

# CONSULTATION SOURCES

---

**1971-1975 TIME PERIOD**

Consultation Sources: 1971-1975 Time Period

Edited by: Consultation Team

Copyright © 2022 PEOPLE OF PRAISE, INC. All rights reserved.

Published by CONSULTATION TEAM

# Table of Contents

---

100. Background Information for 1971-1975 Sources.....	1
102. Early Lessons in Christian Household.....	7
103. The Need for Christian Environments.....	25
104. Being and Doing.....	41
106. Spiritual Gifts and the Common Good.....	47
107. Reflections on the 1973 Conference.....	57
108. The Role of Prophets and Prophecy.....	63
109. Pastoral Needs Memo.....	71
110. Relationships Built on Jesus.....	73
111. Covenants and Agreements.....	87
112. Overcoming Pride.....	99
113. Satan's Way and Christ's Way.....	105
114. The Trap of Money.....	113
115. Work: the World's View and God's View.....	123
116. Slaves to Whom?.....	131
117. Prayer, Study and Action.....	139
118. Motives for Serving.....	149
119. Servant Leadership.....	157
120. Consulting the Community.....	165
121. How to Pray with People.....	181
122. The Origins of the People of Praise.....	201
123. Brotherhood Among Leaders.....	217
124. Following Jesus Wholeheartedly.....	225

125. Teaching Children to Pray.....	231
126. Being a Man, Being a Woman.....	241
127. Freedom and Leadership.....	263

*Sources 101 and 105 are not included in this print edition.*





# 100. Background Information for 1971-1975 Sources

## **Audience**

The talks in this collection were addressed to several different audiences: those present at the Apostolic Institute, those at a community meeting, those at a charismatic conference and those who were attending some kind of teaching session sponsored by the community. When the talks are organized according to audience, the list looks like this:

### **1. Apostolic Institute Talks:**

- 103. The Need for Christian Environments (1971).
- 104. Being and Doing (1971).
- 105. The Key to Community Vitality (1972).

### **2. Talks given at Community Meetings:**

- 108. The Role of Prophets and Prophecy (1973).
- 111. Covenants and Agreements.
- 120. Consulting the Community (1974).
- 124. Following Jesus Wholeheartedly (1974).
- 126. Being a Man, Being a Woman (1974).

### **3. Talks given at charismatic conferences:**

- 102. Early Lessons in Christian Households (1971).
- 106. Spiritual Gifts and the Common Good (1972).

### **4. Other community-sponsored events:**

- 110. Relationships Built on Jesus.
- 121. How to Pray with People (1974).
- 122. The Origins of the People of Praise (1974).
- 125. Teaching Children to Pray (1974).

## **Apostolic Institute**

Some of these recordings need some historical context. To begin with: What was the Apostolic Institute? What was the Deacon Training Program?

Since 1964 a small group of people in South Bend had been working to build Christian community. Their efforts were taken to another level by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1967. The search for Christian community deepened every year. However, the work was hampered as key people would graduate either with their undergraduate or their graduate degree and leave the area. In the spring of 1969, they were again faced with graduation, and this time it was Kerry Koller who was moving on. Paul DeCelles and Andrew Plodowski asked themselves whether there was something they could do to provide some stability and a reason for someone like Kerry to stay in South Bend.

The result of those conversations was the formation of the Apostolic Institute, which they incorporated in June of 1969. An early Apostolic Institute publication described the Institute as an association “concerned for Church renewal and especially for assisting in the formation of leaders of Christian communities.” After much prayer, it seemed like the Lord wanted them to start a program to train Roman Catholic deacons. Eventually the local Roman Catholic bishop approved the plan “*ad experimentum*,” noting, “We must all live by faith.” So the Deacon Training Program was the first work of the Apostolic Institute.

By the time this program began (1971), Kerry had accepted a job in San Francisco, but there was another graduate student on the horizon. Kevin Ranaghan was hired to run the Deacon Training Program.

The order of the permanent diaconate had been restored at Vatican II. In 1969, when Paul and Andrew first started talking about it, there were only a few (seven) permanent deacons in the United States. It was a time for experimentation. The Apostolic Institute



had a unique vision for training deacons to be leaders of Christian communities, sometimes within the context of a parish. The goal was to build communities.

Based on his studies of Christian communities throughout history, Paul taught a course, in 1971 and in 1972, on building Christian community. It was called Christian Community Formation. Men training for the diaconate, their wives, leaders of local prayer meetings and various others attended these classes.

The Apostolic Institute recordings are among the oldest in our archives. Due to their age and the circumstances of their recording, the sound quality is not the best. Also, we do not have recordings of an entire talk. Instead we have recorded fragments, found on the back of recordings of an Apostolic Institute class on Scripture. These fragments begin and end abruptly. They do, however, reflect some of what we were thinking in the months before making the covenant.

## **Demographics**

Several other things in the audio sources need some historical context. First of all, some demographic information about adult membership might be helpful:

- 10/71 29 members
- 10/72 53 members
- 9/73 82 members
- 10/74 100 members
- 10/75 240 members

Between October 1974 and October 1975 the community grew tremendously. Why? We do know that in the summer of 1974 the Wednesday prayer meetings (public) were regularly drawing 550 to 600 people. In June 1974 two Life in the Spirit Seminars were conducted concurrently, each with more than 40 participants. Presumably these and others held the same year resulted in many people being baptized in the Holy Spirit and, subsequently, large Community Weekends.

# Households

Secondly, at this time households were part of normal community life. In fact, some of the original covenant makers were, in October 1971, already sharing their home with at least one brother or sister who was not a blood relative. In early 1972 community members got together for a weekend to pray and talk about the question of household. Initially, some thought God was leading them all to live in some form of common household life. Others thought the opposite. By the end of the weekend they had discerned that “the People of Praise was a community of households, but that household life was not a requirement for all members.” Even though God wasn’t leading everyone to live in household, everyone agreed that we, the People of Praise, placed a very high value on household life.

Our archives contain a few demographic facts about households. In December 1973 there were approximately 92 people in the community. Fifty of these people lived in 11 households. In April 1975 there were approximately 190 people in the community. Eighty members lived in 16 households. Sometime in 1975 or early 1976, the South Bend Common Council changed a zoning ordinance and outlawed households with a married couple and more than 2 single people. Already existing households were grandfathered in, but the ordinance definitely had a negative effect on household life in the People of Praise.

# Explanation of Terms

There are some details in the February 1974 talk on Consulting the Community that need explaining. Another community named True House is mentioned. There is also a reference to a decision to take on Charismatic Renewal Services (CRS). As many of the prayer meeting folks in South Bend were talking about building community, others decided to get started. A group of Notre Dame students and younger folks formed a community called True House. The True House Community ran CRS. This community eventually disbanded in 1974. Some of them accepted an invitation to be part of the People of Praise, and the People of Praise agreed to take responsibility for running CRS.

In this February 1974 talk there is also a reference to “branches.” What was meant by this term? In order to better meet the pastoral needs of each person in the People of Praise, the coordinators (Paul, Kevin and Clem) added a new structure to the community—branches. This happened in November of 1973. (It is worth noting that not everyone had a personal head at this time.) These branches were three groups which included one coordinator and about 5 household heads. They met weekly, but they were not geographical units. In the paper resources for this time period there is a memo entitled “Pastoral Needs Memo” which briefly lays out the rationale for this change. Subsequently in a May 1974 memo from Paul to Clem and Kevin, Paul commented, “Purpose of Branch Meetings: Review households and encourage them. To prepare and improve Community Meeting. To train heads and start them off.” He also noted, “The Branch meeting is a place to present problems clearly and channel to definite solution. Gauge of how the whole is doing. If Branch is good then develop friendships. Branches should become backbone of community.”

