

“Balancing Your Faith!”

Improving Your Relationship

With God

By

John McWilliams

A portion of the proceeds of this book will go to the Christian ministry of **“Operation Heal Our Patriots”** which is a ministry of Samaritan’s Purse.

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All Scripture quoted in this book comes from the Revised Standard Version of The Bible unless otherwise noted.

Balancing Your Faith

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**SEEK HIM
SERVE HIM
SHARE HIM**

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Dedication and Acknowledgments

Without doubt this book should be and is dedicated to God Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Anything of worth that has come out of my life has come as a direct result of Christ being Lord and Savior of the world and Savior of my soul.

In addition I would like to dedicate this book to my wife Barbara. The value of her love, support, encouragement and partnership in our marriage, family and ministry is beyond what words can describe. Next to Christ Himself saving my soul at Calvary, she is by far, the greatest gift I have ever been given!

Although my name is on the book as the author, this book came about thanks to the support, prayers and kindness of many people. The congregations and individual people that have prayed for and supported our ministry for decades now, have played an important role in allowing me to write this book.

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CHAPTER ONE

SEE IF THIS MAKES SENSE

I would respectfully suggest that Scripture teaches all Christians, including me, to seek the most balanced and full relationship with God possible. If that is our goal, then common sense would tell us that it would be important for us to have a full and balanced relationship with *all* three Persons of The Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I feel Scripture shows us how we can do that and when we do, we'll see huge differences in our faith, our lives and whatever ministry God has given us to do for Him.

Since none of us is perfect, it seems that all of us can improve on our relationship with God if we are open to it. After nearly forty years of ordained ministry in what have been theologically conservative and Evangelical congregations, I have found that for many people, a full and balanced relationship with God is often missing. That does not mean they are not Christians and are not saved by Christ, but it does mean they are missing out on so much that God has for them in this life, due to the fact that they have never discovered what it means to have a more full and balanced relationship with God. Experience, research, and feedback from those I have consulted concerning the writing of this book, confirm that to be the case.

What I have found is that most people tend to live out their faith favoring and relating to one Person of The Trinity over the other two. When it comes down

to it, most of us tend to “*major*” in one Person of The Trinity and “*minor*” in the other two.

In addition, I have found that as people find others who agree with them theologically and doctrinally, entire congregations and even entire denominations can end up favoring and focusing on mainly one Person of The Trinity much more than the other two. I would respectfully suggest that doing that actually cuts us off from much of what God has waiting for us in our individual Christian lives and in our congregations.

When we do that, we also tend to live out our faith emphasizing and seeing as most important, the ministry, and works associated with the Person of The Trinity we favor most. Some have said that in so doing, we actually come close to practicing a form of Unitarianism, which Scripture would never support.

Yet, consider what might happen if every Christian and every congregation and every denomination were relating to and receiving from, all three Persons of The Trinity in a Biblically full and balanced way. Let me suggest to you that new and wonderful things would come into our lives and ministries as a result, things which God desires us all to have, but which have been missing due to the fact that our relationship with Him has been out of balance.

The goal of this book is to invite you to explore and seek out a more balanced and mature Christian walk and ministry in your life, by relating more fully to all three Persons of The Trinity, in ways you may previously never

have considered.

Different people are of course going to get different things out of this book. Individual Christians will see numerous things that will show them where they are in their faith currently and where they might be able to grow in their walk with The Lord. Pastors can find tools in the book that will equip them to lead their congregations to more spiritual balance. Church staff and Bible Study leaders can use the information in this book to better relate to and serve those under their leadership. I trust The Lord will show you something in this book that will be a blessing for you.

Well, that is enough theory. I trust it makes sense. So now we can move on to the practice of all this and see just how much more God has waiting for you in a more balanced relationship with Him.

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF BUT IMPORTANT LOOK AT THE TRINITY

Since I will be discussing The Trinity in this book in various ways, it makes sense right up front to share some things about The Trinity that I trust will be useful. There is certainly plenty of mystery when it comes to The Trinity. Yet God has explained Himself and shown Himself to us in the form of The Trinity. He has shown us in Scripture much about The Trinity that indeed does make sense and which can be shared with others.

In my opinion, far too many Christians say The Trinity is just too big a mystery to comprehend and they leave it at that and move on. I was in that place for a long time, but by God's Grace, I found out that staying there caused me to miss out on so much of what God had waiting for me in my life.

People of course have valid questions like how can there be a God Who is one God, yet three Persons in a Trinitarian form? How can there be three forms of one God without there actually being three Gods that we worship?

Actually there are some good answers to those questions, so let us take a brief look at them and see how they actually do make sense and how they take away some of the unnecessary mystery surrounding The Trinity.

To start off with we should simply state that God can do anything He feels like doing.

In Jeremiah 32:17, we read these words.

“Ah Lord God! It is thou who hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thy outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for thee. . . .”

In Luke 1:37 we read,

“For with God nothing will be impossible.”

So it is clear that God can do anything and do it in any way He chooses. Therefore, showing Himself to us and the world in the form of The Trinity is totally possible and it is the way He chose to do it. It is obviously the way that best suits His Will and the way He desires to relate to us and the world.

Therefore, we in fact have one God, Who chooses to manifest, show, or present Himself to us in the form of three distinct Persons; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Here is a simple check off list for The Trinity:

1. Each Person of The Trinity is a separate and distinct Person or manifestation of the same God, but all are completely equal and eternal in every way.
2. They are not three different Gods. They are three manifestations of the same God.
3. They are all of the same essence, even though they appear as three distinct Persons.
4. They exist separately and yet simultaneously and are all equal in every way.
5. Since this is the way God has chosen to reveal Himself to the world and nothing is impossible for Him, God can

certainly accomplish it.

The big question so often asked is how can something that is of the same essence; exist in three different, equal, and distinct forms at the same time? It seems impossible.

Well the answer is twofold. As I said before, with God anything is possible and nothing is too hard for Him. So if that is the case, He can handle it.

Yet we actually have a real and tangible example of this right here in our own world. We do have a situation on earth where something can exist simultaneously in three distinct and different forms, with all three forms being of the same exact essence and makeup.

You have probably heard of it. It is water or good old H₂O. It may seem strange, but as someone pointed out, water serves as a good illustration of The Trinity. This illustration really does show us how God can do what He says He has done regarding The Trinity.

Water, can in fact, exist in three different, separate and distinct forms at the same time, all of which are of the same exact essence and makeup. These three separate and distinct forms of H₂O are of course called water, ice, and steam.

Suppose I draw a 12-ounce glass of water from the kitchen faucet. Then I pour those 12 ounces of water equally into three different 4-ounce glasses. So far so good.

If I took the contents of one of those 4-ounce glasses of water and sent it to a lab to be analyzed regarding its essence and makeup, the lab would report to me that the substance I sent them is made of 2 parts hydrogen and 1 part oxygen, thus being H₂O or water.

Then if I took the second 4-ounce glass of water and poured it into an ice cube tray and left it in the freezer for a couple of hours I would, of course, have ice cubes. If I then took one of those frozen ice cubes, which was made from the original 12 ounces of water drawn from the faucet, and sent it to the same lab for the same analysis, the same results would come back. They would tell me the ice was made of 2 parts hydrogen and 1 part oxygen, thus being the exact same substance as the previously examined liquid sample of water from the same faucet.

Then if I took the third 4-ounce glass of water and poured it into a teapot and left it over a high flame for a few minutes, it would become something called steam. On a technical note, most of us look at what is coming out of the hole in the spout of the teapot when it begins to whistle and we say that what we see coming out of that hole is steam.

However, steam is actually invisible. It is a gas. So, what we see coming out of the hole in the spout of the teapot is actually the invisible steam from inside the teapot condensing and becoming water again as it hits the air. So the actual steam is inside the teapot and is in the form of an invisible gas.

Yet it can be captured and if that steam inside the

teapot were to be captured and sent to the same lab in the form of steam, when it was examined, the same results would come back. We would be told that the steam was made up of the same exact essence as the water and the ice, which all came from that same faucet. We would be told that the steam is made up of the same 2 parts hydrogen and 1 part oxygen, thus in essence being water, but just existing in a different form.

So we can see that something as simple as water can actually exist in three separate and distinct forms at the same time. Yet all three separate and distinct forms are actually only one substance and are equal in every respect regarding their essence. They are simply the same exact thing, taking three different forms.

If that is possible here on earth with water, ice and steam, surely a God for Whom all things are possible, can arrange to manifest or show Himself to us in three separate, distinct, and equal Persons called The Trinity.

In the case of the water, ice and steam, we are not dealing with three different substances, but rather three different forms of the same thing. The same goes for The Trinity. We are dealing with the exact same God Who has chosen to show Himself to us in three separate, distinct and yet equal Persons in ways that will minister to us and allow us to best relate to Him.

Therefore, each Person of The Trinity is God and each Person of The Trinity has existed forever, thus being co-equal and co-eternal in every respect.

Most of us are familiar with the terms, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If we expand that a bit we get the age-old Christian formula of God The Creator, Jesus The Redeemer and Holy Spirit The Sustainer.

Those titles tell us something. They tell us that over the years people have come to associate different things with each Person of The Trinity. When I teach on this subject I usually ask people to tell me what characteristics or things they associate most with each Person of The Trinity. Here are 10 things about each Person of The Trinity that often come up. See if any of yours is on the list.

God The Father

Creator
Giver of The Ten Commandments and The Law
Promise Maker
Judge
Deliverer
Old Testament
Sent The Prophets
Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent
Everlasting
Loving

God The Son

Savior/Redeemer
Good Shepherd
Forgiveness
Miracles
Salvation

Will Come Again
Resurrection
Healings
Rabbi/Teacher
Incarnation

God The Holy Spirit

Lives Inside Us
Convicts Us of Sin
Comforter
Giver of Spiritual Gifts
Produces The Fruit of The Holy Spirit In Us
Guides Us Daily
Teaches Us All Things
Works to Sanctify Us
Gives Us Strength and the Words to Say on the Spot
Causes Us to Recall Scripture

I doubt if anyone would say that we should purposefully neglect and do without any of those things in our Christian lives. Yet if it is accurate to say that the majority of evangelical Christians tend to focus on and “*major*” in only one Person of The Trinity and “*minor*” in the other two, it stands to reason that by doing so, we will be doing without some of those things and will forfeit much of what God desires for us to have in this life. It would be interesting to see why we actually do that and what we can do to bring about more spiritual balance in the living out of our Christian faith.

In this book, what I would like to invite you to consider is the importance of being familiar with and

having a personal relationship with all three Persons of The Trinity. That is something we often fail to do. For instance, as evangelical Christians many of us speak of having a “personal relationship with Jesus,” but we rarely speak, if ever, of having a “personal relationship with The Father” or a “personal relationship with The Holy Spirit.”

When it comes to The Holy Spirit for instance, we often act as if The Holy Spirit is not a Person of God at all, but rather some kind of “force” floating around out there in the universe.

Let me give you an example. When speaking of or referring to The Holy Spirit, many Christians use the word “it” instead of “Who” or “Him.” Christians will say things like, “I felt that The Holy Spirit was speaking to me and ‘it’ told me to be more aware of what I could do for others.” That sentence should be, “I felt that The Holy Spirit was speaking to me and ‘He’ told me to be more aware of what I could do for others.”

If you see The Holy Spirit as the third Person of The Trinity, why would you refer to Him as an “it?” We never refer to people as “its.” Why then refer to The Holy Spirit as an “it?” The answer to that is simple. When we refer to The Holy Spirit as an “it” we do so because we fail to fully see and recognize Him as the third PERSON of The Trinity. When we do that, we are without doubt going to be missing out on a whole bunch of things The Holy Spirit would love to give us through a more personal relationship with Him.

We will miss those blessings because we only have an

“it” relationship with The Holy Spirit, instead of a “*Personal*” relationship with Him. I have even heard pastors refer to The Holy Spirit as an “it” and I used to be one of them.

We never refer to Jesus or The Father as an “it.” Inanimate objects and lifeless things are “its.” The Bible tells us in various ways that The Holy Spirit is a Person. “Its” can never speak to us nor can they lead us or teach us or comfort us or protect us or convict us of our sin. We never worship “its.” We worship God. Only a person can do those things and that is Who The Holy Spirit is, the Third Person of The Trinity with Whom we can and should have a personal relationship, just like we do with Jesus and The Father.

As one of my professors in seminary pointed out, The Holy Spirit is not some inert gas floating around the universe. Rather, He is God in the form of The Holy Spirit, the third Person of The Trinity and He is to be praised, prayed to and worshiped just as we do with Jesus and The Father.

Without doubt, and without trying to be judgmental, many of us as Christians are lacking when it comes to a full and balanced relationship with all three Persons of The Trinity and as a result, we are missing much of what God has waiting for us. As we will discuss in upcoming chapters, the things you may be missing the most in your Christian walk are tied directly to the Person of The Trinity you “minor” in the most.

In discussing the premise of this book with people, I

have been told that the issue of a more balanced life in The Trinity is something they have never even considered. Perhaps that is the same for you as well. Whether you have or not, I would be honored if you would stick with me as you read through this book and be open to what might be some life changing things from God for all of us.

I have tried to write this book in a very pastoral and practical style. I have tried to present numerous insightful illustrations for you and also to share many specific practical steps which can be used by individuals and congregations alike to achieve a more Biblically balanced relationship with God and therefore a more fruitful and joyful Christian walk.

Chances are that there is a lot more wind available for your spiritual sails and a lot more fuel for your spiritual tank than you currently might be aware of in your Christian walk. I can tell you one thing. Discovering what those things are and the changes they can make, have changed my life completely. I am sure they can change yours too.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE

A New York City investment firm once aired a television commercial which made an important point. "When it comes to successful investment management," they said, "the wise investor, sees the importance of balance to achieve the sought after success in his portfolio." As the announcer spoke, the word "balance" appeared on the screen. Then the definition followed. "Balance . . . stability brought about through planned diversity." Without question, balance is critical to attaining stability. When something is unbalanced, we say it is unstable, lopsided or shaky. In a world where we take so many things for granted, we can tend to forget that so much of our lives depend on proper balance.

We are surrounded every day by examples of balance which directly affect us. When you are traveling down the highway and you feel a vibration in the front end of your car, it often turns out to be poorly balanced tires. At first you may hardly notice it. However, tires affect the whole ride of the car and poorly balanced tires will produce excessive wear and poor performance of the tires, eventually causing potentially dangerous circumstances to exist. Unbalanced tires, a seemingly small thing, can lead to disastrous results. Keeping your tires balanced is important.

While watching my mechanic balance my tires on the high-speed spin balancing machine, I have been amazed at the difference those small lead weights he puts on the

rims of the wheel can make. They are so tiny, but they make proper balance possible, the kind of balance that keeps my family safe.

In another way, balance affects all of us every day in the form of how we eat. It seems we are constantly being told how important it is to maintain a properly balanced diet. One has only to see the pictures of swollen bellies from rickets to see what happens when the balance in our eating habits is upset. We are taught about the basic food groups and about the importance of eating foods regularly from each group. If our diet becomes unbalanced and we eat too much of one thing or too little of something else, we can pay a high price. God designed our bodies to run on certain foods and maintaining a properly balanced diet is crucial to our health.

When one stops to look at it for a moment, stability reached through balance is more vital than we often see. Another and perhaps more complex example of balance or stability achieved through planned diversity, can be seen in the performance of a talented orchestra. When an orchestra is performing correctly, all the sections and instruments, as individually diverse as they are, join in harmony to produce a balanced and beautiful sound.

That can only be achieved by all the members intentionally seeing the value of each other and working hard to achieve the sought after balance and harmony. If one section of the orchestra becomes too loud, or too fast or too slow, things begin to break down and the balance is lost.

The beauty and balance of an orchestra producing stable harmonious music, is due to the fact that each individual musician and each section of musicians has the vision that balanced harmony only comes when each person sees the importance and value of all the rest. The moment a person or section tries to overpower or drown out the others, the balance is lost. It is then that the conductor must intervene to tone down, slow down, speed up or otherwise correct those who threaten the overall balance of the orchestra.

I can remember playing in bands and orchestras in school. With Mom and Dad in the audience, there was the temptation to show off a bit and be heard above the others. Multiply that by a number of other kids doing the same thing and the result can turn out to be a loud, out of balance performance. Moreover, mistakes are more frequent due to people trying so hard to show off and shine on their own.

The plan a composer has as he or she writes a score is to use all the diversity available in the orchestra to achieve the highest possible quality of balanced harmonious music. The scenario feared by any composer would be that individual musicians or sections of the orchestra would begin to see themselves as more important than and independent of the rest.

Try to get a picture of what would happen to Handel's "Messiah" if the instruments could talk and followed the example of the Christians described by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12 who were in selfish competition with each other. What would happen if the strings said to the

brass, "We have no need of you!" or if the reeds said to the drums, "We have no need of you!""? If the whole orchestra was composed of only strings, where would the balance be? If the whole orchestra were brass, where would the diversity and stability be? If the whole orchestra were drums, where would the melody be?

Yet, as it is, the composer has planned it so that the orchestra works together and does not consist of just one member, but of many. If the brass section should say, "Because we are not stringed instruments, we do not belong to the orchestra," that would not make them any less a part of the orchestra. And, if the reeds said, "Because we are not drums we do not belong to the orchestra," that would not make them any less a part of the orchestra. As it is, there are many instruments, yet one orchestra. The brass cannot say to the strings, "We have no need of you." The reeds cannot say to the percussion section, "We have no need of you."

It is then up to the conductor to take the composer's piece of music and see to it that the orchestra works together well to play it correctly. There should be no discord or factions. All the members of the orchestra are to do their job with their different gifts and are to have the same respect and value for one another. If one member is out of tune, the rest hear it and it affects the whole.

However, when one member plays well, all are glad together and all rejoice in the stable balanced harmony which he or she is assisting to achieve. More important, those who have come from outside to hear the orchestra perform, are happy to hear the balanced music.

So it is quite clear that much of what we strive to achieve in life depends on things being in proper balance. From a symphony orchestra to the tires on your car, balance affects the outcome of performance. So much of our lives literally depend on proper balance.

I would like to suggest that the same applies to our Christian faith and the congregations we attend. If we are out of balance in our relationship with God we will miss so much of what He has in store for us. Moreover, those looking in from the outside will also see the lack of balance. Interestingly enough, it is those outside The Church who are often the first to correctly point out the imbalances and hypocrisies going on inside The Church.

As we move together through the chapters of this book, my prayer is that you will rejoice with me at the great potential God has offered us through a more full and balanced relationship with Him, a relationship so many Christians are missing. I invite you to see along with me, the vision for a more balanced spiritual life that God has set before us in His Word. I trust that you will be excited about the tremendous joy, power, and stability available to congregations and individual Christians who are open to living a more spiritually balanced faith. Moreover, as we do strive for a more balanced faith, it will empower us as never before, to reach out to and love those in this world God has called us to reach with The Good News of His Son.

CHAPTER FOUR

FACETS NOT FACTIONS

If we take the definition of balance given by that New York investment firm in Chapter Three, and apply it to the Christian Church we have a lot to discover. I Corinthians 12:12-26 clearly points out and speaks to the goal God has for each of His congregations to be spiritually balanced as a body of believers. Also, one should note specifically, that the balance God designed to exist in His Church, comes through planned diversity on His part.

For instance, God gives Spiritual Gifts to His people, in such a way as to create an interdependency among Christians within The Church. I have yet to meet the person who has all of the Spiritual Gifts. On the contrary, as The Bible says, there are a variety of Spiritual Gifts. That is, the Gifts are diverse and those diverse Gifts are given to different people. Therefore, it takes all of those people working and ministering together to bring about the full spiritual balance God intends in our congregations and in our individual lives.

The balance or stability of His Church is something our Lord plans to see happen through the cooperative use of diverse Spiritual Gifts in many different people. This planned Godly diversity will, if enacted according to His plan, bring about the most spiritually and theologically balanced and mature Christians and congregations possible.

It should never be a surprise that balance is intended to come about through all of God's people, with all our different Spiritual Gifts, talents and skills, working together to minister in Christ. In the secular world there certainly are numerous examples of balance and stability around us which are the result of people with diverse gifts coming together, sharing their gifts, and in so doing, bringing about an overall stability and balance which could be achieved in no other way. We already saw one example of that in the illustration of the orchestra mentioned in the last chapter.

Those who enjoy team sports see this principle in action all the time. The example of a baseball team is a good example of this principle at work. All nine players on a baseball team have different gifts, skills and abilities which contribute to the overall balance of the team. One player is a good shortstop. Another plays third base, while others pitch, catch, and play the outfield. Each player is different and has abilities and gifts the others do not. Moreover, it takes each player playing his position well, to assure overall balance and success of a winning team.

In baseball, you will never hear the first baseman tell the shortstop, "We have no need of you." Likewise, you will never hear the pitcher tell the catcher, "We can do without you." On the contrary, each player is grateful for, welcomes and sees the absolute necessity of each other player. The balance and stability of the team's overall performance depends squarely on the use of the diverse gifts they each have as well as the mutual respect they have for each other as part of the team. Ball players are

very aware of the fact that jealousy or strife between them directly cuts into their strength, balance and overall performance as a team.

It is amazing how we are willing to accept without question that in sports, or in our investments or in music, diversity encourages stability and is a good thing. Yet, when it comes to Christianity, people often see diversity as being a negative thing, a threat and something to be avoided. Many congregations actually strive to maintain a sense of “sameness” with everyone being alike. Yet that is like a baseball team having nine shortstops without any pitchers or catchers. When the spiritual balance and diversity God planned for a congregation is seen as a bad thing, I guarantee you that many of the spiritual blessings God intends for that congregation are being forfeited.

For instance, when the former Soviet Union fell, the rush was to get evangelism going there, to train pastors and to share Christ all over that huge country. I was a part of that push to get pastors trained there and I went to Russia many times to teach and train pastors and Christian leaders. When the wall came down, the most important thing was to teach people how to effectively share their faith in Christ with as many people as they could reach. The approach was balanced in many ways. People were sharing God’s Love through the Grace of Christ in the power of The Holy Spirit.

However, as time went on and congregations and denominations were established and grew, they began to draw their theological lines in the sand. Arguments over doctrine and other issues began to pop up and people

began to spend lots of time defending particular doctrinal positions which although important, were certainly less than eternal in nature.

I would never downplay the importance of doctrine. I have been thoroughly trained in it and I affirm its value in our Christian walk. I feel that questions of doctrine which deal with issues of eternal nature, such as whether Christ is God or whether The Trinity actually exists or whether The Scriptures are actually God's Word to us, or whether The Resurrection literally happened, are all worth the time to study, teach and defend.

Yet denominations have argued for decades, even centuries over doctrinal statements and positions which have virtually nothing to do with one's salvation or sanctification and growth in Christ. It is easy to find people placing a lot of energy, time and money into defending theological and doctrinal turf which as it turns out, is far more important to them than it is to God.

As we will see shortly, I suggest that when this happens, it is, to a great degree, rooted in the kind of spiritual imbalance with relation to The Trinity that I am talking about in this book. When this kind of imbalance happens, and it happens often, congregations and individuals miss out on so much God would like them to have in their ministry for Him.

So often we tend to major in defining our differences. In doing so, we often miss many of the glorious opportunities God sets before us. As Christians, we have a choice. We can choose to accomplish much for Him in

what I will call the balance and fullness of The Trinity founded on His Word, or we can insist on frantically and selfishly protecting our own theological patches of turf and territory and thereby forfeiting the full spiritual balance He intends for us to enjoy and employ in our ministry for Him.

The spiritual balance which comes from relating fully to the work and ministry of all three Persons of The Trinity is often lacking in congregations today. Why? Because Christians specifically determine to choose up sides and pursue one Person of The Trinity to the exclusion of the other two.

Critical spiritual balance is always lost under such conditions. Moreover, the irony of it all is that people often sense deep inside, sometimes on a less than conscious level, that something is missing. In some congregations, it may be the lack of reaching out to others, a lack of evangelical zeal which The Bible speaks so often about as being second nature to any congregation calling themselves Christ-centered and alive. In another it may be a sense of sameness, of going through the motions; a lack of joy, a sense of just "playing church" as some call it. In II Timothy 3:5, God calls it "*. . . holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. . . .*" In still another congregation, there may be much joy and good evangelical outreach or both, yet what may be lacking is a sense of exactly what they hold to doctrinally. That is a problem because without a strong doctrinal compass, people in a congregation can much more easily find themselves drifting into Biblical error. When these things are missing in our congregations and in our

individual Christian lives, we will reap the bad fruit of spiritual imbalance.

