students of CCA who have advised me, and I believe it to be true, that while attending CCA they were threatened by CCA staff and leaders of the Church that they would be sent to Canaan Land for being rebellious. “Being rebellious” was a catch-all term for anything the staff did not like, such as vocalizing critical thinking.

The Effects of the Abuse

93. The education that I received while attending CCA was inadequate for me to qualify for post-secondary education after I graduated, except for Faith College. The help that I received from teachers was lacking, and without someone at home to help me with my schoolwork, I fell behind. CCA sending me to Canaan Land, and particularly the low

priority that was put on education at Canaan Land, set my education further back. I was unable to graduate from CCA when I turned 18 because I only had 9 out of 24 of the required high school credits. In fact, I never graduated from CCA, and instead, I obtained my General Education Diploma (GED) from Kelsey - SIAST when I was 19 years old. I became so anxious about schoolwork that I felt unable to continue my education beyond obtaining my GED. To this day, I feel uncomfortable with the concept of stepping into a classroom.

94. Many further education programs require credits that I did not receive as a result of my education at CCA. I have experienced difficulty finding work as I am comparatively less qualified than graduates from “normal” Saskatchewan schools. Many professions require some form of post-secondary education that I was unable to apply for.
95. L. Brunelle attended every service at the Church while I was at CCA, and his presence there made me uncomfortable attending Church. Now that I’m out of the program, I still experience that same discomfort when I think about attending any church service.
96. While attending CCA I felt strong feelings of dread and anxiety most mornings before school. These feelings developed when I began attending school at CCA and I had not experienced them previously when I was attending public schools. I felt like any of the staff members at CCA might send me to the principal’s office to be paddled at any time. My classmates were exceedingly kind, but we were all in a culture of fear over being disciplined.
97. The religious content of the PACEs also routinely triggered my blood/injection/injury-type phobia. The content often talked of Christ’s shed blood, rivers of blood, blood of the lamb, scriptures about blood, etc. I had panic attacks while reading the course work and developed anxiety over what I might encounter in the workbooks. Beyond that, CCA’s Bible club required us to memorize multi-verse Bible passages each month, some of which were about blood. I also remember scripture being quoted in the Church about blood.
98. When I was 13 or 14 years old, I fainted during class after having a panic attack triggered by the content of my workbook. When I regained consciousness, I was lying in the doorway

of our classroom and a teacher was holding my feet up in the air. I felt confused and sick, and was sent home without any medical checkup or evaluation. I remember fainting on two other occasions while at the Church after being triggered by references to blood.

99. I do not remember having this type of reaction to my attendance at CCA and I believe that my blood/injection/injury-type phobia was developed while reading, hearing, and seeing depictions of blood at CCA and in services at the Church. I found this content traumatic, especially at such an early age, and now when my phobia is triggered, I experience a fight-or-flight response, and can experience further nausea, disorientation, aggression, vomiting, and fainting. I have suffered head injuries from fainting triggered by my phobia. I am triggered by my phobia about twice each week.
100. I avoided medical care for over 10 years after leaving CCA, both because of the teachings that were indoctrinated into us and because vaccinations and bloodwork both trigger my phobia. I am still unable to submit any typical bloodwork so my doctor and I cannot get a full picture of my overall health.
101. I grew to distrust the teachers and principal at CCA, which evolved into a general distrust of authority. Every person with authority at CCA and the Church was part of the system that encouraged catching children doing something wrong so that they could be “saved” with scriptural discipline. This developed distrust of authority has caused me difficulty with relationships as an adult, as I have difficulty believing in people to be loyal and trustworthy.
102. My experiences at CCA filled me with self-doubt and a poor quality of self-worth, both of which have persisted throughout my life. The environment at CCA that I existed in was a mixture of fear of being disciplined, embarrassment for mistakes and struggles with learning, and anxiety about what I might encounter on any given day. I enjoyed going to school when I was in the public school system, but CCA stole that enjoyment from me.
103. Any time I did something wrong, no matter how minor, I feared the discipline I would face and that my spirit was sinful. Even though I left CCA in 2000, I still struggle with a sense of impending doom and judgment, and I’m afraid of imperfection to the point that it

distracts me from everyday activities. I've been hypervigilant throughout my adulthood to avoid imperfections as best I can. I have difficulty reconciling the indoctrinations from my time at CCA and the Church with the reality of the "normal" world.

104. In or around 2017, I was diagnosed with General Anxiety Disorder and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by my therapist Dr. Carverhill and my family doctor, Dr. Nayar. They have confirmed, and I verily believe it to be true, that the experiences I've described from my time at CCA and the Church were familiar to them. Following the recommendations of my doctors, I have been receiving psychological counselling for my symptoms related to anxiety and PTSD since 2017. I have a counselling session every two weeks and expect to continue attending counselling indefinitely. I was also prescribed medication to treat the symptoms of my anxiety disorder and PTSD, which I have been taking daily since 2017. It is expected that I will have to stay on my medication for the rest of my life.

105. Between the cost of my medication and counselling sessions, I have spent tens of thousands of dollars out of pocket to deal with the trauma that I experienced at CCA and the Church.

106. My family has been torn apart by the Church. The Church's teachings were at the heart of my parents' separation, and the Church and some of its members were involved in my parents' divorce and the ensuing custody battle over my brother and me. When my mother received custody of us, we soon stopped seeing my dad altogether, and although I am no longer a member of the Church, my relationship with my father was never fully repaired.

107. My family was then torn apart a second time when I was excommunicated by the Church in 2000 after I refused to attend Faith College. My mother continued to attend the Church and to date asks me to return to the Church to redeem myself. She remains fully indoctrinated by the teachings of K. Johnson and that has prevented us from having a close relationship for the last 25 years. I still see my mother because she takes care of my severely brain-injured brother, but our relationship will never be fully repaired.

108. When I was excommunicated, I lost all of the friendships that I had with other students from CCA and members of the Church. I find it difficult to build new relationships as an adult, and to maintain existing relationships.

109. The symptoms I experience from my PTSD and anxiety disorder negatively affect my relationship with my wife. She becomes concerned and distressed when she sees me experiencing depression or emotional control oddities. Additionally, the medication that I take to treat my symptoms has a side-effect which causes sexual problems and has diminished my sexual relationship with my wife.

110. As a survivor of multiple levels of systematic abuse from CCA and the Church, I am still learning of the width and breadth of the abuse and harm that I, and many children like me, experienced and witnessed while attending there.

111. I make this Affidavit in support of the motion to certify this action as a class proceeding and for no improper purpose.

SWORN/AFFIRMED BEFORE ME at, the)
City of Saskatoon, in the Province of)
Saskatchewan, this 18 day of March, 2025.)

Smalleem
Commissioner for Oaths for Saskatchewan
My Commission expires:
OR Being a Solicitor

Mark Drapak
MARK DANIEL DRAPAK

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THIS IS EXHIBIT "A" REFERRED TO IN
THE AFFIDAVIT OF MARK DANIEL
DRAPAK SWORN THIS 18 DAY OF
MARCH, 2025.



A COMMISSIONER FOR OATHS IN AND
FOR THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: _____
~~-BEING A SOLICITOR-~~

03

LIFE'S

PRIORITIES

Too
Many
Choices

Too Little Time

KEITH
JOHNSON

THRIFTBOOKS

Life's Priorities

Too Many Choices, Too Little Time

Life's Priorities

Too Many Choices, Too Little Time

by
Keith Johnson



Harrison House
Tulsa, Oklahoma

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Foreword by Dr. Ken Stewart

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Foreword

One of the greatest problems in the lives of many Christians is the simple fact that too many things are too important. There seems to be much confusion concerning the order a person's life should take.

Certainly, your job is important. Your children are very important. But, they have a particular place in the scheme of things, as God sees it. I will promise you that you will be frustrated until you admit that this is true and get your priorities in line with God's Word.

Here is a book that will help you do what I have suggested. It is entitled *Life's Priorities*. That is exactly what it is about. I strongly recommend it to you, because it is solidly based on God's Word.

I was not at all surprised when I learned that Keith Johnson had written a book on life's priorities. I have known Keith for several years. As long as I have known him, I have observed his intense interest in this subject. I do not mean that he talked about it a lot. He lived it. He still lives it. He is a man who has his priorities in line with God's Word. You can see the evidence of it in his home and the church he pastors. In fact, you can see the evidence of it in the lives of the people he pastors. I know. I have been in his home, his church, and in the homes of some of his church members.

What you find in this book are several chapters of this man's life. It will bless you. It will help you. Most

of all, it will help you get in a position where God can bless you.

I encourage you to read it thoroughly. Then, put it into practice so that you can share it with others.

It really is a pleasure to recommend this book, and this author, Keith Johnson, to you.

Dr. Ken Stewart
Family Worship Center
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Introduction

...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

Ephesians 6:10

When I first became a Christian, I did not know how to be "strong in the Lord," as we are told to do in this verse. But after studying the Word of God, and after allowing the Spirit of God to reveal His Word to me, I found that the way to be strong in the Lord was to know His Word and to act upon it.

When you know God's Word and act upon it, then you are actually being "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

God's strength and power are in His Word. That same strength and power are available to every child of God. When we keep our minds renewed on the Word of God and do as the psalmist David said and hide God's Word in our hearts (Ps. 119:11), we put that Word into our spirits. Then when we speak, that Word goes forth. That is what is meant by being strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

If we don't know God's Word, we can't act upon it. God has said, **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...** (Hos. 4:6). When we gain a knowledge of God's Word, then we can begin to act upon it. The devil will try to prevent us from gaining this knowledge because he knows that is how the blessings of God are received — by acting upon the Word. That is how

healing comes; that is how prosperity comes. The power of God is in His Word.

The Word of God is the answer to all of life's problems.

Friend, it is very important that we Christians know how to act upon the Word of God in our everyday life. God's Word is practical. It isn't just a big show with a lot of emotion and fanfare. That is not what it is all about. The Word of God will work in the midnight hour in our home. It will guide and strengthen us through the problem times in our family. It will help us when the preacher is on vacation, the prayer bands are dismissed, and the telephone is out of order so we can't get in touch with anybody else.

Praise God, even when nothing or no one is available to help us, the Word of God is always available — and it always works!

If you will learn how to act upon the Word of God in every area of your life, you will win your family — your whole neighborhood — for Jesus. But it is not enough to act upon the Word just when you go to church. You must act upon it in your everyday life — especially in your home. If the Word won't work at home, there is no reason to believe that it will work in church.

The Word of God must work first in the home, before it can ever work successfully anywhere else.

The Apostle Paul once gave an exhortation to the leaders of the Church concerning this issue of acting upon the Word of God. One of the first qualifications he laid down for any church leader was that he be:

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

1 Timothy 3:4,5

Children need to be taught to be obedient to their parents and to follow in their footsteps. This teaching is the responsibility of the parents. As Paul points out in this passage, how can any person expect to rule the church of God if he cannot rule his own home? It can't be done.

Several years ago I was visiting with Rev. Doyle Harrison and we began to talk about some of these things I am discussing in this book. As we were visiting along this line, the Spirit of God began to reveal certain truths to me concerning life's priorities. He said to me: "Son, not only should you as a minister have your priorities in line, but the people in your church need to have their priorities in proper perspective. Ill-ordered priorities will hinder them in their faith and keep them from obtaining and enjoying the abundant life I have provided for them in Christ Jesus."

Then the Lord began to reveal His Word to me concerning the proper order of life's priorities.

Have you ever asked yourself how things got into such a mess, how the world got into the turmoil it is in today? Well, the way things got really "messed up" in the beginning was through the failure of the first man and woman. The problem was that Adam and Eve had their priorities all mixed up. Eve put the material over the spiritual. And Adam put his marriage companion over God. From that day forth, right on down through recorded biblical history, everything became progressively worse — until Jesus came to earth and ushered in the Kingdom of heaven.

It is the same today. If things are messed up in your life, in your marriage, your home, your business, your personal relationships, the reason is because your life's priorities are out of order.

So, being taught of the Lord concerning these things, I brought all of my staff together for an experiment. I gave each of them a list of ten priorities. I asked them to rank these items by placing the number one (1) by the highest priority, two (2) by the second highest, three (3) by the third, and so on down the line. As they returned their lists to me, I was amazed to see how few of those people knew the proper biblical order of the priorities of life. Most of them had the first one right, but the rest of them were all mixed up.

Again the Lord spoke to me and said, "See, you need to to teach on this subject." So I began to teach.

My first pastorate was in a town of eleven hundred. In that city we had a congregation of about four hundred and sixty people. We were a lighthouse to a fifty-mile radius — and it was not a suburb of a large city either.

Several years later, my wife and I went to Plainview, Texas, and pioneered a Christian work in that area. Plainview had a population of about twenty to twenty-five thousand. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, we leased a building and began a work for God. One of the very first things the Lord told me to do was to teach on life's priorities. I taught on that subject on Sunday evenings, a series of four weeks at that time. The more I taught this subject, the more revelation I received about life's priorities.

Recently the Spirit of God spoke to me and said: "Now I want you to teach this subject again. You have a lot of new families in the church who need to learn it. I want you to re-teach this subject from time to time."

What I am teaching is not what some man has taken out of a book. It is something that the Holy Spirit has ordered. So receive it from God. Begin your study of this vital subject by ranking the five priorities listed below, placing a one (1) by the highest priority in your life and proceeding down the list until you have placed a five (5) by the lowest priority. Then as you read the following chapters, you can compare your list to the one presented in this book:

- _____ Job
- _____ Children
- _____ Relationship with Jesus
- _____ Local church
- _____ Marriage companion

1

Relationship with Jesus

Looking at society today, it is very apparent that few people really know what life's priorities are. It would do all of us good to stop for a moment and ask ourselves three questions: Why am I here? What is the real purpose for my life? Was I put here on this earth just to make a living, to find some happiness, raise a family, and to be a "good Samaritan"?

As we look at the biblical answers to these questions, the highest priority in life becomes very obvious — a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

In Genesis 1:26 to 2:3, we find that God made the earth for man:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every thing that moveth upon the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and

every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

God made the earth for man, and He gave him dominion and authority over all of His creation. Whenever Adam wanted some milk, he didn't have to go out into the pasture with a big stick and chase the old cow in. All he had to do was call, "Jers, come here!" and old Jers would obey. If a bird flew across the sky and Adam wanted him to come, he just spoke to the bird and he came.

Adam had named everything, so he knew every creature by name. He had authority in his word. It wasn't because he was strong that all the creatures of the earth obeyed Adam; it was because the words he spoke carried authority.

God made the earth for man. But, more importantly, we find in God's Word that God made man for Himself. Now, why do you think He did that? Why did the Master Designer of the universe make man in His image and after His likeness?

The Word of God gives us two reasons why He made man. First, God made man for fellowship! Second, God made man so He could derive pleasure from him. Just as you and I derive fellowship and pleasure from our companions, so God derives fellowship and pleasure from man.

So man is created by God, in God's own image and after His likeness, to fellowship with and to please his Creator.

The psalmist David saw all this and wrote:

I say, "And what is man, that thou should'st think of him? What is a mortal man, that thou should'st heed him?"

Yet thou hast made him little less than divine, thou hast crowned him with majesty and honour, giving him sway o'er all thy hands have made, with all things underneath his feet

Psalm 8:4-6 *Mof*

Just think of it! Of all the vast creation of the whole universe, God thinks most highly of mankind, which was created in His own image.

Consider the president of the United States. Would you like to be able to talk to him today, to offer a few suggestions or maybe present a request? Do you think you could just "breeze over" to the White House and have an audience with the president, just like that? Not on your life! You would never be able to get anywhere near him. He doesn't have time for you.

But let me tell you something. God Almighty is much more important than the president of the United States, and you and I have immediate audience with Him, at any time we want. God, our heavenly Father, gives us an immediate audience, any hour of the day or night.

Now how do we know that we have an audience with God? Because His Word tells us so:

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

1 John 5:14,15

Hallelujah! We have an immediate audience with our heavenly Father, the Master Designer of all the heavens and the earth. Sometimes we take this great privilege for granted, don't we?

My wife has trouble getting an audience with me. Sometimes I am so busy that she will call my office and be told, "Pastor Johnson is in conference." But when you and I call upon the Lord, He never answers, "Wait a minute; I'm in conference." And God's time is free! We must pay for the doctor's time, and for the lawyer's time, but not for God's time. Isn't that wonderful?

"...What is a mortal man, that thou should'st heed him?..." I will tell you what man is. Man is God's friend and companion. God created man in His own image, after His own likeness, because He wanted to have fellowship with him and to derive pleasure from him.

My friend, you and I are somebody! We have not been forsaken or forgotten. We are important — because God created us and He loves us.

"...thou hast made him little less than divine..." The King James Version says, "...thou hast made him a little lower than the angels..." (Ps. 8:5). But that is a mistranslation. God didn't make the *angels* in His image, after His likeness. He made *man* in His image and likeness! God didn't give *angels* authority over the

earth; He gave it to *man*! God has made us "little less than divine," little less than Himself.

According to 1 Peter 1:12, the angels desire to look into this redemptive plan which we have with God. They sit by in awe as the saints in heaven are rejoicing.

In Luke 15:10 Jesus tells us that "...there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. For a long time I thought this verse meant that the angels rejoice when a sinner is saved, but that is not what it means. What the Lord was saying is that there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels when a sinner repents. It is the redeemed saints in heaven who are the ones who rejoice whenever a person is made a new creation in Christ Jesus.

As the saints rejoice, the angels sit by and say: "Look at those people! They are so happy. We would like to be able to rejoice with them, but this is something we know nothing about." God did not make the plan of salvation for the angels. He made it for His own special, elect creation.

John, the Revelator, also saw the purpose for man's existence. In Revelation 4:11 he wrote: **Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.** God created the earth in its fullness for man. He wants man to derive pleasure from His creation. At the same time, He wants man to fellowship with and to please Him, so that God derives pleasure from man. God gets pleasure as we live for Him every day.