Less than a year later, the term “branch” was used in a different way. At an Oct. 4, 1974 community meeting Kevin announced that the coordinators wanted to radically change the branch system by making the branches geographical areas. He explained, “with the increase in community size, with the growth of the whole community, we need to have a more orderly way of placing everybody in the community in situations where they can receive adequate headship, where the pastoral gifts of the community and the leadership gifts of the community can be available to them easily and readily.” He also noted “We want to make it possible for those of us whom the Lord is leading to share our lives even more deeply with each other, perhaps more deeply than we had been doing before.” For those who are interested this announcement and the details about the geographical boundaries and the leaders of these “branches” can be found in the file library by searching for “New POP Structures” and then clicking on Fall 1974 Community Meetings.

The first Servant School was in 1973, but we do not have recordings of the talks given there. We do, however, have recordings of the talks from the second Servant School. Servant School lasted between 6 and 9 months and was much more than a series of

talks. Most of the time was spent actually serving. For example, a 1975 community directory lists the head servants of various Servant School teams. There was a prayer meeting team, a community meeting team, a book table team and an Apostolic Institute team.

## Written Resources

The written sources for this time period include five things:

1. “Signs of the Times.” These four documents date from the years before we became a covenant community. They are snapshots of the “signs of the times”: the powerful effects of the Cursillo movement, the mention of the charismatic gifts at the Second Vatican Council, community-building in Latin America and the spread of baptism in the Spirit.
2. “Reflections on the 1973 Conference.” In this article from *New Covenant* magazine, Paul DeCelles underlines the importance of the ecumenical and lay character of the Charismatic Renewal. Approximately 20,000 people attended that conference, and it was the first Charismatic Renewal conference to hold its general sessions in the Notre Dame stadium. By way of reference, what is commonly called the first conference was in 1967, and approximately 80 people attended. In 1968 approximately 200 attended; in 1969, 450 people; in 1970, 1300 people; in 1971, 4,000; and in 1972 about 11,500 people attended.
3. “Brotherhood Among Leaders.” This is a talk, by Paul DeCelles, on brotherhood among leaders. It is dated March 1974. Internal evidence suggests that it was given to some kind of gathering of Charismatic Renewal leaders.
4. “1973 Memo on Pastoral Needs.” This is a proposal to the coordinators about how to meet the pastoral needs of every member of the People of Praise. It was written at a time when the community was nearly three times as big as it was in the beginning.
5. “Leadership and Freedom.” This is a transcript of a talk given by Paul DeCelles. He was speaking primarily to prayer group leaders. We do not have a recording of the talk. This transcript was edited by Paul sometime after the talk was given. To the best of our knowledge it was given sometime in the early 70’s.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise Inc.

# 102. Early Lessons in Christian Household

*This talk was given at a workshop at the June, 1971, Conference on the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church. Jeanne DeCelles shared about household, stressing that order in a household should give people more freedom. She described several lessons that she and others learned and talked about headship and submission. For more on People of Praise households see the "Households" section of Resource 100, "Background Information."*

## Transcript

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

[Tape begins after Jeanne has already begun speaking.]

JEANNE: . . . There is also to be considered the relationship between households and households, you know, how we relate to one another, because none of us is—well, we all, you know, are a body of Christ. And he's going to give us everything that we need to function there in that household. Households need other households, and they need them very much. So, if I seem to talk about only, you know, what we have in our household and how things are worked out there, it doesn't mean that I think we're self-sufficient. Because I don't. I think that we all learn, as our children get older, for instance, that there are things other people can do for our children that we just cannot ever do by ourselves.

With each different style of a household, there exists a different kind of order. It seems to me that the order in a household should do three things, at least:

It should give people more freedom, not less freedom.

It should probably—not necessarily, but probably—evolve. I say that because in our case, that's what happened. We didn't come together with any particular agreement,

like Jerry was talking about this morning. We came together, and then some other people were added, and, you know, the order that's there in our household now, I think, would not have been possible a year ago. And the order that was there a year ago was quite different from the order that had preceded that.

It should be an expression of the needs and the lifestyle of the entire household. And when you've got a bunch of people living together who are all doing a lot of different sorts of things, then that's going to make order a little more difficult to establish.

But I cannot myself conceive of any household functioning very well, or succeeding very well in the Lord's work, unless there is order.

The order in our household evolved as we grew in love and friendship and understanding. That there should be this order I just can't question at all.

Order does not tie you down more; it *frees* you more to do the work of the kingdom. If I keep the house in pretty good shape, and if everybody can find what they need, you know, when they need it, if they know that there are going to be more or less three meals a day, and that there are going to be enough clean socks in their drawers, and that the house is going to be definitely livable and orderly and clean, they are going to function better. And what's more, so am I. If somebody comes to the door, and I have to spend an hour with that person, or if the phone rings and I have to spend an hour with *that* person, it isn't a disaster area all of a sudden. I can just kind of be sure that things are running more or less smoothly.

And it doesn't mean that you should have some sort of slavish obedience to orderliness. Not at all. And orderliness which cuts out the needs of other people is really out of order. But it's also true that that kind of orderliness that I'm talking about is a very freeing sort of thing. It frees you to be calm. It frees you to be peaceful. It frees you to be serene. And it frees you to attend to the needs at hand. It's better that we arrange the odds and ends of our life so that the things that we're doing to build the kingdom can take place.

Of course, we also have to have orderliness because we have five children, and children are notoriously attached to the idea of regularity in their meals, for one thing. So, you know, that's built in.

How do these living situations evolve? Usually they arise out of a need. Perhaps a group of single people will find that their prayer life goes better if they pray with other people. If they get together regularly, and they pray, really being open and listening to God to see what his will is for them, he may be telling them that he wants them to come together in a more definite and a more manifest way. So, maybe they'll decide that they should move in together into one household. Usually, they will share everything in their house, as Jerry said this morning. Most often, they will share all their material possessions as well.

If they have moved together because it was God's will, sought out, and found, clearly in prayer, they will find their common life together marked by a deep desire for more prayer together. Their friendship will grow, and the people in that household will become more mature and more free in their Christian life. Their private prayer life will improve and be strengthened and deepened because of their fellowship in the household. They will not become more dependent. They will become more free.

The living situation that we're talking about, any of these living situations, should not cut us off from other people. It should make us more valuable, more fruitful, more useful in our relationships with other people.

Not only that, but it should also allow us to grow more and more into that unique, mature, loving Christian that God has always had in mind that each one of us should be.

Sometimes, in a household, particularly of single people, there will be a tendency for them to all become more and more alike, and less and less free in their relationships with other people. I think that that's probably a sign, you know, that something's going to have to change in that household or the household is going to fail.

Because it should never—it's always a mark of true love that it doesn't cut you off from other people. It opens you up more to other people. That's true in any relationship. In a marriage relationship, if it's a jealous kind of love that cuts you off from other people, then it's not a Christian love, and it's not going to be a very fruitful love. It's just going to be more and more—it's going to hold the seeds of its own destruction within itself.

If people move together only to live together, then living together will become burdensome. It may even become loathsome. Because it is built on an assumption that is false. People who move together because it's more convenient, because they can save money, are living in a more "true" situation than those who live together just because they think it would be a good thing to live together.

Living together will not necessarily make you more Christian. It just does not work out that way. What you have to seek is the Lord's will, God's will. And just moving together is not necessarily going to be God's will. There may be within it all sorts of seeds of destruction. There may be chaos. There may be a situation that can only fail, and the people who come away from it may have learned something, but they have definitely learned it the hard way.

Just living together, and forcing yourself to live with other people, is not only not a free situation and a liberating situation and a maturing situation; it can be a very destructive situation. It can smother you. And it will either change—and it can—I don't think people should despair that something that's just been kind of fallen into carelessly can't change, because it can—or it will fail.

In other words, Christians should live together because God wills it, not just because it seems to be a very good thing to do.

In a family situation like ours, this can happen in a variety of ways. Paul and I have done this thing three times. The first time that we did it, we did it because it really seemed like a good thing to do, and we were good guys, and, you know, it was—we were nice people. We didn't pray about it very much. We talked it over and we discussed it, and we thought about it, but we didn't really seek what God's will was. And it turned into one of



the most disastrous experiences that I personally have ever had. It was not just a failure. It was a really dark night of the soul for me personally.