Just by reading this you may have already identified with one of these scenarios. However, as we will see, the trouble often is that the very elements and gifts of faith which would bring our individual lives and the lives of our congregations into much greater spiritual balance are the very things we skillfully work hard at keeping out of our midst.

We prefer sameness and like so many of us, we are unwilling to welcome change or accept new things. There are so many Christians and congregations in the world today from various denominations, which are way out of balance, unaware of it and oddly enough, striving hard to keep it that way.

Such Christians and congregations would never admit that they are striving to maintain an unbalanced situation. In fact, as I said, many do not even see the problem. Yet, people and pastors I have talked with across the nation confirm this to be the case.

As I see it, the balance problem has to do with three viable facets of the Christian Church which are constantly colliding with each other and doing all they can to hold sway over each other, instead of working together in a more Godly balance which The Bible says should happen. These are the well established theological positions in which people and entire congregations find themselves firmly planted. People in each facet tend to see themselves and their facet as the best and most important

one. At best they will tolerate the others, while making sure to keep them at a proper distance.

When describing these groups I have chosen the word “facets” instead of “factions.” Facets are something which we talk about when we discuss gems and diamonds and their brilliance. All the facets of a diamond are important and necessary to bring out the total brilliance of the gem. Factions are flaws or brokenness. Factions are division.

It is my intention to show that each of the three facets of the Christian Church I will be discussing in this book are valuable, necessary and designed by God to be in the life of every Christian, every congregation and every denomination on the planet.

Simply listed, the facets of the Christian Church I am speaking of are:

1. The Traditionalists/Doctrinalists
2. The Evangelicals
3. The Charismatics

Some may have different names for these facets, but whatever they are called, they do exist. Instead of each one trying to dominate the other within a congregation or denomination, the more Biblical view would be to have all of them working together in a way that brings a tremendous spiritual balance to each congregation, denomination or individual Christian’s life and ministry.

As you read on and hear each of these facets described

in detail, it is very likely that you will find yourself identifying more strongly with one of these facets over the other two. You will also notice that each of these facets is directly tied to and associated closely with a particular Person of The Trinity.

One of the catalysts for this book was a short article written years ago by Dr. Thomas Gillespie, past President of Princeton Theological Seminary. The article was entitled, *The Three Faces of Evangelism*. In his article, Dr. Gillespie had the goal of setting in historical perspective three groups of the Christian Church within the context of Presbyterianism. As you will see, his definition of each group serves to clarify nicely the main thrust that each group has as they minister.

Yet I would suggest that these groups or what I have called these “facets” were never unique to Presbyterians. They have existed for decades in many denominations and continue to exist today. I would like to suggest that within the conservative wing of Christendom most every congregation, denomination and every individual Christian, if they are honest with themselves, will normally identify more strongly with and prefer more highly, one of the aforementioned three facets over the other two. Yet, I have found that until a congregation and or individual Christian is comfortable with and sees the value of all three, they will be missing much of what God has for them in this life.

At this point, let me give you some working definitions of each facet. The following definitions are by no means perfect or complete. Yet they serve as indicators of the

style of ministry which each one of these facets shares. It would be interesting for you as the reader, to see which facet you and your congregation currently identifies with the most. As I said, research indicates that for various reasons, most Christians align themselves with and “major” in one of the Persons of The Trinity and “minor” in the other two. Since each of these facets is directly associated with a particular Person of the Trinity, as you read further in the book, you will see how this all plays out.

The first facet is what I call the Traditionalist / Doctrinalists.” The folks in this facet of the American Church have their roots in those who practiced the Reformed faith in ways that majored in correct doctrine and church polity.

A good example of such Christians would be the men of Princeton in the years of the early 19th. Century. In his article, Dr. Gillespie prefers to call this group the Confessionalists. He says:

"Princeton Theological Seminary, from its founding in 1812 by the General Assembly until its reorganization in 1928 by the General Assembly, was the premiere institutional representative of the Confessionalist way of being reformed. . . .

From Archibald Alexander, our first Professor, through Charles Hodge, to Benjamin B. Warfield, and J. Gresham Machen, Princeton represented a no nonsense, strict confessionalism. Here faith was essentially a matter of assenting to the truth of God's inerrant word. The task of theology was to systemize the truths of the

Bible and then to defend the system.

While the Princeton theologians of this period were all men of deep personal piety, they were convinced that whatever the experiential dimensions were, they were subject to reason in obedience to the Divine Reasons. Faith, in other words, was a matter of correct understanding, of right belief, of orthodox convictions. Put simply, being a Christian meant having your theological head screwed on properly

Consequently, these confessionalists were 'high church' in their polity. The primary task of ecclesiastical judicatories was to insure confessional discipline among the ministers of the church."

Folks in this particular facet of the Christian Church today still have as their primary focus for the Christian life, correct doctrinal positions and stances. These are the folks who can quote The Westminster Confession as well as they can quote Scripture. They are a no nonsense type of Christian who see themselves on a mission to protect the purity of the doctrine of Christianity and to make sure everyone abides by it.

To these folks the test of being a real Christian is having your theological and doctrinal ducks in a row and being able to articulate and defend the faith at any given moment against those who would water it down. That is a good thing, but it is not the only thing.

In the congregation you currently are a part of, you might be able to identify members who would most likely classify themselves as being most comfortable within the

Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet of The Church.

Moreover, you could also probably identify individual congregations that you are aware of, or even entire denominations, that major mostly in doctrine and tradition.

The second facet, I call the “Evangelicals.” This is the group of Christians who, although they feel doctrine is important, also feel it is more important to be primarily in the business of sharing the message of salvation and seeing souls won for Christ. This facet of Christianity in America increased greatly during the late 1800's as a result of the numerous “Great Awakenings.” Preachers like Charles Finney and Jonathan Edwards in New York and New England, among others, were critical in fanning the flames of a new zeal of evangelism in American congregations.

However, the Evangelicals found themselves rather quickly at odds with the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists. The Traditionalists/Doctrinalists found themselves upset by what they would call a lack of attention to and reverence for appropriate doctrine by the Evangelicals. The Evangelicals, on the other hand, saw themselves as making their first priority sharing the salvation message of The Gospel. Doctrine was important, but as they saw it, it took second place to getting people saved.

They saw the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists as people who were too legalistic and who often would put law above grace. They saw them as a new form of Pharisees who put all their emphasis on The Law while tending to

be short on God's Grace.

As you will see later, these differences permeated their entire Christian lives even down to the types of hymns they wrote and the language of the prayers they prayed.

The point is that the Evangelicals felt the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists placed far too much importance on doctrine and tradition and ignored the most important thing of all, which as they saw it, was saving souls.

The Traditionalists/Doctrinalists, although they too were certainly interested in salvation and the saving of souls, said that the Evangelicals were leading people astray because of a lack of attention to the details of theology and doctrine which could lead to error and heresy at some point. They were also very concerned, that as they saw it, the Evangelicals placed an improper emphasis on the emotions and an experiential component of faith which they found to be unnecessary.

The Evangelicals would then counter by saying that a person who had come to Christ and His saving Grace, even though he or she may never have all the fine points of doctrine and theology down, would at least make it to Heaven. They would have the joy of their salvation.

They also would look askance at the Traditionalist / Doctrinalists as people whom they saw as the modern-day Pharisees of the faith, holding all the forms of religion, but never fully putting it into practice and using it powerfully for Jesus.

So tension was struck between these two groups. Yet it seems to me that they both have something critical and necessary to offer The Church, something The Church can never do without.

Yet, they refused to see the value and importance of each other. In doing so, they purposefully forfeited what God would bring to The Church through each other and thereby they each chose to remain unbalanced in the practice of their faith.

Even today there is tension between people who would commonly call themselves Traditionalists / Doctrinalists and Evangelicals. Both groups certainly see that there is some value in the other group which is necessary. Yet, purely speaking they will do everything they can to maintain the dominance of their own position both in their individual Christian lives and in the congregations they join.

In his article, Dr. Gillespie calls the Evangelicals, The Conversionists. He makes a good point about the tensions between the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists, which again he calls The Confessionalists and the Evangelicals which he calls The Conversionists.

"The first revival and all of the revivals that followed in the 19th Century challenged the basic assumption of Confessionalism, the assumption that faith is primarily a matter of the mind. Orthodox conviction was of no avail unless the truth of the Gospel touched the human heart in a life-transforming manner. The Revivalists were as a matter of honest fact as orthodox as the Orthodox. But it was their insistence upon a personal experience of God's transforming

grace that introduced Conversionism into the Reformed Traditionalists.

The Confessionalists were suspicious of this new emphasis primarily because of its emotional excesses. It is perhaps not incidental that the Confessionalists were by and large of Scots and Scots-Irish stock, a breed of humanity not widely known for its enthusiasm, let alone its emotional demonstrativeness. However that may be, the Confessionalists were equally suspicious of Revivalism because of the authority it seemed to assign to the faith experience, an authority which they perceived to be in competition with the Word of God. For these reasons, the Conversionist emphasis created enormous tensions in the life of the Presbyterian Church. Three times prior to the Civil War, these tensions proved to be more than the church could bear.

Three times it resulted in open schism between the so-called Old Lights and New Lights, between the Old Side and New Side, between the Old School and New School.

The latter split occurred in 1837, when the Confessionalists of the Old School excised the Conversionists of the New School, lock, stock and barrel by action of the General Assembly. This wound in the body remained unhealed for three decades."

So it was. Two important, vital and necessary facets of the Christian Church saw themselves as more important than the other. Two important facets of the Christian Church preferred to be in competition with each other rather than seeing how they each could complement and

bring value to one another. In fact, two important facets of the Christian Church were trying to stamp each other out! This is certainly contrary to the balance called for in Philippians 2:3 where we read, *“Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility, count others better than yourselves.”*

Then came the third facet, which in the Presbyterian movement, never really entered into the mainstream of the denomination until the 1960's. Dr. Gillespie called this facet the “Culturalists.” I prefer to call them the “Charismatics.”

Let me just say that I am fully aware of the fact that the word “charismatic” is a loaded term. It means a lot of different things to a lot of different people. Yet for the moment, it will only mean that it represents the group of people within the Christian Church, who began to place primary emphasis on not only a personal relationship with Jesus, but also a very openly, joyful, emotional, and demonstrative expression of their faith with a special emphasis on The Person and Works of The Holy Spirit.

This facet of folks, like facets before it, caused those in the other two facets to become nervous and suspicious. The Traditionalists/Doctrinalists were already upset enough with the Evangelicals. Yet, as the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists saw it, the Charismatics only added to the abandonment of sound doctrinal practice started by the Evangelicals. An emphasis on a more experiential side of faith, which went beyond even that of the Evangelicals, was very threatening to the Traditionalist/Doctrinalists. Even the Evangelicals

looked on the Charismatics as having gone too far in their experience of faith, while the Charismatics felt they had recaptured the true faith experience of the New Testament. They claimed to have gone back to the Book of Acts in the ways they worshipped and practiced their faith in their congregations.

They would tell you that unless you worshipped, praised, and practiced your faith in God with an emphasis on the experiential side of the faith, you were seriously lacking in your faith, witness and commitment to Christ.

The Charismatics felt that the Traditionalists / Doctrinalists were far too legalistic in the practice of their faith and that although the Evangelicals had made a major step in the right direction, they were seen to have stopped short of the full enjoyment and experience of worshipping and following Jesus in The Holy Spirit.

The Charismatics were indeed concerned with the saving of souls, as were the Evangelicals, but they tended to find themselves at times more wrapped up in experiencing their faith, than in sharing it.

Meanwhile, the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists accused the Charismatics of going whole hog in the direction of experience, while forgetting the foundations and traditions and doctrines of the faith.

So once again, another vital facet of the Christian Church which is supposed to work in concert with the others, is instead found to be in conflict with them. All

three of these facets found themselves vying for position and power within the Christian Church and each of them failed to see the total value and brilliance of the others.

Instead, feeling threatened by the others, each tried to keep the others from shining. In direct contradiction to Scripture in I Corinthians 12, each facet had its own way of saying to the other, "We have no need of you."

Yet it seems to me, based on Scripture, that all three of these facets are indeed facets of the Christian Church of Jesus Christ which were intended to be in concert, rather than in conflict with each other. As we will see, all three have their Biblical basis. Yet, it seems rather rare that the leadership of a congregation will identify and attempt to maximize within their local congregation, all three of these facets. In most situations where these facets exist in a congregation, one seems to dominate the others. Each group seems to feel that each and every Christian and congregation can move ahead in their faith with full power by majoring in just their particular theological position. The best situation that is often heard is a call for tolerance. Yet to tolerate simply means to put up with, as opposed to seeing the value in the other.

Ironically, as the people of one facet try to power the others out of existence, they forfeit and miss the power and blessings which God intended them to have and experience by working in concert with the other facets of the Christian faith.

The title of this book is *Balancing Your Faith*. In my opinion, when the three major facets spoken of in this

book are more concerned with how to compete with each other than they are in complementing each other in the balance and unity that The Lord intended, they are all missing so much of what Christ would have for them and their ministry. Without seeing it, they are preventing their congregations from experiencing the fullness that God actually intends through these different facets which He Himself has ordained.

Look at it this way. There are different terms in the Navy which pertain to how fast a ship is moving. There are different degrees of forward movement. The Captain will give the order to the engine room as to how much power the ship should have and depending on that power, the ship will move at certain speeds. There is "All Ahead One Third," "All Ahead One Half," "All Ahead Three Quarters," and "All Ahead Full." "All Ahead One Third" simply means what it says. They are moving ahead, but only at one-third of the full power available.

I suggest to you that when any congregation bickers over the three facets described in this chapter, insisting on focusing on only one, that congregation will often end up moving ahead at only one third full power.

The only way a Christian or congregation can move ahead in their ministry with full power is to incorporate in their lives, the full blessings of all three of these facets. One has to wonder why anyone would prefer to be anything but a full powered Christian.

It is very important to note once again, as I said earlier in this chapter, that these three facets have historically

been clearly aligned with the three Persons of The Trinity. Since the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists align themselves more closely with God The Father they have been given the title “God The Father Christians.” Much of what they do focuses on the works of The Father and His Word and doctrine.

The Evangelicals, on the other hand, associate themselves very closely with salvation and the winning of souls. Therefore, they have become aligned traditionally with The Person and works of Jesus, The Son and are called “God The Son Christians.” The Charismatics tend to align themselves with The Person and works of The Holy Spirit and therefore are called “God The Holy Spirit Christians.”

As we will see later, each of these facets has also come up with their own hymns, styles of prayer and even styles of architecture and sanctuary design. However, as I said before, the harmony and full power of the message of The Gospel is missed if they all insist on only seeing the value of their own particular facet.

On a retreat that I led for a congregation once, I tried a little experiment to illustrate this fact through singing. I divided the large group of people into three smaller groups. I had one group pick out a very Traditionalist/Doctrinalist type hymn. Another group was asked to choose a famous Evangelical hymn from the time of The Great Awakening. The third group was asked to pick a more contemporary Charismatic chorus. On my signal, I asked them all to begin singing their song at the same time.

As they did, you can imagine the confusion and lack of harmony which existed. It was a perfect example of how the Christian Church today is out of harmony and balance with each other, due to each facet trying to sing their own song louder than the others.

Then, I had them all sing the same song at the same time. What a difference there was in that room! It was a living example of how different facets of the Christian Church can come together and sing the same tune for the Glory of God.

Various symbols have always been important to Christians. One of the symbols for The Trinity is an equilateral triangle. As you are probably aware, an equilateral triangle has the same length lines on each side and they intersect at the exact same angle, thus making the triangle perfectly balanced. If you were to remove one of the sides of the triangle, the rest would collapse.

Therefore, all three sides are equally necessary to give full support and balance. The same holds true with our relationship to The Trinity; God The Father, God The Son and God The Holy Spirit.

For any Christian or congregation to have the full power and balance of God in their lives, they must have a personal relationship with each Person of The Trinity living and ministering within them. I am sure that none of the people within these three facets of the Christian Church would ever deny the existence of The Trinity. They would each tell you that God The Father, God The Son, and God The Holy Spirit are vital to the life of any

congregation.

Yet, as was mentioned earlier, the unbalanced over-emphasis on only one Person of The Trinity can run the danger of flirting with a heretical monotheism, rather than proclaiming the fullness of The Blessed Trinity. Again, those who insist on “majoring” in just one Person of The Trinity are pretty much saying that The Church ought to move ahead at only one-third full spiritual power.

Without trying to be stereotypical or placing people in boxes, experience shows that within most congregations it is often the case that one of these facets is usually more predominant in the worship and life of that congregation than the other two.

It can be interesting and informative to do a little check on yourself and your own congregation to see where the primary emphasis lies for you. In the congregation I served in New York, I took the time one day to take that kind of poll with our Elders. After doing some teaching on the three facets of the Christian Church mentioned in this chapter, I passed around a sheet of paper in our study meeting and asked each Elder to write down where they each felt they predominantly came down in reference to these three facets.

When I got the papers back, it was incredible to see that the Elders had placed themselves almost equally in all three of the facets. So basically I had one third of our Elders identifying themselves predominantly as Traditionalists/Doctrinalists, one third as Evangelicals

and one third as Charismatics. That was balanced in one sense, but unless they each saw the real value of the other, issues would arise.

In spite of the fact that those Elders placed themselves in different facets of The Church, they did work together well. They worked hard at going beyond tolerance to real balance. They began to see that a congregation can never be in full spiritual balance and concert without all three facets being alive, being cultivated and being valued within the body of each individual congregation and within the lifestyle of each individual Christian.

As we prayed together that day one person, a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist, actually prayed and asked The Lord to bring into the congregation more of the life and the joy which he saw being experienced in the Charismatic facet of the faith.

Although it has been specifically mentioned earlier in this chapter, I would like to reemphasize that each one of the facets is extremely valuable and brings to each Christian and each congregation, something Christ desires them to have and without which they are operating at less than full power. Here is why.

Let us start with the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet. This facet is one that has extreme value. This facet is the foundation upon which our faith is built and from which we move forward to practice and live it out. Christians, congregations and entire denominations which have a weak doctrinal foundation, often find themselves in theological trouble and turmoil. In congregations with

weak doctrinal foundations, many doors are left open to homemade theology, poor teaching and various forms of heresy. Short of reading The Scriptures themselves, there is nothing quite like reading the great doctrinal confessions of The Church. We would be greatly lacking as Christians if we were in any way to minimize the importance of the historic confessions of The Church which instruct us in what we believe from Scripture.

Many times I have had people come to me and ask what The Church believes about certain things such as salvation or The Resurrection of Jesus Christ. I am so thankful that I can refer them to our Book of Confessions and show them things like *The Scots Confession* where it says this about The Resurrection.

"We undoubtedly believe, since it was impossible that the sorrows of death should retain in bondage the Author of life, that our Lord Jesus crucified, dead, and buried, who descended into hell, did rise again for our justification, and the destruction of him who was the author of death, and brought life again to us who were subject to death and its bondage.

We know that his resurrection was confirmed by the testimony of his enemies, and by the resurrection of the dead, whose sepulchers did open, and they did rise and appear to many within the city of Jerusalem. It was also confirmed by the testimony of his angels, and by the senses and judgment of his apostles and of others, who had conversation, and did eat and drink with him after his resurrection." (*The Book of Confessions, Chapter X, Paragraph 3.10*)

The Traditionalists/Doctrinalists are absolutely necessary to have in our congregations. Anyone who sees them as unnecessary is making a big mistake.

The same goes for the Evangelicals. The wonderful zeal and love for witnessing to the power of salvation in Jesus Christ, that souls may be won, is something the Evangelicals bring to our congregations. Without the evangelical spirit this facet brings, Christianity would be in danger of doing nothing but sitting around and debating theology and doctrine all day long. They would be experts in the faith while never drawing anybody to it.

Evangelicals have told us for decades the importance of fulfilling The Great Commission. They urge us to put our doctrine into practice. Yet, without the solid doctrine the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists bring us, the Evangelicals would soon lose their way, finding themselves adrift in a world of doctrinal quicksand which seems so prevalent today. It is vital that these two facets work together to complement and strengthen each other, as opposed to being in conflict and competition with each other.

Traditionalists/Doctrinalists and Evangelicals working together in harmony rather than discord, is critical to a solid Christian witness. In Romans we are told by Paul that one of the issues he faced was people who had a zeal for sharing The Lord, but whose zeal was not enlightened. He said in Romans 10:2, *"I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened."* In other words their witness had more heat than light. Jesus never said Christians are the heat of the world. He said they are the

light of the world.

Our witness for Him to others has to be enlightened by His Word, His doctrine and His Spirit. It can be a pitiful thing to see someone trying to share his or her faith without being grounded in The Word and sound doctrine and filled with His Spirit.

Traditionalist/Doctrinalists and Evangelicals must never be seen as antagonists in the Christian Church. In reality, they are vital to each other and the spreading of The Gospel.

Finally, the Charismatics bring to the life, worship and ministry of The Church a necessary emphasis on the wonderful power of The Holy Spirit. The Bible is clear that The Church is to be empowered for her ministry by the living Holy Spirit of Christ with The Gifts and Fruit of The Holy Spirit at work in her ministry.

The Charismatics bring to us that critical awareness of The Holy Spirit. The Charismatics call us to appreciate and appropriate the joy of our salvation. The Charismatics call us to allow The Holy Spirit to breathe His Life into our doctrine and our zeal for sharing Christ through evangelism. Yet, the Charismatics alone are not sufficient for Christianity to run at full power. The Charismatics must be in concert with the zeal to save souls and the enlightenment of good doctrine.

So, if in your congregation, you see only one of these three facets being predominant, chances are things are spiritually out of balance. That does not mean that

ministry is not being done. It does not mean folks there are not Christians. But it does mean that the ministry there could come into much greater balance and a greater fullness of what God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit intend to see happen within and through your congregation and the people in it.

If in your congregation or your individual Christian life, only one of these three facets of ministry is prevailing, that is clearly happening at the expense of the other two. If so, two-thirds of the fullness of the power of God which He intends for your congregation or for you to experience individually in the practice of your faith, may be missing. Proper balance in The Lord, with all facets shining and being in concert, is the goal set forth in The Word which God has given to His people. Anything short of that fullness falls short of the intention which The Lord would have for you.

Let me close this chapter by saying that even folks in the secular world realize that balance is vitally important and they even sometimes draw those conclusions from Scripture. I was walking down the street one day and saw a tractor-trailer with the words, "Tree of Life Food Products" written on the side of it.

There, on the side of that truck was the logo of the tree of life obviously having come from Genesis and The Garden of Eden. It represented a perfectly balanced food line that would bring full nourishment to those who ate from it.

The tree of life that we see in The Garden of Eden in

Genesis and the tree of life that we see in The Book of Revelation, both represent the beauty of the balance of God and His Spiritual Fruit which is to be born in His Church. As we strive toward serving The Lord fully, let us strive toward having a full and personal relationship with all three Persons of The Trinity which will then bear more of The Fruit of The Spirit in our lives, our congregations and our ministries.

CHAPTER FIVE

OUR THEOLOGICAL CENTER OF GRAVITY

As I have been sharing thus far in the book, balance is very important. It is important in a number of ways and especially in the way we as Christians share our faith, proclaim our unity, and do our ministry.

When it comes to balance there is a phrase which is very important. That phrase is “center of gravity.” The center of gravity is the exact point at which something is perfectly balanced. If you have a see-saw for instance, the center of gravity is the point at which the see-saw can be perfectly balanced over the fulcrum. Every single thing on the planet has a point that is its own center of gravity. The cover of this book shows a tire swing nicely balanced by 3 equal chains.

In many situations, finding out exactly where that point is, can be critical. For instance, if you load an aircraft with people and baggage without being aware of or paying attention to where the exact center of gravity is for that particular aircraft, keeping it stable in flight may become a very difficult thing to achieve.