God is pleased when we find pleasure in His creation. In other words, He is happy when He sees

His children walking in health and prosperity in every area of their daily life. It is fun to be a conqueror. It is fun to be healthy. It is great to walk in divine health. Now, I do not say that to boast of myself, Keith Johnson; I am bragging on Jesus! It is wonderful to be able to lie down and sleep peacefully all night and to wake up in the morning rejoicing in the Lord. It is fun being a conqueror! That pleases God.

But God gets the most pleasure when we say to Him: "Father, I thank You. You are responsible for all of my blessings. I did not get them by myself. I didn't acquire any of this abundance which I have been receiving. It wasn't anything that I did that brought me this happiness, this home, this wonderful family, this marvelous life that I now enjoy. I owe it all to You, and I give You praise for it." That kind of confession gives pleasure to God, because it puts things in their proper perspective.

God is the One responsible for life, and life more abundantly. (John 10:10.)

Many people try to gain pleasure from God's creation, but with their priorities out of order. It won't work. The Apostle Paul said that men make the mistake of worshipping and serving the things that are made, rather than worshipping and serving the Maker; they worship and serve the creation, rather than the Creator. (Rom. 1:25.) Now God wants His children to enjoy all of His creation, but He wants us to make sure that we fellowship with and worship Him, the Creator, and that we give Him the praise for all that we see and have and enjoy. This kind of action pleases God.

I want to be a God-pleaser. I would rather please my Creator than please my wife. I would rather please

my Father than please my children. I would rather please my divine Lord than please my deacon board. I would rather please the Master of the Universe than please the chief executive officer of some corporation. I would rather please God than anybody else in the world. Why? Because I know that fellowship and relationship with my Lord and my Savior is the highest priority in life.

If I can please God, then things will work for me. But if I fail to please God, then I don't have a chance of true happiness or real success in life. In Romans 8:31, the Apostle Paul asks, . . . **If God be for us, who can be against us?** In order for God to be for you and me, each of us must be a God-pleaser.

Success is not just the accumulation of money. Success is being able to meet every need in life with God and to emerge as a conqueror from every crisis. Instead of being destroyed by circumstances, the successful person reigns in life. The psalmist says that God has made us little less than divine. He has crowned us with majesty and honor, and has placed everything under our feet. That means that we are never "under the circumstances." Instead, we are on top of the circumstances of life; we reign in life.

The Bible declares that . . . **they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ . . .** (Rom. 5:17). And in Romans 8:17, Paul tells us that if we are children of God then we are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

As Christians our top priority is to keep Jesus Christ Number One in our life. To do that we must make sure that we fellowship with Him and please Him every day.

If you want to get your priorities into the proper order, if you want your life in proper perspective, then put Jesus on the throne. Make Him Lord of your life. Make Him Number One, and strive every day to please Him in every way.

If Jesus is not the Lord of your life, there is no way you can please Him. You cannot please Him by going to church, by singing religious songs, or by reading the Bible. If you have not made Him Lord of your life, none of these things will please Him. Things will not work for you in the way that they could until you have crowned Jesus as Lord of your own personal life.

Oh, you may go out and make some money, but you won't enjoy it fully. You won't really experience life in all its abundance; you will be miserable in some aspect of your life. The Bible says that we can enjoy the pleasures of sin — for a season. But after a while the fruits of sin become bitter. They never get any better; they just get more bitter. But the enjoyment which we experience when Jesus is the Lord of our life grows and grows; it becomes sweeter day by day. With Jesus as Lord, life just gets better and better.

When we are born again, we become one spirit with the Lord. First Corinthians 6:17 states: . . . he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Since we become one with the Lord when we are born again, not even death can separate us. Isn't that beautiful? Not even death. Why? Because, when we die, our physical body is laid to rest in the grave, but our spirit goes to be with God. According to 2 Corinthians 5:8, to be absent from the body, for the person who is born again, is to be present with the Lord. But for the one who is not born

again, to be absent from the body is to be present with the lord of this world (Satan).

So when we make Jesus our Lord and become one with Him, we enter into a binding covenant with our heavenly Father. Remember, your spirit is the real you, and no one can get more personal or more intimate with you than Jesus — not even your life companion.

Jesus is one with our spirit. That is why the highest priority in life is our personal relationship with Him. Now when we try to make our life companion, or our children, or our church, or our job, or our pleasure, or anything else the top priority, then there is left a huge void in our lives which nothing will ever be able to fill. We can have every other priority in perfect order, but if Jesus is not Number One on the list, then our life will still not be satisfying.

Before I was born again, the devil used to tell me: "Son, you can't be a Christian and have fun. Wait until you are about sixty or seventy years old, and then get saved. If you will wait and get saved on your death bed, you can still go to heaven but you won't have to miss all the fun in this world."

I thought Satan was right. I tried going to church, and it wasn't fun. It was like a funeral service, sitting there going through a bunch of rituals.

Then one day I received Jesus as my personal Savior. I heard the story of the cross, of how Jesus died for me, how He took my place so I could take His place. I heard that wonderful message of salvation and deliverance, and I said, "That is what I want." I was twenty-three years old when I received Jesus. That was a long time ago. Since that moment my life has been wonderful,

more real to me than ever before. I discovered that it is fun serving Jesus. I never had this much fun before I became a Christian. The world doesn't know what it is missing, and Satan doesn't know what he is talking about. He is a liar.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

1 John 3:21-23

Obedience to this commandment is one of the first steps to pleasing God. If we want to please our heavenly Father, then we must first of all believe on the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

At one time, I didn't know that. I joined churches. I was baptized in water. I went to church and took Communion. I went through a lot of rituals. But that is not believing on Jesus. To believe on Jesus means to act upon the Word of God.

Believing on Jesus is more than just giving mental assent, just saying, "Yes, I believe," but then going out and acting completely contrary to what you have just said. You can declare all day long, "Yes, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; I believe He died on the cross; I believe He was crucified, that He was buried, that He rose from the grave and ascended into heaven; I believe that He died for me, in my place, and that He took my sins upon Him." But, until you act upon the Word of God and make Jesus the Lord of your

life, you are just giving mental assent — and it won't do you any good. That is why "Bible belief" means action. When you believe, you will act.

Now, how do you act on the Word of God? In Romans 10:8,9 Paul states:

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

This passage describes how to act on God's Word. You must not only believe in your heart, but you must speak forth what you believe with your mouth: "Jesus, I believe You died for me. I believe You rose from the grave for me. I believe You ascended into heaven and are now seated at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for me. I confess You as the Lord of my life."

Do you know what the word *Lord* means? *Boss!* Jesus Christ is my Boss. Many people don't want anybody telling them what to do — not even God. Neither did the devil; that's why he was kicked out of heaven.

When someone is your boss, you have to "check in" with him every day of your life. We "check in" with God through His Word. I know what God wants me to do because He tells me in His Word. Many people don't know what God wants of them because they never take the time to read His Word, or they read only a portion of it — only that part which they want to read. But that portion they want to hear won't work for them if they don't take the whole Word of the Lord.

Many people want to enjoy God's prosperity, healing and blessing, but they don't want to be obedient to His Word. The Apostle James says, **Therefore to him it is sin (James 4:17). When we know that we have sinned and disobeyed God's Word, our heart will condemn us and we will not have confidence before God. Without confidence with God, our prayers will be hindered. God's Word will not work in our life. We won't be able to receive His promised blessings. If we are to enjoy the benefits of God's Word, then we must be obedient to that Word, because to believe the Word means to act upon it.**

So when we act upon the Word of God by doing what He has commanded us to do by first making Jesus the Lord of our life, then we are pleasing God and will receive His blessing.

The second way we please God is by putting others before self. We live in a selfish world, a self-centered society. There are many people today who only think of themselves. Young people are being taught to seek only self-satisfaction, self-gratification. Often the watchword today among the young is, "If it feels good, do it." That is the quickest way to destruction that I know of.

But when a person is born again, immediately he becomes concerned for others. He discovers an interest in them that he never had before. If he will cultivate that new concern and interest, it will remain and will continue to grow all the days of his life. That doesn't mean that we Christians ought to totally disregard ourselves and our own needs, but it does mean that we should always be sensitive to those around us.

Every day of our life we will come into contact with people who are smiling outwardly but who are miserable deep down inside. They are in great need of what we have. Many times in the past I have had the opportunity to minister to someone in need, but because I was not sensitive to his needs, I went on my way without being a help to that individual. Now my constant prayer is: "Lord, I want to be sensitive to others and their needs. If I have the opportunity to minister to them, I want to seize that opportunity. I want to put others before myself."

That is where happiness lies, in placing others before self.

In John 13:34,35 Jesus told His disciples:

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.

Do we truly love one another as Jesus loves us? Now, my friend, please pay careful attention to this statement: *Love is unselfish*. We all want to receive, but the way to receive is to give. It is a law of God. The way to be loved is to love. The way to have friends is to be a friend. The way to become prosperous is to prosper others.

This way is against every natural law known to man. But there is a higher law at work here, a spiritual law that supersedes the natural law. It is what the Bible calls "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:2.) If we will enter into the spiritual realm and activate spiritual laws, they will act to supersede all the natural laws known to man. Then, bless God, there are not

enough demons and imps in hell to keep the blessings of God from coming our way.

But even when those blessings come, we can keep ourselves from receiving them — by not acting upon the Word of God, or by not exercising our faith. But Satan and his demons cannot hinder us from receiving. The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ can never be stopped by outside pressure, only by internal failure.

So we ought to cultivate the desire to take an interest in others. Desire to be a blessing. The Bible teaches that it is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35.) The more you give, the more you are going to receive.

When you gave your heart to Jesus, what happened? You received His fullness. Did you receive less than you gave, or more than you gave? Much, much *more*! The same is true in your giving to others. Whatever you give to other people, God is going to return to you — in multiplied fashion. When you do something for somebody else, don't have an ulterior motive; don't do it expecting that same person to do something for you in return. That kind of "giving" can't be blessed of God. But if you will give as unto the Lord, expecting nothing in return except the joy of helping someone else in need, then God will honor your good work and will reward you for it.

We also please God by walking in faith. In Hebrews 11:6, the Bible tells us: . . . **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.** Without faith no one can please God. As Christians, . . . **we walk by faith, not by sight. . .** (2 Cor. 5:7). That means that we do not allow our physical senses to control us.

Smith Wigglesworth once said: "I am not moved by what I see, I am not moved by what I feel, I am moved by the Word of God." If that statement describes you, then you are a disciplined Christian. You are controlling your senses, walking by faith, living by the Word of God.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

For to be carnally minded (or to be sense-minded) is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

So then they that are in the flesh (those who are led by their senses) cannot please God.

Romans 8:5-8

According to this passage, to be carnally minded, to be led by the physical senses, is enmity against God. The things we see, the things we feel, the things we hear, all these will pull us away from the Word of God.

Now our senses themselves are not all bad. Thank God that we can see, hear, smell, taste and feel. But if we live according to the dictates of our senses in everything we do, we will go contrary to God instead of following God.

It is all right to go by our senses as long as they do not contradict the Word of God. But if our senses and the Word are in conflict, then we must put our senses down and take our thoughts captive: **Casting down imaginations (reasonings), and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ** (2 Cor. 10:5). What is "the knowledge of God"?

The Word of God. Anything that exalts itself against the Word, no matter what its source or origin, must be cast down.

Many times I have stood up behind the pulpit to preach with pain trying to rack my body, with symptoms of some illness or disease trying to attack me. But long ago I learned to say, "In the name of Jesus, I will not allow or permit my body to accept these symptoms which exalt themselves against the Word of God!"

Now I know that pain is real, but I deny it the right to work in my body. The Bible tells me that my body is the temple of the living God, and so, like Paul, . . . I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection . . . (1 Cor. 9:27). What do I bring my body into subjection to? My spirit man. I control my body, and all other areas of my life — my finances, my family relationships — the same way. That is living by faith.

You can't please God unless you live by faith. However, you can't "get there" overnight. You must work at it. You climb the ladder of faith by taking one step at a time. You don't jump right to the top. You start at the bottom rung, then you take the first step, then the next step, and the next. As God's Word is revealed to you, you keep walking in that light. If you will continue to do that, sooner or later you will "get there." Nobody can stop you. But you must walk in the light that you have.

God desires our fellowship, and this fellowship is made possible when Jesus becomes the Lord of our life. Now we, also, must desire to fellowship with God. Fellowship is communication. It is a two-way street.

I have been around some people who want to fellowship, but they want to do all the talking. Do you like to be around someone like that? Many times our fellowship with the Lord is one way, isn't it? We want to do all the talking. We go to Him and tell Him what we want Him to do. We treat Him as though He were our little errand boy. We expect Him to do what we desire, and then we can forget Him until we need something else done.

If that is the way you operate, then you must know that you will never get your life in proper perspective. Fellowship with God works both ways. There has to be communication. You must allow God to communicate with you, just as you communicate with Him.

You and I need to listen to what God has to say. What He has to say is more important than what we have to say. We don't know anything. That is the reason so many of us are in debt, having marital problems, getting divorced, destroying our own families. That is the reason so many of our lives are not "panning out" the way we had planned. The problem is that we are not very smart. All of our college degrees don't get us anywhere. They can't solve our problems. Our homes are breaking up at a greater rate than ever before in history because we don't have the answers to this life — God does. He says to us, "Listen to Me, and I will help you."

How do we listen to God, how do we know what He has to say? The first step is to get out the family Bible, blow the dust off the cover, open it up and begin to read and study it.

"Ah, but the Bible has never made much sense to me."

The Bible is so simple you almost need help to misunderstand it. There is a lot of misunderstanding today. Many times our own ministers have only added to the confusion. They have gotten up behind the pulpit and preached little sermonettes that have no real application to our daily life.

My friend, please listen. God wants to give you light. He wants to enlighten you. He will give you this light through His Word. In Proverbs 4:20-22 He says to you:

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

Why?

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

This Word brings life. The secrets of life, the keys of life, are found in the Word of God. It produces life in you.

But living selfishly will produce death, and everything associated with it — misery, heartache, problems. Everything that is bad will happen to you if you follow your senses. But if you follow the Word of God, it will produce life.

Just going to church won't produce life. Singing "Oh, How I Love Jesus" won't produce life. I know many people who have sung that song for years and yet have never taken time to look at the Word of God and put it into practice in their daily life. They are leading the most self-centered life of anybody I know.

What we have to do is say, "Father, I believe You know more about life than I do, so I am going to listen to Your Word and do what it says to do."

God's Word has been my medicine and my life for many years. Why does God's Word work for me? It works because I attend to it. I pay more attention to what He says than to what anybody else says. I continually listen to His Word. I incline my ear to His sayings. I don't let them depart from before my eyes. I read the Word. I meditate upon it. Not just on Sunday, but every day of the week. I discipline myself to keep the Word of God before my eyes and in the midst of my heart.

Now, do you think there is a "pay day" for that kind of diligence? Yes, there is a pay day. When is it? It is the day when the thief comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. (John 10:10.) If you have been in the Word, then when the enemy comes on the scene you will know that he has no right to attack you. You can say to him, "Satan, I resist you in the name of Jesus. You have no right to steal from me. I command you to take your garbage and be gone!"

You have that authority and that power. The Word of God works. The enemy has to do as the Bible says.

I remember how my father used to say "Scat!" and our little old dog would put his tail between his legs and just take off. That is what the devil will do, because he is afraid of the Word. James tells us, . . . **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you** (James 4:7). The original Greek meaning is "to flee as in terror." Satan is terrified of the Word of God.

We fellowship with God by communicating with Him, in His Word, and by praising Him. *The Amplified Bible* version of Hebrews 13:15 reads: **Through Him therefore let us constantly and at all times offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of lips that thankfully acknowledge and confess and glorify His name.** It pleases God when we do that. According to Psalm 22:3, God inhabits the praise of Israel. If He inhabited the praises of His people in those days, then He inhabits the praises of you and me today, we who are the seed of Abraham.

That word *inhabit* means *live in*. God will live in those praises. He will manifest Himself in and among our praise. We don't have to go to church to get a manifestation from God. We can get it at home. God inhabits the praises of His people, not the churches. When we offer up our praises, that is a sacrifice, a sacrifice of praise.

Some mornings I just don't feel like worshipping God. Have you ever felt that way? But I don't go by what I feel! I go ahead and worship God anyway. Feelings fluctuate like the waves of the sea; they toss this way and that. I don't let them control me. I begin to worship and praise, and soon my foot is patting and my hands are clapping. I get going and have a good time in the Lord. And this pleases God.

Another way in which we fellowship with God is by listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit Who speaks to our spirit. In John 16:13 Jesus said, **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.**

Now the Spirit of truth has already come. He lives within each of us. Jesus lives in our heart in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks to us concerning that which He hears. What does He hear? He hears the Father speaking. You see, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are One. They are in perfect unity, in perfect harmony. Whatever the Father desires, the Spirit of God knows immediately, and the Spirit of God will *speak* the Father's desire for us directly to our spirit.

I already know what you may be thinking: "Well, how do I listen to a spirit?"

Let me give you some suggestions. Turn off the TV. Get up early in the morning and have Bible devotions for yourself and your family. Meditate on God's Word throughout the day. Praise God and worship Him out of your spirit. Be faithful to a Word-preaching church. Then, when you are in your prayer closet, you can just sit silently and you will be able to hear the voice of the Spirit speaking to you in your heart, giving you advice and encouragement. This practice of the presence of the Lord will work for you just as it will for anybody else.

The Spirit of God tells me more things in a few seconds than I could plan out in a month. He saves me many hours of heartache, misery and work just because He speaks to me. I communicate with Him, but I also let Him communicate with me by His Word and by the voice of His Spirit within my spirit.

The reason some people claim that God is dead is because they have never allowed Him to communicate with them. That takes discipline. The old flesh would rather get a Pepsi, lay back in the Lazy Boy, and watch

the "tube." It takes a little discipline to listen to the Spirit, but it is well worth it! It will spare you all the sickness, all the heartache, and all the problems that the world has to offer.