Now, I know that the Lord used that experience in our lives to teach us and prepare us for what he was leading us into later. But at the same time, I certainly wouldn't want to recommend that anybody do this sort of thing unless you have really prayed it through, thought it out carefully, talked it over, and really sought *not* what you think would be a nice thing to do, but what God's *will* is for you to do.

Some people think that—they look around in their community, and they think, “Well, everybody's taking in people, and there are all sorts of households being set up, and I'm not doing that. So I must be a terribly selfish person.” Not necessarily.

I stand before you as an ordained clay pot, but not everybody is a clay pot. [Laughter.] Not everybody can serve in a household situation, using all the gifts that God has given them, in the way that he meant you to use them. There are some people who maybe just should not choose this sort of lifestyle. And I don't think they ought to be made to feel uncomfortable about that.

The second time that it happened to us, we had not prayed very much, but the girl who came to live with us had. *We* didn't know what we were doing, but she did. [Jeanne chuckles.] To the world, her action would have seemed extremely foolish. But she had really prayed it through; she had really decided that what she needed was an openly praying, dynamic Christian community. And at the time, for her, the closest thing to that was the South Bend prayer community.

She knew us . . . slightly. Really slightly! [Jeanne laughs.] And we knew her, slightly. But we had been in contact with each other for, I guess, two years, maybe, two or three years, mostly via WATS line<sup>1</sup> between Boston and South Bend, or California and South Bend. But at any rate, we'd stayed in touch. She was having a hard time being a Christian as a single woman in a strange town, and she was really looking for people who would share a Christian life with her, and most of all, share their prayer life with her. She asked—Paul asked her on the phone one night, “What would you do if you could do

anything that you wanted to do?” She said, “I’d find a bunch of Christians to live with.” So, she came. [Jeanne laughs.]

The original arrangement was that she would just stay with us until she got, you know, established, got a job, got a place to live. But as these things will happen in the Lord, she became very much a part of the household before there was any job, and after there was a job, there didn’t seem to be any point in her moving out. Because by that time, she was very precious to us. She’s been a wonderful gift to the whole household. I hope that we have been—in fact, I *know* that we have been an expression of God’s love for each other.

When the next adult member of our family joined the household, we prayed about it for a good six months. I forgot to mention that I’m really basically a kind of a private sort of person. I’d never even hire a cleaning lady, because I don’t like anybody else around all day. And to make each of these decisions, on my part, was really kind of hard, because I never understood, you know, with each decision, how it is that the Lord is gonna take care of all those things in *me* that are gonna keep me from really loving another person the way he wants me to. So each time, you know, I went into it with great trepidation and awe and fear.

So, we prayed, and we sought advice, and we listened carefully to what we thought the Lord was trying to tell us to do. We were led very gently, but very strongly and very definitely, to ask this young lady to join her—our household, because she needed a Christian—stable Christian living situation at that time. That was a year ago. The Lord has really . . . just blessed us so much with these two people. There’s no way to express the things that other people can bring to your children that you can’t bring them. I mean, there are just other gifts! And for the children to live, you know, with other people in the household is really a tremendous gift for *them*. They grow. They just grow wonderfully.

There are a lot of things that I’d like to go on saying, and there are a lot of things that I want to hear from you about how these situations evolve. But the main thing that I want

to say is that you have to understand that this kind of life is a life of love, and a life of service. It's service, probably, most of all. You have to be sure, and you have to pray it through to make sure that God really wills this situation for you. It must be God's will, and it must be free. It must involve growth, and it must involve love, and it will most definitely, if it is to succeed, involve service.

Whether you live in a highly structured household or a less structured situation, as a regular prayer and sharing of two single people who live separately, it must be marked by the fact that it is a seeking of God's will, of love, of service, and of freedom.

Christian living is going to require some things from the individual. Most of what I say will have to do with the situation in which I live.

The Christian who lives with other people must be able to be alone. If you can't be alone, if you're just looking for an experience of togetherness, then it would be better if you went down and joined a club of some kind. If you are looking for Christian community, then you must be aware that you must be willing to be alone . . . in order that you might bear fruit when you are with others in fellowship.

Christian fellowship, like Christian marriage, requires that those who are entering into it are willing to dare to be as complete and whole as possible. You must not enter into the relationship expecting to be somehow completed. God created us alone. He calls us into life together. But if one enters marriage or community in a parasitic frame of mind, it will wreck [sic] havoc.

That is not to say that we embark on these relationships only when we are whole and healed and perfect. It is not to say [either] that most of our healing and perfection will be made possible because of these relationships. These situations that we're talking about are certainly the vehicle for God's healing power. But the individual must be willing to stand alone before God, and must understand that he is to be a part of the relationship in a giving and loving way, not just a parasitic way. Christians must never, never, never, never, *never, never* use each other!

There are some practical steps that can nurture your Christian living situations. And I've already mentioned the necessity—at least, I think it's a necessity—of having orderliness.

Of course, one of the most essential things is that we pray together. This is the area which has been most difficult for our family because of the children, and I've learned in talking with other people today that this is a fairly common problem. At first, it was very little. We've been very, very slow and very cautious about it. It was sporadic, and it was not particularly fruitful.

There were instances, of course, where there was a special need or crisis, when we would not only pray all night, but talk things over most of the night as well. In fact, I'd say that the early part of our lives together was marked most definitely by a willingness to pray all night with somebody, if that's what was required.

We did pray at mealtime regularly, and more or less regularly at night. After a while, and in a very stiff and uneasy way, the four adults in the family began to pray evensong together. I hated it at first, and I don't think that enthusiasm was exactly rampant, but the headship in our family is rather secure [crowd laughter], and so, we prayed evensong together most every night. We teased him a lot about how the place was turning into a "darn convent," you know. But gradually, I really began to love it, and look forward to it. And I really miss it now if we don't. It's a really, really neat way to pray together in groups.

It has really made an appreciable difference, I think, in our lives: together, and when we're away from each other. And of course, it's really crucial that the fellowship and the prayer that you share together makes you *stronger* when you go out into the world, because most of us do have to be in the world a good part of the time. Most of us have to work. And if what we've experienced in the fellowship, in the household, in the family, has not been *real*, then, you know, when you step out into the world, it's really a nightmare.

The children really couldn't manage evensong. They just, "Ewww . . ." So, rather than insist on that, we decided a short time ago that we would start praying together in the

morning and at night. And the way we arranged it was that we would pray very short prayers in the morning, as the kids were on their way out the door, and longer prayers at night after dinner, from about 7:00 to 7:15. Well, that went pretty well. The children are ages 4, 8, 11, 13, and 14 now. The 13- and 14-year-olds are really self-conscious, and about the most they can manage is, you know, an intercession for good weather. The little one [is] kind of, you know, on again, off again. He's not as free as a two- or three-year-old in prayer, but when he's there, it's good, and he prays, and he likes it. And he sings praise hymns very well. He leads us.

I must confess that my own desire for morning prayer arose out of something else rather than just wanting to pray together. I really didn't like the idea of some of us being up—kind of bearing the heat of the day—and some of us being in bed. [Jeanne chuckles.] It seemed to me that if we were really gonna share life together, then we had to really share, you know, both the bitter and the sweet. And I *really, really* hated and resented having to be up and feeling myself getting more and more impatient, and more cranky, and more horrible with the children, while other members of the family were still in bed. So, I would say that for us, it was not just a matter of getting up to pray together. It was getting up to share our life together. And to me, that was really important.

Enthusiasm from the children, no. But they do get up, even now during vacation, even the two older boys. And they come.

And in conversation with the children, I realized that we hadn't really been listening to them or paying attention to them. Because they made it very clear that the evening prayers were a real hardship on them. They would have preferred to have the longer prayers in the morning. Well, that was, you know, easily enough done. And so, we did. But I'm really grateful that, though it was a nasty situation out of which this conversation arose, where I found out how unhappy they were about that, I'm really grateful that we found out. We've added a Scripture passage in the morning, and we usually ask one of the children to read it. I think it's a good thing to pass that job around.