The three facets of the faith that we talked about in the previous chapter, the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists, the Evangelicals and the Charismatics, ought to be able to shine in each and every congregation and in each and every Christian. Yet, we also discussed the difficulties which come up when each facet tends to see the others as factions instead of facets. I pointed out that rather than

complementing each other, they often compete for power against each other. Certainly we Christians point to Jesus as our example and The One we should emulate and follow. Scripture teaches us that we are to constantly become more like Christ. We are to be Christ-like Christians. That being the case, we should take a close look at what Christ is really like so we are aware of what to model and follow. When you do that, you will see that all three facets mentioned in this book, come to a perfect point of balance in Him. He is in fact our “Theological Center of Gravity.”

If that is true and if it is also true that He is our example, then that says something very important to us about how we should treat these facets both in our congregations corporately and in our Christian lives individually. So let us see how all three of these facets, the Traditionalist/Doctrinalists, the Evangelicals, and the Charismatics are all fully balanced and expressed in Him.

Let us first take a look at Jesus as a Traditionalist / Doctrinalist . In Paul's letter to the Romans, and in II Timothy 4:1-5, we see that The Law and good doctrine are things which are important to maintain in our congregations. In fact, if doctrine is compromised, our integrity as the Christian Church and our witness to the world can be compromised as well. Jesus clearly was a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist. In Him, the Traditionalist / Doctrinalist facet shone brightly and appropriately. When it came to The Law and proper doctrine, He gave it great importance. In Matthew 5:17, we see from Jesus that The Law is good. He said, *“Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to*

fulfill them."

In the next verse, verse 18, we see that Jesus says that as long as Heaven and earth exist, not one jot or tittle of God's Law will pass away. We see that Jesus came to fulfill The Law, not to do away with it. The proper Law of God and good doctrine were things Jesus was always willing to support and live by in His actions.

Jesus used doctrine and The Word of God the way it should be used. He stood on God's Word and Law. He built on its foundation. He found strength in it. It is interesting to note in Matthew 4, that it was The Word of God and the doctrine that came from it, that was the biggest weapon Jesus used against the devil in Jesus' time of temptation in The Wilderness. Each and every time the devil tempted Him, Jesus answered with The Word of God and the doctrine found therein.

In the first temptation, after Jesus had had nothing to eat for 40 days, the devil goes after Jesus' physical hunger and tempts Him to turn some stones into bread, which He certainly could have done. In fact, Jesus was being tempted by the devil to use His powers in a way to serve Himself. Satan was tempting Jesus to rely on His own power and to rely on material things for His strength rather than turning to God for such things.

We often see Satan doing the same things in our congregations and in our own lives today. Most of us have been tempted more than once to place our faith and strength in things we can do and produce for ourselves, as opposed to that which God can do and provide for us.

When we are tempted in those ways, we must do as Jesus did. We have to turn to God's Word to be strengthened and corrected. We have to have God's Word as our doctrinal base, foundation and moral compass to keep us from getting off course and lost.

In Matthew 4:4, Jesus answered the devil and said, "*It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'*" Jesus thwarted the devil by using the good doctrine in God's Word to correct him. So often in our lives and in our congregations, when faced with temptations and confusion, we fail to seek out God's Word. We too often forfeit the heavenly doctrine and direction put down for us in Scripture. Jesus was no stranger to God's Word and to the doctrine it contained, and He used it correctly time and time again in a perfectly balanced way. We can all stand to ask ourselves how well we follow that example in our own lives.

In the second temptation, we see the devil trying to tempt Jesus to throw Himself off the temple in a way that would be foolish. He is tempted to do something that would be a leap of foolishness rather than a leap of faith. The devil tells Him to jump off the temple trusting God and trusting that His angels would rescue Him before He hit the ground.

Once again, Jesus goes to doctrine from God's Word in Matthew 4:7 and says, "*Again it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord, your God.'*" The Word of God, The Sword of The Spirit, once again cuts through the temptation of Satan, and allows the power of God to prevail.

In his third temptation, the devil attempts to get Jesus to bow down and worship him. He tempts Jesus with worldly power. As if Jesus did not already have it in His power, Satan tempts Him with being able to rule the world. In Matthew 4:10, Satan is told by Jesus once again from The Word of God, "*Begone, Satan! for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and Him only shall you serve.'*" In our lives, we are often tempted to serve other gods. If we are honest, and we do a periodic check, we can often find other gods on the altars and thrones of our lives. We often allow other gods to rule kingdoms of our lives which we have yet to turn over to The Lordship and Kingship of Christ. We often fail to study God's Word and the doctrine of Christ which is intended to serve us as a defense for and corrective to such temptations.

It is quite clear that Jesus was a Traditionalist / Doctrinalist . Jesus was a man who knew His doctrine well and used doctrine properly in all situations. He would never say that we can do without proper doctrine.

In His many encounters with the Pharisees, He would often show His capability in the area of doctrine. So many times the Pharisees tried to snare Him in their man-made doctrinal traps, yet Jesus would answer them and correct them with God's Word and the true doctrine contained in it.

Chapter 6 of The Gospel of Luke begins by showing two instances in which the Pharisees tried to accuse Jesus and His disciples of breaking The Law. The first had to do with Jesus' disciples picking grain in the grain fields

on the Sabbath. The other had to do with Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath.

In both instances, the Pharisees were trying to prove that they were working on the Sabbath and therefore, breaking The Law. In the first instance, Jesus comes back with the truth of God's Word and shows that even King David ate the Bread of the Presence in the temple when He was hungry and that was the right thing to do on the Sabbath.

With regard to healing the man, He shows that ministry to human beings is a higher order of necessity than keeping a law that man has stretched into something that God never meant it to be. Luke 6:9 shows Jesus asking the Pharisees a very poignant question. It reads, *"I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"* Jesus put the Pharisees all perfectly in their place, when in Mark 7:6-9, He says these powerful words, *"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' You leave the commandments of God, and hold fast to the tradition of men. And He said to them, 'You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition!'"*

Doctrine, of course, is important, but when doctrine itself becomes worshipped and is given a higher place than The Word of God itself, when it becomes the "all in all" of a Christian's life or a congregation's focus in ministry, things will get out of spiritual balance.

In II Timothy 4:3-4, we read these words, *"For the time*

is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths."

So much of the world and many Christians today have wandered into myths. So many people today are practicing a faith which is more of their own making, than that of The Lord they claim to serve. Many of the heresies down through the ages, even to the present day, have come about because people have refused to see and apply the sound doctrine found in God's Word to their lives. The examples are many and the results threaten us today just as The Word says in II Timothy 4:3-4 mentioned above.

People today wonder how a man like Joseph Smith, in a small town in up-state New York could start an entire religion based on the things of his own life. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, commonly called The Mormon Church, is the church Joseph Smith started and it has grown tremendously around the world. Yet, there is no traditional Christian Church on earth which sees Mormons as Christians. In fact, the doctrines they teach are far from that which The Bible teaches.

Christians who have taken the time to thoroughly study and grasp what the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints preaches and teaches are appalled at what they find. For instance, they are shocked to find that the church teaches that The Bible is not the only document considered to actually be God's Word.

In the official church document called "The Articles of

Faith of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," point 8 reads as follows: "*We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.*"

This church also teaches that we as humans today, will one day become gods and rule our own worlds as God rules this one. They also teach that God was once a man just like us, but was promoted to being the god who was given this world to rule.

Such things can be formulated and made up by anyone who wanders from the doctrine found in God's Word. Joseph Smith had his own way of looking at God's Word. He did not use God's Word as the standard by which he measured his doctrine. He made up his own doctrine and then measured God's Word by it. Again, II Timothy 4 tells us, that people will wander away from God's Word and find themselves putting their faith in things that are false. They will wander into things which may appear to be truth, but in fact, are anything but true doctrine.

Joseph Smith did it as did Mary Baker Eddy as she started The Church of Christ Scientist commonly called Christian Science. Charles Taze Russell did it as he started Jehovah's Witnesses. L. Ron Hubbard did it as he started Scientology and Muhammad did it as he started Islam. One thing is for sure. People will wander into myths and untruth when they cease to focus on and follow what God's Word teaches and the doctrine which comes from it.

In their emphasis on proper doctrine, the

Traditionalists/Doctrinalists are correct. The Christian Church cannot do without it. She will otherwise stray, wandering into untruth and silly myths.

Interestingly, in many congregations today, the emphasis on good doctrine called for by the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists, is barely visible. Many people feel that if they can justify it, they can do it. They often fail to check to see if what they feel is right is justified and upheld by God's Word and by the sound doctrine found in it. It seems so long ago that the men of Princeton were in the forefront of our congregations. Yet, they were correct in calling us to never discount or minimize sound Biblical doctrine. Many congregations today could use a renewed focus and a renewed emphasis on proper doctrine which would surely serve well all other aspects of the practice of our faith.

Something that continues to amaze me as a pastor is how lost many laypeople seem to be when it comes to having a good grasp of sound Biblical doctrine and how to put it to practice in their faith. It has been my experience that when laypeople are introduced to good doctrine, the Holy Spirit quickens in them the importance of living by God's Word and the doctrine that comes from it.

They are more open to learning how to practically apply their faith through the doctrine found in Scripture. Yet, it seems that it has been decades since a firm emphasis has been placed on training up people with a good doctrinal foundation. Let me show you how the Christian Church is paying the price for allowing the

brilliance of one of its important Godly facets to become dull.

The Barna Group has for years, done research polls of people who say they are Christians to see where they stand on different Biblical and doctrinal subjects. One that they did a few years ago was very telling and it shows how far one can wander into myths and away from good Biblical doctrine and teaching.

Let me show you what people calling themselves Christians, actually said was fact in their opinion.

40% said the devil is just a symbol of evil and he was never an actual being.

38% said that The Holy Spirit is simply just a symbol of good and was really never a Person of God.

This next one really shows you the confusion out there today.

49% of those who say that The Holy Spirit is just a symbol of good, also take the position that what The Bible teaches is totally accurate.

Interestingly enough, The Bible teaches that The Holy Spirit is actually The Third Person of The Trinity and is God as opposed to just a symbol of good.

The next one is an amazing example of how far into myths people can wander.

22% of those polled said they felt that Jesus actually sinned while He was here on earth.

The next one shows just how uneducated and uninformed we can be in our faith.

20% said that they felt that The Bible, The Book of Mormon and The Koran are just all different expressions of the same spiritual truth.

It is obvious that a whole lot of people have left the doctrinal rails designed to keep them on track in their faith. However, that was never the case for Jesus. As our Theological Center of Gravity, doctrine always had its proper place in His life.

Many Christians today have also been drawn into the myth that same-sex marriage is Biblical and that it is something God fully supports and blesses. If you happen to be one of those Christians, or are aware of someone who is, I would encourage you to seriously look into the facts concerning same-sex marriage and do the necessary homework before settling on the conclusion that same-sex marriage is Biblical.

In fact, I have written an in-depth research paper on the subject called *"Homosexuality: Blessing or Sin? The Facts Many Pro Same-Sex Christians Are Keeping Very Quiet!"*

You can find it at PastorJohn500.blogspot.com and if you are over 18, I suggest you consider reading it. Thousands of people have accessed it online. Yet there

has not been a single pro same-sex marriage Christian in the country who has been able to refute what is presented in the paper. They can ignore it, they can call it homophobic and whatever else they would like to say, but none have been able to refute the facts presented in it nor answer the questions I pose. I have promised that the day somebody successfully does so, I will apologize for writing it and will take it down from the Internet.

Good Biblical doctrine is essential to our faith and to preventing us from wandering into myths, error and heresy. It is clear that when we look closely at Jesus, He was not a stranger to doctrine. He upheld doctrine as critically important to the practice of His faith and His ministry. He was never one to downplay the importance of doctrine in the life of the Christian Church, nor should we.

Yet, it is also clear that Jesus was more than just a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist. As we will see shortly, the other facets being discussed in this book were also facets in Jesus which He counted equally important to those of doctrine.

It is very important to see that although Jesus encompassed within Himself all three of these facets, He always kept them in the proper balance and always used them correctly. He never went to extremes in one facet or the other and always found the appropriate times and outlets for each one. He taught us that there were times which were more doctrinally oriented than charismatically oriented. He also taught the opposite. Yet He never taught that any of them were unnecessary or

could be put aside in favor of the other.

Unlike so many today, Jesus never found these facets to be in competition or in conflict with each other. Yet so many of our congregations today find themselves majoring in only one of these three facets, while vigorously opposing the facets they may fear or count as less important. Whenever this happens, that congregation or that individual Christian loses. All three facets were designed to complement one another and to be called on and used at the appropriate times. They are all to be used in the manner that we see them used by Christ, our “Theological Center of Gravity.”

However, some congregations and Christians are threatened by one facet or the other and we will talk about that in a later chapter. Yet Jesus serves as our example of how to keep the proper balance of all three facets in our congregations, ministries and individual Christian lives.

None can be left out. It is vital that all three facets work together complementing one another, strengthening one another and working in concert and balance with each other, rather than being in conflict and competition.

As our example, Jesus teaches us the way we should behave. If He behaved in such a way as to value and use doctrine to show the correct ways of following God and standing against the devil, we should do the same. Scripture tells us clearly, that the doctrine in God’s Word is to be studied and held without compromise.

It is clear in Scripture that Jesus valued, embodied and lived out the emphasis and importance of proper doctrine in His life. Tell me then how we, as His followers, can do any less than to live out that example after Him.

The next facet which comes into perfect balance in Jesus is that of Him being an Evangelical. Who in the world would ever question the fact that Jesus came to evangelize the world? Scripture clearly shows us that Jesus was an Evangelical in every respect. In Matthew 28:19-20, He gave us The Great Commission which tells us clearly that He expects us to be Evangelicals as well. In The Great Commission it is interesting to note the importance of balance that Jesus places before us.

¹⁹“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

In verse 19, we are told to make disciples of all nations. We are to evangelize. We are to go out, share our faith and make disciples and followers of Jesus. Yet, notice, we are to do so in the name of all three Persons of The Trinity, in the name of The Father, and of The Son and of The Holy Spirit. As we evangelize, we are to keep in proper balance all the aspects and facets of The Godhead; The Trinity.

Jesus goes on in verse 20 to teach us to “*observe all that I have commanded you.*” That is, He tells us to obey, and to do the things He has told us to do. Yet, the way we find out what to do is to study His Word and to have correct

doctrine. Then we are to share what we have learned with others, that their lives might be transformed as well. Notice that later in that same verse 20, we are told our evangelism is to be done in the context of, "*I am with you always,*"

In that we have the balance of The Holy Spirit being brought to bear on evangelism as Jesus promises to be with us always, dwelling inside us. In John 14:17, He promises to live right inside us through the indwelling of The Holy Spirit. So Jesus makes it clear that we are all to be Evangelicals, but we are to do that balanced by the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist and Charismatic facets, all of which are perfectly balanced in Him and His ministry.

So many other examples in the life of Jesus show the importance of the Evangelical facet of His faith as He reached out to others. It is the same Evangelical facet we should have in our faith as we reach out to others today.

The encounter in John 3 with Nicodemus is a classic example of the Evangelical facet shining brightly in Jesus. Here we see a man who was searching for God and found himself standing right in front of Him.

Yet, Nicodemus had questions. Nicodemus had doubts. Nicodemus was searching for the truth. Jesus is The Truth and was willing to share The Truth with others. Our calling as Christians is both to know The Truth through God's Word and the good doctrine in it and then to share The Truth in the spirit of evangelism guided by The Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke with Nicodemus and shared with him the importance of being born again. Keeping

things balanced, He also talked about the power of The Holy Spirit and how God works in His people.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Nicodemus was one who knew The Law and doctrine and the traditions of the faith very well. Yet, he lacked the enlightenment that made his zeal worthwhile. It was Jesus, The Light of The World, Who brought the proper enlightenment and evangelical zeal to Nicodemus' doctrinal side and added the power of The Holy Spirit to make it practical.

We never see in Scripture exactly how Nicodemus responded to Jesus. Yet, we do know that he was not present at the vote when Jesus was condemned by the Sanhedrin of which he was a member.

Many scholars have assumed and perhaps correctly, that Nicodemus indeed did become the Christian Jesus came to make him be. If he did, it seems to me that he would have been a very balanced Christian. He would have already had the foundation of the Old Testament and doctrine of God and then Jesus showed him what it meant to evangelize and share the faith.

Jesus also told him and taught him about the power of The Holy Spirit, which you can never see or touch, but which Jesus promised would be living right inside of us as we accepted Him as our Savior.

While many of us call ourselves Evangelicals, we often fail to openly share our faith with others. Certainly the Gift of Evangelism as stated in Scripture is a Gift of The Holy Spirit. The Spiritual Gift of Evangelism is given to

some people and they become evangelists. Yet, one can be an Evangelical without being an evangelist. Even if you never receive the Gift of Evangelism, you should still be an Evangelical, willingly sharing your faith in Christ with others and allowing the facet of evangelism to shine brightly in your life.

Another good example of Jesus teaching us to be Evangelicals comes to us from Luke 8:16. There we read about the light under the bushel. Jesus tells us not to put our light under a bushel. He says there that *"No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light."*

Once again, Jesus tells us to let our light shine. Once again, Jesus teaches us to let the facet of evangelism show forth in our congregations and in our own Christian lives. I certainly realize that sharing your faith with others can be a very intimidating and difficult thing for many to do. However, there are lots of books and videos that can teach you how to do that and I suggest you get hold of some of them, because Jesus calls us to share our faith in Him with others. Lots of people have written about how to do just that in an effective and easier way than you might feel is currently possible. I had to learn to do it myself. So if you have not already done so, let me encourage you to get started in learning how to more effectively share your faith with others. A couple of books I could recommend are "Gentle Persuasion" by Joseph Aldrich and "Witnessing Without Fear" by Bill Bright.

Some of the greatest times of faith in our nation were

the times of the great revivals. Some of our greatest evangelical hymns come from those days. Great evangelists such as Charles Finney and Jonathan Edwards were powerfully used by God. When evangelical fires are allowed to burn brightly, the souls of men and women are saved and changed forever.

Once again, we see in our congregations today, the stifling influence of people who feel they can do whatever they please. Evangelism is not seen so much anymore as a mandate from Christ which The Great Commission says it should be. Rather it is seen as something that you do when you feel like doing it as long as it never invades or bothers anybody else's privacy. It is like we feel we should wait to be asked about our faith before we share it. If you would suggest to men like Charles Finney and Billy Graham that we should wait until people say they are ready to hear The Gospel before sharing it with them, they would feel as though you had compromised their very calling in life.

As one person said, it seems today that "The Great Commission" has become "The Great Suggestion."

In the United States today Christians are caving in to political correctness and are far too often willing to back off from sharing The Gospel with others. Yet our faith is not based on being politically correct. Our faith is based on truth and the Love of God. Yes, we should be concerned about manners and politeness and loving people in the proper ways when we witness to them, but if we do not witness to them until they ask us about our faith, we are disobeying Christ, plain and simple. I am so

thankful that the people who witnessed to me never waited until I asked them to share Christ with me. If they had, I would likely still be lost today.

Christ has called us to evangelize others, that is to share our faith in Him with them and there are many ways to accomplish that goal. There is friendship or relational evangelism. There are revivals and evangelical meetings. As I said earlier, there are plenty of books and videos that teach you how to do this.

The bottom line is that we must be willing to learn how to share our faith and then do it, thus letting the Evangelical facet of our lives shine more brightly for Christ. Jesus Himself was The Great Commission in the flesh. As “The Theological Center of Gravity” of our faith, the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet and the Evangelical facet were in perfect balance in Him. They went together and dovetailed as only The Lord can make it be. That is the example He has set for you and me. It is our job to follow his example and share our faith with others.

What I am going to say next might raise a few eyebrows, but get ready because here it is. Jesus was a Charismatic! Now as I mentioned earlier, the definition of a Charismatic varies greatly depending on who you might be. There are some who will tell you that you must have The Gift of Tongues to be classified as a Charismatic. Others will tell you that to be a Charismatic you must belong to a charismatically oriented congregation. There are others who have other definitions they would put forth for what a real Charismatic happens to be

However, I prefer the definition given to us in I Corinthians 12. It is there that we see what it truly means to be a Charismatic. In Corinth, the Apostle Paul was dealing with a difficult situation in a difficult congregation. The problems were such that the different Gifts of The Holy Spirit were being used improperly and selfishly.

People were in competition over The Gifts rather than in concert. It is obvious from the way I Corinthians 12 begins that the problems were many. Paul says in verse 1, "*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed.*" Notice the problem. The people were uninformed about Spiritual Gifts. Their pastor was writing to give them what God had to say about the proper use of Spiritual Gifts.

He goes on to say in verses 4-7 these words. "*Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*"

We learn something quite specific from this passage. We learn that The Bible says that to each believer in Christ Jesus, there is given a Gift of The Holy Spirit for the common good. The Greek word, χάρισμα which is pronounced "charisma" is what gets translated in English as "gift." It is a grace or free Gift from The Holy Spirit and can never be earned. We are told that each person who believes in Jesus as their Savior and Lord is given a "charisma," or Gift from The Holy Spirit. Scripture says these Spiritual Gifts are varied. Yet, they come from the

same Holy Spirit, and they are for the purpose of building up the Christian Church. As a Christian you may actually be unaware of which Spiritual Gift or Gifts you have been given. So it is important that you find out which Gift or Gifts you have and how to use them Biblically.

Unfortunately, the Corinthians were using their Spiritual Gifts poorly and were causing dissension, rather than harmony.

Nonetheless, each person who sincerely believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord and has asked Him into his or her life, has also asked in The Trinity, which certainly includes the Holy Spirit. That being the case, The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer and gives that person at least one Spiritual Gift.

When speaking of The Holy Spirit in John 14:16-17 Jesus says these words. *“And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.”*

Now I am aware of the fact that there are brothers and sisters in the faith who have a lack of agreement over the issue of The Holy Spirit and the indwelling thereof. Some people see salvation as one event, and the indwelling of The Holy Spirit as a second experience which is always accompanied by particular Spiritual Gifts. I concur with Billy Graham who says that when Jesus comes in, so does The Holy Spirit. It is that simple.

I see it this way. When Jesus comes in, so does The Holy Spirit and He lights the flame of The Holy Spirit in

us. When a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, The Light of The Holy Spirit is lit and begins to burn within them. How big that flame becomes and how much it warms up and glows in the life of that person is yet to be seen. After that time, a person can allow that flame to be turned up in their life or they can quench it. It is their choice. In fact we are told in I Thessalonians 5:19 *"Do not quench the Spirit. . . ."* so quenching The Spirit must be something we actually can do. In my opinion people do it all the time. I did it for years.

A person can also use that flame of The Holy Spirit in an irresponsible way so that it burns things down and causes division and strife as many Christians in Corinth were obviously doing.

If you will, envision a furnace in a house. When the flame inside that furnace is under control and burning correctly it will nicely warm the entire house. Yet were the flame to be quenched the house would become dangerously cold, or if it were allowed to burn out of control the house itself would be in danger of being burned down. Jesus lights the pilot light of His Spirit in us when He comes into our soul. How much we allow that flame to be turned up for His glory is up to us. As I said, it is even within our ability to quench The Holy Spirit in us and thereby allow ourselves to become spiritually cold and ineffective for Christ.

In his book, *The Holy Spirit*, Billy Graham speaks to this issue. He says:

"However, in my study of the Scriptures through the

years, I have become convinced that there is only one baptism with the Holy Spirit in the life of every believer, and that takes place at the moment of conversion. This baptism with The Holy Spirit was initiated at Pentecost, and all who come to know Jesus Christ as Savior share in that experience and are baptized with the Spirit the moment they are regenerated. In addition, they may be filled with the Holy Spirit; if not, they need to be..(p. 90)

I personally hold to the position of one baptism of The Holy Spirit which happens at our conversion to Christ, but of many fillings of His Spirit being possible beyond that moment. We all can benefit by being filled with The Holy Spirit. At different times in our lives we may feel that His flame in us has grown rather low or we have done something to quench it and we would like it turned up again. What we find ourselves longing for is a fresh and renewing filling of The Holy Spirit, versus a baptism of The Holy Spirit. We long to have our spiritual tank filled to the brim so that we may be empowered to do His work in this world.