Our conscience is the voice of our spirit. God will speak to us through our conscience:

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

1 John 3:20,21

In other words, if we do something that we know we shouldn't do, our heart is going to condemn us: **Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin (James 4:17).**

There are some things that I used to do that were wrong, but I didn't know it at the time. I know more today than I did ten or twelve years ago. It would be sin for me to do those same things today, but I got by with them back then because of my ignorance. If I tried to do those things now, my heart would condemn me.

God deals with each of us individually. If we do something wrong, something which God has already dealt with us about, then our heart is going to condemn us. God is greater than our heart. We may fool the pastor, or even our companion, but we won't fool God. If our heart condemns us, God knows it, and we know it. However, God is not the One doing the condemning. The condemnation comes from Satan as a result of our disobedience to the Word of God. God cannot remove the condemnation and guilt until we repent and come into obedience to His Word.

I like to stay "up to date" with God. I don't want our fellowship disrupted by a condemning heart. I want constant fellowship with my Father, because I never know when the devil is going to attack me. I need confidence toward God so I can deal with Satan effectively. But if my heart is condemning me, I am going to have to repent before I can take care of Satan. He may have me flat on my back before I have a chance to resist him.

If the enemy comes against us, and we are in fellowship with God, living in the light of His Word, we can handle any crisis that we may have to face. But many Christians get "under the circumstances" simply because they will not immediately repent of wrongdoing. They wait, sometimes for a long period of time. They will not do the things God has been dealing with them to do.

You don't have to open the door to Satan and allow him to come in and put you in the hospital before you will listen to the voice of God. You can hear God speak to you today. If He is speaking to you about anything, then for your own sake, obey Him. Just say: "Yes, Lord, I will do as You say. You know best. I won't ask You any questions. I will just obey."

Then you can get rid of that old condemnation. Then you will have confidence toward God. That means that you can act in faith. Then whatever you ask, you will receive of Him because you keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

2

Marriage Companion

The second priority in life is our companion. We can see this truth set forth in Genesis 2:18-20:

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

Can you imagine this? God saw that Adam needed a companion, and decided to make one for him. Then suddenly He started bringing all the animals of the field and the birds of the air before Adam for him to name them. I am sure that Adam must have looked up, saw the elephant coming, and said, "Lord God, I hope this is not my help mate!" Sure enough, it wasn't. Then came the giraffe, and Adam said, "Man, I am in trouble if this is what God has in mind!" Well, that wasn't it either. So God continued to bring every creature before Adam, and he named them all.

Even after Adam had named all the animals, a suitable helper had not been found for him. So in Genesis 2:21-24 we read:

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

We see here that in the Garden of Eden, in the beginning of time, God ordained marriage. He decreed that when a man and a woman unite in marriage the two of them become one flesh. Only death is supposed to separate them.

Now this, my friend, is the second most important covenant known to man -- the marriage covenant. The most binding covenant of all is our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, which is made possible by the New Birth. This covenant was discussed in the previous chapter. But marriage is the second most binding because it causes two people to become one flesh. Only when one partner dies is this covenant dissolved.

This truth needs to be preached around the world. Marriages are just falling into shambles. One out of every two marriages performed today will end in divorce. Isn't that terrible? So the second priority in life is our companion. We must see to it that our life partner comes second only to Jesus. Then we must allow Jesus to help both of us build a scriptural relationship with each other.

What is a scriptural marriage relationship? We find the answer to this question in the fifth chapter of the book of Ephesians:

Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Ephesians 5:22-24

"Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands...." There are many men who see to it that this injunction is carried out. They demand that their wives submit. They are tyrants and dictators, and they use scripture to lord it over their wives and make them agree with everything they say and do. They say to their wives: "See, the Bible says that the wife is supposed to submit to her husband. If you are such a good Christian, then you must submit to me."

But there are some conditions to be met before a wife can be expected to submit to her husband, as we will see from the scriptures:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it....

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and another, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Ephesians 5:25,28-33

Now, notice the conditions. Husbands are supposed to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. If a husband does his part by loving his wife, then he can expect his wife to be in submission to him. But if he does not love his wife as Christ loved the Church, then there are going to be problems in that marriage relationship.

"...men ought to love their wives as their own bodies..." There are some egotists today who love nothing as much as themselves. Their self-love is evident in their walk, their talk and their mannerisms. But the Bible says that husbands are to love their wives because "...he that loveth his wife loveth himself." Why? Because the husband and the wife are "one flesh."

The fifth chapter of Ephesians presents a great comparison between the husband-wife relationship and the relationship between Christ and the Church. These two relationships are really the only ones which can be compared this way, because no others exist which are as beautiful. This scripture can be distorted, but when kept as God intended it to be, it is the key to the second highest priority in life — the husband-wife relationship.

There are three steps to building a scriptural marriage relationship, as described in Ephesians 5. I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that if you will follow these steps, you will have the happiest marriage in all the world. They are very simple, but they also

require hard work. The three steps have a priority that must be preserved. You must discipline yourself to keep them in the proper order. But if you will follow them faithfully, they will work.

The first step in establishing and maintaining a scriptural relationship with your husband or wife is to build a spiritual relationship. When it comes to spiritual things, many husbands and wives are just as opposite as north is from south. There is no relationship, no fellowship, no communication in this area at all. Any marriage which is not founded on a firm spiritual relationship has one strike against it from the very beginning.

This is why it is important to teach our children proper boy-girl relationships: proper courtship, how to prepare themselves for life, how to choose the right mate. Ninety-nine percent of the young people who get married today choose or select someone with whom they have nothing at all in common in the area of spiritual matters. In fact, spiritual compatibility is way down the list of considerations. Mom and Dad usually want to know how much money the prospective groom earns, what kind of a job he has, if he is able to provide for a family, and if he has a good education. These are the kinds of things most parents consider important. But these things are very unimportant compared to spiritual matters.

When a son or daughter gets married and the home becomes a hell and ends in divorce, many times the response of the parents will be: "We just don't know why it didn't work out. Why did God let this happen to our child? We prayed so hard."

But there is a way to avoid this failure. You can train your children when they are young. You can teach them the importance of a spiritual foundation for marriage. In a courtship, boys and girls ought to build a spiritual relationship first, but usually they start out by building a physical one.

Children are imitators! If you don't have a spiritual relationship with your own companion at home, you can be sure that when your son or daughter gets married, he or she will not have one either.

For any marital relationship to be truly successful, it must be firmly grounded in a strong spiritual relationship. In your own marriage, make every effort to build a spiritual relationship with your companion. Make sure that both of you have made Jesus Number One in your life. Put God's Word first. Pray together. Talk about spiritual things together. Worship together.

I love to see a husband and wife come into church and sit down with each other, worship God together, and pray with one another. Then when problems come up, the wife doesn't have to do all the believing, but they can believe together. That is beautiful. That is how God intended the marriage relationship to function. If you will discipline yourself to build upon that kind of a spiritual bond and foundation every day of your life, then your marriage will withstand the pressures of this life.

The man should be the spiritual leader of the home. After all, it wasn't Joshua's wife who said, . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord (Josh. 24:15). It was Joshua himself. He didn't ask his family if they wanted to serve the Lord; he told them that they would.

Imagine Joshua coming home from work at night: "Thank God, let's have dinner, get the children ready, and go to church."

"But the children have homework."

"Oh, there's homework! Well, they should have done it earlier. We are going to church. They can do their homework afterwards."

Some spineless men let their children run all over them. Their words don't carry any "punch." When they say, "Come on, it's time for devotions," their family doesn't respond. The children straggle in late, sit there and yawn, and pay no attention to what is being said and done. That is not a spiritual time. That is just going through the motions; it is a waste of time.

I know many men who would not even go through the motions of serving God if it were not for their wives who push them. Men ought to be the spiritual leaders of their homes. Marriage and family life must be built upon a strong spiritual relationship. There is no other hope of success.

When I was in my first pastorate, I tried to tell the young people what their priorities should be and how to prepare for life. They would just sit there and look at me. I could almost read their minds. They were saying to themselves, "I wish you would shut up; I already know what I want."

Occasionally I go back to that town and hold a meeting. Some of those young people are now young adults. As I preach the Word of God, tears begin to stream down their cheeks because they can remember when I tried to warn them. Now they have experienced the heartache and the problems for themselves. These

young moms and dads who used to say, "That may be good for you or for somebody else, but we will do it our own way," now sit there and appreciate the Word. They know that what I taught them years ago works, and that their way didn't.

Don't let this happen to you. Don't be stiff-necked and hard-hearted. Don't say, "No, I'm going to do what I want to do." Humble yourself before the Lord. Submit yourself to God and say, "Lord, I know this is the most important thing in marriage, a spiritual relationship." Then covenant with your companion to build that kind of relationship with each other. Encourage one another to fulfill your rightful roles of spiritual leadership in the home.

The second step in building a scriptural relationship is to develop good communication between yourself and your marriage partner. Most men are alike in one respect; when they come home in the evening, they have done all the talking they want to do for the day. They just want to be quiet. But they have a responsibility to the second priority in their life, their companion. They need to come home and communicate.

An interesting survey shows that the average American woman speaks thirty-three thousand words a day, while the average American man speaks only about twenty-nine thousand words a day. The problem is that when the man comes home from work in the evening he has already spoken twenty-five thousand words or more, but his wife has probably only spoken about seven thousand or so. That means that husbands must listen to their wives deliver about twenty-six thousand more words — and that is usually where communication breaks down.

This is important. You have to work at it. You have to keep these priorities in order. Many men think that mere physical attraction will hold their marriage together. It won't work, and it won't solve marital problems. If you do not have a spiritual relationship with your companion, and if you do not communicate, there is a great chance that your marriage will go bad.

So many Christian marriage partners just tolerate each other. They don't get divorced because they know it is wrong. But they don't even like to be together. They work at staying away from home. Often the root problem is a lack of real communication.

In many of the counseling sessions which I conduct between husbands and wives, the problem is that the husband will not listen to his wife. That is also true when it comes to dealing with problems between children and parents. Many times children don't respect or obey their parents because the parents just don't listen to the children. Good listeners are an endangered species. Everybody wants to talk, but only a few are willing to listen. In much of the counseling I do, the people come in to see me, but they really don't want godly counsel; they just want to tell me what they have already decided.

If you are not a good listener, you will have to learn to be one. Husbands must learn to listen to what they may think are petty, insignificant problems compared with the issues which they confront in their daily life. They must learn to take these "woman's problems" seriously. They must learn to help their wives, understand them, and communicate with them.

Many husbands don't even know their own wives, and many wives don't really understand their

husbands. Often the office secretary or the fellow on the job knows the husband better than his own wife does. Why? Because the husband doesn't communicate.

The third step in building a scriptural relationship is to establish a good physical relationship. This is last in importance; however, many people make it the most important aspect of marriage. A physical relationship does not mean just sexual intercourse. The physical relationship is the attention that the husband and wife give each other. Many men don't believe it is manly to show their emotions or feelings, but this is a lie of the devil. Not a day should go by that the husband does not tell his wife that he loves and appreciates her — and the wife should do the same for her husband.

It is so easy to take each other for granted. We need to work at showing our appreciation to our companion. I suggest that once a month every husband take his wife out — not because he is "hen-pecked," but to show his love. He needs to get a babysitter for the children, take his wife out and do something special together.

Love will express itself. There is no way around it. Many men feel that they show their love by being a good provider. That is not enough. I have seen many a husband who tried to buy his wife's love. He gave her things, when all she really wanted was to hear him say, "I love you." A wife doesn't want things as much as she wants her husband to communicate with her, to spend time with her.

Finally, in considering the relationship between husbands and wives, we read in the Bible:

In like manner you married women, be submissive to your own husbands — subordinate yourselves as being secondary to and dependent on them, and adapt

yourselves to them. So that even if any do not obey the Word [of God], they may be won over not by discussion but by the [godly] lives of their wives.

When they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence [for your husband]. That is, you are to feel for him all that reverence includes] — to respect, defer to, revere him; [revere means] to honor, esteem (appreciate, prize), and [in the human sense] adore him; [and adore means] to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love and enjoy [your husband].

Let not yours be the [merely] external adorning with [elaborate] interweaving and knotting of the hair, the wearing of jewelry, or changes of clothes;

But let it be the inward adorning and beauty of the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible and unfading charm of a gentle and peaceful spirit, which [is not anxious or wrought up, but] is very precious in the sight of God.

For it was thus that the pious women of old who hoped in God were (accustomed) to beautify themselves, and were submissive to their husbands — adapting themselves to them as themselves secondary and dependent upon them.

It was thus that Sarah obeyed Abraham (following his guidance and acknowledging his headship over her by) calling him lord — master, leader, authority. And you are now her true daughters if you do right and let nothing terrify you — not giving way to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you.

In the same way you married men should live considerately with [your wives], with an intelligent recognition [of the marriage relation], honoring the woman as [physically] the weaker, but [realizing that you] are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off. — Otherwise you cannot pray effectively.

1 Peter 3:17 AMP

Here we see that if our relationship with our companion is not what it should be, it will hinder our relationship with God. It will open the door for the enemy to come in and plunder our home, our marriage and our whole life — to actually steal, kill and destroy. Life is full of bitterness, heartaches, troubles and trials for those who try to live it their own way. But it is full of joy, peace and happiness for those who will dare to live it God's way.

A good scriptural marriage is one of the greatest gifts you can provide for your children. In fact, you can do more to train and prepare your children at home than can be done in a Christian school or church. More life skills should be learned in the home than in any other place on earth. Why? Because children are imitators.

Now, if you are married, get together with your husband or wife and humble yourselves before God. Submit your shared life to the Word of God. Make Jesus the Lord of your life. Let each of you covenant to put your companion second in your life, right after your relationship with Jesus Christ.

Some men give their jobs a higher priority than their own companion. Some women give more attention to their children than to their own husband. That is a tragic mistake. The proper order of life's priorities must be established and maintained.

The day is coming when you may wish you had placed your life's priorities in the proper order. To do that, you may have to rearrange everything in your life, but start building upon these priorities now so you can receive God's best.

3

Children

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

This verse implies that a child does not know the right way to go. Children do not have the wisdom, the foresight or the knowledge to be able to choose properly what is best for them in life. Who do you think needs to teach them this skill? Is it the preacher's responsibility? Is it the school's responsibility? Many people are relying on the church or the school to train up their children in the way they should go, but that is not their job. It is the responsibility of the parent.

I heard an attorney speak at a meeting in Amarillo, Texas, concerning the law and our children. This man is a dedicated Christian and very qualified to speak on this subject. He said that when he graduated from law school, the law books stated that a child was the ward of his parents. In other words, parents were responsible for raising and training their own child. But, this man went on to say that these books have been re-published and now the law states that the child is the responsibility of the state; it is now the state's responsibility to see to it that the child is properly trained and cared for. That is not scriptural!

I love our American way of life and form of government, but we have allowed a lot of our law-

making to fall into the wrong hands. We have stood by and let bureaucrats make decisions that should be ours alone. I am not going to allow anyone to decide for me what is best for my child. It is our responsibility as Christians to stand on the Word of God, to stand on what we know is right.

There are two areas that our government does not totally control today: the Church and the home. The government has its finger in just about everything else, and if it wants to change something, it has the power to do so. There are certain elements within the government that are trying to gain the same control over the Church and the home. Do you believe this? I believe it is the truth!

The spirits and the powers of darkness in this world are trying to control our society, to force their ways upon us. Conversely, the Holy Spirit will never force us to do anything. He will woo us. He will direct us. He will do His utmost to show us what is best for us. But He always leaves the final decision up to us. However, the powers of darkness want to take our freedom of choice from us. The devil wants us in a position so that he makes our decisions for us. That is why parents today must stand firm and assume the God-given authority that is theirs.

My wife and I operate a Christian school, and we deal with parents and children daily. I know the pathetic condition of some of our homes today. There are a lot of so-called good homes which are total failures when it comes to training up children. In the majority of American homes, the parents do not make the final decisions. So I appreciate it when a parent says to us, "Wait a minute; this is my decision — I should be

teaching my child this, not you." I appreciate that attitude because in our school we do not endeavor to make decisions that should rightfully be made in the home.

In Matthew 5:6 we read: **Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.** Here is where we parents need to really conform our thinking and attitude to the Word of God. If you will do that concerning the training of your children, you will be blessed for it. It doesn't matter what your minister teaches on the subject or what I think about it. Find out for yourself what the Word of God says concerning child training, and then be obedient to that Word.

We need to be in right standing with God concerning not only our spiritual growth, but also the training and upbringing of our children. Many people today have no earthly idea how to raise their children scripturally. They simply go by trial and error. Children brought up that way do not have one chance in a million of turning out spiritually mature. They may go out and get a good job, live in a nice home, have fine clothes, and be able to afford some of the luxuries of life, but they won't be spiritually fit. Unless we train them correctly, our children will not be spiritually successful.

The most important thing in child-rearing is not education. Neither is it proper clothes, food or shelter. These are all important, and God wants us to provide them for our children. But the most important thing that we will do for our children is to develop them spiritually for Jesus Christ.

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

James 1:25

What is "the perfect law of liberty"? The law is the Word of God, and that Word produces liberty. That means that the habits, sins and problems — things such as sickness, disease and poverty — cannot put us into bondage if we keep the perfect law of liberty (the Word) and "continue therein." We will be prosperous, blessed, healthy, and free of all of Satan's bondage. This is true of child-training also. If we will continually look into the Word of God, and let the Word make decisions for us, it will produce good results.

I don't blame anyone for not caring what I think about how he raises his own children. But I think that anyone is foolish who doesn't care what the Word of God says. I believe the Word of God is perfect. I believe it will produce perfect results. I am not perfect, but I endeavor to study the Word of God and to discover certain truths in this area of child-training.

I would like to show you where my priority lies in child-training. If I had to choose between walking in divine health or seeing that my children turn out right, I would choose the welfare of my children over my own physical condition. Thank God I don't have to make that choice. I can walk in divine health and still see that my children turn out right. But the proper raising of children is a high priority in my thinking, and I believe it stands high in God's sight too.

So our highest priority in life is our personal relationship with Jesus. Our second priority in life is our companion. And our third priority in life is, of

course, our children. Our companion and our children constitute the home.