Does it work? Well, maybe if you came in, and you listened to the rather dejected, desultory early morning prayers in our house, you'd say, "That's not working." But it is, for me. It's really becoming a very important cornerstone in my life, and it's really making a difference in the way I feel in the morning . . . about getting up, and about really, you know, sharing my life with these other people.

Another aid to Christian living is shared meals. We try to all have dinner together every day. Because we all have a lot of odd schedules, that means a very, very late dinner hour, and it also means that we take the phone off the hook most of the time. It means a real sense of service to one another. If the conversation becomes disorderly, or fragmented, or unshared, we have to kind of call ourselves back, you know, to our commitment to one another.

Another aid is action together. Like, we all worked on this track together, and I think that we need to do more of that in our household, because just as faith without good works is dead, the household or community that is only serving itself is dying.

Another thing that we've tried that has been helpful is the "group reunion." We learned about it through the Cursillo movement, and it's a whole talk in itself, because all the pitfalls and all the dangers that are present in any household living situation are definitely present in a group reunion. But briefly, what it is, for those who haven't made a Cursillo, is coming together once a week, in idealism and self-surrender, in the spirit of charity, to share your Christian life together: your prayer, and what the Lord is doing in your life, how you're serving him in your life, how that's succeeded, and how it has failed. And then, we plan together what we're going to do in the following week to build the kingdom.

And that's a really sketchy treatment of the group reunion. But I think what it amounts to is something like what Jerry was talking about this morning. If you don't get together and share, regularly—in this case, we do this only once a week—you won't grow. You won't grow in friendship. You just can't, because it'll become harder and harder and harder for you to share those things in your life that are really deep. And the more things

left unshared, the less friendship, the less love, there is for one another. And the less of the work of the kingdom that gets done, incidentally.

There are a couple of things about a group reunion and sharing that I'd like to mention that—I don't mean to seem negative, but there are a couple things that you definitely should try to avoid. One of them is that you have to *all* come with idealism, and you have to *all* come with a sense of charity, and you have to *all* come with a spirit of self-surrender. If one of you doesn't bring those things to the group reunion, then the group reunion will be that much weaker, and that much less effective.

One thing you should never try to do in a group reunion is change the other person. If you try to use it to, in any way, you know, make that guy be what you want him to be, then it's really gonna fail. You just can't do that. You have to be really trusting with each other. You have to be really *loyal* with each other. You have to be able to share absolutely anything at a group reunion and know that it will be understood as much as possible, that it will not be laughed at, that the other people will not, you know, store that away somewhere to bring out, dredge up, some other time. It has to be really mutual sharing and love, and there has to be confidence which comes from knowing that the other person is not, you know, gonna use anything against you, is not gonna be critical of you in any way, and is not going to try and use the things that they say in the group reunion to *change* you, or to criticize you. You just *can't* criticize each other at all.

Another thing that I want to mention is your prayer alone. Your prayer alone is going to really weaken or strengthen the fellowship in the household. And you have every right in the world to insist on a certain amount of time alone, for Scripture reading, for private meditation, and private intercessory prayer. And there's nothing selfish about insisting on that. Nothing at all. If each of us doesn't have that, then all of us are going to suffer.

If you neglect your own private prayer life for long, you will certainly eventually cause the ruin of the fellowship. If you come to a fellowship as anything but a constantly growing and maturing Christian, growing always in your relationship to God, then you're

not going to be adding that part of the fellowship which is really essential: *your* part. You will be a weak link, and you will be a sterile seed, unless you're nourished by prayer.

Over all these things, we should place the word of God. The word of God should be the foundation, the cornerstone, and the nourishment of a Christian fellowship. And I think the best way to talk about that is probably just by going through Paul's epistle on love.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but I have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, and if I have prophetic powers, and I understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have and deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

If I move in with a bunch of other people, but I have not love, I will be nothing, and the fellowship will be nothing, too.

"Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or boastful." Don't compare your gifts with somebody else's gifts; nor do you boast about yours, in order to put somebody else down.

"It is not arrogant or rude." I have that one up in my boys' room.

"Love does not insist on its own way." Probably the hardest thing that I've learned in Christian fellowship, and in marriage, too, is that the most useless, meaningless thing to be is to be . . . right.

"It is not irritable, or resentful." That's in [sic] the icebox for me. I've got these things pinned up all over the house, mostly for myself!

"It does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things." Including the fact that you've got to let those other people in your household be free! You have to bear that! You have to bear their freedom.



“It believes all things. It trusts all things. It hopes all things.” That’s on the stairway as Maggie comes up out of her basement room every morning on her way to Kmart.

“It endures all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away. As for tongues, they will cease. As for knowledge, it will pass away.”

There is a different translation of this, where it says that love “does not take offense.” That’s probably one of the single most important things for Christian fellowship, I think, to remember, particularly women. And there are a lot of women in our household. I say this a lot, because I really mean it. [Jeanne laughs lightly.]

It’s really meant a lot in my life, that you can’t just take offense and hide it way down deep inside of you and say nothing. That’s not what that means. It doesn’t mean, “Well, if somebody hurts me, it’s okay for me to be offended. I can’t help but be offended! I can hide it away, and I can just be quiet about it and not say anything, you know, and then it’ll be all right.”

But that’s not true. You can’t even take offense. And if you think of who *you* are, and who *God* is, and who that other person is, and how you may have failed that other person time and time and time again, then you just *cannot* take offense. You cannot be offended by a brother. That’s not to say that I’m not; it’s to say that I shouldn’t be. And none of us should be. I mean, you can’t—the important thing, I think, is to remember that you can’t—you know, just being *quiet* about it is not the answer. You can’t just be quiet about it. In fact, that’s worse, because your silence really speaks volumes. But you can’t even take offense.

I’d like to say a few words about marriage, because I think that before anyone who is married enters on this adventure that we call Christian household, you have to face squarely the fact that in most cases, your mutual commitment, that of the husband and wife, will be the most important stabilizing element in the household. In fact, it may be the *only* stabilizing element in some households, in the beginning. The degree to which that commitment is Christian and total and healthy will determine to a great extent the degree of peace and stability and serenity of the household.

Now, I think our marriage was made in heaven. But it's not an easy marriage, and it's not a perfect marriage [Jeanne laughs lightly] from some points of view. But one thing is true, and that is that our commitment to each other is total. Sometimes that has to be worked out again verbally. That is to say, sometimes we really have to discuss things. [Crowd laughter.] But it is a Christian marriage—I hope in the process of becoming more Christlike. But I know that our ups and our downs have a very profound effect on the rest of the atmosphere and on those around us.

I hope and pray that God is the foundation and the cornerstone of our household, but I know that Paul and I have to be the framework. While it is essential that our marriage be allowed to grow, and that will require some privacy for us to just share our marriage and nourish it with prayer and sharing of our own, the private times of our marriage must lead to more service, more love, more outgoing care for those around us: the children and the rest of the house, as well as those in the rest of the community.

I don't have any notes on this, but it came up in our discussion this morning, and I think this is as good a time as any to tell you what I think about headship and subordination. I think most of the time—this sounds very sarcastic, but I don't mean it to be sarcastic. I really mean it, that this is the way I understand it: when I try to decide why it is that that role of headship must belong to a man, the only thing that I can really come up with is that it doesn't work the other way! It just clearly does not work. It doesn't seem to be in the natural order of things. I don't have any particularly long, drawn-out theological or scriptural explanations for that.

But the reason that things get disordered, it seems to me, is clearly a result of original sin. Because, when Adam and Eve sinned, as I was telling somebody this morning, first of all, I think Eve got exactly what she asked for, and I think a lot of women do. And secondly, I think that when God said, "No matter how much you love him, he will lord it over you," that wasn't a *command* from God; it was a *prophecy*. Now, some men regard it as a *command*! [Crowd chuckles.] And so, their headship becomes just a "lording over." And that's got nothing to do with headship. It has nothing to do with authority. Because all authority simply means service. It means really laying it down on the line. And where

that is not operative and effective, not only does the household suffer, but the woman will suffer too.