The story is told that the famous Evangelist Dwight L. Moody often spoke about being “filled with The Holy Spirit” and that he preached that we should regularly seek being filled by The Holy Spirit in our lives. A couple of old ladies who sat near the front when he preached, approached him one day and asked him about this “filling of The Holy Spirit.” They asked why he always emphasized that one should be filled by The Holy Spirit on a regular basis. His answer was “Because I leak.” How right he was in that all of us can be in

situations where we can use a fresh filling of God's Spirit and all that He brings to us by dwelling and living right inside us. There is nothing like a full tank of God's Holy Spirit to keep you going in this world today.

Therefore, since every believer has been given a *charisma* or Gift of The Holy Spirit, in the most technical and Biblical sense that makes each believer in Christ a *charismatic*. Yet so often we fail to see and rejoice in the Charismatic facet of our faith that The Holy Spirit would bring us. Jesus always let the Charismatic facet of His faith shine through. As I said, Jesus was a Charismatic.

We certainly see in Scripture that Jesus used many of The Gifts of The Holy Spirit in ministering to those He came to serve. Gifts of evangelism, teaching, healing and pastoring, to mention a few, were all active in His ministry among us.

Just prior to the onset of His ministry, He was driven into The Wilderness by The Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil and it was The Holy Spirit in Him Who enabled Him to stand against the devil.

Just prior to His being sent into The Wilderness by The Holy Spirit, we have the scene at the end of Matthew 3 of the baptism of Jesus. At His baptism, we see that The Holy Spirit came down and dwelt in Jesus. It is The Holy Spirit Who must dwell in us if we are to be empowered to evangelize and if we are to be empowered to have eyes to read God's Word and stand on firm doctrine. Without

the empowering Love and Gifts of The Holy Spirit, our faith becomes flat and our doctrine becomes mere words and with that, our ability to withstand the devil is seriously compromised. So it was the Charismatic facet of The Holy Spirit in perfect balance in Jesus, which enabled Him to have the life and power of the ministry He shared on earth with us.

In Luke 10:21 we see more of how Jesus was a Charismatic. In this passage, God's Word tells us "*In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. . . .*" This follows on the heels of the victory of His disciples who had gone out and been empowered by The Holy Spirit to do ministry against the devil.

In another passage from Luke 1:41, we see Mary pregnant with Jesus and Elizabeth pregnant with John The Baptist. As they physically came close to one another and Mary greets Elizabeth, we are told that upon hearing Mary's greeting, John leaped in Elizabeth's womb and Elizabeth was filled with The Holy Spirit. All of this was a result of being in such close proximity to The Messiah, even while He was still in His mother's womb.

As one person put it, even in utero there was rejoicing in The Holy Spirit as John the Baptist, still in Elizabeth's womb, and Jesus still in Mary's womb, met each other and through the power of The Holy Spirit, John leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb. From the very beginning of the earthly ministry of Jesus, there was a Charismatic facet in Him that The Holy Spirit made shine.

In John 15:5-11, we see another very important aspect

of this facet of The Holy Spirit in our lives. In this passage, we see Jesus say that it is so vital that He abide in us and we abide in Him. As we invite Him in, He comes into us with the power of The Holy Spirit. As we abide in Him and stay connected to The Vine, The Fruit of The Holy Spirit is born in our lives. One of the other important things The Holy Spirit brings us is The Fruit of The Holy Spirit listed in Galatians. 5:22-23.

The Fruit of The Holy Spirit is one of the least taught subjects in our faith today. Even those in the Charismatic facet of the Church often ignore this vitally important subject. You can hear lots of sermons and teachings about The Gifts of The Holy Spirit, but very few about The Fruit of The Holy Spirit and without The Fruit of The Holy Spirit, God's Church is far less effective in the calling He has given us. Far too many Christians are so lacking in Spiritual Fruit that it is amazing. It is one of the reasons that they are out of balance spiritually when it comes to having a full relationship with The Holy Spirit. Those Fruit of The Holy Spirit are critical to us doing our ministry. Consider what it would be like trying to do ministry without the Spiritual Fruit of *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*.

As I have said, as Christians, we speak all the time about having a personal relationship with Christ as our Savior and Lord, but we almost never use those terms to describe our relationship with The Father or The Holy Spirit and we should. If we have what we feel is a personal relationship with Jesus and feel we can have anything less with The Father and The Holy Spirit, we are

fooling ourselves and are maintaining an unbalanced spiritual life that thwarts what God would like to do through us.

In John 15, Jesus speaks about bearing fruit and the only way that can happen is if we are connected to Jesus, The Vine. That happens as Christ dwells in us through The Holy Spirit. Take a look at Galatians 5:20-21 and see how you are doing with regard to bearing The Fruit of The Holy Spirit in your life each day.

In John 15:11 Jesus also says "*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*" Jesus had a joyful ministry. Even in the most difficult times, the joy and hope of The Holy Spirit were ever before Him and in Him. One of the things that is often lacking in the Christian Church today is the Spiritual Fruit of joy.

At times, it seems as if joy is the forbidden fruit of the Christian Church. I have heard more than one pastor preach about joy and never even mention that joy is a Fruit of the Holy Spirit. We all too often do not understand joy. When real joy happens in our congregations, some folks can actually get nervous, suspicious and upset. We think things are going very wrong, when in fact for the first time in years, things might just be going very right.

As a friend of mine put it, many of us in the Reformed Faith have "banished The Holy Spirit back to Heaven." He is right. For many Christians, it is as if The Holy Spirit should stay where He is in Heaven and leave us alone. We act like we can do just fine without Him. What a huge

mistake that is for any Christian or congregation to make!

Jesus was a man of joy and that joy came because He allowed the facet of The Holy Spirit to shine forth in His faith, in His life, in His ministry and in the example He set for us to follow. He would never have been The Messiah He was supposed to be without it. You and I will never be the Christians we are supposed to be without it either.

Yes, Jesus is a Charismatic, yet He is not just a Charismatic. He is also the “Theological Center of Gravity” where all things come into perfect balance. He is a Charismatic, but He is also an Evangelical and He is also a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist. All three facets are in perfect balance in Him. Therefore, if Jesus is our example, we too must be striving to bring into balance those areas of our faith and Christian life which may currently be out of balance.

Christians like you and I should consider becoming more balanced in our approach to the Traditionalist / Doctrinalist facet, the Evangelical facet, and the Charismatic facet of our faith. If Jesus is our example and we are to be like Him, we should be satisfied with nothing less than striving for the balance of all three of these facets of faith in us, which are so clearly expressed and lived out in Him.

Jesus often had to put to work in His ministry the balance which I am speaking about in this book. In John 8, we see Him facing a woman caught in adultery. The legalists of the day, the Pharisees, were trying to trap Jesus. They were trying to catch Him in a doctrinal snare.

Yet Jesus, knowing the doctrine well and knowing that the woman had transgressed The Law, went beyond The Law to God's Grace. Jesus never compromised The Law. Jesus allowed for the balance of God's Grace within the confines of The Law. As He addressed the woman who had been caught in adultery, He did not ignore The Law.

He told her clearly that what she had done was sinful and wrong and it had to stop. Then, in an evangelical way, He reached out and He loved her and He forgave her in the Grace of His Father. He then, through the power of The Holy Spirit, encouraged her to go and live her life not any longer in sin, but in the Love of The Lord.

The problem with so many of us today is that we get comfortable in just one of these facets and we try to make one size fit all. One size does not fit all. Diversity is planned by God to bring about spiritual stability and balance. In Jesus all three facets were in perfect balance, and each was used and put into practice at the most appropriate times.

On the other hand, in a way different from the legalists going too far, Paul dealt with those who would like the opposite to take place. In His letter to the Romans, we see that Paul was dealing with people who felt that God's Grace was so wonderful that it was alright to sin boldly so His Grace could be extended to them all the more. He addressed the issue in Romans 6:1 saying, *"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means!"*

In this case, they were willing to throw out The Law in

favor of God's Grace. Yet, Paul instructed them in The Lord that to do so would be foolish and completely unbalanced. God's Grace can never be used as an excuse for casting off The Law. Balance has to be kept.

The facets being spoken about in this book are certainly individually very important, but are only fully realized as they are in balance with each other. In this chapter we have seen what it looks like in Jesus, our "Theological Center of Gravity," to have all three facets in perfect spiritual balance. In the next chapter we will take a look at what happens when people refuse to follow that example and the consequences that come when they allow just one of these facets of faith to dominate in their lives at the expense of the other two .

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT SPIRITUAL OBSESSION LOOKS LIKE

We can now take a bit more practical look at what spiritual obsession looks like and the damage that can come from obsessing on only one of these three facets of God we are discussing in this book. Let us look first at how Jesus dealt with the Pharisees who insisted on obsessing on only the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet of their faith. It was the Pharisees who tried the hardest to discredit Jesus and as we've seen, they usually did so by trying to catch Him in some legalistic doctrinal trap. His evangelical zeal and His openness in The Holy Spirit was a threat to them. He did not fit into their mold, or job description if you will, of what a Messiah ought to be like.

The Pharisees were the guardians of The Law. The Pharisees were the ones who protected and upheld the importance of The Law. However, even though Jesus fully affirmed The Law, He had His greatest encounters of anger and conflict with the Pharisees. Was it because He disagreed with how they valued The Law? No. The problem was that although the value of The Law being upheld was important, it was also important not to obsess on The Law to the exclusion of other facets of their faith which their obsession was causing them to miss.

One of the problems that the Pharisees had was that they felt that keeping The Law perfectly was the way to get to Heaven, but God never said that was the case. In fact, those who study Old Testament theology will tell you that The Law is a grace gift. The Law was given as a gift to the people of God to keep them from falling into

and doing the wrong things in life. Abiding by it was good and doing so kept people out of trouble and danger and provided for a much better society, but keeping The Law was never intended to be the means to salvation.

Therefore, The Law was given as a gift of God to His people, who through their faith in Him, were already going to be in Heaven with God. Nonetheless, the Pharisees obsessed on The Law. They made The Law into something God never intended it to be. God gave The Law at Sinai as a grace gift to the people of God, but He did that *after* they had already placed their faith in Him as their God.

He never said then nor does He say now, that the way to Heaven is by keeping The Law. On this side of Christ's Resurrection, the way to Heaven is accepting through faith, what Christ did on The Cross to save us from the consequences of our sins. Moreover, keeping The Law can never erase the penalty that we owe for breaking it.

The penalty for breaking God's Law is clear. Scripture consistently tells us that the penalty for sinning against God is eternal death in hell.

The first sin by human beings took place when Adam and Eve ate from the tree God had told them to avoid. Doing so cost them dearly. In Genesis 2:17 we read . "*for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.*"

God made things crystal clear. He told Adam and Eve ahead of time that on the day they disobey Him and therefore sin against Him, they will die. Of course

we are aware of the fact that when they ate of that forbidden tree and sinned, they did not fall over and die right then and there.

So you might wonder what God meant by what He said to them. He meant that as a result of disobeying God and therefore committing sin, death now becomes a factor in human life and in all of creation. Therefore as a result of your sin, your life will end one day and you will die. Yet more important is the fact that the Hebrew language in this text also focuses on spiritual death, meaning that because of your sin you will not just die physically, but you will also die spiritually and forever, that is you will be consigned to hell forever as the penalty for sinning against God.

Now some might argue as to whether such a penalty is fair. After all God is a loving God and a forgiving God. How is it right for Him to send someone to hell just because they sinned against Him? Let me suggest that those who take that position fail to take seriously the gravity of what it means to sin against God. Sinning against God is not a “spiritual misdemeanor.” It is a “spiritual capital crime.” When we sin against God we are sinning against The Almighty God, The Creator of the universe, The Giver of life itself. We are sinning against the most Holy Being ever to exist. That is not a small deal. It is a huge deal! That is why The Bible teaches us that to do so, to sin against God, comes with huge and eternal consequences.

“For the wages of sin is death,” That is what God says in Romans 6:23. Wages are that which you and I

receive for doing something. Wages are what we have earned. In this case, the wages, or that which is earned for sinning against God, is eternal death in hell. The Bible tells us in many places that all of us have sinned and as a result, all of us deserve the penalty of eternal death in hell.

Yet that same verse of Romans 6:23 also says
“ . . . *but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

What that means is that in His Grace, God chose, even though He did not have to, to give us another chance, a chance to be rescued and saved from hell.

However, that would cost Him and His Son a tremendous price, because He could not just declare that we were all forgiven and be done with it. Just saying we were forgiven, would never get the penalty of our spending eternal death in hell paid. He had to come up with a plan that would both forgive us and would also pay our penalty of going to hell forever, thereby freeing us from that eternal punishment. Somebody had to pay for our penalty of spending eternity in hell or it would still be on us to do so.

That is precisely where Jesus comes in. I like to say that Jesus came to this earth on purpose with a purpose. That purpose was to ultimately go to The Cross and on The Cross give His life for our soul, thereby allowing us to be saved from hell and instead being given a place in Heaven.

On Good Friday something far more amazing was happening on that Cross to save us than just an average crucifixion. As bad as that was, Jesus never saved us by just being crucified. The penalty for our sins is not being crucified. The penalty for our sin is spending eternity in hell!

So when He was on The Cross a lot more was going on. God had to make His wrath and the punishment for our sins, literally what it would be like for each of us to spend eternity in hell, to fall on Jesus instead of us. On that Cross, God put Jesus through our personal eternity in hell. Isaiah spoke of it nearly 700 years before it happened. On The Cross Jesus experienced what it would be like for every person who has ever lived, lives now or ever will live, to spend eternity in hell! In Isaiah 53:6 we read, "*But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved.*" Good News Version.

Because of what Jesus did to pay our penalty of hell on The Cross, we can have the option of going to Heaven instead. We can be saved. We can be rescued from hell. In Matthew 1:21, regarding Mary, an angel tells Joseph that, ". . . " *she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save His people from their sins.*" The name Jesus means "rescuer." That is The Good News. He came to save us from hell.

Yet we have to acknowledge and accept that gift and ask Jesus to be our Savior. Unless we do that, what He did for us will never be applied to our lives and we will end up having to pay for our own sins in hell forever. John 3:36 puts this very clearly when it says "*Whoever*

believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." New International Version.

Like any other gift, unless we actively accept, open and receive it, it will never do us any good. If I told you I had just sent you a million dollars and it was waiting for you in a Post Office box, it would never do you any good until you actually took action to pick up the gift and receive it yourself.

So we have a choice. We can accept what Jesus has done to take God's punishment and wrath of hell onto Himself and off of us, or we can choose to reject that offer. However, if we refuse the offer, which we have the right to do, we are clearly told that God's wrath and punishment of hell will then remain on us and we will have to pay for our sins in hell forever ourselves.

So the way we get to Heaven is to accept what Jesus did on our behalf on The Cross as He took the punishment for our sins onto Himself and off of us. As much as I love my wife, if I said to God I would like to pay for her punishment in hell by going there myself and thereby allowing her instead to go to Heaven, God would say that was impossible. Why? Because He would tell me that I owe the penalty of eternal death in hell for my own sins. Therefore, since I would be paying for my own sins by spending eternity in hell forever, I would never be able to get around to paying for hers.

As it turns out, the only person who can pay for our sins would have to be someone who did not owe that

penalty in the first place. Again that is Jesus and only Jesus!

Jesus, Who never sinned and therefore never owed that penalty of spending eternity in hell, is the only One who could in fact volunteer to take our punishment of hell onto Himself and off of us and that is exactly what He did for you and me.

So we are saved by accepting what Jesus did on The Cross to save us and through His Resurrection on Easter, He is alive today to back up His Promise and to make sure we reach Heaven IF we accept and commit to Him as our Savior and Lord.

However, if we insist on being as one person said, “a self salvation project” we will keep trying to save ourselves by various means, just like the Pharisees did by obsessing on and trying to get to Heaven by keeping The Law and doing good works.

By the way, if you feel you have found a method that gets you saved apart from Christ, if you feel that doing good works or being kind or giving money to charities or any other amount of keeping The Law and doing good works will get you into Heaven, two things are for sure about whatever method you have chosen.

First, it better work! Otherwise, you have made a serious eternal mistake. Second, you are actually claiming to have found a way to Heaven other than through Christ and what that means is that Christ’s coming was really unnecessary to get you and me saved.

Paul points this out clearly in Galatians 2:21 where he says, . . . “ *for if justification (that is being saved from hell) were through (keeping) the law, then Christ died to no purpose.*” Parentheses mine.

In other words, if you have found another way to be saved from hell, like doing enough good works, Jesus going to The Cross for you was unnecessary. If that is the case, then we must have a pretty horrible and sadistic God Who was dumb enough to put His Son through our punishment on The Cross, when another method works just as well.

The Pharisees of old and the new Pharisees today completely miss the whole point of The Law and keeping it. Instead of keeping The Law and doing good and charitable works in thanks to Christ for making Heaven possible for us through His sacrifice on The Cross, they continue to feel that somehow by keeping The Law and being good and doing good things, they will amass enough points to get into Heaven one day. That is an eternal mistake! It can never be done.

It is putting all your eggs in the wrong basket. In Ephesians 2:8 we can clearly see that salvation is a gift from God through Christ and we can never claim to have done it on our own. “*For it is by God’s grace that you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts.*” Good News Version

Even today, so many people still see The Law as that which was given in The Old Testament to allow a person to be perfect and therefore earn the right to go to Heaven.

This simply is not true.

As I said earlier in this chapter, The Law was given as a gift to guide and protect God's people. God gave The Law at Sinai as a grace gift to the people of God. It was never intended to be something that if kept perfectly, would allow someone to go to Heaven. Long before The Law was even given, we read in Genesis that Abraham, our forefather in the faith, was justified by faith. It is our faith that saves us, never our works. We are certainly supposed to do good works, but in thanks and praise for being saved, rather than as a means by which to be saved. In Matthew 5:16 we read these words showing us clearly that our works are to be displayed after and as a result of our faith in Christ. Then they will be works that bring glory and others to Christ. Jesus says, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

In the eyes of God, salvation comes through our faith in His power to forgive us and bring us to Heaven through what Jesus did on The Cross on our behalf, period! Then, out of the joy and thanksgiving for being saved through what Christ did on The Cross to take our punishment of hell onto Himself and off of us, our works will be a natural outcome which will act as a light to bring others to Christ.

Pastor Cho of Seoul, South Korea, founder and pastor of the largest Christian congregation in the world, made an analogy between The Ten Commandments and the guardrail around the rim of the Grand Canyon.

He said that the guardrail around the rim of the Grand Canyon was put up with a loving purpose. It was put up to keep people from danger. It was put up to keep people from going too far. It was put up to keep people from falling. He makes the same remarks about The Ten Commandments. God gave The Ten Commandments and the rest of The Law to the people of God to be a guide and a guardrail for them in this life. He gave The Ten Commandments in such a way as to put up a railing of faith and guidance around our lives, lest we go too far and fall into great danger.

Yet the Pharisees in their obsessing on The Law, made it into something it was never intended to be. I do not feel the Pharisees ever intentionally meant to obsess on The Law and make it a stumbling block to people. They felt they were doing the right thing and felt they had the right interpretation of The Law.

Nonetheless, their obsession blinded them to the greater truths of God. For The Pharisees, The Law became something which must be followed to get into Heaven. The Pharisees told the people of Israel that unless they followed The Law perfectly, they would be unable to get to Heaven one day. Consequently they and others went crazy trying to perfectly follow and keep The Law. Even though it was impossible because of their sinful nature, they still preached that it was through following The Law that one would reach Heaven.

They should have been preaching that it is through faith in what The Messiah did on The Cross that we will reach Heaven and that The Law is God's guardrail to

guide us and keep us from falling in this life.

Yet they obsessed on The Law and made it into something much more than God ever intended it to be. They went beyond His plan. They obsessed on what they felt was right, instead of what God said was right. In so doing, they caused tremendous difficulty for God's people. Over the years, many would fall into this legalistic trap.

It would be a number of centuries later that the great reformer Martin Luther would struggle with the very same problem. As a result, he would become the more modern day champion of being saved by faith versus works. As a Roman Catholic priest, he often tried so hard to keep from breaking The Law and falling into sin. Although he found himself incapable of stopping sin in his life, He still felt that keeping The Law and doing good works would be his ticket to Heaven.

It got to the point where even during the Sacrament of Communion, he found himself letting sinful things come into his time of prayer. It got so bad that he finally saw the light of the truth that only by faith in what Christ did, versus what we do, can we be saved. Following The Law and doing good works will not save us. Only accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord will save us from hell. Then after we accept Christ, following The Law becomes a joy and a delight. We then do good works in thanks for our salvation, rather than as a means to achieve it.

There always seems to be a group of people in The Church who will obsess on The Law and doctrine in a

Pharisaic way. However, we should never forget that Jesus was most angry and upset with these kinds of Pharisees. He was more upset with the Pharisees than with the vilest of sinners.

It was not because the Pharisees were more sinful than others. It was because when it came to living one's life, they failed to see the importance of the balance brought by the Grace of God. He was most angry with them because they had taken the beautiful gift of The Law of God and turned it into a book of rules and regulations which must be carried out perfectly to get to Heaven. They did all this in spite of the fact that God said to Abraham that you are justified by faith. Jesus was most angry with the Pharisees because in their obsession on The Law and doctrine, they were leading the people of God astray in a way which caused them to miss so many of God's blessings in this life. Their obsession actually caused them to miss Heaven itself as they tried to make it to Heaven by keeping The Law, rather than putting their faith in Christ to do what was necessary to save them.

That is why Jesus was so upset with the Pharisees. Their misplaced obsession on The Law, doctrine and tradition was leading people astray. Jesus puts it as clear as can be in Mark 7:6-9. He says these words to the Pharisees.

"Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.' You leave the commandment of God and hold fast to the tradition of men."

And He said to them, *“You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God, in order to keep your tradition!”*

Here is the crux of this obsession. The Pharisees had made The Law their god. They had forgotten the Writer and Author of The Law. They said salvation came by keeping The Law, rather than putting faith in their God Who wrote it. They made their own traditions more important than God’s Word itself. They became the ultimate Traditionalists/Doctrinalists blocking so many blessings of God for His people.

The powerful message which comes through here, for those who will see it, is the fact that Jesus simultaneously upheld The Law of God, while knocking down the precept that The Law of God should replace God on the altars of our lives. Traditions are good, Jesus would say, but when they are given a higher place and importance than the totality of God’s Word, they must be confronted and exposed as the false idols they can become.

The dangers of this kind of obsession are many, as you can well see. There is a dryness about this kind of lifestyle in ministry. There is a legalism that the Traditionalist/Doctrinalists often have which creaks because of its obsession with man-made traditions. People become more concerned about The Law than they do about seeing souls saved. People become more concerned about making sure that their doctrine is correct, than they do about people who are all around them facing physical and spiritual hunger.

People can obsess on making sure doctrine is taught above all else, at the expense of the grace and the joy which comes through The Savior and The Spirit. Jesus never said that learning The Law and proper doctrine is wrong. Yet He did say that it was wrong to take it to the point of obsession and to the exclusion of the other facets of the Christian Church.

It seems that it would make a great difference in our congregations today if the modern day legalists and Pharisees would see the doctrines and the concepts of The Law, that they have studied so diligently, as a gift which contributes to the balance of the whole Church, rather than as a position to be held in contrast to and in competition with the other spiritual facets mentioned in this book. Moreover, it would be an even greater thing if they could see their congregations and themselves as being unbalanced, until they were willing to take part in the joy of The Holy Spirit and the outreach of evangelism through Jesus The Son. What a difference it would make if the modern day Pharisees were willing to see the value of what Jesus teaches concerning spiritual balance.

There was a man in one of the congregations I served as pastor, whose life was lived like a Pharisee. I am not saying he was not a Christian and was not saved. Yet it seemed his whole purpose in his Christian life was to make sure everybody could articulate their faith through doctrine. If a person was a wonderful Christian and full of the joy of Christ, but was unable to articulate to his satisfaction what the correct doctrine of Scripture said on any given subject, he or she was looked down on by this man. He had an amazing lack of joy in his life and was

always so serious, sort of a self-appointed member of the doctrinal police. He saw the Charismatics as a serious threat to the wellbeing of the congregation and he never really seemed to learn how to effectively share the faith he had in Jesus with others.