God instituted the home before He established the Church. Home is one of the most sacred institutions in the sight of God. His Word has much to say about this subject. If your home is not right, if it is not in obedience with God's Word, then nothing else is going to be right either.

You may go to church, tithe, speak in tongues, and have all nine gifts of the Spirit operating in your life, but if you do not have love and peace in your home, you are "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. 13:1.) Without love, you are a fake! One of the things which soured people on Christianity in the early days of the Church was hypocrisy. It sours people on the Church today. I know of countless numbers of people who are not serving Jesus because of hypocrites in the Church, people pretending to be something they are not.

What we really are is going to come out at home, not in church. We all have a tendency to put on a religious cloak in church. But when we are at home, the real "us" shows up. The pressures that we encounter every day of our life are going to come through loud and clear. How well the Word is working for us will be revealed at home. If we are under a load of care and anxiety, yet paste on a false smile for prayer meeting service, then we are being hypocritical. And we are not going to be very convincing to our companion or our children.

But if the Word is working in our life, it is going to be working in our home. Those who will see it

working more clearly than anybody else will be our wife, our husband, our children.

I couldn't look my wife and daughters in the face if they knew that I got up behind the pulpit in service after service and presented a different image from what they see at home. My wife and children love and respect me. How did I earn that love and respect? I didn't; the Word gave it to me. Because if you love the Word, it will give you what you really desire. But if you don't love the Word, it won't work for you. You can buy your children bicycles, motorcycles, and cars; you can put money in their bank account; you can give them everything they want materially; but you will never be able to buy their love and respect. But the Word God will give it to you.

If there is one area in the Church which needs attention today it is not tithing, healing, worship, or operation of the gifts of the Spirit; it is the Christian home. Church families need to bring their homes into conformity to the Word of God. That is what counts most.

If we want the Word to work in our life, if we want to enjoy the blessings of Abraham, we must have our children lined up with the Word. The same Word which we instill in our heart, we must instill in our children. More Charismatics fail in this area than in any other. They make a great show of worshipping and praising God in church, but they shirk their God-given responsibility of teaching and training their own children at home. This situation is not what God intended, and it must be changed.

We can see an illustration of God's plan for the family in the account of Abraham, the father of faith. God made a covenant with Abraham, and the basis of Christianity rests upon that covenant today. Because of Jesus Christ, we now enjoy the same blessings that Abraham enjoyed: spiritually, physically and financially.

In Genesis 18:19, God speaks concerning Abraham and the covenant:

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Now one of the conditions that Abraham had to meet before he could enjoy the blessings of the covenant was to teach and command his children and household after him. This was not optional. He did not have a choice. If he failed to do so, he would not fulfill his part of the covenant. Then God would not be able to fulfill His part and provide the promised blessing.

Many people know about faith. They know what the Word of God says about walking in health, about prosperity, about the blessings of God. They are actively walking in the light of that knowledge and are enjoying God's blessings in their life. But they are forgetting their children; they are allowing them to grow up without being taught the Word of God. They are not commanding their children and their household after them. Then when their children get older, they begin to bring misery to the parents.

Children can cause a lot of misery when they are fourteen, fifteen, sixteen years old, while still at home.

I know of five-year-olds who are causing their parents misery. But when those children get to be about eighteen, nineteen, twenty, or twenty-one, they themselves begin to reap the seeds of rebellion they have sown. Maybe they are married and their marriage breaks up. There may be children involved. Maybe two or three marriages go by, and they still have not found the answer to their problems. They may be involved in drugs. They may jump from job to job and move from town to town. They may become miserable people in bondage to sickness and disease. Their children may be sick all the time, or there may always be accidents happening around their home.

If this describes your children's situation, you know that no matter how much Word you may know personally, you cannot be full of joy and happiness while your children are living in such conditions. Your joy cannot be full when your own flesh and blood are miserable and unhappy.

So God is showing us a way that we can raise our children so we won't have to experience all this heartache. If we will take God's Word and act upon it now, we will see results in our children and in their lives now and in the future. If we want happiness for our children and for ourselves in the days ahead, then we must train them up in the way they should go, according to the Word of God. This is the condition for receiving the blessings of Abraham for ourselves and for our children and our household after us.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." This is God's promise that if we will train up our children according to His Word, they will never leave that training, not

even when they get old. Isn't that a blessed promise? But it is conditional. The condition is this: in order to make sure that the child always lives for God, always lives right, we must start raising and training him right from day one.

Now training up a child is a twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week, twelve-months-of-the-year job. It doesn't end until he steps out from under our roof and assumes responsibility for his own life. I am confident that most people wait too long to begin teaching and training their children in the ways of the Lord.

Now Moffat's translation of this verse says that if we train up a child in the way he should go, . . . he will never leave it, even when he is old (Prov. 22:6 Mof).

There are many people who say, "Well, I know that I raised my children right, and the Bible says they will come back to it when they are old."

That is a "cop-out." It is an attempt to cover their own failure as parents. This translation says that the child will never leave, not that he will one day return!

Many people have said, "Well, you wait until those little Johnson kids get older; he will preach a little differently then!"

No, I won't! If my kids don't turn out right, I will quit the ministry. But I am not worried about that, because I know the Word works, and they are going to turn out right!

A Christian brother once came to me and said, "I have seen a lot of children who were raised up right but who didn't turn out very well. Don't ruin your life by blaming yourself for the way your children turn out."

But I can't blame anybody but myself! I can't blame God, my mom, my dad, my kinfolks or the children that my children associate with. I can't blame anybody else. My children are my responsibility. The Bible says that I have a duty to train them in the way they should go. That means that when they go wrong, it is my responsibility to correct them and to get them going right once more. And if they get off again, I must correct them again.

I know that many parents say that if we are too strict with our children, we will turn them against us. If our training is nothing more than handing down a list of don'ts, then we will. But when God tells us not to do something, He always gives us a better choice. When we tell our children not to do something, we should always provide them a better alternative. God doesn't just say, "You'd better quit smoking and drinking, else you'll die." Instead, He says, "If you will quit smoking and drinking, you will be healthier and live longer and happier." He doesn't just say, "If you serve the devil, you will go to hell," but, "If you serve Me, you will go to heaven." Every time God says don't, He gives us a positive alternative. His message is, "Don't let sin and sickness rule your body, but instead keep yourself pure so you can enjoy life, health and happiness." That's exactly the way we should teach our children.

The Word of God says that if we will train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he will not depart from it. For this reason, I am not very enthusiastic about exposing our children to "professional" testimonies. By "professional" I mean those from people who make their living by giving their testimony. Usually those which appeal most to young

people are from reformed dope addicts, alcoholics or rock stars. I give glory to God for saving such people, but they are not the kind of example we want to hold up to our children.

Many young people feel that their own testimony is not effective because they have never had a dramatic experience which they can relate to others. They have never been on drugs, in prison or constantly in trouble with their parents or teachers. Sometimes they think they have to get out and get into mischief before they have anything to testify about. We have exposed our children to too much of this kind of "testimony."

I want to put before our children testimonies from those who have been successful in life. I want to present a young man or woman who says, "I have been raised in a Christian home and have been taught right from wrong since childhood. I have been living for Jesus since the first. I never drink, smoke or engage in sin. I am happy in the Lord, and full of His Word."

This is the example we should show our young people. Then they will know how to live holy and successfully. They need to see that they don't have to go out and live in sin before they can come to love and serve the Lord. They must see that they can live for Jesus all the days of their life and be happier by doing so than by living the world's way.

That doesn't mean that the testimonies of those who have gone out and sinned are not great. These people have come back and are now serving Jesus. That's good. But I want to hold up the example of those who have never stopped serving Jesus.

One area which the Church has neglected over the years has been ministry to children. So I have endeavored to find examples of parents who have been successful in raising their children. I studied their methods so I could copy them.

One man whom I highly respect for his influence on other preachers and Christians in raising their children for the Lord has six daughters. All six of them turned out to be pure, clean, virtuous women. Not one of them ever went out and lived in sin, not even for a season. This man preached Proverbs 22:6 all across the nation. He would have failed God and other people if he had compromised. He knew that he couldn't preach proper child-training in the Lord, and then make a mistake with his own children. So he endeavored to train up his children in the way they should go.

I know about five or six other ministers across this country who serve as pastors of churches with two to twenty thousand in attendance. This man greatly influenced their lives, and, as a result, they preach the same message on child-training. It just so happened that their children turned out right also. Coincidence? No, it is never a coincidence how children turn out. Remember, we reap what we sow! If we sow hours of proper instruction, correction and training into our children, we will reap good results. But if we shirk our responsibility by substituting material things for time and love, we will meet with bitter disappointment. Our children want us — not our money or our possessions. They want *us!*

Some people don't believe that. Many of them are the same people whose children are not following the

Lord. They will often end up calling for intercession meetings to pray their children out of sin and into serving Jesus. I am not against praying for anyone's salvation or repentance. Yes, we should intercede for those children who have gone astray. But there is a better way. We can train up our children so they never go that route.

I am sincere when I say that we have an awesome responsibility in raising our children. There are many people who disagree with us. But the Word is on our side. And if God be for us, who can be against us? It is not an easy task. It takes intensive training — morning, noon and night, day in and day out. Children are not going to turn out right just because their father is a preacher and they go to a Christian school.

Don't ever think for a moment that sending your child to a Christian school can serve as a substitute for home training. I can show you numerous people who went to Christian schools and who have ten-year perfect attendance pins for never missing Sunday school. But they are not serving God today. Do you know why? Because their parents thought church and Sunday school would train them. Institutional training is part of the answer, but not the most important part. It takes diligent, intensive training at home.

One of the finest compliments that a Christian can be paid is to have it said of him that he has good children — children who are living for Jesus. What a wonderful testimony for any Christian, because children are imitators.

God is going to do His part. Church and school must do their part. But the parents — and the children

— must also do their part. If we all work together, I can guarantee you that our children will turn out right!

I don't think it is necessary to point out at length the rebellion that many of our young people display in our nation today. Those who are going bad are not just the ones who live in the ghettos of our large cities. Many of them are the children of prominent families, children who have been raised in supposedly Christian homes. This age is coming to a close, and our precious children are the only eternal possessions we have. They are the targets of the most subtle attacks ever devised against mankind by the forces of darkness.

But God's Word always prepares us for the future, and this time is foretold in 2 Timothy 3:1-5:

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.

In this passage we can see one of the major reasons why many of our children are not being raised properly today. Most parents are lovers of their own selves. They devote more attention to their own interests and desires than they do to their children. As a result, their children are turning out badly, and are disobedient to them and to the Church and society.

Many parents have been very religious and can't understand the problems they see in their children. They go to church and are active in it. But they are also active for the devil. That is deception; that kind of religion will destroy. Yet it is all that many people have. They don't have Jesus; He is not the Lord of their life. They are just religious folk, "...having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." From this God tells us to turn away.

As a result of this situation, our children are the ones who are suffering. This fact is very evident from the mass media. In an article entitled "Blackboard Jungle Updated" which appeared in *TWA Ambassador*, in September 1978, Connie Cronley noted that if people thought the 1954 movie "Blackboard Jungle" was frightening, they should see the real-life version now playing in our local schools.

"Last year, American school children committed 100 murders, 12,000 armed robberies, 9,000 rapes, and 204,000 aggravated assaults against teachers and each other," the article reports. All this took place on school campuses. Some educational authorities say that only ten to forty percent of all school violence is actually reported. So the figures could be astronomical, if every case were reported.

It is time that we face reality. We must see things as they really are today. We must quit kidding ourselves and saying, "Everything is going to turn out fine; this is just a stage our children are going through."

Now I realize that not every school is as bad as those referred to in this article. But these kinds of children are influencing our children. It is these types that our

children are patterning themselves after. There is a definite negative influence at work here.

First Corinthians 15:33 (AMP) says, **Do not be so deceived and misled! Evil companionships, (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character.** Do you believe that verse, or do you believe that Paul was just joking when he wrote it?

We cannot put Christian boys and girls in school with hundreds and thousands of other children who are not born again and expect that our precious children will be able to influence the others around them. I know that the Bible says that we are the salt of the earth, but our young people are not mature enough in the Lord, not knowledgeable enough in the Word of God, to be turned loose in a world that is so sin-sick. We adults can't even change the people we work with, so how can we expect our young people to change some of the ungodly sorts they must associate with every day?

That is why we parents have to take responsibility. We must bring our homes into conformity with the Word of God. We must make Jesus the Lord of our life. We have to make sure that we are leading our children in the right way. Many parents don't like this kind of message because it places the responsibility squarely on them. They would like to just "turn their children over to the Lord and let Him raise them." But that is not scriptural. The Lord will not and cannot raise our children for us. Proverbs 22:6 tells us that God has given the responsibility of child-rearing to us, and it remains our responsibility no matter how much we would like to give it back.

So you need to raise *your* children. You need to get your life in order and to live it for God in an up-to-date fellowship and relationship with Him. Then you and your companion need to build a scriptural relationship with each other, and in turn begin to develop a scriptural relationship with your children. Then you will be on the right road, the road to success.

This is the kind of relationship Abraham had with Isaac, as we see in Genesis 22. A footnote in *The Amplified Bible* states that, according to Josephus, in this story Isaac is about twenty-five years old and Abraham about a hundred and twenty-five. Together they journey to Mount Moriah to make a sacrifice to God. They take everything necessary for the sacrifice except the animal. They leave the servants at the foot of the mountain and climb to the top.

Now Isaac is not stupid. He realizes that he is going to be the sacrifice. To follow through on the plan took faith on Abraham's part, but it took just as much faith on the part of Isaac. Nowhere do we read that Isaac said to his father: "Dad, you've gone crazy. Religion has destroyed your mind. I have been obedient to you for twenty-five years, and yet you are planning to kill me. I am not going to put up with this any longer." Did Isaac say that? No! He lay down across the altar and allowed Abraham to draw the knife that would take his life. Why did he do that? Because he was obedient.

There is only one way that Isaac could have come to that place of obedience. He had a personal relationship with God the Father. The reason he had that relationship was because Abraham had developed a spiritual relationship with his son and had instructed him in the ways of the Lord. Now, at twenty-five years

of age, Isaac is just as strong in faith as Abraham. Isn't that great? If Abraham said that God willed him to be sacrificed, then Isaac is willing to submit.

I know boys sixteen and seventeen years old who won't even obey their fathers and go to church. Their fathers tell them to go out and mow the lawn, and they won't do it. You ask, "What does that have to do with being spiritual?" It's a matter of obedience. If you are spiritual, you are going to be obedient.

The more knowledge of the Word of God you instill in your child, the better relationship you can develop between that child and his heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That means that your child will be much more obedient, much easier to raise and train, much smarter in his studies, and a much harder worker.

We must develop a spiritual relationship with our children. We must teach them the Word of God:

And you shall love the Lord your God with all [your mind and] heart, and with your entire beings, and with all your might.

And these words, which I am commanding you this day, shall be [first] in your own mind and heart; [then] you shall whet and sharpen them, so as to make them penetrate, and teach and impress them diligently upon the [minds and] hearts of your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 AMP

We have to saturate our children with the Word of God. You may think that is too much religion, that it will turn our children against us and God. It may, if they have lived the way of the world for fourteen or

fifteen years. But if we raise them up this way from day one, then that is all they will ever know.

Now if you take a teenager who has had a steady diet of hard rock music and start mixing in the Word, you will have an explosion. It won't work. If you ever expect to help your youngster, you need to control the radio and television programs, the records and tapes he listens to. Don't let him feed his mind and spirit on garbage.

Many parents see nothing wrong with hard rock music. But the Bible says that one of the sins of the flesh is "revellings" (Gal. 5:21), which is obscene music. Parents need to realize that some people who sing and play in these groups stand against everything taught by the Word of God. I wouldn't want my children even snapping their fingers to the beat of that music, much less singing the words of it out of their mouths. Thank God for Christian groups, Christian singers and musicians. God is raising up Christian entertainment across the country so our young people don't have to listen to ungodly filth.

Now there shouldn't be any rebellion in our homes over this issue. Just set your children down and say: "I have been wrong in the past by allowing you to listen to this kind of music. I am not going to tolerate it any longer. This is the way it is going to be from now on. We are going to keep the way of the Lord. We are going to do what's right." Then from that day forth carry out what you have declared.

But don't just take the wrong music away from them; replace it with godly music. Get the Word of God and show them that music has a great part in worship to God. It also has a great part in worship to Satan;

hard rock is Satan's music. There is a lot of good Christian music that our children can listen to. God never takes away anything without replacing it with something better; teach your children this principle.

It is never too late to do right, and it is never right to do wrong. If you have been raising your children wrong for eighteen years, and if they are still living in your home, you owe it to God and those children to go to them and say: "I repent for the way I have treated you up to this point, but I now know what the Word of God says about child-training. I am going to lay down the law. We are going to begin to abide by what the Word says." Then lay it down and be consistent in it.

I don't think it is ever too late to do right. When parents have been saved later in life, and they have teenagers who are not living for the Lord, it does present a difficult situation. However, I do not believe it is a hopeless situation. Neither do I think it is too late to reach their teenagers. In such a case, the parents should call a family meeting and carefully explain to their children that before they were saved they didn't know how to raise them, but now that they are saved, they are going to have a Christian home.

To have a Christian home means that you start operating as a family unit. You eat together, talk openly and freely about any and everything that concerns your children, pray together at a family altar, have devotions together, go to church and worship together, play and do things together. Explain to your children that you are making up for lost time. Explain the principle of 1 Corinthians 15:33 (AMP): . . . **Evil companionships, (communion, associations) corrupt and deprave good manners and morals and character.** Therefore, you will

have to approve of the people they associate with. That means you will have to take the time to check out their friends. Go meet their parents and find out something about their home and family life. Don't turn your children loose with just anybody.

Parent, you are responsible for the training of your child. You can't train what you can't control. (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4.) I know this is a hard saying, but nevertheless it is true. Your child's future depends upon how well you train him.

I have raised teenagers, and they will tell you that I am not a hypocrite when I say these things. I would say, "This is the way we are going to live, and you don't have a choice. The decision has already been made." Now that didn't mean they didn't have any choices in life, but concerning certain principles of God's Word they had no choice. This strong stand contributed to their success and helped make them men and women of character. All of them are actively serving the Lord today.