The reason that men have to be the head of the household is not because *women* are weak, but because *men* are weak, and because women are weak, too. And because that's the only way that it works out. And if women really look into their hearts, and really think about it, they'll see. I think the word "subordination" may trouble some people, but if you stop to think about it, you know, that's an "ordination." That's an "ordaining," to be . . . under the headship of the man. That's not an undignified sort of ordination. It's a real seeking out of where you belong in the correct and proper order of things. And you don't have to look very far to see the products of households where the woman has either *had to* assume a role of headship, or where she's usurped it. The children really suffer. They don't exactly know where they fit in the order of things, sexually, or emotionally, or in any way.

The only other thing that I'd want to say about it is that—that there's a real "holding up," there, that goes on. If you encourage and support the headship of the person to whom that rightly belongs, then you're really holding him up! You're really bearing him up! You're really, you know, bearing one another's burdens. You're really, you know, helping to carry *him*. If you try to take it away, you not only lose what your own role is—and that's a very neat role to have, that of the subordinate. That's a really important role to have. But you also are usurping that other person's role, and you'll do a bad job of it. You won't be able to make it. You won't be able to carry it out.

Children should never be made to feel superfluous in a household. They should really be asked before changes are made, and that's why I mentioned this thing about prayer. I really feel that, you know, we didn't ask. And they were already carrying an extra burden of nine people at the table every night for dinner, which means more work in the kitchen. So, we decided that each adult would take a role in the kitchen every night, and help out there, but still, that makes the dinner hour late, and then the prayer hour—I mean, the prayer 15 minutes—and then the cleaning up—well, it's pretty late before they can get out, you know, and play. And we didn't think of it that way, because to us

that was kind of the end of the day. For them, it was really the beginning of that really exciting time for kids between dinner and bedtime, where they really play. And I'm just grateful, you know, that we had a big enough blowup that I found out.

I remember when I—we were about to ask Margaret to join the household, I asked my spiritual director for some advice about it, and the first thing that he said was, "What about the kids?" That's what everybody always says. Will they mind it? Will they be jealous? Will they be bothered by it? And I'd be the last person on earth to say that my children are perfect, or even any better than most, but I remember that I did say to him that I trusted them . . . to be generous. Which was, he thought, kind of a unique choice of words, that I trusted my children.

But we did trust them, and they really more than fulfilled any of the highest aspirations I would have had for them. And it's been a tremendous gift for them. Not only are their horizons broader, and they're really in some ways more mature than most children, but they've been exposed to more demands of charity: not just a once-a-year trip with a basket of food for a poor family, but a daily, every day, laying down of certain things. Like, you know, a late dinner hour. They fail and I fail—we all fail—but on the whole, I think we have been a sign of Christ's love to one another.

If you're thinking about this kind of living situation, and you're praying about it, and you're trying to find out what God's will is for you, I think that teachings like what Jerry gave us this morning are really helpful, because he kind of pointed out those things that we didn't know, and which we've had to kind of grope our way towards, which would have been nice if we'd known ahead of time.

And another thing that I would suggest is that there is a lot of literature available on it. But I think one of the best things that I've found is Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*. He's very familiar, I'm sure, to all of you. And some of the things that he mentions in there that I've found particularly helpful were the ministries. He mentions four ministries. I would add a fifth.

The first one that he talks about is the ministry, with each other, of listening. He talks about how it is that we mustn't just, you know, listen with half a heart or half an ear. We have to really pay attention to each other. We have to really listen to what the other person is trying to say to us. And more often than not, it's better to just shut up than it is to talk a lot. And the people who cannot learn to listen can never really minister to another's needs, can never really know how to carry out the rest of these ministries.

The second one that he mentioned is helpfulness. It's the kind of helpfulness which never, never considers any task too demeaning, too small, too useless, you know—to go ahead and do it for the other person . . . to really look for ways that you can help the other person. And if you think that your gifts are really too much above that sort of thing, then you're really mistaken. You're like the priest who passed up the Samaritan. He was probably, you know, reading a very learned book, and he was just, you know, too deeply engrossed in that to be helpful.

The third ministry, and a really important one that he mentions, is bearing one another up. And I think we know what that means. It means just really constantly, constantly bearing the other person. Constantly forgiving the other person *because* we have been forgiven, because we have been borne up . . . by Jesus.

[Recording ends here.]

#### Endnotes

1. Wide Area Telephone Service—WATS—was a flat-rate long-distance service used in the 1960s–1980s.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 103. The Need for Christian Environments

*In this talk from the summer of 1971, Paul DeCelles pointed out that people's beliefs, attitudes and behavior patterns are strongly affected by the others around them and that we need, therefore, to have at least one Christian environment in order to live a full Christian life. This talk was given as part of the deacon training program of the Apostolic Institute, which was preparing men to be community-builders. For more on the Apostolic Institute see Resource 100, "Background Information."*

## Transcript

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

[Tape begins after Paul has already begun speaking.]

PAUL: . . . briefly read that again, just to keep in mind the sort of thing with—and the kind of scope with which we're trying to approach the question of building Christian communities. This is Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:9–10, and some more later on, 9–12.

“For he has made known to us”—this is our Lord—

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight, the mystery of his will according to *his* purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him, things in Heaven and things on Earth, in him according to the purpose of him, who accomplishes all things, according to the counsel of his will. We who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

And a little later in chapter 2 verse 19, he says,

So then, you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also were built into it, for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

There are three points I'd like to point out that, in particular, St. Paul makes in these short verses.

One of them is that God did then, and he does now, have a purpose for creation and a purpose for redemption. And if we were to miss that purpose, we would miss what we were made for.

The second thing is that his purpose, as far as the human race is concerned, is to create a people who are united to him, to create a unity of God and man, one body, including God himself, a temple in whom God's Spirit dwells.

And the third thing is that man's purpose is to live for the praise of God, for the praise of God's glory.

Now, as these talks—I hope anyway—as the talks unfold, it will become clearer what I mean by illustrating—what I'm trying to illustrate in drawing these particular three things out of St. Paul's letter. For your own purposes, perhaps you'd like to read St. John's gospel, chapter 17, verses 20-26, in which you'll see another source talking about very much the same kind of thing.

Now, one of the points that we were talking about last time was that we were talking about planning. And the point is that we really can know what God's plan is. And the reason we can know it is because he's revealed it to us. It's very much in line with one of the things that Brian was saying, just in answer to a question. Now, when we're thinking about planning, thinking about building the church, and cooperating in God's plan, our very own purpose has to be drawn from *his* purpose, and *our* planning and our plans have to parallel *his* plans. They have to go along with and be a part of God's plan. And



*his* purpose is to build a people, a people of God, a people who are united with him. His plan is to build a body of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit. And so ours should be the same: to build a people.

Later on tonight, I'll use the word "community." I want to talk a little bit about the sense in which the meaning of the word "people,"—the way it's used in Scripture is—it would be just as well to translate it "community" rather than "people." We're not accustomed to thinking in terms of the word "people."

So, our plans should be the same as God's. That is, it should be drawn, our plan, and I hope that our proposals will, in fact, be reminiscent of God's plan, will be patterned after God's plan itself. So, ours should be the same, namely to build something, to work to form a people, and that is a people who live for God. And this should be the work, and the result of our pastoral work. That is, essentially the way in which to determine whether or not your plan is in line with God's plan, and whether or not it's effective, is to see whether or not a people has been formed, a people who live for God.

I'd like to make a small distinction here between what it is that is the goal of an individual Christian life and what it is that is the goal of pastoral work. An individual Christian should live for the praise of God's glory, but the goal of pastoral work is to build a people of God.

And sometimes people will be confused about that. They will, for example, think that they have essentially accomplished God's purpose when they themselves live for the praise of God's glory . . . as they understand it. But in fact, there is more to that. There's more meaning in living to the praise of God's glory than you might—than simply, for example, having your own private prayer life. It also means cooperating with God's purpose and His plan. And *that* plan is to build the people of God.