What he would do was tell you what you were doing wrong from a doctrinal perspective and he would make you feel like an idiot for daring to be a Christian who expressed their faith and joy in ways different than him. He tended to be very judgmental of others and quick to condemn even other Christians who were different than him. Oh the joy and grace he missed in his life and what a negative witness for Christ he could be. In many ways he was a miserable Christian and that should be an oxymoron, but all too often it is exactly how Christians act.

He clearly lacked the balance and joy of The Trinity in his life and as a result may have driven more people away from Christ than he ever drew toward Him. Obsessing on only one Person of The Trinity can leave a Christian so unbalanced in their faith and so much less effective in reaching others for Christ.

Now we can take a look at the Evangelical facet and how they can obsess to their detriment. When the Evangelical facet of the Christian Church obsesses in their area of strength, it too causes weaknesses in the other areas. Rather than obsessing on The Law, like the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists, the Evangelicals tend to obsess on winning souls.

Yet, often they forget to tell the souls they are winning how to grow and how to learn good doctrine and how to be filled with The Holy Spirit. Certain congregations seem to major in getting people born-again, getting them to be babes in Christ, but never doing much more to ensure they are properly nurtured so they can grow up into mature Christians. These congregations see people born again by the hundreds, but many never grow beyond spiritual infancy.

Of course certain people are actually evangelists. The Gift of Evangelism is an important Gift of The Holy Spirit. Certain people do indeed have a specific calling to major in evangelism and in getting people saved. Billy Graham is such a person. Charles Finney was such a person. Yet congregations are called not only to bring people into The Kingdom, but also to equip them for the work of The Kingdom. That equipping for the work of The Kingdom must include all three facets of the faith we are discussing in this book. People, who focus only on winning souls and nothing much more, are preventing the brilliance of the other facets of The Trinity from shining in the lives of new Christians.

In my first pastorate in New England, there was a congregation nearby that had a reputation for getting people saved. It was a wonderful congregation. It was a place where the pastor had an evangelical call on his ministry. It was a place where people were born as babes in The Lord, yet rarely became doctrinally sound and filled with The Spirit in such a way as to be equipped for more mature and significant lay ministry.

Consequently, people from that congregation would come to ours and other congregations in the area to get what they considered to be more solid spiritual food, beyond the diet of spiritual milk, which was regularly being offered to them in their own congregation.

The Lord tells us in His Word that we are supposed to grow beyond infancy in Christ. In I Peter 2:2 we see clearly how God expects us to grow. He says, *“Desire God’s pure word as newborn babies desire milk. Then you will grow in your salvation.”* God’s Word Translation.

God is saying through the Apostle Peter that He expects us to grow beyond the infant stages of being born again. Being born again is only the beginning of the Christian life.

Those who obsess on the Evangelical facet of The Church can become too preoccupied with just getting people born again and fail to equip them to live the Christian life they have been called to live.

Too many Christians have come to The Lord, and then have fallen by the wayside, not because they never had a real experience with Jesus in their life, but because they never had any teachers in the faith who taught them sound doctrine and introduced them to the sustaining power and Gifts and Fruit of The Holy Spirit. That is like giving someone a new car and never telling them where to go to get gas to keep the tank filled up.

In I Corinthians 3:1, the Apostle Paul addresses the members of the congregation in Corinth as babes in Christ

and says they are only ready for spiritual milk and not yet ready for solid spiritual food. It seems clear that one of the problems in that congregation was that there were too many baby Christians and not enough mature believers. The mature Christians were failing to do the proper teaching necessary to bring younger Christians along in their faith.

If we are going to take responsibility for bringing people into The Kingdom of God at birth and then pull back on our responsibility to see them grow beyond infancy in the faith, we are creating roadblocks and closing doors for the power of God to work through these new Christians.

So those who obsess on evangelism at the expense of the other facets of the Christian Church, are causing an imbalance within the body of believers which should be corrected. That is why we see God chastise people through the Apostle Paul and others when it comes to growth. People should grow up into Christ who is the Head of the Body. If we stay in the stages of our infant faith when we should be moving into the stages of toddler faith, adolescent faith, and mature adult faith, we are failing to become what God intends us to be and missing out on so much God has waiting for us.

To their credit men like Luis Palau and Billy Graham and others who see themselves as evangelists, also see themselves as responsible to train people up in the faith. As well as getting them born again, it is a good thing to see that in their evangelical crusades they provide resources to get new Christians connected to a local

congregation, so that each new convert can continue his or her growth in the faith. By doing so we see balance being upheld and seen as being important.

The same must apply to the individual congregation and the individual believer. Sometimes, when a person brings another person to Christ, they sort of abandon them after that “born again” experience. It is sort of like they have done their job by leading someone to Christ and can now move on to someone else to get another notch in their belt.

Yet, it is so vital for those who bring people to Christ to also bring them into the body of Christ and into the Word of Christ that they might learn doctrine, that they might learn God’s Word and that they might be introduced to and filled by The Holy Spirit.

When that happens, that new Christian can become a strong living stone and building block in the wall that makes up the body of The Church, that spiritual temple which Peter talks about in I Peter 2. So we can see that those who obsess on evangelism can cause problems for the growth of new believers and therefore the balance and growth of The Church.

Then there is the Charismatic facet which can tend to obsess on The Holy Spirit, and the Gifts of The Spirit. Those who stand strong in the Charismatic facet of The Church do place great emphasis on The Person and Gifts of The Holy Spirit. As I said earlier, God desires to have His Spirit and Gifts present and valued within the life of every congregation and every Christian.

Yet, to have them without the guidance and direction which evangelism and good doctrine bring, is to possibly become self-centered and ingrown in such a way as to actually close the doors to The Holy Spirit and what He would like to do. Often times in very charismatically oriented fellowships, spiritual balance is missing. I have seen such congregations where very little attention is paid to doctrine and there can even be a sort of self-centeredness which leads to a lack of zeal for evangelism.

Preaching and teaching can often be so exclusively centered on The Holy Spirit and the Gifts, that the people develop a sort of spiritual "tunnel vision" of what the life of faith ought to be. Emphasis can be placed quite heavily on the Power of The Spirit without the guidance of The Word and the correct doctrine God has given us. People can be sent forth into the world trying to evangelize and trying to have the power of God at work in their lives, without having taken the time to find out how such a thing comes about.

The Corinthian congregation seems to be a prime example of a problem congregation of this type. They had been blessed with the Gifts of The Holy Spirit and indeed were using them in the ministry, but they were also using them to break down the fellowship into different factions. They had power, but they started to use that power to out power one another. They started to set up a specific hierarchy of which Gifts they deemed were the most important. They started to wander away from the traditions and the doctrine that had been handed down to them. In I Corinthians 15 we can even see that there was a group of people actually talking about

whether the reality of The Resurrection had any impact on the average Christian.

Please note and keep in front of you that this was a Christian congregation. As one of my professors in seminary said, the most amazing thing he ever saw about the Corinthians was that Paul never said they were not Christians. He called them baby or immature Christians, but they were still Christians whom Paul was called to pastor. They had accepted The Gospel, but they were making tons of mistakes in living it out.

Many of the things that they were doing were certainly outside of God's Word. For instance, in I Corinthians 6, we see that some people truly felt that due to their faith, they could still have a prostitute and in some way, be mystically protected from being affected by that sin. This is the kind of thing that actually can happen when proper spiritual balance is missing in a congregation.

But again, in His Grace The Lord worked through Paul to bring about balance. There were things going on in the congregation in Corinth that were certainly way out of balance. When you start to teach against the truth of The Resurrection, something has gone very wrong. Either you never learned it, or if you had learned it, you had wandered away from it into silly myths.

Whatever the case, what we have portrayed here is a congregation with believers filled with the Power and Gifts of The Holy Spirit, but falling far short of the wisdom and balanced ministry necessary to use them correctly and according to God's Word. They were

missing the balanced approach of dovetailing Biblical tradition and doctrine with outreach and evangelism, all powered by The Holy Spirit among them. Therefore, the Apostle Paul, their pastor, had to write to them and chastise them for the lack of balance in the faith they were practicing.

So you can see, obsession in any one of the areas leads to problems by excluding the other two facets of the Christian Church, which should shine in every local congregation and in every Christian believer.

CHAPTER SEVEN

OH, THE THINGS WE MISS!

In the previous chapter we looked at what obsessing on just one facet of The Trinity looks like and how it can be such a negative thing. In this chapter, we can now take a close look at some of the specific and vital things which we miss in our spiritual lives when we obsess on only one spiritual facet of our faith.

When it comes to the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists, I would like to respectfully suggest that if there is anything missing in what they do as a result of their obsession with The Law, it is God's joy and an attractiveness which draws others to Christ. In Jesus' day, The Pharisees were seen by the average person as being far too legalistic. They were seen to have made up rules that were never God's rules and which bound the people of God in spiritual chains. One example would be how far they went in interpreting what it meant to keep the Sabbath and avoiding work on that day. The Pharisees had written in the Midrash, which was an official commentary on Scripture, that a woman should never be allowed to look in the mirror on the Sabbath day because she might see a gray hair, and if she did, she might pull it out, which would constitute having worked on the Sabbath. In another case, it is written that if you dragged a chair across a dirt floor in someone's house, that constituted plowing the ground and therefore counted as labor on the Sabbath, which broke one of The Ten Commandments. We see here once again what obsession does to the faith.

There was a dryness about the Pharisees which should

have been quenched by the Water of Life. There was a legalism about the Pharisees which should have been balanced by the Grace of God. There was an effort by the Pharisees to trap The Messiah, which should have been replaced by a willingness to see Who He truly was and to be set free themselves in His Grace and power.

As mentioned earlier, one of the classic cases where they tried to entrap Jesus in The Law is recorded in John 8. The Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, threw her before Jesus. In John 8:5 they say to Him, "*Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such. What do you say about her?*" Jesus was certainly aware of The Law. Jesus upheld The Law. Yet Jesus went appropriately beyond The Law to extend God's Grace to the woman. Without that joy and grace of God's Holy Spirit in His life, the only way to go was legalistically, which was what the Pharisees did on a regular basis.

In this case, Jesus challenged and trumped their legalism with His Grace. He told them that anyone among them without sin could pick up the first stone and begin to stone her. Had they stoned her, they would have been legally correct according to The Law. Jesus was fully aware of that fact. Yet none of them could bring themselves to condemn her, even according to The Law. Jesus saw the worth of salvaging her from the condemnation of The Law and instead blessed her with His Grace.

After all those who were unwilling to condemn her had left, He told her that He did not condemn her either. He then told her to go and live a life worthy of her being

saved, stopping her sin and leading a life made new in Christ's forgiveness.

I mentioned earlier that this was a perfect example of not disregarding The Law, but allowing the appropriate balance of God's Grace to be applied to The Law. Were it up to the Pharisees and their limited view of the balance of the Grace of God, this woman would have been stoned. Yet, when it was up to The Messiah, the woman lived and was saved and learned what it meant to glorify God.

Like the Pharisees of old, the Pharisees of today still maintain a posture which has a dry mustiness about it. They usually do not see it, nor are they usually concerned about it. As He did then, Jesus still challenges today's Pharisees with His Grace, Love and the joy of The Holy Spirit. Yet far too often, like their predecessors before them, today's Pharisees respond with their legalistic traps and dig their heels in to defend their legal territory. However, that only acts to maintain the legalistic prisons they have put themselves and others in from which Jesus is trying to set them free.

In congregations where people obsess in the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet of The Church, much is learned through their teaching and their preaching, but much of the joy and Grace The Holy Spirit desires to pour out on them is missed. Is it any wonder that Jesus was so upset with the Pharisees? The Pharisees were the ones who stood in the way of God. They had The Word and they had the doctrine, but they had very little that appealed to others; nothing that drew others to come and learn. The same seems to apply today to those who

obsess on tradition and doctrine.

What people see in these congregations is a dry, legalistic, joyless, unbending religiosity which has very little room for the joy and the Grace of Christ. Holding up that kind of an example of what God is like to people confuses them and all too often keeps them from a saving encounter with The Risen Christ.

These kinds of congregations are dry spiritual places. Some allow only for traditional and doctrinal kinds of teaching and preaching. These are places where modern day Pharisees gather to compliment one another on their understanding of The Law. They are places, as one of my friends put it, where when you sit in the pews you are overcome with waves of dust. They are dry places waiting for the fresh outpouring of the Water of Life through the Holy Spirit of God.

Yet, usually when The Lord comes and knocks on those doors, the barricades of legalism and tradition are put up even more strongly to keep Him out. So they go on as believers, but not multiplying very much and the Spiritual Fruit listed in Galatians 5 is all but absent in their fellowship.

They go on as believers with sailboats ready to sail but with little wind in their sails. They have the course charted, but virtually no spiritual power to get anywhere. They are congregations where faith is out of balance, and worship and ministry are obsessing on only one facet of the faith. They are moving ahead, at best, with one-third the power that God has available for them.

Now when it comes to those who obsess on the Evangelical facet of The Church, there are also many things which get missed, things which God would have those folks include in their lives, faith and ministry. As mentioned earlier, one of the problems becomes that of stunted spiritual growth. People do get born again, but they grow in Christ far too slowly.

In congregations that obsess on the Evangelical side of things, doctrine is often put aside and as I said in the previous chapter, getting people born again becomes the only important thing. Getting others born again as quickly as possible becomes the driving and main emphasis in pretty much everything they do. Numbers of “salvations” or “conversions” become very important. Yet doing so, without putting a sound doctrinal foundation under those who are getting saved, only complicates matters further. Without a sound doctrinal foundation, congregations that obsess on the Evangelical facet sometimes put new and immature Christians in positions of responsibility and leadership before they are ready. They send them out on the streets to witness to others far too quickly and in doing so can bring a lot of discredit to Christianity. They put babies in the cockpits of 747s so to speak and expect them to be able to fly perfectly well. They also often fail to seek and welcome and taste the fullness of The Holy Spirit which would empower their evangelical ventures even further. In their zeal to see people saved, they sometimes forget that it is The Holy Spirit Who does the convicting of sin in a person’s life and it is The Holy Spirit they should be relying on more to be more effective in their evangelical outreach to others.

As one reads through the great career and ministry of the evangelist Charles Finney, one is struck by the incredible spiritual balance which he had.

Even though he had a great evangelical zeal for saving souls, he recognized clearly that it was only through sound Biblical doctrine and the power of The Holy Spirit, that his work of saving souls could go forth and flourish. He saw the critical importance of spiritual balance. Therefore, evangelism can never really be done well without the proper balance of doctrine and the fullness of The Holy Spirit dwelling in the midst of our evangelical efforts.

Now let us take a look at what blessings get missed when a congregation or an individual Christian obsesses mostly on the Charismatic facet of The Church. There is so much joy and the feeling of being so alive in The Spirit, that those who obsess on it can easily fail to see what they are missing. Charismatics have a great Christian party going on, much of which is great worship and appropriate emphasis on The Holy Spirit. Yet sometimes they focus so much on the party, that that they fail to see when they are drifting into spiritually dangerous waters. It is like the party boat on the Niagara River where the people were having so much fun that they never saw how close they were getting to the falls.

Majoring only in The Holy Spirit and doing minimal evangelism and downplaying the importance of sound doctrinal teaching, can leave a congregation in a position of becoming fairly ingrown and capable of losing objectivity and accountability. Certainly not in every

case, but far too often we have seen that pastors and congregations that have run into the most problems with accountability, are those who claim to be Charismatic in nature.

The Christians at Corinth certainly could be classified, even by the standards of today, as a Charismatic congregation. Yet, they had many problems and their problems were due to the fact that they had power without paying attention to God concerning the proper knowledge of how to use the power they had been given by Him.

A good analogy would be that of receiving a new power tool as a gift for Christmas. No one who receives a power tool should just go out and try to use it without reading the manual. They should take the time to read the manual and find out how the tool was designed to be used, including how to avoid abusing it so that no one gets injured.

The Corinthians were given powerful Spiritual Gifts, “spiritual power tools” if you will, and they went out and started to use them without really learning how they were supposed to be used. They even used them to tear each other down instead of building one another up in The Lord.

Having Spiritual and charismatic Gifts and using them without first checking the manual, that is The Bible, is like trying to use power tools without first reading the instructions. It can lead to lots of problems. Today many people read I Corinthians 12 without paying much

attention to the two chapters which follow. Those two chapters are critical for all Christians to read concerning the use of their Spiritual Gifts given them by The Lord. That is why those two chapters were written and are in The Bible.

The Charismatic facet of Christianity often claims to experience a great amount of freedom in their ministry and indeed there is tremendous freedom in The Holy Spirit of God. Yet there is such a thing as too much freedom which can turn into license. Even though there is much freedom in The Holy Spirit, the lack of grounding in sound doctrine can sometimes turn that freedom into foolishness. Their so called “freedom in The Spirit” can be the very thing that gets them into trouble.

Moreover and quite ironically, so called “Charismatic” congregations sometimes seem to come up with more rules and regulations about how The Spirit actually moves and works in a person’s life than one could ever dream.

They create what I call a “nouveau Pharisaism” which can be just as binding and legalistic as the Pharisaism they say they have escaped through The Holy Spirit. True freedom in The Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary. However, it is necessary to practice that freedom, within the balance and accountability that comes with evangelism and doctrine being given their appropriate place and emphasis.

While on vacation I once attended a very high powered, so called, “Charismatic” congregation. We

began with about 45 minutes of accelerated praise and worship. Musically speaking, it started out at forte and went up from there. Personally, I enjoy that kind of Christian music and worship. There was a freedom of The Spirit in that place which opened my spirit to worship God in a way which was very meaningful and Biblical.

Yet, throughout the service there was never any mention of evangelism and sharing what God had done for them with others outside that congregation. If you will, it was the opposite of a "pity party" where everybody was saying "poor me."

Instead, it was like a private "spiritual pep rally" where everybody was saying "wonderful us." There was nothing said about reaching out to others with the joy that they had discovered in their fellowship. Throughout the entire service of worship, lasting two hours and fifteen minutes, there was never a single prayer offered for others in the sense of intercessory or pastoral prayers. It was really all pretty self-centered.

There were no traditional or evangelical hymns of any kind sung. There were only Charismatic songs and choruses. There was nothing shared from the Old Testament. There was no pastoral welcome to those who might be visiting and who might like to find out more about the joy of The Spirit they were expressing.

Everything seemed to be in-house and pretty much in-grown. Do not get me wrong. There was wonderful worship and good preaching of The Word. Yet, there was

a sense of spiritual balance in The Trinity which was missing that would have made the overall service a much more powerful time of ministry and blessing.

Moreover, a friend of mine in full time ministry on Long Island approached this congregation to see if he and they could work together. At the time, my friend was the Long Island executive director of a highly respected national ministry working with young people. This ministry had been used by God to bring thousands of young people to a personal and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ.

However, when he approached the leadership of this congregation, they basically told him he really did not know enough about what he was doing and that unless he did it their way, they really had nothing to share or work on in common. It was a spiritual elitism that was totally inappropriate. I am not saying that such a closed attitude can only be developed in a charismatically obsessive church. It can also happen in a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist congregation or an Evangelical congregation. Yet the point is that when we obsess in one area without the proper Godly balance, we miss tremendous opportunities from The Lord. We miss opportunities to serve the Lord. We miss opportunities to grow deeper in our faith.

It may sound strange, but an important lesson on balance was discovered in professional baseball. The question came up as to why it was that so many more baseball players seemed to come up with injuries to their hamstring muscles than other professional athletes in

sports like basketball and hockey. After studying the situation for some time, professional team trainers found that the reason there were fewer hamstring pulls in sports like basketball and hockey was because basketball and hockey players inherently use their hamstring muscles in a more balanced way.

That is, baseball players primarily and almost exclusively, run full out in only one direction and that is forward. Therefore, the stress and force against their hamstring is almost exclusively exerted in only one direction. On the other hand, basketball and hockey players have to regularly run or skate backwards as a normal part of their sport. In basketball and hockey, running or skating backwards is a primary part of playing defense. Therefore, players are running or skating backwards a great deal of the time.

As a result, their hamstring muscles are being used in a much more balanced way than in baseball. In fact, now that they have found this to be the case, the treatment for a pulled hamstring muscle in baseball, involves among other things, making the baseball player do running drills which have him run backwards to balance the use and therefore increase the strength of his hamstring muscles.

So you see, missing opportunities to exercise our spiritual muscles in all directions can have us missing opportunities to strengthen our faith and instead can actually build weaknesses into our faith.

Let me close this chapter by saying that it really makes an eternal difference when Christians and congregations

are open to embracing all three facets of The Trinity. God has ordained it in His Word that the different facets should not fear each other, but should work together building one another up in the faith. We must go beyond tolerance to the point where we see the other facets as absolutely necessary to make us as complete in The Lord as we possibly can be. Anything short of seeing the diverse plan of God which brings about balance and stability will see us coming up short and even closing doors in the face of God which He would prefer be left open for Him to enter. Failing to incorporate in our lives, all three facets of the faith can cause us to be stunted in our growth, our ministries and our ability to reach others beyond our walls.

Revelation 3:16 has Jesus saying, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him. . . .”*

You might check around in your life and see where Jesus might be knocking and trying to get more into your life or the life of your congregation. Failing to answer the door when Jesus is knocking, is always a mistake. Yet we Christians and congregations have been doing that for centuries and the cost can be high.

The story is told of a young African American man who felt that God was calling him to start attending an all White congregation in his town. So in obedience he went there and began to attend. People were rude to him and made him feel very unwelcome. The pastor never spoke with him and eventually after being mistreated for weeks the young man left that congregation. He went home and

got down on his knees. He was confused and prayed to God and even apologized, feeling as if he had failed in what God had called Him to do.

However, God said that it was alright. He had done exactly what he had been asked to do. In fact, He then told the man, "You did a great job. At least you got inside. I have been trying to get inside that Church for more than a 150 years!

I experienced something similar in my home congregation. It had been a traditionally all White congregation that majored in the Traditionalist / Doctrinalist facet. Evangelism was very weak and anything Charismatic had yet to come on the scene.

Then in the early 1960's a new pastor came who felt evangelism was critically important. Moreover, he told us that we should be reaching out to the Latin community in our town and area, sharing The Gospel with them and inviting them to be a part of our congregation. Some folks from our congregation started to go out to the large farms in the area, holding worship services and sharing Christ with the many Latin migrant workers on those farms.

Like I said, this was the early 1960's and this kind of thing upset a lot of people. There were even meetings held to try and get rid of the pastor, but he continued to call us to recognize the Evangelical facet and get about the business of reaching people very different than ourselves with The Good News. Unfortunately, lots of people left the congregation as a result.

To make a long story short, the eventual outcome was that a Spanish speaking congregation was started, a Spanish speaking member was sent to seminary to be trained and became the pastor of the Spanish speaking congregation and eventually, both congregations officially became one.

Oh yeah, something else happened because of the Evangelical facet shining brighter in our congregation. As it turned out, the witness and faith of a number of the new Latin people in our congregation played a key role in my becoming a Christian.

Moreover, years later, God would give me the privilege of traveling to Latin America many times to train and teach Latin pastors and Christian leaders. All this was due to one man calling one congregation to recognize and embrace the Evangelical facet of The Trinity.

It is always good to listen for Jesus' knock on the door of our lives!

CHAPTER EIGHT

USING LOVE TO GET RID OF THE FEAR

God tells us in I John 4:18 that ". . . *perfect love casts out fear. . . .*" One of the things that is absolutely necessary for any congregation or individual Christian to address if they desire to attain proper spiritual balance, is to make sure they deal with the fears that may come with each of the facets we are talking about in this book. Folks simply have their preconceived positions on these facets and they feel threatened by various things they have heard or read about them which in fact, are often false. Chances are very good that if the leadership of the congregation would sit down together, trust The Lord and look carefully at what they fear the most concerning these three facets of the Christian Church, God will work in some amazing ways. Given half a chance, God will do a wonderful job of melting away any false fears which may be adding to their state of spiritual imbalance and which may be preventing them from moving forward in their congregation in ways more pleasing to God.

I can remember as a child having a tremendous fear of wolves. I am unsure where the fear began, but I tend to feel it came from the "fairy tale wolves" which always ended up trying to eat you. Stories like "The Three Pigs," with the wolf coming to blow their house down, or stories like "Little Red Riding Hood", where the wolf tried everything he could to eat Little Red Riding Hood, likely made a big impression on my childlike spirit.