So the first step in raising your children scripturally is to develop a spiritual relationship with them. It takes a lot of work. It demands more effort than many of us want to put out, but it is our responsibility. We were the ones who brought our children into this life. God didn't bring them into this world; we did. God gives us the power and ability to reproduce ourselves. Reproduction is our decision, and with that decision goes the responsibility of raising the children we produce. That takes time, but we need to assume our responsibility. We need to begin to develop that spiritual relationship with our children.

I would like to define that word *develop* for you. One meaning of it is *explain*. You need to explain the Word

of God and the things of God to your children. You need to sit down with them and let them know how you think spiritually. I sit down with my children and say: "Do you know why your dad is a success? Because I trust God in this area." You see, they will want to give Dad all the glory, and I don't want them to do that. I want them to give God the glory. I want my children to know that the reason I am a success in life is because I do things God's way, and God makes me successful. When they see that Jesus is the means of success, our children will be drawn to Him. They will want to please God and do what He wants them to do.

Develop also means *open up*. You need to open your children's understanding concerning the things of God. As parents, my wife and I do our best to show our children how we trust God: how we believe Him for finances, for walking in divine health, for success in every area of our lives. Now some parents may think this is too difficult for their children to grasp. No, it's not. It is so simple that even a small child can understand it. Children need correct training, and that is where parents come in. We need to open up to them the things of God.

Develop also means *cause to become visible*. We need to make the things of God visible to our children. With my children I sit down and say: "Do you remember when all those good things happened? Well, there was a period of time when it seemed as if we were not going to experience those blessings. It looked as if bad things were going to happen. But we stood on the Word of God. Mommy and Daddy believed God and we agreed together. And do you know what? God brought those good things to pass. He manifested His Word in our

lives." That kind of discussion causes those spiritual values, those spiritual truths, to become visible to children.

Develop also means *make active*. So many people sit in church services every Sunday morning without ever allowing the Word of God to become active in their lives. They don't use the Word of God. Instead they rely on carnal methods to get by in life. They think in carnal terms of how they are going to reach their goals and fulfill their desires. These carnal methods are transmitted to the children.

If you want the Word of God to be active in the lives of your children, then you are going to have to activate it in your own life. Then you must teach it to your children. I want the Word of God to be a living thing in my children's lives.

If you and I are going to have a successful life, we must do what God told Joshua:

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Joshua 1:8

"You will make *your way* prosperous by acting upon the Word of God. Keeping the Word active in your life will cause you to be a success." We need to teach this principle to our children. We need to be honest and say: "Children, the reason we have not been successful up to this point is because the Word of God has not been active in our lives." Then we need to apologize to them, repent of our failure, and say: "But, bless God, from this point on we know the truth, and the truth

is going to make us free. We are going to make the Word active in our lives. We are going to be a success and not a failure the rest of our lives."

This kind of approach to God's Word will cause our children to respect God. It will cause them to love Him. It will cause them to see Him as a loving heavenly Father Who wants good things for them. They will understand that "bad" is not of God, that the bad things which happen in life come as a result of not obeying the Word of God. They will know that if they will make the Word active in their lives, it will cause them to be successful.

You need to start every day by having devotions with your children. Then, in the evening, you need to have devotions again. The father should be the leader in devotion time. He should give the scripture reading, do the teaching and make the practical application of God's Word. He is the leader; not the children, not the mother, but the father. That is scriptural. Of course, there will be some occasions when the father cannot be present, in which case the mother has to lead devotions.

This devotion time helps you to develop a spiritual relationship with your children. They will begin to look at you and say: "My father is spiritual. My dad is a Christian man." They will begin to honor and respect you because of your stand on God's Word and because of your convictions based on that Word. There is nothing that will cause your children to respect you more than your standing on what the Bible teaches.

Not only must parents feed their children's minds with the Word of God, they must also guard their minds against that which is not of God. In the name

of education, many parents have abdicated their responsibility in this respect. They have allowed their children to read and digest ungodly materials because they were assigned reading in school. The teachers have been led to believe that this material is good literature. That's how children are captured by someone else's philosophy.

See to it that no one carries you off as spoil or makes you yourselves captive by his so-called philosophy and intellectualism, and vain deceit (idle fancies and plain nonsense), following of human tradition — men's ideas of the material (rather than the spiritual) world — just crude notions following the rudimentary and elemental teachings of the universe, and disregarding (the teachings of) Christ, the Messiah.

Colossians 2:8 AMP

We parents cannot just sit back and let our children's minds be perverted in the name of education and intellectualism. Parent, don't forget that it is your responsibility to educate your child, and not the government's. Therefore you should make the decision of what kind of literature your child reads, and not leave the choice to some educator.

I have a good friend who was faced with a similar situation. His son was assigned to read a book that was filled with obscenities. So he went to the school and met with the principal to inform him that his son would not read this book. After much discussion, the principal could see that the father wasn't going to back down, so he called the English teacher into the office to help persuade the concerned father that this book was good literature. So the English teacher came into the office and began to reassure the concerned father that this was good modern literature and there wasn't any need

for him to be alarmed. But the father held firm to his convictions that his son would not read such filth. So in a last-ditch effort to convince the father that he shouldn't object to his son reading the book, the teacher said, "Why Mr. Hyles, your son reads worse language than this every day on the bathroom walls." Mr. Hyles retorted, "Yes, but when the bathroom walls become required reading, I'll be back here again. My son is not going to read this book." Thank God for parents who want to do right and who will fight to protect their children from being influenced by evil.

Your children are watching you. There are times when they will look at you and think: "I wonder how Dad and Mom are going to react to this situation." If they know the Word of God, they will watch to see if you react in line with it. If you do, it will cause them to respect you. You won't have to beat your chest every morning and say, "I demand that everyone respect me." You can just say: "Children, this is the way it is going to be, because God's Word says so. We are all going to live according to God's Word."

Would you like to know how your children will react to God's commands? Would you like to know how they would respond if God Himself told them to do something? In Ephesians 6:1 (AMP) the Apostle Paul writes: **Children, obey your parents in the Lord [as His representatives], for this is just and right.** Parents are God's representatives to children, so children will react the same way toward God as they react to their parents. If your children break your word, they will do the same to God. Many of us don't like to think so, but it is true.

The best insurance policy you can take out on your children is to raise them in accordance with God's Word

and see that they obey you. Ephesians 6:2,3 (AMP) tells us:

Honor (esteem and value as precious) your father and your mother; this is the first commandment with a promise:

That all may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth.

If your children honor and obey you, you have done a good job. You can be assured that all will be well with them, and that they will live long on the earth.

The second step in developing a scriptural relationship with children is to establish a good line of communication with them:

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4

The word translated *nurture* is a very powerful one in Greek. It means *correction, training and education*, as well as *discipline*. The area of communication involves correction. It involves training. It involves education.

You need to listen to your children. I really work at giving an audience to my children. When they come to tell me something, I listen to what they have to say. However, they must learn to come at the proper time. They have been taught not to interrupt me when I am talking to another adult.

Listening to your children is so important, because if you don't pay attention to them and take what they say seriously when they are small, they pick up on it. Eventually they will say, "Well, Mom (or Dad) is not listening and doesn't care." Then when you really want them to come and talk to you, they won't.

One of the things that we really strive to establish in our school is a good, open line of communication with our boys and girls. We do not want them to think that they will get into trouble if they come and talk to us. We try to teach them that when they do wrong, if they will come and tell us, we will help them solve their problem.

Talking to the proper authority about a problem is not what gets a child in trouble. Children get into trouble when they do wrong; coming to the proper authority for correction is helping them to get out of trouble. This principle must be stated because it's a major deception of the enemy.

You need to teach this principle to your children. They need to feel free to come to you with any question or problem they may have. Train and educate them. Don't just take for granted that they know what you expect of them. Sit down and share with them. Be fair with them, too. Don't expect more out of them than they have the ability to produce.

When your children do something wrong, you should correct the wrong. You should sit down with them and explain why what they did was improper behavior. Don't just start berating or beating them. Talk to them about the situation and show them from the Word of God why their act was wrong. Warn them that if they continue to do wrong, it will hurt them. This is communicating with your children.

The third step in developing a scriptural relationship with children is establishing a good physical relationship. We need to show our children love and affection. Love will express itself. Many men think it is not manly to show love, to say "I love you," to

embrace or to kiss. That is wrong! If you have love in your heart, you are going to express it.

If you were raised in a home which did not show love and affection, then you may have to work at it. It is going to take some extra work and discipline on your part to begin to show how you feel about family members. Wives whose husbands are not saved and are not living for the Lord need to work double time in this area.

Children need to know that they are loved. You can show your love in many ways. You need to talk to them, and this is why it is important to have communication with them. If you communicate well, you can explain things to your children, things that may just be taken for granted. You can say, "Honey, I do this because I love you."

To establish a good physical relationship, you have to do things together. But be careful not to go overboard in this area. You can get into a situation in which you think you have to do something every afternoon, four or five times a week. I don't think that is necessary, nor do I think it is proper. I think children should be trained and taught that during the work week we do work at home. But there ought to be one evening or afternoon set aside each week when the family can have time to do things together.

Now you should not spend time with your children just to be doing it. Your attitude should never be, "I am going to do this with you, but I would rather be doing something else." If that is your attitude, forget it. Your child will sense your feelings and resent them. But do develop activities as a family and get involved in them together. Be just as excited about them as the

children are. Children know whether you are truly enjoying yourself or just acting out of a sense of duty.

You need to give yourself to your children. When you do something with them, get involved and have a good time. Make sure that you give them your full attention. Plan one afternoon or evening a week when you can give yourself totally to your family. That is what they want. They don't really want things, they want you. They want your love, your affection, your time.

One very important area that is included in the physical relationship is discipline. As we have seen, the word translated *nurture* in Ephesians 6:4 means *discipline*. Discipline is not something we do to our children; discipline is something we do for our children.

The Bible talks about positive, not negative, controls. If our children do what they are told to do, we reward them. If they don't do what they are supposed to do, we discipline and correct them. Both of these responses are positive and both are scriptural.

This principle is found in 2 Timothy 3:16: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. In God's program we are rewarded for doing right, and disciplined for doing wrong. This is the law of sowing and reaping. When you discipline your own children, you are teaching them this biblical principle.

Are you going to help a child by just letting him slide by? No! That only helps to build this lie: "If I do wrong, it is not going to hurt me." Will it hurt him to do wrong when he gets older? It certainly will. It will

hurt him when he is young too, but he is not able yet to see delayed consequences.

When my children disobey, I explain to them that when they are disobedient they open the door for the enemy to put sickness upon them. I want them to know that if they do right, they get rewarded, but if they do wrong, they hurt themselves. Then doing right becomes fun.

Wouldn't you rather obey the Word of God than violate it? Anybody in his right mind would. Because if the Word is obeyed, it brings blessing. Anyone is foolish to violate the scriptures because he only hurts himself. You need to teach this principle to your children. That is what you are doing when you administer scriptural discipline to them.

As I was growing up, I was taught that, in the light of God's Word, certain things were wrong, especially drinking. I held out against it for a long time, but as a teenager I fell in with the wrong crowd — a drinking crowd. The Bible says that bad communication will corrupt good character, and I had some good character in that area. I hated and detested drinking, but I hung around that crowd long enough that tolerance led to acceptance. I began to drink. Now I had been taught that it was wrong, but when I took that first drink, lightning didn't strike me. I did wrong for a long, long period of time and nothing bad happened that I could visibly see. Yet as I progressed in that habit, bad things did begin to happen. However, I did not relate them to my drinking.

That is the way children are. They do not relate the negative results to their disobedience and rebellion. That is why you need to instantly discipline your child

when he misbehaves. You are doing him a favor because you are teaching him that when he disobeys he had better repent and receive forgiveness immediately so something bad won't happen to him. That is sound teaching, and it is the reason why it is so important for us to discipline our children.

Spanking a child is not getting him into trouble. Spanking is showing him that he has to bring his flesh, his senses, under control. We must show our children that there are consequences to wrongdoing. Their wrongdoing hurts them worse than it does anybody else. It hurts their parents and it hurts God, but it hurts them worse. So the whole idea of spanking is to show that wrongdoing hurts.

Proper discipline is very, very important. However, most parents haven't had enough teaching to know how to administer proper, scriptural discipline. Because they do not know scripturally how to discipline their children, they spank them but they do not talk with them and counsel them enough.

Does the devil fight you when you discipline your child? He fights me. He says: "You are mean. You should feel bad about what you did. Oh, dear me, that is child abuse."

I like what one mother did after her child had received a spanking. He was feeling sorry for himself. She took him home and showed him Proverbs 20:30: **The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil....**

Proverbs is the book of wisdom, and it has a lot to say about child-training, about children listening to their parents. But do you know that your children are not automatically going to listen to you? You are going

to have to administer scriptural discipline before your children will really listen to you.

Let's look at what the Bible says about administering scriptural discipline:

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Proverbs 22:15

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Proverbs 19:18

When you punish your child, don't let up just because he begins to cry. If the punishment for a certain violation is three licks, then give all three. If after two licks the child is "doing the Watusi," don't feel sorry for him and quit. When I was a child, I used to cry harder before I got a spanking than afterwards. I thought the more I cried and agonized, the quicker my dad would quit. It was unpleasant for both of us.

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 13:24

This statement certainly contradicts what society tells us today, doesn't it? I hear people say all the time, "Oh, I love my darling child too much to ever use corporal punishment." Rubbish!

Now in the original Hebrew the word translated *betimes* in Proverbs 13:24 means *early*. Discipline your child early; don't wait until he is sixteen years old to begin. Little children throw temper tantrums and need to be disciplined. They don't need to be beaten with a board, but they do need to be disciplined. Why? Because "foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it from him."

Foolishness is bound in any child, including yours. You need to help him control his senses. I believe that if a child has a good temperament when he is four or five years old, it shows that he was raised properly when he was younger.

Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

Proverbs 23:13,14

Here the scriptures tell us that spanking our children will not kill them, but it will save them from eternal death. These scriptures, along with Ephesians 6:1-4, show us that we are to discipline our children.

Discipline means *penalize*. The severity of the penalty should be in proportion to the importance of the rule that has been violated. It should be fair, and it should be explained very clearly to the child.

Do you know what? Your child will love you for disciplining him. Instead of saying, "I hate you; I'm going to get back at you," he will admit that the incident was his own fault. He will have a repentant heart and a spirit which is turned toward God.

There is an order or ritual that you should follow when you administer discipline to your child. We are going to go through this ritual one step at a time.

Step One: You should explain the rules. I am always making new rules. As my children get older, they find new ways to do wrong, so I have to keep making new rules. Is that wrong? No, it is not wrong. It is right. It means that I am on my toes, that I am doing what I should be doing. It is apparent that I am training my

children. So, make the rules and explain them and their penalties to your child.

When a rule is broken, evaluate the child's attitude. Determine as best you can the motives for his actions. I have seen some champion liars in little children. Place any child in the right situation and he will lie to get out of it. Most children have not matured enough to control their senses which are crying, "Help, I don't want the paddle!" They don't want to assume responsibility for their own actions. They are not mature enough to put down those senses and tell the truth. A cornerstone of maturity is assuming responsibility for one's own actions.

Your little darling will lie as much as anybody else's. I have known children who would look me straight in the eye, shed big crocodile tears, and say, "I swear on the Bible that I didn't do that." But through God's wisdom, I went ahead and disciplined them anyway. After the discipline was over, they would say, "Yes, I did it; I just want to confess that since I have already been paddled." So, in deciding how harsh to make a punishment, take into account both the seriousness of the infraction and the child's reasons for breaking the rule.

Whenever your child requires discipline, talk sternly and deliberately without a display of temper, and let him know exactly what he did wrong. Do this in private. If you administer discipline in the wrong way, it will come across to the child as a "put down." You are not trying to suppress your child. You want to correct and discipline him, to nurture him.

Step two: Require that your child state to you exactly what he did wrong so it is made very clear. As a child,

I was disciplined many times without even knowing what rule I had broken. I did wrong so often that I didn't always know which one I was being punished for.

When I administer discipline to my children, I first say, "Do you know why we are going through this ritual?" If they don't, I explain it to them. Then I say, "All right, now you explain to me why we are doing this." Then I ask, "Did you know what the rule was on this subject?" If they do, I ask, "What is the punishment for breaking this rule?" If they do not know these things, I explain them to them.

Step three: Explain to your child that as God's representative, you are obeying God in administering punishment. Let the child know that God punishes wrongdoing. The punishment of God is a result of the law of sowing and reaping: **Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap** (Gal. 6:7). God will chasten us — "whip us" — with His Word. So as God's representative, you are obeying God by administering punishment.

Step four: Read Ephesians 6:1-4 to your child:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)

That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Have your child read this passage back to you. Explain it to him and point out the benefits of obedience:

1. It will cause him to have wisdom.
2. It will cause him to be happy.
3. It will cause him to be healthy.
4. It will give him a long life on earth.
5. It will cause him to be successful.
6. It will cause him to be a good Christian.
7. It will make his parents happy.

Then explain that you are disciplining him because you want the best for him, because you love him.

Step five: Read Proverbs 13:24 to your child: **He that spareth his rod hateth his son...** Then you need to bend the child over and apply the board firmly.

There is a proper way to spank which needs to be learned. The spanking needs to be applied in the area where God intended it to be applied — right on the padded little bottom. That way nothing gets hurt. Have your child place his hands firmly on the seat of a chair. This will put him in a bending position. He must keep his hands on the chair to prevent him from trying to cover his seat with his hands. I have heard of children who have received broken fingers because they put their hands on their bottom as their parents were swinging the paddle.

You should place your free hand on the child so that your thumb covers his tailbone. This protects the tailbone from injury. It also allows you to adjust the swing if any motion is felt. You should not allow the child to jump around. Never try to hit a moving target! Use the proper paddle. I don't believe in using a two-by-four to spank with. I think the smaller the child, the smaller the paddle should be.