Now, not everybody is involved, or should be, in pastoral planning. And you might wonder—for example, I'm sure some of you might think, "Well, what am I doing here? Because I don't think I'm going to be doing any pastoral planning."

It seems to me that in order for pastoral planning to become a reality in the church today, it has to be accepted by all people. There has to be a culture, essentially, in which pastoral planning begins to take root and begins to mean something to the people who are being built into a people of God.

Also, it isn't at all clear to me who it is who should be doing pastoral planning, and at all times, you should be open to what it is that God wants to do with you.

Now, there is no one great master planner outside of the Lord himself, and there may be innumerable ways in which you can foster the building of Christian communities. Or, there may be innumerable ways in which you can cooperate with God's purpose and his plan.

So, I'm maintaining that the *goal* of pastoral work is to form a people who will do all the things that Christians should do. I'm suggesting that we build Christian communities.

Now, I want to talk about—I'll spend some time tonight talking about basically two and a half things. The first two—first one I'll talk about is the notion of *environment*. And the second thing I want to talk about is the notion of *institution*. And the half, the third thing, which I won't be able to talk very much about tonight, is a very special kind of environment, which is called a *community*.

When you think about . . . let me—I wanna explain one other thing, too. It may seem to you that I may be belaboring the point a little bit about environment, but—as I go through this type of description—but it seems to me that it's that the notion of environment, and the importance that the environments in which we live have on our lives, is not necessarily a thing which is very easy to get ahold of, to grasp intellectually. And there really is at—in this connection, a key issue which is involved with the nature of man, as well as God's purpose for man. And as we go through this, I hope to try to describe it, anyway—environments—in a variety of ways, with a lot of sidelights perhaps, that—some of which might strike home and make things intuitive.

It's really not enough, when you think about renewing the church, or working for the Lord, in addressing groups of people to simply get certain principles accepted or certain values accepted, or even getting individual persons to save their souls, or, so to speak, the phrase that—by that phrase, I mean getting them into a right relationship with Christ.

For example, one thing—there are lots of extremely important things, and good things to do. For example, the Christian mentality on abortion is something which is really important for us to talk to people about. And we can spend a lot of energy and effort trying to, for example, go to state legislatures and address the legislatures, or talk to—present some sort of a lobby against abortion bills. And that's a good thing to do. But that's not really enough to actually bring about the kind of change which has to take place in order for people to live a full Christian life. That's an *important* thing, but it's not the *essential* thing—I hope to show you by the time I'm through tonight.

There are all kinds of things, ideas, for instance, which it would be very wonderful if, for example, everybody in America, or everybody in the world were to adhere to. It would make, for example, the world a much better place to live in. It might make, say—disseminating a lot of ideas about the right way to live, like Christian ethics, is a very, very worthwhile thing. And if the whole world were to think Christian—not—I'm not talking about *being* Christian, but *think* Christian, or *act* Christian—then, in fact, that would be wonderful, because at least that much of the world would be set right as far as external behavior is concerned, and there would be a lot less interference, I mean, real, hard, murderous persecutions against Christians who really want to be Christian, in places, for instance, in Pakistan, as an example.

But one can spend a great deal of time, and legitimately so, on trying to convince people of your position—of one's position with regard to various topics, having to do with religious or Christian ideas. But that really, . . . basically, misses the point of the way people are deeply influenced. It misses the point about an essential aspect of human nature, I'd like to claim. Namely, that human beings do not function independently; rather, they change in groups.

Some of the things that we have to realize about this aspect of things—I'd like to draw this out a little bit as we go along here, but there are three points in particular I'd like to make.

First of all, a person's beliefs. Beliefs, now, the things that you don't know what the guy next to you is thinking, perhaps, because they're not necessarily the things which show the most action, or they may not be externalized. These are personal things, these beliefs. So, a person's interior beliefs and his own attitudes and his own behavior patterns are affected, to a very great degree, by the environment in which he is—in which he finds himself, and in which he functions. And one of the theses which I want to develop in these talks is—and especially tonight—that a Christian environment is necessary if a person is going to live a full Christian life.

The second point is that environments are more important than institutional factors in forming these attitudes and behavior patterns. So, the environment—environmental factors are more important than institutional factors. I'll describe both of those concepts.

The third point is, when society as a whole cannot be expected to accept Christianity, it is necessary to form communities, within society, to make Christian life possible.

I want to work to develop these different things. I really don't want to work at all, but if you can do it, that would be better. [Laughter.]

So first of all, what is an environment? Well, basically, what I mean by the word "environment," and what people mean when they use the word, is it's a social situation with some kind of stability. It's not a mere collection of people. For example, a group of people riding on the bus is not an environment. That's a collection of people and it—but it's not a social situation with stability. And I'm not playing on the fact that the car is running. [Laughter.] In fact, if the social situation implies—what I mean by this is that there are interpersonal relationships existing as well, that people are *relating* to each other. And that's a key thing, a key factor in what I mean by environment.

For example, an environment—every one of us lives in many different environments, and that’s—seems to be a necessary thing. And I don’t think that one should be—I’m not saying that there should be only one environment in which a person lives out his whole life. But let me just sketch, for example, my own different environments, some of them.

I live in a house, in a household, with variously ten—nine or ten people, depending on who’s . . . the last—the tenth one is sometimes there and sometimes not. This is—not all these are members of my family, my immediate family. Some, a couple are living with me and my wife and children and are very much so [sic] a part of our family and form an environment where, in terms of which, we affect each other’s attitudes, beliefs and behavior patterns. We relate to each other in a fantastic variety of ways. And each person in the household understands that he or she can expect a certain kind of stability and a certain kind of permanent relationship. He can expect to be dealt with at a certain level in our household.

There’s another type of environment that I work with—at my work. Now, I work—I teach at Notre Dame, in the physics department. Now, Notre Dame itself is not an environment. It is not one of my environments. There are many—most of the people at Notre Dame, I don’t know. And when I go to any kind of a large university function, we are all basically not relating to each other. We may be there, for example, the President’s Dinner, listening to what the president of the university has to say, or eating dinner or something.

But at that dinner, which, for example, happens every year, there’s an interesting thing that develops—not at all surprising to any of you: that all the people in the physics department sit at three different tables. Now, that’s by choice. And, not all of them. In each year, these three different tables don’t get mixed up, basically. I’ve noticed that each year, it’s the same set of people sit at one table, and another set at another table, and so on. And that’s a very natural situation that’s evolved there: that within the physics department, within the larger university, in fact, various types of personal relationships have been evolved, and in some cases worked out, so that people will know when they get together, they will expect certain kinds of things and they will just

deal with each other expecting to be dealt with personally, whereas they don't expect that from other members at that dinner.

Well, I have—there—in general, say, something else that might seem like an environment is the parish. But the parish is not an environment. I don't mean that it shouldn't be, but it's a fact that it is not, because, for example, when I go to Mass on Sunday morning, or throughout the week when I go to Mass, the people who are there, I don't know. I may know them by name, but I don't actually have any kind of a personal relationship with the vast, vast majority of them. Now, at the 11:30 Mass that I go to sometimes, Ken is there, and Steve [inaudible], and occasionally a couple of other friends of mine. And they're—now, that's a very small group, but that is kind of a subgroup of the larger collection of people, which is almost—it's not big enough to be an environment, really, but it's a kind of environment where we have personal relationships with each other.

There are varying degrees of interaction within a given environment. That corresponds with the fact that we have various capacities for relating with various types of people, among other things. For example, at work and among the, say, physics environment, in which I *work*, I don't expect of them the same kind of personal relationship that I would expect with any one of you, because the vast majority of my personal environment at Notre Dame is not Christian. In fact, it's manifestly atheist. In fact, they *are* declared atheists. But, they happen to be people with whom I can talk about physics, and I do relate to them very deeply at the level of the study of physical reality. And that's a real environment.