It became so bad that whenever I saw a picture of a

wolf I would cry and carry on in fear. When fear takes over, being rational can go out the window. When emotions take over, logic seems to do very little good. Often, the only way to deal with these issues is to face the fear itself. My parents devised a way for me to do just that and face my fear of wolves.

One week LIFE magazine came out with a whole article and pictorial spread on wolves. It told about how wolves act in their packs, how they travel together and set up their societal orders, etc. To me, even having that magazine in my house was a serious threat to my well being. I heard about it and did everything I could to stay away from it. Yet my parents saw it as a way to confront my fears and get rid of them once and for all.

After I had gone upstairs to my room to play, my parents took the magazine, opened it to all the pictures of the wolves and laid it on the landing of the stairway between the first and second floors, which I would have to pass by in order to get back to the first floor of our house. I looked at the possibility of spending the rest of my life on the second floor of our house, but somehow that seemed like a bad plan. After all I did have to eat and play with my friends! So, after a long time, I slowly worked my way down the stairs to the landing where the magazine lay open on the floor. The only way to handle this was to literally walk over my fears to get downstairs.

In this case, my parents' plan worked. Once I walked over the magazine, I felt as though I had conquered it. I turned around and went over to the magazine, actually looked at it, touched it and picked it up in victory. I came

downstairs with the magazine in my hand to show everybody how I had conquered my fear. I even went outside and across the back yard, with magazine in hand, to my friend's house to tell him of my victory as well.

Now I am not saying that this is the best way for every parent to confront their child's fears. However, in this case it worked for me. Scripture tells us that with The Word of God, the Love of Jesus, and the power of The Holy Spirit, we can confront our fears and trust Him to conquer them for us and with His Love, to cast them out.

Once the leadership board and the pastor take the time to actually identify how these facets are functioning or missing in their congregation, it is vital that they sit down with The Word of God, the Love of Jesus, and the insight and teaching of The Holy Spirit and discuss and face any fears about any of these facets which may exist.

Let me share how we did that among our Elders at Central Presbyterian Church on Long Island where I served for 12 years. The facet feared most at Central Church at that time was the Charismatic facet. At the time Central Church was almost 127 years old. They saw themselves as an Evangelical congregation. They had stood long and courageously on the side of sharing and witnessing for The Gospel.

Along with that evangelical zeal, there had always been a solid grounding in God's Word and sound Christian doctrine. So, by the definitions being used in this book, Central Church had been a congregation that for years had majored in the Evangelical facet, had felt

most comfortable in it, with a healthy secondary focus on the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet. Therefore, the only facet that was missing and which left Central somewhat spiritually out of balance was the Charismatic facet.

As I said, it was also the Charismatic facet which was feared most by the leadership. Approximately ten years prior to that time, a group of people who considered themselves Charismatics started to place pressure on the congregation to recognize them and take them more seriously. Yet, as is so often the case in these situations, those claiming to be Charismatics, were not so much interested in balance as they were in having their facet shine more brightly. This type of situation usually causes dissension and ends up with the Charismatics being seen by the other facets of the congregation as being divisive rather than having something to be desired and offered to the overall work and ministry of the congregation.

Before I arrived there, there were some power plays and some moves to try to establish the Charismatic movement much more strongly at Central. However, for whatever reason those efforts failed. As a result, a number of those who saw themselves as Charismatics and having something to offer the congregation, became disappointed and eventually left the congregation, “shaking the dust off their sandals” as they went. Yet, some stayed and worked for balance and unity in the entire body of Christ. It was those people who opened the doors for the Charismatic facet at Central to shine without being seen as such a threat.

Upon my arrival at Central, I asked about the different

spiritual facets mentioned in this book and how they were represented in the congregation. I was told by the pastoral nominating committee that there were all three facets in the congregation and that they did get along fairly well together. I was told there was a sense of tolerance and a sense of living with one another without bickering and dissension.

As it turned out, that was a fairly accurate assessment. However, the problem was that, once again, the best they were normally doing was to tolerate each other, which is very different from seeing each other as valuable, desirable and necessary to the overall life and ministry of the congregation. There was yet to be a sense of one facet truly seeking the other facets out in the congregation and seeing them as valuable and having something important to bring to the table. This especially applied to how both the Evangelicals and the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists saw the Charismatics. Over the years, the Evangelicals and Traditionalists/Doctrinalists had learned the value of one another. Yet neither was really convinced that what the Charismatic facet of the congregation had to bring to the table was worth that much and they certainly preferred to avoid any dissension that might come with it.

Like it or not, the Charismatic facet, when coming into a congregation, often faces a history of being seen as pushy, lacking patience and having a somewhat self-righteous attitude which often causes dissension rather than something that forges unity.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, when seeking the proper spiritual balance in your congregation,

the one thing that should be done is to look at which part of which facets are feared the most and to work in The Lord to dispel those fears.

That is what I set out to do at Central Church. In a plan which I felt would work, and that The Lord would honor, I began to teach on the subject of spiritual balance in the faith as put forth in this book. As I said, the Elders at Central Church had a lot of fears about the Charismatic facet.

So after teaching on balance and the value of each facet, I then began to look closely with the Elders at the Charismatic facet, dealing both with the positive aspects as well as the aspects they feared the most. The complete plan of how I went about introducing both this theology of balance to the leadership and congregation, as well as dealing with the fears of each facet, will be discussed in more detail in a later chapter.

However, once the teaching was done and we were able to talk about these things in an atmosphere of trust, the Elders were willing to share what their fears were concerning the Charismatic facet of the congregation.

The most important thing to do first was to establish specific definitions of what it was we were talking about. Since it was the Charismatic facet and Charismatic Christians which were deemed to be a threat and who were most feared, it was important that we got a definition of what it really meant to be charismatic. If Charismatic meant something unbiblical, it would mean that the Charismatics were indeed bringing problems to

the congregation and being Charismatic would be appropriately seen as something to avoid. Yet if being Charismatic turned out to be right and Biblical, there could be much more openness to the Charismatic facet and what it could add to the congregation.

So the first thing we had to do was look in Scripture and see what Charismatic really meant. Yet beyond that definition, being a Charismatic has a lot of things that go with it, some of which people fear and so we had to look at all those things together. Yet, even before we worked through the fuller definition of what it meant to be Charismatic, I felt it would be important to ask each individual Elder to write down their definition of what it meant to be Charismatic. The answers came back and they varied from bad to good.

Let me share with you some of the bad ones first.

"A charismatic is one who believes that God's 'revelational' gifts (namely, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy) are still valid for the church and are a (second and necessary) seal or stamp of authenticity of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life."

In that definition you can see a rather limited view of what it means to be Charismatic. That definition laid down certain rules and regulations to put one in the Charismatic camp. Scripture says something different. Therefore, we must allow Scripture to be the yardstick by which we measure our own experiences and conclusions.

Here is another bad one.

"Number 1: Charismatic . . . filled with the Holy Spirit. Number 2: Filled with the Holy Spirit, is receiving the gift of tongues. Number 3: Being baptized in the Holy Spirit...speaking in tongues. Number 4: A special relationship of praise and worship with the Lord."

Notice here again, the limitations and the legalism that comes in the definition of what a Charismatic actually is today.

Another definition of what it means to be charismatic was given by one Elder. This definition is probably the most popular definition around today, although according to Scripture, it is also incorrect.

"Popular understanding seems to label a person a 'charismatic' if that person is emotional in his or her praise, vocal and demonstrative, especially with speaking in tongues."

All three of those definitions were in need of some correction and clarification. There were other definitions closer to reality, although they too were missing some important elements. Let me share one of those with you.

"Charismatic - belief in the receiving of special gifts that enables a complete ministry to be undertaken and accomplished."

Here is another one.

"It appears to me that a Charismatic Christian is one who believes, and acts on that belief, that the gifts of the

Spirit are still poured out today. That, 'gifts' are an important manifestation of one's Christianity.

What happened next is that we took time to come to a consensus among the Elders from Scripture, as to what it really meant to be a Charismatic. We looked at God's Word together. In doing so we came up with a definition for Charismatic which was much broader and open than some of the more limited definitions I just shared with you.

As I shared previously, we learn from Scripture in I Corinthians 12:7 that to each believer in Christ Jesus, there is given a manifestation or a "charisma" of The Holy Spirit. The Greek word, "χάρισμα" which is pronounced charisma, is what gets translated as "gift." It is a grace gift. Therefore, according to Scripture, each person who believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord is given a charisma, or Gift of The Holy Spirit. Scripture says these Gifts are varied. Yet, they come from the same Holy Spirit, and they are for the purpose of building up the Christian Church. That being the case, Scripture is clear that every believer in Jesus Christ has been given a Gift of The Holy Spirit. Therefore, since every believer has in them at least one *charisma* of The Holy Spirit, in the most technical and Biblical sense, that makes each believer in Christ a *charismatic*.

All the other stuff that goes with the word charismatic has to be discerned by the study of God's Word. If something is being claimed about the Charismatic facet which is false, it should be exposed as such and dealt with as such. If there are things that go with being a

Charismatic which are Biblical, they then should be appropriated in one's life according to Biblical guidelines.

As we saw in Corinth, even real Gifts of The Holy Spirit can be misappropriated and used to bring about division rather than unity. Yet the most important thing is that pastor and people are directed by God's Word in such a way as to see that the Charismatic facet is something God values and desires to see appropriated Biblically in our lives and ministries. In fact, the question must be raised as to whether or not one can be fully expressing his or her Christian faith without the Charismatic facet being given opportunities to shine.

So, the next step was to get the Elders to talk about both the fears they had about the Charismatic facet and the things that they felt the Charismatics had brought into the congregation that were positive. So I asked them to write down both the fears they had, as well as things that were positive and valuable which they felt the Charismatics had brought into our midst as a congregation.

As I share these with you, you will see that doing such an exercise opened up areas we could talk about concerning fears. However, it also allowed for areas where people saw the Charismatic movement as something positive and something to be affirmed. These are exact quotations from the elders themselves.

Elder #1

Fear: That the charismatic's over enthusiasm might

drive some of us away, dominate to the exclusion of other important factors.

Positive: Shown how to have more enthusiasm and verbalization!

Elder #2

Fear: A strong insistence on dominating the worship experience and offices of the church.

Positive: Encouraged more openness about the joy of The Lord. Motivated many to volunteer for teaching, and service responsibilities.

Elder #3

Fear: Is that the manifestation of certain controversial gifts will be set up as a standard of spiritual birth or maturity.

Positive: Shown that it is o.k. to worship God with our emotions as well as other parts of our being. Pushed forward a proper recognition of the power and place of The Holy Spirit in Christianity. Focused on the necessity of "evidence" of the indwelling of the Spirit in a believer.

Elder #4

Fear: None . . . so long as the Holy Spirit leads and not man.

Positive: Fullness of joy. True praise and worship

experience. Receiving of fullness of the Holy Spirit. Being able to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit. God works through the Holy Spirit such as healing, prophecy, etc.

Elder #5

Fear: The people will fear they are "in" or they are "out," depending on who has perceived themselves as having a special relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Positive: People have come to recognize that the Spirit fills people in different ways and that each Christian has something to offer. This can unleash much joy and excitement for accomplishing God's work.

Elder #6

Fear: None.

Positive: Has made the love of Christ show through. Made very loving people more lovely.

Elder #7

Fear: If you don't speak in tongues you are not a Christian. Too much emotion, and not enough worship. Not understanding the whole movement.

Positive - Allowed God to "seem" in a more personal way.

Elder #8:

Fear: Divisiveness - just as you spoke, that one viewpoint seeks dominance. Narrowness of thinking.

Positive: Joy in worship and praise. Willingness to speak boldly. Use of spiritual gifts.

A quick look at both the fears and positive aspects with regard to the Charismatic facet will show you that the Elders were very open to and grateful for the increased joy, increased sense of worship, and the increased use and value of Spiritual Gifts which the Charismatic facet can bring to the congregation. Yet, their major fears lay in the areas of possible division, a possible sense of spiritual superiority and one's proof of being a Christian being directly tied to whether that person had certain Spiritual Gifts, especially The Gift of Tongues.

Our study in The Word led us to some specific conclusions:

1. Often our definition of Charismatic was far too narrow when measured against God's Word.
2. Most Christians would never deny the existence or power of The Holy Spirit. Yet many are willing to forfeit that power and give it up, because they fear the possible abuse more than they welcome the sure benefits.
3. Many congregations focus more on what can go wrong through the use of Spiritual Gifts than trusting God for what can go right.
4. When it comes to the Charismatic facet of The Church,

study, prayer and teaching will allay many false fears that may possibly be out there in the congregation.

5. The exercise of Spiritual Gifts in the Christian Church is something God has planned and made diverse to create spiritual balance.

6. To have an emotional experience of faith is not necessarily to have been filled by The Holy Spirit, but to be genuinely filled by the Holy Spirit always results in a deep emotional experience with God.

7. To be Charismatic according to Scripture is mandatory, but is only part of what it means to be fully Christian.

The overall conclusion of the Elders at Central was that the Charismatic facet, which they had previously feared, need not be feared in the ways they previously had determined. They also saw that those Biblical and good aspects of the Charismatics in the congregation should be cultivated, while the fears should be confronted, controlled and never allowed to rule the day.

With a new definition of what it *really* meant to be Charismatic and seeing that a lot of good things can come into a congregation because of it, the Elders saw they really did not have to fear the *genuine* Charismatic facet at all.

To put it in a rather humorous way, one of my friends said what the Elders were fearing was not really the Charismatic facet of the congregation, but rather the "charismaniacs" in the congregation.

What that really means is that there are people who, when they obsess on things, get in a maniac kind of phase about the whole thing. They walk over people and they drive their own opinions and spiritual agendas to the point of offending others in The Lord. Obviously, there were "charismaniacs" in the congregation in Corinth. It was not the Charismatic side of The Lord that was the problem there. It was the "charismaniac" influence that had to be watched. It was those folks who ran with zeal, but without much spiritual light and thereby ran people over, rather than building them up.

What our Elders feared was that if the Charismatic teachings became too influential in the congregation, we would have situations cropping up where people would say things like, "unless you have received the Gift of Tongues, you are not fully a Christian." That really is a kind of "spiritual prejudice" not found in God's Word and is certainly not what will build up His Church. The Elders also feared that if the Charismatic facet grew in the congregation, everybody would be forced to raise their hands in worship and be expected to have a more emotional experience on a regular basis.

During that time one of our elders who was very skeptical of the Charismatic facet asked me to lead the Elders in a simple Bible study regarding the practice of raising hands in praise and worship so we could see whether it was a Biblical thing to do. We did that study together and I showed him and the others that in fact raising "holy hands" in worship was indeed Biblical for those who felt led to do it. They saw that in fact, in Jesus' day, if you did not raise your hands in the synagogue to

praise God, you might have been the one who was in the minority and seen as weird. Paul talks about lifting up “holy hands” in prayer in I Timothy 2. It is also a practice we see mentioned in The Old Testament.

It was not mandatory, but it was certainly Biblically appropriate. As much as he probably hated to admit it he agreed with me and conceded in front of everyone that it was Biblical. I felt we had made some real progress until in the same breath that he used to say it was Biblical, he then firmly pronounced, “. . . but it is not Presbyterian!” Oh well. You can only do so much. Just for the record, if something is Biblical, then it is Presbyterian, it is Baptist, it is Methodist, it is Roman Catholic and so on.

We were even able to talk about how as Christians our own actions were often somewhat incongruent, even contradictory, in how we lived our lives in different contexts. For instance, it was completely acceptable, even encouraged, for a Christian attending a Major League Baseball game in New York City to jump up and down, yell out loud and raise and wave their hands in the air in support and praise for their team. Yet for that same Christian to gently and quietly raise his or her hands in a Biblical and dignified act of loving worship of their Lord Jesus, was somehow seen as inappropriate and weird.

As we worked together on this matter, the Elders clearly saw that if they were going to have the genuine blessings of the Charismatic facet, they were going to have to buckle down, study what The Word said about it, and maintain a Biblical approach in spite of those who may attempt to abuse it. They saw that to have a

spiritually balanced congregation, they would have to work hard at keeping that balance in some situations. They saw that if they were to reap the blessings of theological balance, they would have to include the risk of abuse. Confident in God and in His power to lead His Church, they moved forward, striving for more balance even in the areas they feared most.

Upon study of God's Word, they could not deny the importance and divine plan for the Charismatic facet being in the Christian Church. More important, they came to see that if they openly opposed the Charismatic facet, they were opposing The Holy Spirit Himself.

What a freeing thing it was for them to see that God would take care of His Church and would bring all three facets into balance in our congregation as the Elders led the people in The Holy Spirit, in sound doctrine and in evangelical outreach.

So although it was perceived to be a problem, the Charismatic facet was never the real problem after all. The problem was twofold. The first lay with the folks who insisted on obsessing on that facet, and abusing The Gifts of The Holy Spirit making them more an offense than a blessing. The second lay with those who feared the Charismatic facet so much that they would always vote to forbid any part of it to be allowed to have a place in the congregation.

If you are a pastor or leader in your congregation, when you identify the facet most feared in your congregation, I suggest that you and your folks go to The Word to find out how to handle those fears. If you

find yourself in a primarily Charismatic congregation and they fear the very dry, staunch, immovable legalism of doctrine and tradition, teach them how sweet the blessing of solid teaching and good doctrine can be to build up the congregation in The Spirit of God.

If you find yourself in a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist congregation and they fear sharing their faith with others, teach them how vital Jesus said it was to do so and teach them the many good ways it can be done. All in all, the goal is to blend into one congregation what is often seen as three separate factions, which in fact are three wonderful and diverse facets of God, planned by Him to be there for the up building, balance and stability of His people.

CHAPTER NINE

JUST FOR THE FUN OF IT

This chapter is really an invitation to look around you and at other congregations, to see if what I am claiming in this book is presenting itself around you.

Let me share some of the things I have found as I have looked around me and let me encourage you to look around you, just for the fun of it. Look at what your congregation is like as well as other congregations you may be aware of or may visit. Below you will see some of the things which do, in a very detailed way, become representative of one or another of the spiritual facets we have been discussing. I trust a smile of confirmation will come to your face along the way in this chapter as you recognize in it, your specific congregation, Christians that you interact with on a regular basis, other congregations and of course yourself. I trust these examples will show you just how ingrained and just how deep the sphere of influence goes with regard to each of these three facets. So just for the fun of it, here we go.

First of all, a specific language or vocabulary seems to accompany each facet. The language often shows how the people in that facet view God and what they see as most important. Once again each area does have value that the others could experience if a balanced blend of the three were brought into the life of each congregation and the life of each individual Christian.

Possibly the best place to get a look at the language

that a person feels comfortable with theologically, and which indicates which facet they feel most comfortable in, is the language they use in prayer. For instance, the language used in prayer by Traditionalists/Doctrinalists tends to be fairly formal in nature with a good amount of reference to God, The Father and His Almighty Power.

The Traditionalist/Doctrinalist will keep before us in the vocabulary of his or her prayers the awesomeness, the wonder and the greatness of our God as Creator and Father of all. This is, of course, in keeping with what was spoken of earlier in the book where people who are Traditionalists/Doctrinalists are often called “God, The Father people.” Their prayers often reflect that fact. Here is an example of a typical prayer offered in worship by a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist.

“Almighty God our Father, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth. You have created the Heavens and all that is, and in Your great mercy You have created us as well. As we stand before You now, we do so as sinners deserving Your wrath, rather than Your Grace.

Yet Father, in Your steadfast Love, You have sent even Your only Son, Jesus, to go to The Cross in our place, giving up His life and taking Your wrath upon Himself that we might be set free. As we come to worship You now Father, please draw near unto us, giving us the blessings of Your Heavenly Kingdom and lifting us into the realm of Your Glory which Your Hand has provided for us. We ask it all in Your Name Father, Amen.”

That prayer is a beautiful prayer. I hope that I never

stop hearing that kind of adoring language and honoring of God. There is so much that can be learned from the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists when it comes to the awe and splendor of God as our Father and the wonder of His majesty and His awesome power. As we look at other typical prayers from the other facets, you will notice that some of those things are missing and that if such things were added to our prayers, they would be much more theologically balanced. Certainly, Jesus often referred to God as His Father and all that went with that wonderful image of our God.

God is certainly beyond gender, but Father is a title given throughout Scripture and used so often by Jesus Himself. Capturing all of what that means in our spiritual lives is vital to our walk with The Lord and our ability to share Him with others.

I was so blessed as a pastor to have a mixture of these kinds of people on my Board of Elders, and when we prayed together, it was like a wonderful blending of all three facets. As someone once said, "when that kind of thing happens, you get a synergistic effect." That is you get a situation where the total is greater than the sum of the parts.

The prayers of the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists draw us into the very throne room and into the presence and majesty of our Holy God in a way that is so vitally important and Biblical. R.C. Sproul in his book and video series called, "The Holiness of God," does a very similar thing in making us aware of the importance of God's Holiness.

When it comes to those who major mostly in the Evangelical facet, they pray a little bit differently and often pray in ways that emphasize the whole evangelical thrust in which they function.

Here is a typical prayer that could possibly come from a pastor who is firmly planted in the Evangelical facet.

“Lord Jesus we praise Your Name. We thank You for the salvation which You have come to bring to us. We come before You this morning to worship You and to thank You that You have saved us as sinners. We ask only Lord, that you give us a liberty with Your Word this morning, and that You give us ears to hear Your Word this morning, and that You will give us the ability to go forth and speak Your Word, thus sharing the wonderful message of The Gospel with all who will hear.

Jesus, we are here thanks to You and we ask that You move us out of this place into the world which awaits Your Good News. These things we pray in The Name of Jesus, our precious Savior and Lord. Amen.”

In this prayer, you can see the clear emphasis on salvation. You can see the emphasis of sharing The Gospel in an evangelical manner. The main focus of the prayer is on both being saved by Jesus and being commanded by Him to share that Good News with others so they too might share in the gift of salvation.

This is a wonderful emphasis to have in our lives. Oh, what a gaping hole would exist in our ministry without a zeal for sharing The Gospel! Were it not for our brothers

and sisters who have such a zeal to share The Gospel, so many would miss the opportunity to be saved.

Each generation has to be reached out to with The Gospel and it is those who operate mainly in the Evangelical facet who so often keep before us the importance of that responsibility. Yet, if all we heard in their prayers were pleas for evangelism, we might forget about the awesome wonder and glory of God The Father which the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists bring to us. We might also miss what the Charismatics bring to us in their prayer life and therefore we would miss out on the blessings which come with the blending of all three into one powerful ministry for Christ.

So, let us take a look at an example of a typical prayer offered in worship by one who tends to major in the Charismatic facet.

“O Lord, how we love You this morning. Dear God, how thankful we are that You have sent to us The Holy Spirit to fill our lives and to make us more like You. Lord, we love You this morning and praise Your most Holy and Blessed Name. Through Your Spirit, come and be with us, Lord.

Send Your Holy Spirit to come and dwell within the praises of Your people. Let Your anointing wash over this congregation and make us clean unto You that we may serve You and use The Gifts of Your Spirit to bear The Fruit of Your Spirit.

O Holy Spirit, how we love You this morning. Let us

come and bow down before You, adoring Your Holy Name. Holy Spirit of The Living God, we ask that this time of worship will be one in which we are filled by You and where all that we do is done for Your glory. This we pray in The Name of Jesus, Amen.”

In this prayer you can see a strong emphasis on a much more personal relationship with God through The Holy Spirit. So much so, that the gulf that is created in the language of the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists between God and man is somewhat closed by the more familiar vocabulary used by the Charismatic facet. This, of course, is something that bothers some people. They feel that becoming so familiar with God can be a problem and can bring about a casual relationship with God versus a proper relationship which always recognizes how sinful we are in contrast to our Holy God.

They fear that with such familiar language, these brothers and sisters are bringing God down in His glory and compromising His Greatness. One of my professors in seminary, Dr. Ernest Campbell, wrote a book of prayers entitled “Prayers of a City Pastor.” In it, he specifically used Elizabethan English for the prayers with all the “Thees” and Thous.”

He chose such language because he felt that the language of prayer had become too familiar, causing people to see God more as a peer than as our Holy God.