Don't allow your child to scream and holler and "carry on." Just say, "If you scream and holler and 'carry on' when I swing, then that lick doesn't count." He will soon catch on. Let him squirm after you are finished with the spanking, but while it is going on he must be still and take his punishment. Don't let his crying and begging lessen the severity of the punishment. Spanking is supposed to hurt! One swat to five swats is sufficient. You should never give more than five swats.

Step six: Always have prayer at the end of the punishment. Have your child ask forgiveness from you and from his heavenly Father. Lead him in prayer, if he doesn't know how to pray. Then you should pray. This is a time when your child is very sensitive to the Lord. It is a time when the Holy Spirit can do a tremendous work in his tender young life.

Never gripe or fuss at your child. If he has broken a rule, discipline and correct him. If he has not broken a rule (if he has done something you do not have a rule against), sit down and make a rule. Explain it to him, making it clear that from now on you will not allow this new rule to be broken. Tell him what the punishment for disobedience will be, and from that moment on enforce the new rule.

You and your spouse should agree together on the discipline of your children. Mother, you should never keep things from your husband. Father, don't keep things from your wife. If a child ever tries to play one of you against the other, he needs to be disciplined for it; he is trying to get his own way by trickery. You should have a rule against that kind of behavior. Even

though he knows it is against the rule, many times the child will try to do it anyway.

My children used to be professionals at playing one parent against the other, but now my wife and I are nipping it in the bud. Sometimes one of our children will come to me and ask for permission to do something which I haven't had time to carefully consider, so I will say, "Go ask your mother." If the child goes to my wife and says, "Daddy said it was all right for me to do this," that's a lie. And in our home we have a rule against that kind of dishonesty.

Remember, if you don't discipline your children, when the Word of God tells them not to do something because it is wrong, they will go ahead and do it anyway. They will turn their backs on the Word.

There are times when all of us get so tired of disciplining that we would like to throw the paddle right up to the ceiling and run out of the house. Some parents do just that. But we have to control ourselves and keep on fulfilling our responsibility as parents. We must continue to line up our lives with the Word of God. We must continue to do what the Word of God tells us to do, knowing that our obedience will bring God's blessings upon us.

There are "pay days" — a lot of pay days. There will be times when your children will come and share with you how the Word of God has blessed their lives. This is your reward, and it is worth every minute that you invest in discipline. If you will be consistent in training your children in the way they should go, one day they will "rise up and call you blessed."

Local Church

Our fourth priority in life is the local church. We know that God instituted the home before He established the Church. The home is the institution of utmost importance, but the Church is also vital to the believer, as we see in Matthew 16:13-17:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Now Peter had doubtless heard Jesus make the statement, "I am the Christ," many times, because he had followed Jesus very closely for a long while. In fact, the religious Pharisees wanted to stone Jesus for claiming to be the Son of God.

I know Jesus must have been quick to declare, "I am the Christ, the Son of God," because it would be like our saying, "I am a Christian; a new creation in Christ Jesus." We make that confession all the time.

But Jesus said something here in this passage that teaches us a lesson. He says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." In other words, just because Peter had heard Jesus say that He was the Son of God did not mean that Peter knew that truth. He only knew it because the Spirit of God had revealed it to him.

The application that I would like to make here concerning the Church is that a person may hear the Word of God proclaimed many times, but if he doesn't allow the Spirit of God to reveal the written Word to his spirit, it will not profit him. He can rejoice over the Word, get excited about it and even be thrilled with it. He can even give mental assent to it by saying, "I believe that!" But if he doesn't allow the Spirit of God to make that Word real to his heart, he makes Satan's work very easy. The devil will come and steal the seed (the Word) that is sown in his heart — that is his mission.

That is the reason why every time I go to church I declare: "Holy Spirit, I am open to You to reveal the Father's Word to me in this service. I am ready to receive something fresh, something wonderful." That is being teachable. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher. If you and I will be open and receptive to the Word of God, He will bless us. The Word will profit us.

I can remember when I began the "Full-Gospel walk," before I was filled with the Spirit. I was saved and believed in witnessing and leading people to Jesus. But there were a lot of truths in God's Word that I did not know or understand. I read several books (including the Bible) on the subject of divine healing, and went to seminars where this topic was discussed night after

night. But one day I allowed the Spirit of God to reveal to me personally the Word concerning divine healing. When the Spirit made that Word real to my spirit, the light was switched on and began to shine into the midst of my inner darkness.

That is what the Word of God will do for you. When it is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit, you will be able to see it as clearly as anyone else. You won't have to say, "Well, I believe it because Brother So and So preaches it." Instead, you will be able to say, "I believe it because the Spirit of God has revealed it to me." Then it becomes *your* Word of truth.

In Matthew 16:18,19 Jesus went on to say:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church!
We see a lot of churches today that are weak and anemic, but I want you to know that the Church of Jesus Christ is alive and well. It is built on Jesus, the Rock. There are just as many miracles, signs and wonders today as there ever were, and we can expect to see even more.

Jesus has given to you and me, as members of His Church, the keys of the Kingdom of heaven: not to the Kingdom, but *of* the Kingdom. When someone gives you the key to a large hotel, that key will get you into the lobby or main hall. Even though there may be a thousand rooms in that hotel, you can't get into any

of them. But if you have the keys of the hotel, you can get to every room in it. It is all yours. It belongs to you. You see, we have been born into the Kingdom of God, and we have been given the keys of the Kingdom. Isn't that great?

Now the word translated *church* in Matthew 16:18 has a two-fold application. First of all, we know that the Church is a spiritual body of believers made up of all born-again believers. We are not talking about an edifice of wood or brick or stone. My church building could burn to the ground, but my church would still be alive and well.

We see this truth very clearly in Ephesians 1:18-23 in which Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his (God's) 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,

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

We are the spiritual Body of Christ, the spiritual Church of which Jesus is the Head. To be a member of this Body you don't have to be a Baptist, Methodist,

Catholic or Pentecostal. All you have to do is to be born again. You have to believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, and confess with your mouth Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. (Rom. 10:9.) Then you are immediately brought into the Church. You become a member of the Body of Christ.

The second application of the word *church* in Matthew 16:18 is the local church. It comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means *assembly* — in this case, a gathering of a body of believers. When we talk about the church, in this sense, we are talking about the local assembly, the local church.

In Hebrews 10:25, Paul, who I believe is the author of this epistle, gives us some information about the local church: **Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.** Although Paul does not use the word *ekklesia*, he is talking about that assembled body of believers which we call the local church.

Even in Paul's day there were already groups of people who were neglecting the assembling of themselves together. As believers, it is important for us to go where the Word of God is being taught. Church services are designed for the faithful. The reason God has called pastors and set them in local churches is to feed and guard their flocks. When we assemble ourselves together, we are actually fulfilling scripture. We are obeying the command of the Lord by "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together."

In Paul's day it was bad to miss church on a regular basis, but it is even worse now. Paul said that assembling ourselves together is so much more

important as we "see the day approaching." What day is he referring to? The day of the coming of the Lord!

I know the world lives as though there were plenty of time, as though they were never going to die, as though this earth will keep on spinning and somehow, some day, everything is going to turn out fine. But that is not what the Word of God says. The signs of the end times which are pointed out in the Word are in evidence everywhere we look. To read the newspaper today is to read Bible prophecy being fulfilled right before our eyes. But many people are spiritually anemic and dull. They see these things taking place, but they do not understand their significance. They do not read the signs as the fulfillment of prophecy. They do not say to themselves, "The end is near."

However, Christians who stay in the Word of God, who maintain a personal relationship with Jesus, are well aware that this age is coming to a close. This is serious business! It is a matter of life and death. Remember, Paul said, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

There are scores of well-meaning Christians who live in continued violation of this New Testament principle. Paul wasn't talking about becoming legalistic with our church attendance. I know some ministers who literally condemn their flock if any of them misses a single service. Now notice that Paul used the word "forsaking" in reference to church attendance. A person who "forsakes" his assembling with the saints is a person who has lost heart in the things of God. It's a person who habitually misses church. A person who

forsakes the assembling together with the saints hasn't learned the importance of finding his place in the Body of Christ.

Paul knew what very few people seem to know today — the importance of faithful church attendance. The Church will survive without you and me, but we can't survive without the Church. Multitudes of well-meaning, good-intentioned people are experiencing great difficulties in their lives because they are forsaking the assembling together of the saints. Don't forget that it was God Who designed the local church; it wasn't some man's plan. The Church is God's plan so that His people can become equipped.

I know some people give the flimsiest excuses to try to justify why they don't go to church regularly. The time factor seems to be a major excuse for a lot of people. However, I question whether the length of the service is the real problem. There are probably other priorities that they have put above going to church. People don't mind staying for some athletic contest that goes overtime. But on Sunday morning they have to be out of church by twelve noon. What it really boils down to is just a matter of getting their priorities in line with God's Word.

It is very important for believers to learn how the local church is supposed to function. In Ephesians 4:8 Paul writes: **Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.** This verse is referring to Jesus — after He had completed His earthly ministry, died on the cross, and rose from the grave.

In the following verse Paul goes on to tell us: **(Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended**

first into the lower parts of the earth?) (Eph. 4:9). This event was foretold by Jesus Himself in Matthew 12:40 when He said: **For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.**

What is the heart of anything? It is its center — like the heart of a tree or the heart of an apple. Jesus spent three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. Then He went and preached to the people in "Abraham's bosom." (Luke 16:22.) All those Old Testament saints in that place heard Jesus preach the Good News of redemption and release. Then He led them out and ushered them into heaven with Him; thus He "led captivity captive."

Now the gifts that Jesus gave "unto men" at this time are listed in Ephesians 4:11: **And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.** These are the five ministry gifts that God has set into the local church, or into the body of believers.

It was a long time before I learned that there are still apostles and prophets among us today. The church I attended had explained this verse away. They said, "No, that passage doesn't apply to today's church; it is not for us in this age." They claimed it referred only to the time of the first apostles, or to the millennium or heaven. I thought I had missed out on these gifts all the way around.

But, praise God, I discovered that these ministry gifts are for today. Do you think that God would have given apostles and prophets in New Testament times but would refuse to give any for today? No, not on your life. There are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors

and teachers among us here and now. These are the ministry gifts which God has set in the local church and in the universal Church.

In Ephesians 4:12 we are told the purpose for these gifts: **For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.** Now I have been around some saints who had this concept backwards. They thought it was their ministry to "perfect the preacher." This does not mean that any preacher is perfect, that he never needs to be corrected, because he does. But there is a scriptural way to perfect anyone, and there is an unscriptural way to do it.

This is why believers need to know how the local church is supposed to function. It is why a lot of churches are stifled today and cannot succeed in the ministry that God has purposed for them. They have quit functioning as the local church was designed to operate; they have gotten too involved in church government and have lost their sense of scriptural direction.

So the ministry gifts are for the perfecting of the saints. The word *perfect*, as used here in this sense, means *mature*. In other words, God wants His spiritual body, the body of believers, to be grown up. He does not want us to remain babies all of our lives. In a large number of churches today, the pastor is trying to lead a congregation, about ninety-nine percent of whom are baby Christians. He is kept so busy "playing church" that he can't do what God has really called him to do.

I have seen the results of surveys taken among the laity in which they were asked what they thought the pastor's job should be. Some of their answers were hilarious! If the preacher did everything his people

thought he should do for them, he would be waiting on them hand and foot. As a pastor, I have to guard against this danger. If I let myself, I could get too busy doing legitimate things — making house calls, planning social events, running the school. That would be a tremendous ministry, and these things are necessary. But I have to be very careful that I don't get so tied up and involved in these less important things that I am not able to do the one most important thing — that is, to minister God's Word to the people.

I know of churches in which the pastor has become so overly involved in lesser things that he has left off the preaching of the Word. When this happens, strife begins to set in among the members. You see, if people are not being fed, they get cantankerous. If a preacher is not feeding the flock by putting forth spiritual food from the pulpit, problems will begin to arise among the laity. So the main objective of the ministry gifts is to *facilitate the preaching of the Word of God*. Why? Because the Word will correct, perfect, edify and cause spiritual development.

In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul informs us: **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.** That phrase "*instruction in righteousness*" comes from the same Greek word that is translated elsewhere as *chastening*. God's Word will chasten us. Sometimes we may feel that the preacher is beating us over the head, but it is the Word of God doing the chastening.

Many people do not understand how the ministry gifts in the local church are supposed to function. Did you ever go to church when there was an area of your

life that was just not right, and that Sunday morning the preacher spoke of that very area? This happens under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Many people have said to me, "You know, in your sermon today you preached right to me!" No, it was the Holy Spirit. I just preach the Word as He directs me.

There have been times when I have thought, "Boy, I missed it today." There were no visual signs that I had accomplished anything in my sermon. Nobody walked the aisle, nobody responded to the invitation. Then, later on, somebody would come up to me and say, "Do you remember when you spoke on . . . ?" I would go back and look at my records and discover that was the very morning it had seemed to me that I had been totally unproductive. But the Word of God, when preached faithfully, will go forth and do what God intended and desired it to do — if we as believers will open our heart to receive that Word.

I never use the pulpit to preach *at* my flock. I use it to preach the Word of God *to* them. There have been many times when I knew that what the Spirit of God told me to preach was going to hit somebody right between the eyes, that I would have to watch that person squirm as I delivered the message. I knew that was a chance I had to take. When God puts something in my heart for me to preach, because I love my people so dearly, I cannot get into the pulpit and short-change them by just giving them a portion of what God has given me. I cannot hold back and just "play church" with them. I cannot preach sermonettes. I have to deliver everything that is in my heart.

I, and all other pastors, must stand before God some day and give an account of what was preached. I am

going to be judged much more severely than a lay person. Why? Because I have more responsibility, and to whom more is given, from that person more is required. (Luke 12:48.) But each of us is going to have to give an account of what we have done with what we have heard preached.

There are many people who leave the church because they get mad at the preacher. They feel that he is preaching at them. No preacher should ever fail to preach what God has told him the people need to hear, just because he is afraid they might get offended. (John 10:12,13.) He should be more concerned with what God thinks than what people think.

Preachers today who will preach to "tickle the ears of the congregation" are a dime a dozen. As one preacher friend of mine says, "They will aim at nothing and hit it with precise accuracy." They offend nobody and they bless nobody. They preach over the heads of the people instead of preaching the Word of God. As that Word goes forth, it may "whip" us or bless us, chasten us or correct us; but whatever it does, if we will receive it, it will help us.

The writer of Hebrews 13:7 tells us: **Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.** This does not mean that the preacher should dictate to the congregation, telling them what to do and not do. But God has so structured the Church that the ministry gifts are the head of the laity. This is why it is important for a person who has been called to the office of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher to give all of his time to that ministry.

He should not divide his time between his ministry and a second job.

When I was a young man in my first pastorate, I got into the hay business. I worked hard, thinking, "Boy, you are a hard-working preacher; people will really have a greater appreciation and respect for you because you are not lazy." But all the time I was hauling hay, our church was doing nothing of any significance. Then one day I allowed the Spirit of God to get through to me. He said: "Stop dividing your time between *your* work and *My* work!" Now He had probably been telling me that for a long time, but I finally tuned in to His voice. Once I quit my job, our church began to expand in size and outreach. Why? Because we were in a place where God could bless us. God cannot bless anything that is unscriptural.

The office of a ministry gift is the highest office in the land. To take any other job is to step down to a lower position. The ministry gifts are spiritual jobs. The people who fulfill these offices are not to dictate to us, to tell us what to do, but they do have the opportunity to eat, sleep and breathe the ministry. As a pastor, I commune with God; I fellowship with Him. I don't have anything to divide my attention. I can spend more time than the laity seeking God and His directions for the body, His church.

That does not mean that a deacon or someone else in the church can't receive something from God and share it with his pastor. But that would generally be a confirmation of something the Lord has already revealed to the pastor. If God is going to tell the church to do something, He is going to inform the head before He tells an arm or a leg. That is why Hebrews 13:17

warns us: **Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.**

In Acts 20:28-31, Paul was winding up his ministry and heading back to Jerusalem. He knew that the end of his days was coming, that he didn't have time to go through Ephesus. So he sent a message for the leaders and overseers of the flock there to come and receive a word from him. Once they were assembled, he told them: **Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood (v. 28).** It was the Holy Ghost Who had made these men overseers! They were not overseers because the people had voted on them; they were made overseers by the Holy Spirit. I am not pastor of my church because the people voted me in; I am pastor because the Holy Ghost made me pastor. There is a vast difference!

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

Now this is shocking! Paul says that out of their own fellowship these men would see others arise to try to usurp proper church authority, to try to get people to follow after them in rebellion against the leadership. This must be guarded against because such people will be used of Satan to divide the flock.

This is where the laity needs to have great respect for the pastor. If you don't respect your pastor as a man

of God, then when Satan comes to divide the flock, you are liable to side with that troublemaker. I could take you through church after church that at one time were doing great things for God, but then somebody right out of their own fellowship rose up, got out of place, got into strife, and disrupted the work that God had for that fellowship.

Church is a very high priority in life, higher than your job. If you don't think there is a church in your community which you and your family can attend and support faithfully, then you should ask God to move you some place where you can get into a good church. You need to worship God regularly with your family so you can grow spiritually.

I know of two men, both in high positions in their companies, who quit their jobs and moved to a very small town with nothing but a church and a school. God has miraculously provided for them financially. They are doing things they never dreamed possible. God has blessed them. You see, when you get your priorities in line and do what God wants you to do, He will take care of everything else.

Many think it is hard to serve God. That is a lie! The Bible says that the way of the transgressor is hard. (Prov. 13:15.) The person who goes against the Word of God is the one who has the hard life. Those who go with God don't have a hard time; they have the good life. There may be some rough spots, but they are not to be compared with the hardships that await those who live by the world's system.

You should select a church on the basis of two fundamental principles: First, the church should preach the Word of God, confirmed by "signs following."

(Mark 16:20.) That is how to tell if a church is functioning as it is supposed to. In the church which I serve as pastor, we have signs following the Word all the time. God confirms His Word. He confirms His Word daily in our school. There may be some services where we do not see any outward manifestations of God confirming His Word, but before the week goes by we will have telephone calls from people telling how God has worked in their lives.