The degree of my participation in an environment like that, however, is rather limited, because I can only talk about a certain kind of thing with this group of people. The things which count most to me I really can't share on a regular basis, for a variety of reasons. And I just—and they don't—they have not come to expect such a deep personal relationship with me that I would be, for example, sharing with them, for instance, how our Lord dealt with me last night at the prayer meeting, or something like that.

Now, people—all of us may have some difficulty grasping just how strong an influence environments are on us. I think that we hear sort of an idealistic thing very often that all of us would like to think is true. It seems—my own personal conviction is that since it isn't true, I'd just as soon not wish it were. And it's this: that people like to think that individual persons are kind of cool, calm, collected creatures who take in a lot of facts and sort them out, and they weigh the different alternatives, and then they make decisions about what they want to do, about what they think about things. And that's true. We all do that . . . to some degree. But actually, to a much greater degree are we influenced by the environments in which we function.

You go back to physics. The kinds of things, for instance, that I consider really important in the study of physical reality are both shared with the other people in my physics environment, and their ideas are shared with me. And in fact that—what they think is important has had, in the past, and I'm sure will continue to have, a great impact on me, because I really respect—they have really affected me—their ideas about what's important in physics. So that, for example, the kinds of things that I will spend my time on in the area of physics is to a large extent determined by the people whom I think are the best physicists and who are in my environment also. So, I'm carried along by the environment itself.

Now, one might say—well, you know, there are many, many such examples in your own lives, and I'd like you to think about—in fact, sort of—tonight we break off a little early, I hope, and I want you to answer a couple of questions. I'll return to this later. But one of them is, What environments do *you* belong to? And another one is, For what purpose do these environments exist?

One of the environments that we're familiar with, of course, is the youth. And we're familiar with it, and we understand—we have a deep feeling for how important environments are, and I'm going to illustrate this by this particular one. Just consider how it is that mothers especially are so concerned about what children their children play with and where they hang out, at the corner drugstore, or in the neighborhood down the street, or exactly where. Everybody senses that if your children travel with bad

companions, they'll get into trouble. And it isn't that your children are bad, it's just that they're really deeply impressed by whatever the whole group wants to do, and there is a strong group impression on them.

Another type of environment which we're all familiar with is—this is really a loose one, I mean, in the sense of being very unstructured—is the way that at various schools, typical kind of school situation, when a youth goes to school, he will almost inevitably pick up the sexual morality which is common in the environments in which he finds himself at a school. For example, at a university. And if a fellow or a girl starts traveling around with some pretty loose people, then his whole mentality will be deeply affected. He will begin to think, for example, that these things are not really in many ways—these taboos, so to speak, are not anywhere near as important as my parents led me to think. And that if I really want to be a full human being, I have to engage in premarital sex say, or some other kind of behavior. And that's a very normal kind of thing.

We've all seen many, many examples of that, of individuals who are not bad individuals, and they're not weak-minded and not weak-willed, who will fall into situations which will sort of carry them along. We see this especially a lot, I think, in connection with the drug cultures, the groups of people who will be carried and support each other mutually and have personal relationships.

I remember in my case, there was one particular environment which had a great impact on me because it was the *only* environment, basically the only environment in which I lived for a long time. And that's a very rare situation, that you find yourself living in only one environment. But when I was in graduate school, I studied in physics. That's a very refined, kind of distilled situation. And you can get yourself into a situation where you do nothing but one kind of thing, entirely. You don't even take time out to eat, for instance, which happened to me. I lost 45 pounds in one year. I got married and I gained it back, and a little bit more, in about three months. [Paul and all laugh.]

But while I was in graduate school, one of the things that deeply affected me was the scientific attitude toward religion. Now, people didn't talk about religion very much, and



when they did talk about religion and Christianity, it was always very uninformed and it was easy to see that what they were talking about was shot full of holes. On the other hand, their whole mentality was something which I did pick up, and could—and anyone could pick up very easily. For example, that religion doesn't explain everything, in fact, and then you keep talking about religion doesn't explain *anything*. And so on down the line. That it essentially plays no role in my life, and I notice it's playing no role in anybody else's life, and these people are functioning very well in the kind of life that I'd like to live. So, I could get carried along—without ever having a discussion about religion, as a matter of fact! But I would pick up their sense of values. And I did.

We depend on other people for our beliefs. That's fact, I think. Now, I'm not saying that that's the way it oughta be. I think that that's—I'm not arguing idealistically here; I'm just saying, just take a look at it and see how it is that *you* have picked up your own beliefs. What has impressed you? Who has been your teacher, for instance? How did you get to hold on to the kinds of ideas that you hold onto? Where did you get them?

The fact is . . . [inaudible] that we depend on other people for our beliefs, and we depend on them for what we think is important, that is, the set of values. What other—what our friends, what our environment thinks of as being important is what we tend to pick up as—and begin to think is important too. And what we depend—we also depend on other people for the ways that we act and the ways *to* act. Certain things are expected of you. Certain things are legitimate and certain things are not. And we know how to function, how to survive. And we do it. And we survive, in environments.

Now . . . I think I want to go back to this point. I'm not trying to say that we should all be a bunch of sheep. That's not the point. I am trying to point out how crucial environments, in fact, are in our lives, and what a great impact they have on us.

When I was thinking this over, in—one thought particularly struck me. I—this is not—this may not be an accurate observation. I'd love to know what you think about it. But, I've noticed, especially, that many modern businesses make a great deal of effort to destroy environments.

For example, there is—General Motors has a stated policy that anybody in management will have to be transferred if he's going to be promoted, and everybody wants to be promoted. And one wonders, well, that doesn't seem to make sense. I mean, if the guy is doing a good job here, why would you transfer him in order to promote him? And the reason for that, I know, is actually the case.

(Inaudible) . . . one of the executives at General Motors, a very high up fellow, was that they have long since realized that people begin to make deals and make friends in their environments. And those environments begin to be very important things in the way, for instance, a man will do business. He will pay particular attention to his friends when a deal comes along, or he won't cheat his friends. I don't mean that General Motors insists that people cheat; but he won't—if he has an opportunity to, he will do a favor for his friend rather than for General Motors. And so as a regular policy, they transfer people.

Now, actually, many, many people transfer and move around all the time, and a lot of the personal confusion, chaos, in individual people's lives in this present technological society, which is based on that kind of notion of transferring people in order to get maximum output from them, comes about, I think, partly because they, in fact, do not have very many primary environments. The reason they don't have enviro-, as many environments as they might is because bus-, it's not good business. I'd like you to think about that and see if that agrees with any of your organizations.

Now, it really is important for people to take in facts, weigh them, and make their own decisions about what they think and what they want to do. And I am really urging everybody to do that. But at the same time, I want to point out that the environment in which you function, all the environments, play an enormous role in what you do in these regards, in your decisions, and what attitudes and values you take on.

Furthermore, I'd like to argue that that's not a bad thing. A lot of people would say, well, you know, everybody—"the individualistic man is the best man." And to my way of thinking, that must not be true, because it's impossible.

In fact, it seems to me that it also goes somewhat against what I was reading out of Saint Paul. For example, Saint Paul mentions in another place about being of “one mind and one heart.” That is, that it really is a value to have something in common and agree to be obedient to each other, for example, and do something together, to hold certain things in common, and to be influenced by that.

Now, the reason that I think that this is not so bad, aside from that last observation, is that we would, in fact, as people, make very, very slow progress if we had to make every single decision for ourselves, according to that pattern that I sketched before. In fact, people taken together make a lot of progress. While individual, isolationist, idiosyncratic people will just not seem to make much progress at all in their own personal lives, for example; sometimes it may seem this way. At any rate, I want to claim that people who in fact do have effective environments tend to be more effective people. So I think that it is, in fact, a good thing to be affected by our environments.

On the other hand, we had better know what effects the environments are having on us so that we don't just simply get caught up with something and go pell mell in a certain direction because everybody else is doing it, and we have to choose our environments rather carefully because they are very important and make a great impact on the way we live and what we think about and what we believe and hold to be of value.