In some ways, Dr. Campbell was right. It is appropriate to make sure that we do nothing in our relationship with God to ever forget His awesomeness

and Who He is as opposed to who we are in life. Yet, Jesus did say that He is our Friend and He called us His friends and He also said we can call God Abba, a very familiar term for Father actually meaning “Daddy.”

That familiarity, balanced by proper respect for God’s wonder and glory, is permitted by Jesus and by The Holy Spirit dwelling in us. Once again, we see the importance of balance. All three facets that are involved in these prayers are necessary for us to be the fully mature, balanced Christians that we are called by God to be.

So you can see that the kind of vocabulary we use in our prayers often does reveal the different facets of our faith in which we feel most comfortable.

A more fully balanced prayer might look like the following.

“Almighty, Holy and Righteous God, we come before you this morning to worship You and to proclaim the wonders of Your Name. Thank you for sending us Your Son to save our very souls. We are so blessed to be His Church.

Lord Jesus, we praise and thank You for Your gracious sacrifice for us and Your Love which never fails. May we always be willing to share Your Gospel with others.

Holy Spirit, we also worship You this morning. We are so grateful that You dwell right inside of us to guide and empower us to do the work of God’s Church. May we always make room in our lives for You. Please fall afresh

on us this morning that we may bear Your Fruit in this world.

All these things we pray in the name of The Triune God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit to the glory of Christ our Lord, Amen.”

So just for the fun of it, it might be interesting for you to pay attention to the different facets being represented in the prayer life of your congregation, or in a congregation you may visit or be a part of from time to time.

It is also interesting to listen to the words of our own prayers and see what they tell us about where we might be regarding these three vital facets of relating to God. When you do take a look at it, you ought to be affirmed in where you currently are and also encouraged about where you might grow.

Another area where the different facets clearly show up and where specific preferences are in place that represent those facets, comes to us through music. Each one of the facets I have been referring to in this book has its own specific type of music which comes out of its theological perspective. That which each facet holds dear, is what is represented in the music each facet has written over the years and which each facet prefers to sing. Like the prayer vocabulary of the different facets indicates which facet they major in, the music of each facet does the same kind of thing.

There is a wonderful collection of hymns called

“Hymns Triumphant.” It is a collection and recording of some of the most traditional and as the title says, triumphant hymns of the faith. Most of the hymns represented in this collection, certainly fall into the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet of the church. A few of the hymns among the many are “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty,” “Crown Him With Many Crowns” and “When I Survey The Wondrous Cross.” These hymns are great, traditional, triumphant hymns of The Church.

These are the kinds of hymns that I grew up learning in my home congregation. These hymns speak to us about the glory, the wonder, and the majesty of our God and King. Their words are Scripture and sound doctrine put to music and they teach us those things as we sing them. To me, it is awful when a congregation removes these kinds of hymns from their repertoire.

Yet, as I shared earlier, one can go to services of worship for weeks and weeks and never hear a single great hymn of the faith. It is a shame when that kind of balance is forfeited for a more narrow, focused view.

There is something about those great hymns of the faith which lift your spirit to see and experience the very majesty of God. There is something that those hymns do that Evangelical songs do not do and that the Charismatic choruses do not do, and vice versa. Therefore, we see again that only when all the facets that God has planned for us to experience are allowed to shine, will we have the spiritual balance He intends for us to exhibit in our lives.

The Evangelical facet of The Church began to write

some of their most famous hymns during the days of the great evangelical revivals in our nation back in the 1800's. These hymns speak clearly about the message of salvation. They speak about a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They have less doctrine and more emphasis on the saving Grace of Jesus. Obviously, they felt that hymns that expressed that opinion and facet of their faith had yet to be written or they would never have felt led to write them. They were right. The great triumphant hymns of The Church, as wonderful as they were, still fell short of describing the more personal salvation experience and relationship with Jesus which the Evangelicals felt so necessary to share. Some of these hymns are as follows: "Wonderful Grace Of Jesus," "Standing On The Promises," "On Christ The Solid Rock I Stand," etc.

There is something sweet that happens in a worship service when an entire congregation is on its feet and singing the hymn, "Standing On The Promises." When these hymns first came out, many felt they were awful and inappropriate for Christian worship, but I doubt God felt that way.

"Wonderful Grace Of Jesus" is another hymn which can send you soaring into the loving arms of Christ. Yet again, there were many who saw such hymns as way too lively and way too familiar in the manner in which they addressed God. Again, I doubt God saw it that way.

Since I had grown up in a very Traditionalist / Doctrinalist setting, when these hymns started to be sung where I worshiped, it was like I had discovered a whole

new side of my faith and had a new way to express my love for The Christ Who had come for me.

So you can see the importance of the Evangelical facet being written down and sung in hymns. Some of those great Evangelical hymns do more for us in letting us see the fresh Grace of Jesus than do the Traditionalist / Doctrinalist hymns or the Charismatic choruses and spiritual songs. That is just the way it is and that is why balance is necessary to capture all the facets of what God has for us as we worship Him.

Now moving on to the Charismatic facet, we see that in the last 30 to 40 years, a lot of new music has been written which fits into the Charismatic and or contemporary Christian music category. Many of these pieces are called "choruses" as opposed to regular hymns, because they are shorter and simpler in nature.

Yet, one should not mistake simplicity for a lack of power or message. Once again, I grew up in a congregation that majored in the Traditionalist / Doctrinalist facet and then got into the Evangelical facet and I never really heard much about the Charismatic facet until later in my Christian walk.

At first, I was a little reluctant to see some of the choruses that were being sung by the Charismatic movement as valuable. However, the more I opened myself to The Holy Spirit, it seemed that these choruses had an important part to play within my Christian life, worship and ministry. As it turned out, some of these choruses have been extremely meaningful to me and to

my family as we have grown in the faith.

Although many of them are indeed quite simple, they are also quite powerful in the message they convey to us. Sung with a sense of majesty and love for God, choruses can offer a simple but powerful message.

Although some were written with a specific focus on The Holy Spirit, many others do reflect on and include the other Persons of The Trinity. For instance, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus," certainly centers directly on Jesus. Andrae Crouch's well accepted piece, "How Can I Say Thanks?" also centers on Jesus and can be used in various types of worship services. The wonderful piece, "Thou Art Worthy," is a work which emphasizes The Lordship of Christ. Jack Hayford's "Majesty" is another chorus which has come out of contemporary Christian music.

In my opinion, the various musical additions to the faith which have come out of the Charismatic facet and contemporary styles of worship in general, are long overdue and should be very welcome. Yet there are those who feel such new types of music are inappropriate and are an offense to the Majesty and Glory of God. They feel such music should never be used in worship. A director of music once told me that if he had it his way, these kinds of choruses would never again be used in worship services. That made me feel bad because I could see this man was missing an important facet of his faith which would minister to his spirit and enable him to minister more effectively to others. It was as if he was rejecting what God would have him receive and share.

Rejecting new Christian music simply because it is new is a mistake Christians have made for centuries. First of all, much of what we like in the way of music, whether Christian or secular, is tied directly to the way we have been brought up and the music we were exposed to in our lives. Moreover, since most of us are somewhat resistant to change, new music, especially new religious music, is often seen as unnecessary and something we can do without. Yet God says in Psalm 96:1 *“O Sing to The Lord a new song.”*

We tend to forget that every great hymn and cherished piece of Christian music today, was once a brand new piece of music that had never been heard before. Sometimes I hear comments like, “We should just go back to and stick with the old traditional styles of Christian music.” The problem with that comment is how to tell what the person saying it actually means. You have to wonder how far back they actually would like to go. By saying something like that, they may mean they would prefer to go back to the traditional Christian music they heard when they were growing up. However, depending on how old the person is, that could vary quite a bit. What one person sees as contemporary, another sees as more traditional.

For instance much of the music written and performed by Bill Gaither and his family is still considered contemporary Christian music by lots of people today, but actually much of Gaither’s music is now decades old and is being called traditional, classic Christian music rather than contemporary Christian music. Contemporary Christian music is changing all the time.

So when someone pleads the case for Christians to go “back” to more traditional music you really have to find out what they mean. As someone pointed out, how far “back” are they willing to go? Perhaps they mean the traditional Christian Gregorian chants of the 4th. Century. Interestingly enough, Gregorian chants were contemporary Christian music at one point and somebody probably complained at the time about how bad they were too.

Christians have been making the mistake of rejecting new Christian music for centuries. Time and again these Christians have been proven wrong in their assessment of the new music they found so distasteful.

Let me give you some concrete examples.

You may be aware of the fact that when Handel’s “Messiah” first came out, it was horribly criticized as being repetitive and boring. Of course, it is now seen as one of the greatest pieces of music ever written.

Below are some actual complaints that were written to pastors by members of congregations about new hymns that were introduced in worship.

“Was it the organist’s idea or yours that our peaceful worship service was shattered by that new hymn Sunday? The music was sacrilegious, something one would expect to hear in a den of iniquity, not a church! Don’t expect me to even attempt the song next time!”

Here is another.

“Pastor, I am not a music scholar, but I feel I know appropriate church music when I hear it. Last Sunday’s new hymn, if you call it that, sounded like a sentimental love ballad one might expect to hear crooned in a salon. If you persist in exposing us to rubbish like this in God’s house, don’t be surprised if many of the faithful look for a new place to worship!”

Interestingly enough, the first complaint was written in 1874 to a pastor about the hymn, “I Love To Tell The Story.” The second was written in 1864 about the hymn, “Just As I Am.” So you can see, that what is considered today to be some of the most loved and classic music of Christianity, was once contemporary, new music that people rejected outright as inappropriate for worship.

So when it comes to music, one can see that the various facets of the faith have produced some very important works which express, in different and valuable ways, the totality of God’s majesty, Love and holiness. Just for the fun of it, it might be interesting to listen more closely to the music that is sung in your congregation. If you are a pastor, and you do not already do so, it would be interesting to keep a record of the hymns you pick over a period of time and see just how spiritually balanced those selections are.

Taking a look at your prayer vocabulary as well as the music you choose for worship is like taking a walk through your bank statement. Doing so will quickly give you a glimpse of your most important priorities.

Finally, another strong indicator of which facet your

congregation might major in has to do with architecture, and the way the building you worship in is laid out. Most people can easily tell when they are in the midst of a Traditionalist/Doctrinalist sanctuary. You will see architecture which indicates where the priorities lie. You will often see a traditional pulpit and lectern opposite each other in the sanctuary with a deep chancel and a center aisle, thus, forming a cross. In the center of the chancel, you will usually see a Communion table, which in the Reformed faith, would be set away from the wall so as not to project the image of an altar.

Of course many of the cathedrals, both in Europe and the United States, were formed in the shape of the cross with a deep chancel and a center aisle. Traditionalist/Doctrinalist churches will also usually have a prominent cross somewhere at the center area of the chancel as well as in other areas.

Stained glass windows are also often connected with very traditional congregations, although stained glass may also be absent in a traditional church and present in others.

So there are certain styles of buildings which seem to particularly go with the Traditional/Doctrinalist facet such as the Gothic style which came out of Europe and was transferred across the Atlantic Ocean to us. Yet we have also seen that in Colonial America, they developed their own specific and beautiful style of architecture, but at the time it was still accommodating primarily the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet. That, of course, is never to say that a more balanced service of worship would not

be able to take place in a traditionally designed sanctuary, for certainly it can.

Yet, in the past, the building and the facet of the faith represented by the building, often went together.

However, the more congregations change and seek balance, the less accurate that formula is turning out to be.

Churches were built the way they were built for a reason. Great Gothic cathedrals have sometimes been called cold and unwelcoming. However, that is because people who see them that way are often unaware of the theology behind them and why they were built that way in the first place. They were built that way to represent and convey that God is Almighty and Powerful and Great. The huge high ceilings were a visual message that God was in Heaven above us and we were lost below having to have our Father reach down in the darkness of our sinful state and come to save and rescue us. In these large beautiful buildings, the worshipper could be hundreds of feet away from the pulpit. In addition, the pulpit was often elevated so high that the pastor literally had to climb a set of stairs to reach it. Yet, they were designed that way to convey that God is above us and His Word comes down to us to be received by us and followed so that we might be drawn closer to Him. It was a very Traditionalist/Doctrinalist way of doing things.

Yet, things began to change during the revivals of the 1800's. Preachers became more concerned with being able to speak directly to the parishioners. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ was being preached and it therefore seemed necessary to have a sanctuary where

one could personally encounter Jesus through the preaching that was done.

That called for a closer proximity between the parishioner and the pulpit. Many of the so called “Tent” or “Revival” meetings were held during this time period. These tents were much smaller than a large Gothic sanctuary and they allowed for a more personal interaction between preacher and people.

Charles Finney, one of the great revivalists of our country, had an occasion at one point in his ministry in New York City, to design a new building. He was fed up with the way a lot of other people had designed buildings and felt that he would take a crack at one himself. He designed it in such a way that even though the sanctuary would seat 1,500 people, he would still be able to make eye contact with every single person. Again, we see the emphasis here of the importance in the Evangelical facet of the personal relationship with Jesus and the personal relationship being conveyed in a personal encounter between pastor and people. He felt he should be able to personally look into the eyes of every person in every pew and that is exactly the way his design worked.

Yet, I would say that sanctuaries designed specifically for the Evangelical facet like that one, are probably few and far between. The reason for that is that those who later saw themselves in the Evangelical facet, adapted their ministry to the buildings that were already built. People who came out of the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet and moved into the Evangelical facet and brought their congregations along with them, found themselves

primarily Evangelicals but still in a Traditionalist / Doctrinalist type of building, which for the most part worked very well for them.

With the onset of the Charismatic movement in the past 30-40 years, there have been a lot of new buildings built. The Charismatics felt constrained in the more traditional buildings and designed buildings that gave them much more freedom in their times of worship. They also designed multi-purpose buildings that allowed the space for worship on Sunday, to be used for various other things during the week.

Also, the new technology of the last 30-40 years has permitted much better sound systems, much better lighting and much better acoustics. Also large screen projection became available. These new technologies were often used first by those mostly in the Charismatic facet along with those open to more contemporary worship. However that too has changed as congregations in all three facets now use the latest forms of technology to aid them in worship.

Since a specific attachment to the traditions and architecture of the past was no longer a goal for many of the Charismatics, who saw that as legalism, there was no problem in creating sanctuaries that looked very different from more traditional buildings.

However, for a congregation that is tied seriously to tradition and the architecture that goes with it, it can be very difficult for them to see their sanctuary being used for anything but worship and even then, sometimes

newer technology is shunned as inappropriate.

At one point our congregation in New York had been looking at an improvement for the sound system, which was in fact quite necessary. Yet, when it came to talking about some of the larger speakers that are hung from the ceiling and have tremendous sound quality, but possibly not the best looks, people started to get a little nervous. That kind of a speaker system suspended from the ceiling was something which many people felt would take away from the more traditional design of the sanctuary and would compromise it in a way that they would rather avoid. Getting them to go with a better sound system that would enhance worship was unfortunately a difficult thing to do.

However, that is changing today. New sound systems, as well as large screens are being installed in even the most Traditionalist/Doctrinalist buildings so the technology can aid in worship. Yet even that comes with a cost. I have even recently heard Traditionalists / Doctrinalists say things like, the day they put up those big screens in my congregation is the day I go elsewhere. By the way, the key phrase in that sentence is "my congregation." People really do get tied to congregations and feel they own them and feel they have to do things the way they like them or they will leave.

Many of the newer Charismatic congregations also tend to have a more theatrical atmosphere in their sanctuary design. That is, instead of a traditional chancel, they have more of a center stage or platform from which most of the service is conducted. Oftentimes, the art and

design in the building is very modernistic and usually lacking in what some would see as a traditional or Reformed appearance. I have been in at least one sanctuary where The Cross was nowhere to be seen. Pulpits have been replaced by Lucite lecterns. Communion tables are only visible on Communion Sundays, if at all. An awareness of the different liturgical seasons signaled by different works of art and color schemes in the sanctuary, have all but disappeared. As good as the worship may be and it is often very good, I have sensed a lack in these congregations of a deep sense of tradition and evangelical roots and zeal that is still appropriate even in more modern buildings.

Just for the fun of it, take a look around your sanctuary. See what facet of The Church shines most brightly through the architecture and layout of the building. See what you can learn by simply looking around the sanctuary itself and picking up on the details that might be there to see.

This chapter has been called, “Just For The Fun Of It,” yet there is real meaning to the verbal, musical and architectural styles that we have been talking about and how they represent each individual facet of Christianity.

In my ministry as a missionary, I have worshipped everywhere from the Panamanian jungle, to beautiful Palm Desert, California, from Moscow, Russia to Havana, Cuba and I can tell you I have seen just about every worship style out there. I have seen a 100 member choir singing traditional and beautiful classical Christian music

and also I have seen praise bands with congas and horns and singers lifting up wonderful praise to our Lord.

More important, I have become quite comfortable in virtually all worship styles there are and I am grateful that God has shown me the value and importance of each one. In each one, I have been blessed by another facet and aspect of God being emphasized and although it is kind of rare, it is particularly wonderful when I can get all of them in one place and in one congregation, even in one service.

One could certainly go on with a longer list of things which emphasize the different facets congregations find themselves majoring in. Certainly, one could also look at the curriculum, preaching style, and the different offerings that are available in Christian Education, as an indication of where the congregation might be spiritually.

Yet the vision which I feel God has for His Church is one of complete balance as opposed to segmented facets. For instance, my vision for a more balanced congregation would be a congregation that considers itself mainly in the Charismatic camp, but which offers in its Sunday School, a class on the Westminster Confession. On the other hand you could also have a congregation that sees itself mostly in the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet, but in its Sunday School class offers a course on The Gifts of The Holy Spirit. Envision if you will, a congregation that goes beyond tolerance and actually strives for balance, seeking after all that God would have for that congregation from every facet He would call us to experience.

In my opinion that would be a much more mature and

spiritually balanced congregation open to all God would have for them. It would be a place where all three facets of The Trinity would be held up and valued equally and seen as indispensable in the life and ministry of that congregation. It would also be a congregation in which God would be able to do so much more than He can in congregations where people insist on majoring in just one Person of The Trinity. There are congregations that do strive for this spiritual balance and I have seen them, been involved with them and been blessed by them, but they are still greatly in the minority. In my opinion that is the Biblical standard we all should be trying to achieve.

CHAPTER TEN

BEYOND THEORY, TO PRACTICE

At this point, you may be saying to yourself that the whole theory presented in this book is a nice one, but it would never work in my congregation. Well, depending on where you are starting, you will either have a lot of work or a relatively small amount of work to do to attain a point of greater balance if you feel that is worth doing. It should be noted though, that even congregations that are fairly ready to enter into greater balance, may nonetheless face some formidable challenges as they try to move forward. If you are a pastor or leader in your congregation, this chapter is designed to give you a specific plan you might find beneficial to follow in leading your congregation toward considering a spiritually more mature and balanced ministry in The Lord.

If you are a layperson without any leadership responsibilities, I suggest it will also be good for you to read this chapter for two reasons. First, it will assist you personally to move to a point of greater balance in your own Christian walk and maturity and second, it is something you can pass on to your pastor or congregational leaders for them to consider if you feel that is something you should do.

As I said earlier, when I arrived at Central Church in New York, the three different facets I have been speaking about in this book were all represented in that congregation to one extent or another. As I shared, they

had learned for the most part to tolerate each other. Yet, they had done little to move in the direction of seeing each facet as absolutely necessary, or to recognize the spiritual vacuum and void that is created when any of them are minimized or kept out of the congregation. One might say that the soil was fairly well prepared upon my coming. However, it took quite awhile to move them to what in this chapter we will call Step 5.

It can take time to bring things into balance and taking the pastoral time to do that well is what I advise and what I feel Scripture teaches. Trying to force this theology on a congregation without taking the time to teach it, as well as having a definitive plan similar to the one outlined in this chapter, will most likely cause dissension and a quenching of The Spirit in your congregation.

The prophet Hosea tells us that we are to lead the people of God with "cords of compassion." In that image he is talking about how one leads an animal with reins, or cords. When you lead an animal like a horse or mule for instance, you can lead it in a gentle pastoral way which it will normally follow, or you can yank and pull at it in such a way as to create a lack of trust. When you do that, the animal will usually resist you, will pull in the other direction and sometimes will just plain stubbornly sit down.

God is telling us that the same applies to leading His people. They are to be led gently and Biblically without yanking and pulling them until they stubbornly sit down. Whenever you are leading a congregation into new and unfamiliar territory, something one man once said makes

good sense. He said, "Never forget that you can get so far out in front of the troops, that you can be mistaken for the enemy." Leading with pastoral love may take longer, but in the long run it will provide the necessary environment for growth and maturity in the faith.

One must lead in the style of a servant in these areas, or one is going to create a lot of tension. In his book, *Strength In Servant Leadership*, Dr. Paul Cedar points out the fact that it always takes so much longer to build something than it does to tear it down. I can guarantee you that if you go about leading your congregation toward more spiritual balance in a way that builds up the congregation, it will normally take some time, perhaps more than you would like and that may get you frustrated.

After all, as the pastor or leader in the congregation, you may already see the importance of moving toward a more Biblical spiritual balance and therefore may become impatient with those who fail to catch the vision right away.

Yet, if you go about it in a way that is only according to your agenda and your timetable, rather than that of The Lord's, it will not take very long before you see people pulling the other way and sitting down. Jesus has a gentle spirit. I suggest His leaders should also have a gentle spirit, and lead in the same way.

With these suggestions, let me move ahead and share with you the steps I have seen work to move a congregation to a more balanced and spiritually mature

group of Christians. Let me also say that as balanced as a congregation may become, that congregation will never be perfect. The folks in it will always have many things to learn and share together which will increase their spiritual balance and stability.

Yet, if you take a definitive direction toward more spiritual balance, asking God to direct you and correct your course as you go, you will see the blessings and benefits of doing so. I will share with you one plan, one outline of how it may be done. Certainly you must choose the plan which God shows is best for you.

STEP # 1: PASTOR AND CHURCH LEADERS, YOU GET THERE FIRST

It has been my experience in most situations of pastoral leadership that unless the pastor and leadership are already where they are trying to lead the congregation, difficulties arise. Trying to lead a congregation toward greater balance until you have experienced it yourself, is probably a bad way to go.

Therefore, it is important for the pastor and other leaders of the congregation to take a close look at themselves to see where they might be out of balance and what it is they have to consider to come into balance. Before anything else, take a look at the different facets mentioned in this book thus far and see which one you major in and which ones you can still grow in to improve your relationship with God.

When you find out which facet is your weakest and

possibly the least comfortable, you should begin to set aside time to read and explore that facet, pray about growing in that facet and arrange to expose yourself to experiencing more of that facet, by visiting congregations where that facet shines more brightly.

Again, depending on which facet seems to shine the least brightly in you, you will have to spend time seeking God and allowing Him to polish up that facet in you. If you find the Charismatic facet to be the weakest, then it would be good for you to read a number of things written on the subject. My own experience was one where the Charismatic facet was my weakest. It was the one where I had had the least exposure personally and had read the least. It was also the one about which I had the most fears. It meant I had to read a number of books on that subject, which varied greatly in their approach. Some of the writings I personally found very instructive were Dennis Bennett's book, *The Holy Spirit*, Billy Graham's book, *The Holy Spirit*, and various other books and articles which addressed the Charismatic movement from different angles. Outside of Scripture, I have yet to find a perfect book and author on these subjects, but God can show you lots of good things through imperfect people.

However, the thing I found most instructive on the Charismatic movement was in I Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14. Those chapters stood and still stand, as a good corrective to many of the other things that have been written which, when compared to them, fail to measure up.

It should also be noted that when you read, study and

experience different things in the Charismatic facet, or any of the facets you may be investigating, it is possible you will find things that you feel are less than appropriate and may even be out of line with Scripture.

For instance, when reading Bennett's book on The Holy Spirit, I disagreed greatly with some of the things he says in his book about how God leads His people in The Holy Spirit, yet there are other things that were very instructive for me. I discussed those things with him and found our discussion very positive, even though we still disagreed. So things like that should never stop you from moving forward, and obtaining in your own faith and growth, the things from the facet you are exploring which are Biblical and which will enable your congregation to move forward toward a more Biblical balance.

I will never forget the advice a missionary gave me as I was exploring the Charismatic facet of The Church. He said, "Never miss the real thing out of a fear of the counterfeit."