Second, the church must minister to all the spiritual needs of its members and their families — parents and children alike. You should never swear undying allegiance to any church or church group or association. You are unwise if you do that. When your church ceases to preach the Word of God, you should be the first one to leave it. Many people all across the country today are trapped in churches simply because they were raised in them. Since Grandma and Grandpa, Mom and Dad, all went there, the children continue to attend; that is their only reason for being faithful to that church.

I once read a book entitled *Why Not Just Be Christians?*, by Leonard Ravenhill. That book blessed me. *Why not just be Christians?* I tell my people, "If this church should ever cease to meet any of your spiritual needs or those of your family, you should find one that does." If you can change churches in all good conscience, then do so. If not, you should stay where you are and be faithful in service, giving and attendance — because, as Christians, the local church is our fourth priority.

5

Job

In our study of the fifth priority of life, we see in Genesis 3:19 that the Lord God said to man: In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. This is one part of the curse that has not been lifted. Man must still earn his living by the sweat of his brow. This situation is one of the results of "the fall." Jesus did not free us from work.

For while we were yet with you we gave you this rule and charge: If any one will not work, neither let him eat.

Indeed, we hear that some among you are disorderly — that they are passing their lives in idleness, neglectful of duty — being busy with other people's affairs instead of their own and doing no work.

2 Thessalonians 3:10,11 AMP

It is inevitable that if people are not busy working, they open the door for the devil. Idleness is the "devil's workshop." Yet it is an area which many people do not seem to be able to control. Many of them have no intention of being critical, of having a fault-finding spirit, of doing wrong, but because they do not keep themselves busy with constructive work, they allow the enemy to come in and use them to cause problems. They give themselves to the work of the devil.

If I were idle in my work and just sat around all the time watching every move my staff made, I could find a lot of fault with them. I do supervise and evaluate the work of my staff; we have certain checks and balances in our system so I can determine if we are all doing our jobs. My staff members are free to work any way they choose, as long as they are effective and productive. I might do their jobs differently, and they might do mine another way. But we know it is easy to criticize. If you are just sitting by watching others, you will always have a tendency to be critical, to find fault. It is easy, but it is also another tactic of the enemy.

Paul goes on to say in Thessalonians 3:12-15 (AMP):

Now we charge and exhort such persons (as ministers in Him exhorting those) in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, that they work in quietness and earn their own food and other necessities.

And as for you, brethren, do not be weary or lose heart in doing right [but continue in well-doing without weakening].

But if any one [in the church] refuses to obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and do not associate with him, that he may be ashamed.

Do not regard him as an enemy, but simply admonish and warn him as [being still] a brother.

Those are pretty strong words! Paul says that if anyone will not work, he is not to be allowed to eat. He is to be shunned.

Today America stands in the same place that the old Roman Empire stood just before it fell. We are a nation that has gone overboard for entertainment and recreation. Millions are on the welfare rolls. Nearly half of our working population is employed by the government. A four-day work week is now becoming

inevitable with high pay so that everyone can have more time to play. We are treating work as if it were a sin.

Our society has made our youngsters think that work is a "dirty word." That is why we had the beatniks in the sixties and the hippies in the seventies. They thought that work was bad. I have heard parents say, "I don't want my children to have to work as I did." They have passed that attitude down to their children, and, sure enough, their children don't work — at all! Many Christians don't know what the Word of God teaches about work. If they studied the Word, they would learn several things.

Number one: The Word of God teaches that work is spiritual. Did you ever think of your work as a spiritual exercise? I am sure that most people haven't. Some people in the "faith movement" don't like to hear that. They think that if a Christian works, then he is trying to accomplish things "in the flesh." No, when we believers work, we are just doing our part, and believing God to do His part. Our part is faith, and that is work. Work is spiritual!

I always wondered why Dr. Ken Stewart, past dean of Rhema Bible Training Center, asked me to come to Rhema every year and speak to the student body. When I asked him, he answered: "Well, Keith, I have watched your ministry over the years. You have something important that every one of these Bible students needs to have in his or her ministry. That is, you have a proper balance of work with faith. You are not afraid to work." Then he went on to say: "So many of our students think that work is sin. They believe that earning five hundred dollars to pay for something is not as spiritual as

believing for somebody to come along and give them five hundred dollars."

I would rather earn five hundred dollars than have someone give it to me. I mean that with all my heart. I know that God moves upon people's hearts from time to time to give, but I want to be the giver instead of the receiver. Why? Because in Acts 20:35, the Bible says that it is more blessed to give than to receive. When I give I take on an attribute of God, because He is a giver. To be more like my Savior and my Master, I have to give more.

There is work involved in doing the will of God. All through the Bible we read statements like this: **For we are labourers together with God...** (1 Cor. 3:9), **...forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord** (1 Cor. 15:58). These passages talk about work. If you look up all the references to the word *work* in the concordance, you will see just how many scriptures deal with this important subject.

And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless.

But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel (an unbeliever).

1 Timothy 5:7,8

If a person does not provide for his own family, he is lazy and denies the faith. Paul is saying that this person is not spiritual. There are a lot of preachers who need to know that work is spiritual. The reason some pastors have to change churches every six months or every year is because they are lazy. I know of many people who have gone into the ministry because they

got tired of manual labor. They wanted a white-collar job. These poor people will be miserable in the ministry. They won't be successful in anything they do, because doing the will of God involves work.

One of the great mistakes of our generation is that of dividing the "sacred" from the "secular." Many Christians have the mistaken philosophy that sacred things are for church on Sunday, and are not to be mixed with their business or personal lives the other six days of the week. They go to their jobs and say, "Oh, I can't mix Christianity with my work." That is a lie, and it came from Satan.

Every day is a holy day, and every place is a sacred place to the child of God. Everything you do on your job should be done as unto the Lord. Think about what you do, and as you do it, do it as unto the Lord. Being a good Christian is not having a good feeling or a good cry, or giving a good speech; being a good Christian is obeying the Word of God. One thing that the Word teaches is that work is spiritual, and that we should be spiritual in our work. We are not very good Christians if we are not Christian on the job.

Number two: The Word teaches that to work is to succeed. If you want to be a success in life, then you must work. The word *work* implies expending the effort it takes to *produce* or *achieve* something. If you are not working, then you are not producing or achieving anything. It was Thomas Jefferson who said: "I'm a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it." I tend to agree with Mr. Jefferson. I don't believe in luck, but truly the key to success is hard work.

Carefully read all of Joshua 1:1-8:

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joahua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

Now most of the time when we study this passage, we concentrate on "meditating on the Word." But the Lord told Joshua that if he was going to be prosperous and have good success, he would have to do something else, too. He said that every place that Joshua put the sole of his foot, He had given to him. Now that implies that Joshua had some work to do. Standing in one place does not produce or achieve anything. Work is

a part of the law of God, and if we want to be successful in life, we must work. Faith without works is dead. (James 2:20.) There are many verses in Proverbs which show the importance of work to success:

He becomes poor who works with a slack and idle hand, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Proverbs 10:4 AMP

The sluggard will not plow when winter sets in; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing. Proverbs 20:4 AMP

I went by the field of the lazy man, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;

And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered its face, and its stone wall was broken down.

Then I beheld and considered it well; I looked and received instruction.

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep;

So shall your poverty come as a robber, and your want as an armed man. Proverbs 24:30-34 AMP

What is the Bible saying? It is saying that if we are to succeed in life, we must work. If we won't work, we are not going to be successful. If we are not willing to work, not even God and His angels can make us succeed.

Number three: The Word teaches that a person should learn to work without a boss:

Give not [unnecessary] sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids;

Deliver yourself as a roe or gazelle would from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Now after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord it came to pass, that the Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

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Deliver yourself as a roe or gazelle would from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise;

Which having no chief, overseer, or ruler,

Provides her food in the summer, and gathers her supplies in the harvest.

How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep?

Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to lie down and sleep;

So will your poverty come as a robber or one who travels [with slow but surely approaching steps], and your want as an armed man [making you helpless].

Proverbs 6:4-11 AMP

The ant has no chief, overseer or ruler; yet it works diligently to store up its food. Nothing reveals a lack of character in a person more than refusing to work when no one is looking.

Before I entered the ministry, I worked in a huge airplane factory. It was an open shop; that is, union membership was optional. The union steward talked to me about joining the union, but I decided not to. I knew I could keep my job by being productive. I didn't plan to be lazy, so I didn't need union protection. Our lack of productivity is one thing that has ruined our society today. We rely on unions, rather than our own productiveness, to keep our jobs. This has destroyed much of the incentive to achieve.

There was a man in the factory who worked at the same machine as I did. He was the "workingest" fellow I have ever been around in my life! He would turn out two or three hundred parts per day. This was tedious work, and he wouldn't even take a coffee break! That was a challenge for me. I set my goal to beat him. I

worked hard to turn out two or three more parts than he did. Do you know what we got for that extra effort? Nothing! My supervisor didn't care. There were men in my department who would work eight full hours and produce only a few parts. But the men who did all the work got no more recognition or pay than those who did nothing. That kind of situation kills incentive. This lack of incentive is eating our country up, because people have not been taught the simple truth that they need to work without a boss.

It is necessary to know the spiritual value of work, but we need to keep this knowledge in balance and remember that a job is still not our source of supply. God is our source. Until we see that, we will not be truly successful. We can be a hard worker, diligent in our efforts, but if we are looking to that job as our source of supply, the laws of prosperity will not work for us.

Now a job is one channel through which God can bless us. But if we obey and act upon the Word, if we have our priorities in order, then God can bless us in any way He wants. God is my source of supply. I have seen Him bless me in some of the most unlikely ways. I give Him all the glory for it, because He is my source.

In Deuteronomy 8:17,18 (AMP) the Lord is speaking and He says:

And beware lest you say in your [mind and] heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.

But you shall (earnestly) remember the Lord your God; for it is He Who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as at this day.

In other words, when a person is successful in his business and becomes self-sufficient, he tends to forget the Lord. We should have a certain amount of pride in our work, but we need to realize that God is our source of supply. He is the One Who causes the blessings to abound toward us. God has given us the power to get wealth. Now we have studied God's Word enough to know where that power comes from. It comes from the Word of God. God has given us His Word to get wealth. If we will work the Word, if we will walk in line with the Word, if we will do what the Word says, then God will cause us to be successful. God will prosper us. God will see that riches in abundance flow to us. But we must do the Word.

Even though we may be hard workers and Christians who believe in Jesus, if we get our priorities out of line and put our jobs first in our lives, we are not doing the Word. But if we will walk in the light of God's Word and do what the Word says for us to do (be hard workers, not lazy, having a certain amount of pride in our work, knowing that God is our source of supply), then God will prosper us abundantly. Then when we have been blessed and prospered, we need to praise God.

I have seen some wealthy people, people who have large accumulations of wealth, who have gone bankrupt. I read an article about the ten most influential men in the world during the 1940s and 50s. Back then they were on top of the world. Today many of them are failures, or victims of suicide. Why? Because they said, "Look what I have done; my hands have gotten me this wealth." They forgot, or never knew, that their source is God.

Although I work hard for the salary I receive from my church, I thank God for it. I don't say, "Boy, look at what I have done!" I say, "Father, thank You for this income." If I feel that I am worth more than I am being paid, I praise God as my source. You will never be paid as much as you would like unless you start doing this. God will keep the records, and He will cause that blessing to come to you. It has happened many times in my life. God will do it.

I think about Willie, my nephew who used to work with me in my first pastorate. We never could pay Willie a decent salary. We were just beginning to be able to pay him adequately when he left. I remember the untold hours that he put in. He did it as unto the Lord. Willie could do more work in half a day than most people could do in a week. He did not look at what he was getting paid for what he was doing. He saw what had to be done, and he did it as unto the Lord. I know that God has blessed him tremendously for it. I rejoice in that, and I praise God for it.

Jesus, the Word, talks about how God wants to bless us financially. John, the beloved disciple, tells us: **Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth** (3 John 2). God wants us to prosper in every area of our life, materially and financially, as well as physically and spiritually. But the laws of prosperity hinge on Matthew 6:33:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness... Many teachers preach on success and the laws of prosperity, and all of them agree that godly success depends on obedience to this command from the Lord. It all goes back to having our priorities

in line with the Word of God. If you will read through the entire sixth chapter of Matthew, you will find that Jesus is talking about material things, about being blessed materially. But He says that we are to seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; that is, that we are to seek to be in right standing with God. Now, how do we obtain right standing with God? By getting our priorities in line:

...and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33). "Things" are material blessings. There are not enough demons in hell to keep from you all the things you want and need. The blessings will overtake you if you will just get your priorities in the proper order.

God wants you and me to have material goods, but He first wants us to have our priorities in line. Many times when people begin to be blessed financially — to enjoy bigger homes, nicer clothes, newer cars, more of the luxuries of life — their increase becomes a snare to them. Instead of controlling their new wealth, they allow it to control them. They forget how they became prosperous. They become so engrossed in their material possessions they get their priorities out of order, and soon misery starts setting in. Unhappiness and unrest just eat them up. They reach the danger point where some of them begin turning to alcohol or drugs in their search for happiness and contentment. They just wrap the web of misery tighter around themselves, getting more and more into bondage to Satan.

This is "the deceitfulness of riches" which Jesus referred to in Matthew 13:22. I would rather live in a pup tent and wear rags for clothes, have a good relationship with Jesus and my wife and children, and

walk in the light of God's Word, than to have the riches of this world and be miserable. In the past, this is what the Church said a Christian had to do to be happy — he had to be poor! If he had very much of "this world's goods," it was thought that he couldn't possibly be happy. That is a misconception that has robbed the saints of God.

If every honest-hearted Christian had a million dollars in his bank account, every one of them would lay it on the line to do the work of God. But the ungodly who have wealth wouldn't give one dime of it for God's work (although they may give thousands to organizations that don't believe one bit of the Bible). Where does God want the wealth? He wants it where it belongs — in the hands of His children.

Let's look at our job in respect to our list of priorities:

Number one: Jesus is our first priority. Therefore He should have something to say about our choice of a job. In the Word of God we find many scriptures, especially in Proverbs, that teach that we should not earn our income from anything that is sinful or wrong. (Prov. 13:11; 20:17,21; 21:6; 22:16,22,23; 28:8; 29:24.)

Number two: Our companion, our second priority, should be consulted about our choice of a job. If our work keeps us from building a scriptural relationship with our companion, then we need to find another job. I counsel quite a bit, and I know that many times a person's work will interfere with his marriage. Many men, trying to get ahead, give the best years of their lives to their career. Then when they are ready to settle down and begin to work on their marriage, it is too late; their wife has looked elsewhere for love and companionship. There is a great deal of pressure upon

marriages in this world today. Everything we see in the media seems to make it easy for couples to go out and have extra-marital affairs. It is happening all of the time; infidelity is commonplace in our society.

Number three: Our children, our third priority, should enter into the picture when we accept a job. Why? Because our children are a higher priority than our work.

"But if I don't have this job, I can't provide for my family."

Yes, but I know a lot of jobs that keep the father or mother from the family. Your job may make it possible for you to provide food and clothing and housing for your children, but if it keeps you so busy you don't have time to give them the love and attention they need, that job is wrong for you. Remember, what your child wants most from you is not what you can provide; he wants you, not things.

Number four: The local church, our fourth priority, should be considered when it comes to choosing a job. I can think of many occasions when people changed jobs without considering the church. A job opportunity came along and they took it, moving to a new area without investigating the churches in that community. They made the move thinking they were spiritually stable, that since they knew the Word, they could go to any church. Many of these families never did find a suitable church; as a result, some of them forfeited their home, their marriage, their children and their happiness for as little as ten dollars more per week.

On the other hand, I have known people who have quit lucrative jobs in order to get their priorities back

in line with the Word of God. They wanted their personal relationship with Jesus, their companion, their children and their church to be right. These things meant more to them than their job. So they acted upon the Word of God and got their priorities back into proper order.

Do you know what will happen when you do that? God will bless your fifth priority. If He has to open a new field for you to enter, He will do it. Whatever He has to do to cause you to prosper and be a success, He will do — because you have put those other four priorities in line, because you desire them more than you desire that job.

Our society today is very mobile. People pull up their roots, pick up their families, load up everything in a van, and move across the country because their job demands it. One of the main reasons for changing locations is job transfers. If your boss walked in tomorrow morning and told you, "You are going to be transferred to another city," would you say, "Yes, sir!?" Would you let a job dictate to you where you are going to live? If so, you are not very spiritual.

What you should say in that situation is, "Give me some time to think about this situation; I may or may not accept the transfer." You should pray about the move, then go to the new community and check it out. See if there is a suitable church and school there. If there is not, then come back to your boss and tell him, "I'm sorry; I can't go." If he says, "If you don't go, it will cost you your job," then reply, "So be it."

I left a very secure place to pioneer a church in Plainview, Texas. I had no guarantee that I would have even fifty cents income, but I did it because God said

to do it. I prayed: "Lord, when it is time to move, I don't want my wife and children to be angry with me. Lord, would You tell them about this move so we can make it together in harmony and peace?"

One day I went to my wife and said, "Honey, I have to talk to you about something."

"I know," she replied. "God is talking to us about moving, isn't He?" The Lord had told her the plan. We prayed about it and said: "Now, Father, we want our children to know that this is Your will. We want them to want what You want."

When the time came, we went to tell our children. They responded by saying, "This is what God wants." They cried a little when they thought of leaving their friends, but they were ready to go. When God ordains the move, when it is a promotion from God and not your company, it can be a blessing.

Now can you get a picture of what your job is? Work is spiritual. Work is something that God expects. Work is succeeding. You should work even when the boss is not looking. Yet, you should maintain a balance. Your job is not your source of supply — God is. God wants you to be prosperous; He wants you to be blessed. At the same time, He wants you to keep your priorities in line.

Summary

If your priorities are out of line, that lack of order is going to hurt you. It will hinder the blessings of God, the redemptive works of Jesus Christ, from working in your life.

In Matthew 18:18 the Bible says: . . . **Whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven (Mof).** Heaven will permit what you and I permit. It has to. Why? Because Jesus has delegated all of His authority to the believer. If you say, "In the name of Jesus, I come against you, Satan," then all heaven backs you up; you are not standing alone.

However, when your priorities are out of line, you are out of the will of God. You are not living as God would have you live; you are not putting first things first. You are allowing negative things in your life, and you are tying God's hands. You yourself are preventing God's blessings from coming into your life.

In the past, we have made excuses; we have said: "Well, God knows what I need better than I do. He knew that I needed sickness and poverty to keep me in line." We blame God instead of blaming ourselves. That is ignorance. It is like saying that Jesus knew we needed to go out and sin because He knew that sin would work out something in our life. We know that is foolishness because the Bible says in Isaiah 53 that Jesus bore our sins so we wouldn't have to bear them.

John says, **My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not...** (1 John 2:1). God doesn't want us to sin! Why? Because He sent Jesus to pay for our sins so we wouldn't have to be in sin's bondage. Sin is always directed against God, isn't it? And God does not want us to disobey Him. God does not want us to sin.

Sin and sickness are synonymous terms. We can see this in Isaiah 53 and Matthew 9:1-8. Just as Jesus took our sins to the cross, He also took our sicknesses. Many people don't believe this truth, because they have never been taught it. But when you are taught the Word of God, it opens new areas. When I first heard this message, I thought, "Why, that's too good to be true." But when I quit taking the preacher's word for it and began to explore what the scriptures say, I discovered that it is true. Jesus took my sicknesses at the same time He took my sins. Now why did He take my sins? So I wouldn't have to bear them. Why did He take my sicknesses? For the same reason — so I wouldn't have to bear them. That is why we read in 3 John 2, **Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.**

God wants us to have the blessings of Abraham. What were Abraham's blessings? They were three-fold: spiritual blessings, physical blessings and financial blessings. (Gen. 17:1-9.)

Galatians 3:13,14 says:

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ....

Who are the Gentiles? We are — and the blessings of Abraham come on us through Christ Jesus. Galatians 3:29 tells us, **...if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** If we belong to Jesus, if we are in Christ, then we are Abraham's seed and his heirs. The same promise God made to Abraham belongs to us. We don't have to be spiritually dead, physically sick, or financially in bondage. Thank God, the blessings of Abraham are now ours, and they are three-fold. We have spiritual life, physical health, and financial abundance. They are provided for us in the great plan of salvation.

However, we have seen that we cannot enjoy these blessings if our priorities are out of line. If we put our companion before Jesus, then that will hinder the blessings of God in our life. If we put our job before our relationship with Jesus, it will cut off God's blessings. If we put our children before our companion, it will stop God's blessings from coming. God will bless us where He can because of His mercy and grace, but He cannot bless us in these main areas when our priorities are out of order.

This is where the Church has been cheated all along. Most believers do not know that they play a big role in determining what they get in life. They have always said, "Well, I will get saved and then whatever is going to be my lot in life will just happen." No! Whatever we allow on earth will be allowed in heaven, and whatever we disallow on earth will be disallowed in heaven.

I want you to know, if you want divine health, you can walk in divine health. If you want prosperity, you can have prosperity. Get your priorities in order and

you can have whatever you want. But if you say, "Well, I just don't believe that," then you will never be bothered with divine health or prosperity. You can just go along enjoying sickness, disease and poverty.

It is so important to know that our priorities are in line, and then work hard to keep them in perfect order. In Ephesians 4:27 we are told, **Neither give place to the devil.** If you will keep your priorities in line, you won't give place to the devil, but you will glorify God and receive His abundant life.

Additional copies of
Life's Priorities

Too Many Choices, Too Little Time
are available from your local bookstore,
or from:



Harrison House
P.O. Box 35035
Tulsa, OK 74153

About The Author...



Keith Johnson's life exemplifies the principles in this book. Since its release in 1979, **LIFE'S PRIORITIES** has been a powerful teaching tool used by pastors and congregations in churches throughout the world.


More than ten years after its writing, these scriptural and practical principles have proven effective for thousands of people who have applied them to their lives.

Keith accepted his first pastorate in 1969 and was ordained by Kenneth E. Hagin. In 1976 he was recognized as being on the cutting edge in ministry and was awarded an honorary diploma from Rhema Bible Training Center in Oklahoma.

At present Keith serves as pastor of Saskatoon Christian Centre, a dynamic and growing church in Saskatchewan, Canada. His church has a multi-faceted ministry and is engaged in evangelism, prison ministry, church planting, missions, cell groups, bus ministry, and Christian school and a ministry training center. Keith travels extensively throughout the world, teaching and training pastors and church leaders in the principles of local church ministry.

Keith and his wife, Tracey, have two girls and two boys. Their family is a testimony to the keeping power of God's Word which gives victory over the evils of this world.

If the chaos of incomplete tasks seems to overwhelm your life, and stress has become a familiar unwanted companion, it could be that your priorities in life are out of order. Keith Johnson will help bring an end to the confusion as you learn to apply the principles outlined in **LIFE'S PRIORITIES**.

*Standard
Hour* 

HH-710/595
ISEN 0-89274-710-2

THIS IS EXHIBIT **"B"** REFERRED TO IN
THE AFFIDAVIT OF MARK DANIEL
DRAPAK SWORN THIS 18 DAY OF
MARCH, 2025.



A COMMISSIONER FOR OATHS IN AND
FOR THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: _____
-BEING A SOLICITOR-

III
added to III

CHRISTIAN CENTRE ACADEMY

Student Application Form

Date of Application Oct 25/90
Grade Enrolling Gr 4
Date Enrolled _____
Student Application 1990 - 19

Name Drapak Mark Gerald Daniel
last first middle

Address 257 Adilman Dr. Saskatoon
street city province postal code

Home Phone 242-1488 Birth Date May/ 27/ 81 Age 9
month day year

Emergency Phone Numbers _____

School Last Attended Silverwood _____
name address

Name of Father _____

Address _____ Phone at Work _____

Address At Work _____ Occupation _____

Name of Mother Denise Drapak

Address 257 Adilman Dr. Phone at Work _____

Address at Work _____ Occupation _____

Does family attend Church? Name of Church _____

Pastor Keith Schatz Phone _____

Address _____

Marital status of parents: Married () Separated ()
Divorced () Spouse Deceased ()
Remarried () Other ()

STUDENT STATEMENT OF COOPERATION

ALL APPLICANTS GRADES 5 AND ABOVE FILL OUT IN OWN
HANDWRITING!

a. Is it your personal desire to attend Christian Centre Academy? Yes

b. Have you had any difficulty with students or teachers in a previous school? No
Explain: _____

c. Are you willing to abide by the rules of the school as stated in the C.C.A. Handbook, including discipline, dress, and all other matters? Yes

d. Have you ever been in trouble with the police? No
Are you now, or have you ever been on probation? No
Explain _____

e. Have you ever been on, or used drugs other than those that were prescribed for you by a physician? No
Explain _____

f. Have you ever smoked? No Are you now using tobacco in any form? _____ Explain: _____

g. I, the undersigned, as a student who has the privilege of attending this school hereby agree to give my wholehearted cooperation, and refrain from the following:

1. Violence and damage against the physical property of the institution.
2. Smoking, drinking, gambling and use of drugs.
3. Improper boy-girl relationships.
4. Fighting, stealing.
5. Profanity and filthy language.
6. Critical and uncooperative attitude.
7. Any infraction of the provincial or federal penal code.

h. I further understand that the privilege of attending Christian Centre Academy can be removed at any time the above are violated, or any time, in the opinion of the administration, that my continued presence is not in the best interest of the school.

SCHOOL DRESS CODE - see handbook

PARENTAL STATEMENT OF COOPERATION

1. It is understood that my child's attendance at Christian Centre Academy is a privilege and not a right; and that if, at any time, in the opinion of the administration, his or her conduct, academic progress, or cooperation with the school's requirements, the school reserves the right to terminate my child's enrollment.

2. I give permission for my child to take part in all school activities, including sports programs and school-sponsored trips away from the school premises. I absolve the school from all liability in the event my child is injured at school or during any school activity.

3. I agree with the school's efforts to train my child in the Bible and in the Christian faith and will encourage my child in this and in all other phases of the curriculum.

4. I pledge to support the school in its efforts to administer discipline to my child in accordance with the standards of discipline the school sets for itself.

5. Students asking to leave school, or moving out of the area, or because of sickness are unable to attend school, will receive a refund on all unused tuition minus the month currently enrolled. It is understood, however, that all other students leaving school for any other reason will receive no refund on tuition, fees, or expenses of any kind. Registration fees in all cases are non-refundable.

6. I further promise to pay promptly all fees and charges, understanding that no report cards or records will be given or released if the school account is delinquent. No one will be allowed to graduate from C.C.A. until all financial obligations are paid in full.

7. I pledge to participate and attend the Parent Orientation and Parent Association meetings to help promote a good understanding between parents and faculty.

I have read the Parental Statement of Cooperation and I understand the school dress code. I hereby agree to abide by them and I, to the best of my ability, affirm that all questions answered above are accurate, honest, and without deception.

Signature of Father



Signature of Mother

Signature of Student
(Grade 5 or above)

SCRIPTURAL DISCIPLINE FORM

Dear Parents,
Christian Centre Academy is honored that you have asked our staff to assist you in training your child for Christian leadership. Our total program is designed to develop the spiritual and academic qualities that characterize your child. We appreciate your confidence in our program. To carry out your wishes for total character development, we believe it is necessary to follow Scriptural admonition and procedures. When warranted, Bible discipline will be exercised under the following guidelines:

1. The offense will be clearly discussed with your child.
2. A staff member will discuss Scriptural applications and will pray with your child.
3. A reasonable number of firm strokes, no more than five, will be administered by a staff member using a simple, flat paddle.
4. A staff witness of the same sex as your child will be present.
5. Your child will not be physically restrained. (If he or she refuses to submit to the paddle, you will be asked to come to the school to administer the spanking. If it is believed to be in the best interest of the school, the child will be withdrawn from the school.)
6. After administering of the strokes, the staff member will pray with your child, assuring him (or her) of their love.
7. A written record will be made of the date, offense, number of strokes, and name of correcting staff member and witness. You will be notified of the disciplinary action.

I, J Appr one Denise Drapak
Name of father and mother
have read the above and agree to support the school in its policy of Bible discipline without reservation and personally pledge my support to this Scriptural approach to discipline.

Date
Oct 25
Date

Signature of father
Denise Drapak
Signature of mother

MEDICAL HISTORY

IT IS MANDATORY that pupils who show symptoms of communicable disease be excluded from classes until readmission is acceptable to School authorities. Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Pupil's Name Mark Drapak Birth Date May 27 Sex M
Father's Occupation _____ Mother's Occupation cleaning Service
Father's Health _____ If dead, cause _____
Mother's Health Excellent If dead, cause _____

PAST DISEASED - (If your child has had any of the following, state age when he had them.)

Mumps _____	Diphtheria _____	Polio _____
Measles _____	Scarlet Fever _____	Convulsions _____
Whooping Cough _____	Rheumatic Fever _____	Heart Disease _____
Asthma _____	Chicken Pox <u>✓</u> <u>Drapak</u>	Diabetes _____
Hay Fever _____	Pneumonia _____	Discharging Ears _____

RECENT DISABILITIES - (Please check any one of the following noted recently.)

4 of more colds yearly <u>✓</u>	Allergy _____	Tires easily _____
Frequent leg pains _____	Ringworm _____	Frequent sties _____
Hearing difficulty _____	Dizziness _____	Nose bleeding _____
Frequent sore throat _____	Growing pains <u>✓</u>	Dental defects _____
Frequent urination _____	Poor vision _____	Abdominal pains _____
Breath shortness _____	Hernia (rupture) _____	Persistent cough _____
Speech difficulty _____	Crippling conditions _____	Fainting spells _____

IMMUNIZATION RECORD - (Please give the date of each)

Smallpox - Scar? _____	Whooping cough _____	Tetanus _____
Schick Negative _____	Diphtheria <u>Aug 31 / 41</u>	Typhoid _____
Measles <u>June 7 / 42</u>	Polio <u>Oct 6 / 42</u>	3 Dbs: _____

Does your child have a disability due to disease or accident? _____
Has your child had a skin test for tuberculosis? _____
Date Administered _____
Has he been associated with a tubercular patient? _____ When? _____

PERSONAL RECORD - Please answer all of the following

Is he/she shy? <u>Sometimes</u>	Over active? _____	Bite fingernails? _____
Have excessive fears? _____	Have temper tantrums? _____	Suck thumb? _____
Play well with others? <u>✓</u>	Eat breakfast? <u>✓</u>	Like school? _____
When is his regular bedtime? <u>9:00</u>	When is his/her rising time? <u>7:00</u>	

DATE Oct 25 SIGNATURE OF PARENT Denise

REMINDER: No pupil will be excused from P.E. without a written permit from a physician.
* Use for listing inoculation series.

FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FORM

The fee structure for Christian Centre Academy is as follows:

1. REGISTRATION FEE: All families are required to pay a yearly registration fee of \$150. The registration fee is required before the student(s) enter(s) the classroom. However, two prepayment discounts do apply.
- A. Payment by June 30: \$100/family
 - B. Payment by July 20: \$125/family

2. TUITION FEE:
- A. Single child enrollment: \$135/month
 - B. Two-child enrollment: \$200/month
 - C. Three-child enrollment: \$265/month
 - D. Four-child enrollment: \$330/month
 - E. Five-child enrollment: \$395/month

Tuition fees are due upon receipt of bill.

3. SPECIAL PROJECT FUND: (S.P.F.)
- A. Single child enrollment: \$40/month
 - B. Two-child enrollment: \$50/month
 - C. Three-or-more child enrollment: \$60/month

Tuition and S.P.F. fees are based on an 11 month billing structure (September - July).

4. P.A.C.E. FEE: Each P.A.C.E. (Packet of Accelerated Christian Education) which a student completes costs \$3.00. Normally, a student finishes from 5 to 10 P.A.C.E.s per month. Thus, the monthly bill for P.A.C.E.s often ranges from \$15 to \$30 per student. You will be billed for the P.A.C.E.s at the end of the month.

5. ANNUAL LOCK RENTAL FEE: \$3.00 per lock.

6. Other fees will be discussed by the administration and the parents and will be incorporated into the fee structure by mutual consent.

* We have read and do understand the above information regarding the fee structure at Christian Centre Academy. We are fully aware of the importance that these fees have in the successful day-to-day operation of the Academy, and that the only source of staff salaries is tuition payments. We are in agreement with the administration and staff that C.C.A. should provide only the highest quality education possible for our children, and that this is not possible without

adequate finances. We also recognize that our monthly billing represents "fees for services", and that it is only good business to remain up-to-date in meeting our obligations if we expect our children to receive the quality education that we desire for them.

With these factors in mind, we agree to make our school fees a matter of high priority in our monthly planning. We agree to pay our fees on a monthly basis and to remain current with the Academy. We also recognize that failure to do so places an unacceptable hardship on the Academy staff, and that therefore we have no authorization to default or renege on this agreement without clearing it with the Academy administration.

Signature of Father

Denise [unclear]

Signature of Mother

Date

Date

PARENT COMMITMENT FORM

The private Christian school is only as successful as the families that make up the school. At Christian Centre Academy, we have often stated that the individual student's success depends upon the school becoming an extension of the home. For this to happen, there must obviously be open lines of communication between the home and school, and both sides must avail themselves of any opportunities to interact.

Perhaps the most important such opportunity is the monthly parent-school meeting, called the Eagles' Association meeting, held the first Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. This is a time when school events are announced, pertinent policy changes or clarifications are explained, developments in Christian education are noted, and information on our own school's involvement in such things as tax issues and post-secondary issues is shared. As well, the Eagles' Association executive explains its goals, projects, and concerns month-by-month. They also enlist the help of the parents for the various projects they carry out throughout the year, without which our school cannot carry on a quality program. This is also an important time of fellowship among parents and staff.

Experience has shown us that those families who make the effort to be a part of every parent function are the families whose children always reap the maximum benefits from our program. It is imperative that each parent makes the maximum effort possible to attend each Eagles' Association meeting. Our school depends on this commitment, because we truly are an extension of each home, but only to the degree that each family will allow us to be. Please read carefully the following statement and sign below.

"We have read the above information and recognize that our participation is important to the success of the Academy. We are interested in the events that effect our children's lives and desire to be kept informed and stay involved in any way we can. We understand that the level of our involvement will directly effect the level of our children's success in this program. We therefore agree to make every effort humanly possible to have our family represented by at least one parent every Eagles' meeting."

Signature of Father

Dennis Drapak
Signature of Mother

Date

Date

Tit

17

THIS IS EXHIBIT "C" REFERRED TO IN
THE AFFIDAVIT OF MARK DANIEL
DRAPAK SWORN THIS 18 DAY OF
MARCH, 2025.



A COMMISSIONER FOR OATHS IN AND
FOR THE PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES: _____
BEING A SOLICITOR

PERSONAL SERVICES RECORD

This record is for the exclusive, private use and viewing of involved staff, and is not to be removed from this file without the express permission of the Director only.

NAME: Mark D.

DATE	SUMMARY, ACTION TAKEN
Sept 4	Scoring violation on his Eng face. - no paddles.
Mar 30/93	major scoring violation - entire math PACÉ 1063 3 swats (no D.T.)
May 11/93	throwing chalkboard glass in the garbage 2 swats

PERSONAL SERVICES RECORD

This record is for the exclusive, private use and viewing of involved staff, and is not to be removed from this file without the express permission of the Director only.

NAME: Mark Drapal

DATE	SUMMARY, ACTION TAKEN
May 6.	scoring violation big time - 3 swats - re-do PACE's - detention status
May 14	lying about gym clothes - 3 swats
May 21	scoring violation - re-do PACE - 3 swats
June 2	1 page of scoring violation - didn't understand material re-do page. 2 swats
June 8	scoring violation re-do PACE 3 swats