Let me give you an example of what I mean. As best as I can explain it, when I Corinthians 14 talks about The Gift of Tongues, it says that those who have The Gift of Tongues and who use it in a service of worship, should use that Gift one person at a time, with no more than two or three in an entire worship service. It also says that if someone speaks in tongues they are to sit down and be quiet unless there is someone there with the Gift of Interpretation so that everyone can grasp what is being said. I fully concur with what God's Word says there and do feel that the Gift of Tongues is a valid Gift today and

can bless Christians, if used according to Scripture. Yet, I have been in Charismatic congregations that purposefully take time in their service of worship to actually allow everyone who has the Gift of Tongues to use it and to speak at the same time, without any interpretation at all.

As far as I can tell, that is exactly what Paul is speaking against in I Corinthians 14 when he says the following words.

"I thank God I speak in tongues more than you all; nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue. . . ." If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say you are mad? But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you. . . . If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God."

In this passage, the Gift of Tongues is upheld as a valuable Gift. Yet, in public worship, without interpretation and everybody speaking in tongues at once, things can get pretty confusing, especially for those who might be visitors to the congregation. Therefore, Paul says that when we are in public worship and the Gift of Tongues is used, there must always be an interpretation.

If not, it will cause confusion rather than edification.

He says that if a stranger walks into a church and hears everybody speaking in tongues at the same time, he or she may very well feel that the people in that place are "mad."

The word in the Greek which is translated in the RSV as "mad" literally means "crazy" in the lunatic sense. Paul is trying to advocate for a witness to Christ which never makes the believer look crazy. Many Charismatic congregations, and I have been in them, go against this directive of Scripture on a regular basis. There are other congregations where I have been where the Gift of Tongues is in fact used according to The Word of God as written in I Corinthians 14 and when that happens it allows for wonderful blessings to come to the congregation.

Visiting other congregations enables you to experience areas where you may be weakest. Yet, you may also find things that are being done contrary to The Word of God. So, leave those alone and ask God to show you the important things that will lead toward bringing you and your congregation to a greater place of balance in Christ.

STEP #2: LAY OUT A PLAN AND GO SLOWLY

Once you have taken the time to get to a more balanced position yourself as a pastor or leader in the congregation, you can start to prepare a plan of sharing and teaching, aimed at bringing others along to share that vision. The greatest danger here lies in the temptation to move people very quickly to a place where it may have taken you

months or even years to arrive at yourself. Once you reach and enjoy a greater balance in your own personal faith, you may likely experience a strong urge to bring others to that point as quickly as possible.

It will be similar to finding the pearl of great price and trying to get everyone to come and see it as quickly as you can. However, going too fast in this process can be very costly for both you as a pastor or congregational leader and the congregation you lead.

As it was with you, so it should be with the people you lead. First, try to discover the facets of faith your congregation is exposed to the least and which God could move them toward in their life together as a congregation. You will not have to spend a lot of time teaching on the facet which your congregation already finds the most comfortable. Yet in the teaching you present, you should never let that facet be taken for granted. You must hold that facet up as equally important to the others. You may feel that this is obvious, but not to do so, may be sending the wrong message to your people.

As I shared earlier, the area of greatest fear and least exposure for our Elders and people was the Charismatic facet. Therefore, I had to set about a plan of teaching our Elders in this area specifically, while at the same time, studying and properly affirming the other facets and the importance of the balance of them all.

The way I went about it was to teach the importance of balance first, and to give a history of all three of the facets similar to what I presented in Chapter Four of this book. I

then moved on to be more specific about the facet which I felt we lacked in the most in our congregation at the time.

Our Elders met twice a month. Once a month we met for our business meeting. The second meeting of the month, two weeks later, was devoted to prayer and study. It was a perfect time to introduce new things to the Elders and to pray about them. I chose a plan that would take place over approximately a year and a half. Now you may feel that a year and a half is way too long to wait to experience that kind of fruit in your congregation, especially if you happen to be ready to go now. Yet, never forget that it takes time for things to grow. It takes time for a seed to get rooted and to put up a shoot. It takes even longer for that plant to bear fruit. Moreover, it takes even longer for that plant to bear fruit that lasts. You have to choose at the outset whether you are going to go for the kind of fruit that lasts only for a season, or the kind of fruit that abides.

In talking with the vinedresser of a local vineyard on Long Island, I found out some interesting things about grapes. He told me that when it comes to commercially grown grapes you can plant a vineyard and after only one year you can have fruit on the vine. However, if you pick that fruit, you will destroy the vine and nothing will come in the way of fruit the next year. He told me that if you are going after the kind of fruit that lasts, which The Bible in John 15 calls fruit that "abides," you have to wait three years. After three years, the grapes will be such that they will come back year after year and produce the best fruit available.

That is a good lesson for all of us Christians. When it comes to moving toward a greater balance in any of the facets of The Church, we as Pastors and leaders can sometimes be tempted to pick the fruit too soon.

The Charismatic facet, which may be growing in your congregation, might push you to move the congregation toward a more Charismatic approach much faster than the congregation overall might possibly withstand.

I can recall wishing my congregation would have accepted the Charismatic facet more quickly than they did at the time. Yet The Lord continued to show me, in spite of pressure from people who failed to see the overall vision, that to go about this slowly was going to bring Him the greatest glory in the long run. It was also going to enable Him to produce on the vine of our ministry the best and most lasting or abiding fruit possible for our congregation.

So, for our congregation it appeared that a teaching designed specifically for the leadership of the congregation would probably span approximately one and a half years, using those once a month teaching meetings. Of course, that allowed for other things that were going on as well to be given their proper place in the overall life of the congregation. The first thing I did was set up a time in our study meeting to look at the importance of balance itself. I shared with the Elders the entire issue of balance and then gave them a history of what I felt were the three main facets of The Church as described in this book. I allowed for plenty of illustrations and input from the Elders as well as

questions. I allowed two meetings for this presentation. It was during this time that I took the poll of the Session mentioned in Chapter Four and shared the results with them.

Then, I asked them to respond to me with how they felt about the presentation. In our case, the response was very favorable. Although it was new to a number of them, The Spirit had been at work and they seemed very open to exploring it further. I might point out here that the reason that The Spirit had been able to work in the lives of these leaders was a direct result of time spent in prayer for this venture. Undergird everything you do with prayer.

The next thing we looked at in our study times had to do with the area they felt was the most difficult and weakest in our church. As I said previously, for us that was the Charismatic facet.

So I walked them through the previously described exercise of having them write down both their definition of what it means to be Charismatic so that we could talk about that, as well as their greatest fears, coupled with what they felt was the greatest benefit of the Charismatic movement. Once we finished dealing with the fears and taking the time to look at the topics the fears brought up from a Biblical point of view, things started to settle down. It was as if scales were lifted from certain people's eyes and they were ready to walk further.

The next thing we did in our study meetings was to embark on a detailed study of The Gifts of The Holy Spirit

from I Corinthians 12-14 and an additional specific study of The Fruit of The Holy Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. We felt that to best grasp the totality of the Charismatic movement and the emphasis on The Holy Spirit, we would all have to be prepared to understand and teach on Spiritual Gifts. We would also have to be prepared to enable the use of Spiritual Gifts in appropriate ways in our congregation and in our worship. So we embarked on a serious study on The Gifts and The Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

We covered the subject from the most basic perspectives of what a Spiritual Gift actually is and how one differentiates a Spiritual Gift from a talent or a skill, all the way to looking specifically and in-depth at each individual Spiritual Gift and Spiritual Fruit.

In addition to teaching on the Gifts, it was critical that we also took time for teaching on the Fruit of The Holy Spirit and here is why. The bottom line is that the proper use of the Gifts of The Holy Spirit will always produce the Fruit of The Holy Spirit. So, if the Fruit of The Holy Spirit is not being produced in your congregation, you are not using The Gifts correctly. That of course was a major problem for Paul in Corinth. They were so obsessed on which Spiritual Gifts they had and how they could “one up” each other with those Gifts, that they forgot about the main purpose of Spiritual Gifts, which is to build up a congregation as opposed to tearing it down. Also I have found that if the Fruit of The Holy Spirit is missing in a person’s life or in the life of a congregation, the first thing to do is check the connection to The Vine. If you have ever seen a fruit tree like an apple tree with a branch

partially broken, the fruit at the end of that branch is usually stunted and underdeveloped. The reason for that is that the connection to the vine has been broken. Jesus said in John 15:5 that *"I am the vine. You are the branches."*

Then in verse 8 He said, *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."* In verse 5 He says, *" . . . apart from me you can do nothing."* That is why it is good from time to time to do a little "fruit inspection" in our lives, both as congregations and individual Christians. Jesus clearly implies that the sincerity of our commitment to Him can be determined by the fruit we produce for Him. So if we are lacking in Spiritual Fruit or our Spiritual Fruit is stunted and sour, the first place to check is our connection to Jesus The Vine. There are so many things these days that try to disrupt and cut off our connection to The Vine. Perhaps today would be a good time for a little "fruit inspection" in your own life to see how well you are doing in your walk with Christ.

On a side note, it is also interesting that many Charismatic congregations which major in The Holy Spirit and the Gifts of The Spirit do the same thing. They obsess on The Gifts and virtually forget about the Fruit of The Spirit. That is not Biblical and is not something God likes to see happen. In all I have read on the Charismatic movement, there seems to me to be far too little emphasis on The Fruit of The Holy Spirit, which is in fact the end goal of our ministry together.

As you can probably guess, the process of study and preparation we selected took a long time. Let me assure

you that it was worth it. Yes, there were complaints along the way. One of the Elders, who had been in the Charismatic facet for a long time, would complain as we were studying Spiritual Gifts, saying that we had studied the Spiritual Gifts in this congregation before. We really do not get anywhere by studying the Gifts. What we had to do is use the Gifts, he would tell us.

What he was trying to do was push us quicker and further than it was appropriate for us to go at the time. To start to have worship services that would openly use the Gifts of The Spirit before the leadership was comfortable with that and before the congregation could be brought on board through teaching and preaching, would have been divisive. Such well-meaning, but short-sighted vision, may have to be pastorally and lovingly confronted along the way in the process, so be ready.

At an appropriate point after these first two steps, when you sense The Spirit telling you that the time is right, the next step can be taken.

STEP #3: GET YOUR LEADERSHIP TO TAKE A POSITION

This step is one which hopefully has been built up to over time and should seem like the next natural step to take. If it seems like a large leap and seems to be out of step, you may be trying to take it too early. If so, you should probably back off and wait for the leading of The Spirit. Yet, when you are ready, you should encourage the leadership of your congregation to adopt and publish a written statement about the importance of theological

balance in the congregation and that you are working on how to bring that about in some wonderful ways and will be communicating that to the congregation as things move forward.

STEP #4: ARRANGING A SAMPLE TEST

After you yourself feel comfortable in a more balanced position and sense your leadership feels the same way and after they have taken a position on this subject, you are ready to begin the first step to test it in the congregation. Testing how well this will be received in the congregation is a critical step. It should be planned well and in a way that will give you credible feedback. Be warned again that you might find yourself in a situation where you and the leadership are in one place and the majority of the congregation is someplace else. It may take the congregation a longer time to feel comfortable moving forward. In fact, it might take longer for them than it took you and your leadership. Hopefully that will not be the case, but a test of where the congregation is will give you an indication of how quickly you can move forward.

After working with and teaching the leadership, what worked well at Central Church was to present this teaching to a cross-section of the congregation. We had a weekly Wednesday night Bible study/teaching time. Generally speaking, people from all three facets described in this book attended that class each week. Depending on what was being taught, there may have been 25 to 40 people in attendance. It seemed like the perfect place to

run a test of how well this theology was going to be received by the congregation at large.

I felt it important to advertise this class in a way that wet their whistle for something new and exciting. I also felt it was important to have a sense of humor and some fun with the whole event. I therefore chose to present this to the Bible Study on four different Wednesdays in a row. I called this seminar or teaching, "A Fascinating Look at The Facets of Our Fellowship."

Numbers in your congregation may vary, but based on the size of our congregation, I felt it important to have at least 25 people in attendance, so that we could have the kind of interaction and sharing I had planned.

Without telling them, I made up some placards at the suggestion of one of my staff. At first that staff person was only kidding about doing it, but I sensed it might be something which could work and might add some fun to these teachings. As it turned out it worked as a neat way to break the ice a bit as people came into the room. I made up three different placards or signs on poles which looked very similar to the kind of signs you see at our national political conventions to mark where the different state delegates are to sit. On one of them I wrote in big red letters, "Traditionalists." On the second, in big red letters, "Evangelicals," and on the third in big red letters, "Charismatics."

Before the people came for the first teaching I affixed the poles with the placards on them to chairs in various rows, just to see what would happen when the people

came into the room. In our case, it really did work well.

As people were coming in, I simply sat near the back of the room out of the way and watched. Some of them simply went and sat down near a sign that seemed appropriate to them. Others joked about the fact that the signs were even there in the first place. Others talked to each other about which one they ought to sit near. Still others commented in a humorous way that there ought to be other signs there too, like "Former Charismatic" or "Former Traditionalist."

The teachings began and were very successful. They were successful because the timing of The Spirit was right. There seemed to be no adverse reaction from any of the facets. I feel one of the reasons that was the case, was because in the teaching itself, as laid out in earlier chapters, all three facets were taught as being valuable and absolutely necessary for our ministry together.

We also took a poll among the people who came, asking which facet they themselves related to the most. They were very open about sharing where they were and open to looking at what they might do to gain better balance in their own Christian walk. Like the Elders, they too had fears that we talked about positively together and the result was a wonderful atmosphere of growth in The Spirit.

STEP #5: PREACHING

After the first four steps are in place, the time should

be right to preach this theology and share it with the overall congregation from the pulpit. Once again, I suggest that be done in a preaching series aimed at taking whatever time seems to be necessary for your congregation. During those sermons, it is good to make references to the amount of time that has been spent by you, the Elders and other leadership of the congregation in getting to a point where this is now being shared from the pulpit. In my own case, in my overall preaching plans, I allowed for six sermons to introduce the whole subject of spiritual balance and the importance of it. Since for us, the Charismatic facet was the weakest, least familiar and most feared, I then allowed for another six sermons to share on the various Gifts and Fruit of The Spirit in a way that would allay any fears that may have existed regarding the Charismatic facet of the congregation.

In our case, it also seemed wise to us to have an alternative worship service available and ready to be implemented shortly after the preaching series. We did maintain a very purposeful and defined balance in the regular Sunday morning service of worship among the three facets. Yet, when it comes to the use of the different Spiritual Gifts, or more time spent in personal and corporate prayer, or more time spent in singing and praise than usually done on Sunday mornings, we felt the best way to go was to design a special service which would incorporate these without the time constraints so often found on a Sunday morning.

We, therefore, set up an alternate service of worship in addition to our regular Sunday morning worship service

which would also be balanced, but would allow for more time, flexibility and openness when it came to various expressions of faith. This service served two main purposes. One was to allow the folks from the Charismatic facet to have a worship service where they could express themselves more fully and where they could see that they were heard and valued. Yet it also served to allow others to see that such worship really was not the crazy, “out of control circus” many of them feared or heard that it would be.

The final piece in all of this is to put into writing, possibly in pamphlet form, a synopsis of how theological balance is seen in the congregation, making sure it is clearly presented in the new member classes and materials they receive. This, of course, allows for people who are coming into the congregation to see from the start what kind of position you have on such things.

In closing this chapter, let me say that for pastors and Christian leaders in congregations, the main points center around having a plan and a vision that your people can grasp and leading them at a rate which nourishes them, rather than chokes them. The goal in all of this is to bring your congregation to a more spiritually stable position where God can work through them more fully than ever before. Like anything else which grows or gets built, this should take time and if done well should stand the test of time and should bear Spiritual Fruit that abides.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BUILDING UP INSTEAD OF TEARING DOWN

The reason I felt called to write this book is because so often today we see the different facets of the Christian Church mentioned in this book, doing more to tear each other down than to build each other up. We too often fail to see that each facet mentioned in this book is necessary to a fully mature and spiritually balanced ministry. I have seen entire leadership boards study just one of the specific facets with the express purpose of being able to speak intelligently against that facet and assure themselves that that facet will never influence their congregation. In my opinion, so much ministry time can be wasted defending one's own turf and justifying one's own position, rather than moving forward and seeing the purpose and value God has for us through all three facets of The Trinity. As I said previously, the best we often see in congregations is a call for tolerance which falls short of what Scripture teaches. As I read I Corinthians and other passages of Scripture that pertain to balance, tolerance seems to be the least for which we should strive.

The Apostle Paul makes it so clear when he speaks about God's planned spiritual balance. In Romans 12:3-10 he says, *"For by the grace given to me I bid every one among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him. For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy,*

in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor."

The intention of God in giving us various Spiritual Gifts and facets of our faith expression is for the building up of His Church. He never expected to see us use the different facets as if they were knives with which to stab each other in the back.

In I Corinthians 3:1 and following, Paul talks about the destructiveness of factions. Implied therein is also the value of facets. In I Corinthians 3:9- 10, Paul says,

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and another man is building upon it. Let each man take care how he builds upon it."

The point here again, is to build up rather than to tear down. The point is edification. It is clear in Scripture that the different facets being discussed in this book are to be used to build up believers and congregations, rather than beating others up and tearing them down. Some may feel that to keep a certain facet from shining in their congregation is alright to do, but that is not Biblical. I Corinthians 10:23b is very important as Paul says, *"All things are lawful, But not all things build up."*

Again, the theme of building up is expressed so specifically. The clarion call of Paul in I Corinthians, especially in I Corinthians 12-14, is for Christians to work together in The Church which is Christ's Body, instead of working against each other.

Paul tells us clearly that one facet of the Christian Church body cannot say to the other "I have no need of you." To do so is as foolish as the foot saying that it has no use for the rest of the body or the eyes saying to the hands that hands are worthless to the body and the body can do just fine without them.

These illustrations from simple everyday life, inspired by The Spirit, teach us about the importance of working together in balance. Where would the eyes be if they did not have hands to do for them what they see ought to be done? Where would the body be if it had no feet to carry it from place to place? The point of Scripture and the point I share in this book, is that God has created diversity for the purpose of bringing about spiritual stability, balance and maturity.

The body is made up of so many different parts. All of them are diverse. Yet they are all important. They are all orchestrated in such a way as to bring harmony, stability and balance to the body. The Christian Church should be the same way. All the diverse Biblical facets should be allowed to shine with The Light of Christ. Spending time building defenses that keep certain Biblical facets out of our congregations must truly frustrate the Lord. He is not a big fan of our purposefully quenching His Spirit.

It is clear that balance brings stability. Stability is essential for the fullness of ministry among us. A congregation without stability is a congregation that will have trouble standing, or maybe better put, will have standing trouble.

All of the things I have shared which are valuable in each of the facets discussed in this book are worth having in every congregation and in every Christian life. To forfeit them voluntarily is to forfeit what God might do through you or through your congregation. Different facets bring different ministries and gifts into each congregation.

The good teaching and sound doctrine that the Traditionalists/Doctrinalists bring into your congregation, or your life personally, will enable you and your congregation to be steered correctly, by the leading of The Holy Spirit. Good solid teaching produces good, solid and mature Christians. That in turn, will produce Christians and congregations that are sure of where they stand, stable in their faith and confident in where God leads them. Overall, the Traditionalist/Doctrinalist facet of The Church produces a foundation which enables a greater stability throughout, because of the grounding in The Word upon which it insists. That foundation the Doctrinalists/Traditionalists lay is absolutely critical to prepare us to go out and share our faith with others through evangelism.

The Evangelical facet will bring with it a joy and a calling to share that Good News of the Gospel with

others. That will result in people being saved and brought to Jesus. That will result in more people in your congregation with different gifts for ministry, which should result in greater stability of your overall ministry.

The Charismatic facet brings with it an openness to the power, Gifts and Fruit of The Holy Spirit in your life and congregation. That in turn allows for the empowering and equipping of the laity to enable your ministries to be varied, balanced and growing.

Traditionalists/Doctrinalists will tend to make sure that there are good classes and good adult education in doctrine and in Scripture which is very valuable. The Evangelicals will correctly insist on programs of outreach and sharing of The Gospel with your neighborhood and with people around the world through missions. The Charismatic folks will insist upon joyful worship and a reliance on God's Spirit that will allow a flow of God's Love and leading into the congregation that nothing else could bring. All of these things produce a greater diversity of ministry and therefore a greater base of stability for your Christian walk personally and the life of any congregation. Tell me which one you can honestly say you should be without in your ministry.

Once a congregation reaches this level of balance lives will be transformed. What they read, study and hear from God's Word will be translated into ministry in ways that never happened before.

Ask yourself these questions. Can I really be my best as a Christian without sound doctrine and teaching from

God's Word? Can I really be my best as a Christian without a real desire to see people saved and without learning how to effectively share my faith in Christ with others? Can I really be my best as a Christian without the power and enabling Gifts and Fruit of The Holy Spirit living within me?

Let me say again, that as the one writing about this, I too still have a lot to learn. Nonetheless, I have written this book to encourage all of us to take a serious look at the ways we can become more spiritually balanced in our congregations and in our individual Christian lives. When you really look at it, balance in the faith is what God has planned for us. Balance is not an option we can take or leave. It is a mandate from God for the betterment and up building of His Church.

It seems to me that all of us have a tendency in our humanness to take the facet of the faith we like most and to see it as the most important thing, trying to make that the standard for everybody else. That really is not the Biblical way to go. It seems to me that the best way to go would be for all of us as individual Christians, as congregations and as denominations, to truly seek together the value and importance of all the facets of the Christian Church spoken about in this book. We should follow Scripture and count each other better than ourselves. We should all be "**All Ahead Full!**" Christians.

When we freely seek after what God has done and what He offers us through the various facets we have discussed in this book, we will increase the spiritual balance and stability of each of our lives and the

congregations in which we serve. If this book does nothing else but get you to look at this subject in a way that you may have never done before, I will feel good about having written it.

I trust The Lord will lead you to seek the Spiritual balance which God talks to us about in His Word. Of course, there are other things that are also important in our congregations and in our spiritual growth and in our Christian walk. Yet, as The Lord leads, may you find a new joy in the creative possibilities that lie ahead as you step out, seeking the spiritual balance we have shared in this book. I am convinced that only as we see all the facets of The Trinity as being valuable and desirable to us, will we get past factions and tolerance, and move into the realm of true Spiritual balance, stability and deeper maturity in Christ.

May you find yourself searching, stretching and growing in your faith. Although it may be a sometimes lengthy journey, it will be an exciting one filled with His blessings and leading. It is all about "Balancing Your Faith." May you be guided by The Hand of God The Father, The Joy of Jesus and His Salvation and The Power of The Holy Spirit. May you allow God to open your life to new vistas for ministry, new joy in your worship and salvation and new accomplishments for Christ.

Brief Biography For Pastor John McWilliams

Pastor John McWilliams has been in ordained ministry for more than 38 years. He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Secondary Education from Rowan University and a Master of Divinity degree from Princeton Seminary. He served as pastor of two different congregations for 21 years. The first was in Windham, New Hampshire and the second was on Long Island, New York.

In 1998 he and his wife Barbara felt a call into Christian mission work full time. They left the pastorate and went to work with Campus Crusade for Christ for nearly 15 years and then transitioned to be on staff with International Biblical Training in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Pastor John's main area of responsibility has been that of training pastors and Christian leaders in various countries, as well as throughout the United States. He has traveled to teach, preach and minister in Russia and Costa Rica many times, as well as in Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, the Bahamas and most recently in Cuba.

In addition to this book he has also written numerous articles, hymns and songs and has recorded various audio seminars on various pertinent Christian topics. They can be found on his website at WWW.Jbmcw.com. He also produced a Christian video called "The Medal of Honor: Robert Maxwell's Story" in which he interviewed Robert Maxwell, our

nation's oldest living recipient of The Congressional Medal of Honor. Bob threw himself on a live German hand grenade to save three of his fellow soldiers. It's a great story of faith and courage. Just Google the title and it will come up online to view for free. The Gospel is presented in the video in a meaningful and compelling way. This video can be used by Christians as an evangelical tool to share with their non Christian friends.

He and his wife Barbara have three grown children and one grandson and another on the way. He can be reached at PastorJohn@integrity.com

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