Now, the church has not been unaware of this in the past. We've—we really have been holding on to the—sensing the impact that environments have on people. For example, we in the Catholic Church, we have a great deal—a great many Catholic schools, and that's part of controlling the environment in which your children are growing up. So that one of their basic environments, and schools to which your children go are just, are the—well, the second most important environment in which they probably will ever live, because they are very deeply affected by their peers at the psychological ages where they are taking on values and beliefs.

But the positions that we've had with regard to the environments, and the [inaudible] assent to these ideas that I've been mentioning before, have manifested themselves

mostly in a negative way: that we have basically been trying to keep people out of bad environments instead of really concentrating on what is crucial to making a *good* environment and making it better. So, for example, we have the ghetto mentality. That is, a mentality against—essentially that we want to keep people *out of* the vicious world or *out of* all these bad situations that may destroy it, instead of trying—I’m just emphasizing here that in the past, we’ve sensed the importance of environments, but we’ve only concentrated on using them as a defense mechanism.

Not every environment in which a person lives has to be a Christian environment. For example, it’s not necessary for me to live a full Christian life, to, for example, leave the physics environment in which I work, if that’s not a Christian environment. We can—and I’ll explain why that is later. But it’s not—I can function very well there doing physics, which is just fine. That’s what I expect from them, and that’s what they expect from me, and it works out very well. So I’m not—I want you to understand that I’m not suggesting that we should have just sort of one Christian environment, which, in fact, would be a “super ghetto” or something like that. Later on, I’ll come back to what I think is—in the future talks, anyway: What is the minimal sort of environment, or what kind of environment do we need in order to live a full Christian life?

One of the things that we notice about environments—What time do we quit?

MAN’S VOICE [Possibly Kevin]: 10:30.

PAUL: One of things that I—one can notice about environments is that mere coincidence is not a determining factor in what an environment is, or in the taking place of one. But rather, what is important is the nature of the personal relationships that exist within the coincident—the fact that people have crowded together. For example—I can probably get all my examples from, say, a university situation, somewhat, but I think you can substitute your own situations in this rather easily too, I hope.

For example, the fact that the vast majority of the people who go to Notre Dame—I should also explain this is not meant to be an attack on Notre Dame. [Paul and all laugh.] That’s not the intention at all. Just because the situation in Notre Dame is, I

don't think anything different, really, from the situation throughout the whole Christian world, I believe. That—and I'm really talking about a sociological situation basically here, rather than a moral one. The fact that most of the people who go to Notre Dame, the overwhelming majority of people who go to Notre Dame, are Catholic, does not make it a Catholic institution. It simply makes it a fact that most of—the overwhelming majority of people who go there are Catholic. And people who go there, know that to be true, too.

In fact, that may even be true—I don't mean this with the same proportions, but it may be true of parishes, for instance: that the fact that people go to the parish does not necessarily make it a Christian parish, or [inaudible]. The thing which it would be in, for example—again to return to Notre Dame, some people can come to Notre Dame because they're Catholic, and they know that there will be so many other Catholics there. When they get there, the environments in which they find themselves, or in fact place themselves, are such that in almost all the cases, that there is no personal relationship between the individuals in these environments, which is *based* on the fact that they are Catholic and that they hold in common these beliefs, and that they share these attitudes and build each other up. They're all Catholic *together*, but they're not Catholic *with*! And the difference is really crucial! There's a conglomeration of people, but it's not a Catholic environment. Yet it's an overwhelmingly Catholic institution.

And that notion of personal relationship at the level of values and attitudes and beliefs is the point I want to really get across. [Inaudible.] . . .

So, let me say, in order for an environment to be Christian, Christianity has to be part of the way that the people in that environment interact.

Now that—for example, you can take that right into the rectories. For example, you may have a group of people living in the rectory who do not relate to each other, even though each individually is relating to God, they're not relating to each other on the basis of their Christianity! They may be good people doing good things for each other, but they're not really sharing their faith, say. Suppose that that's the case, or that that's the

case in some convents, even, too. Or that in the—in families as well, where the question is, you know, what kinds of things do you talk about?

Well in families, it's really more often the case, at least it used to be the case, that people really did share Christianity and that, for instance, the children would take on the values of the family. That seems to be not necessarily so strikingly the case anymore: that, in fact, families are not necessarily— even Christian families are not necessarily Christian environments, as everybody can sense. And the reason for that is that this element of personal relationship at the level of shared spirituality, shared faith in Jesus Christ as the rock, as the foundation, the cornerstone of that very family, that very environment, is missing . . . in some cases.

Now, the thesis of all these talks is that—the premise is that a Christian has to have an environment in which his life in Christianity—well, he has to have an environment in his life in which Christianity is openly accepted, talked about, and lived.

[Recording ends here.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 104. Being and Doing

*This talk, given in the summer of 1971 at the Apostolic Institute, is about the role of activities in building Christian community. In particular, Paul DeCelles stressed that to build Christian community one shouldn't start with activities. Rather, one should start with a small group who want to gather to share Jesus Christ. In the beginning, activities defocus people from what is essential. For more on the Apostolic Institute see the Resource 100, "Background Information."*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

PAUL: Just at the tail end of the last talk I gave, I mentioned a few things about activities and the question of the role that activities play in the—in connection with basic Christian communities.

Usually when people think of people getting together, it's for a specific purpose to do something together. In fact, it's the most common thing for people to come together just to do something—at least it is in connection with anything religious. That's not the way that families come together. They don't come together in order to do something. They come together mainly to be together, just to be a family and to be present to each other. And there's something of that same sort of note involved with the basic Christian community or the environment that I've been talking about. But it's not—the environment is not meant to be something which primarily is set up in order to accomplish something, to *do* something. It's set up to *be* something, which is a group of people who share Jesus Christ as their Lord and their Savior coming together.

And in the environment itself, lots of good things take place. People continually have the advantage of having the gifts of the Spirit present and all the—all the things that they need in order to lead a full Christian life. But usually, when people think of people coming together, they think in terms of getting together to *do* something. And it's true . .

. that activities of that sort are things which do, in fact, lead to some stronger sense of involvement on the part of the members.

Activities, in fact, are really very good things and important in basic Christian communities. But basically, one has to be—from the point of view of building a basic Christian community, one has to be very cautious about starting activities. That, it's more important for people to be together than it is for them to do things together. In fact, the doing of things together should serve the purpose of building up the community itself, at least in the beginning. That is, the kinds of activities . . .

[skip in the tape]

. . . but the thing about the activities in connection with basic Christian community is that they—there ought to be in the beginning, probably none. That is that—it would almost be confusing to have activities as the focal point around which people come together in the first place. It's more important that people come together because—just in the Lord Jesus and for the purpose of praising him and being together, celebrating that fact together—than it is for them to get together for some organizational purpose or for the purpose of doing some good work; all of which are, of course, very, very good things.

But from the point of view of building the basic Christian community, it would be important not to get involved with very many activities. The community itself should not start off by having a lot of things to do, because it takes a lot of energy to keep activities going for the participants themselves. Most—a lot of their energy would go in that direction. Usually they're isolated, independent kinds of actions that people would have to do, and then they come back together and report on them. And so, in that way, most people wind up spending most of their time separated from everybody else rather than, in fact, working with everybody else, or being with everybody else.

So, it's a matter of basically being somewhat cautious about activities in the beginning.



In fact, rather than starting with activities, like—let's get something started and then bring people together around this thing that we're going to do—it would be a more reasonable way to approach the situation, in which there was no basic Christian community, to start with gathering as many or as few people as there are who would like to get together and pray with you, just starting off very simple—people who are already centered on Jesus, who'd like to come more and more into the fullness of the Spirit, and begin with a nucleus of people who will meet for that purpose of seeking God's will, committing themselves ever deeper to the Lord.

And then, as that nucleus would continue to meet and other people would be drawn into it by the influence of the members of that small group in the first place, it would be—there would be lots of changes that would take place as the thing grew larger. And eventually, there would be some activities that would be necessary to take care of some of the needs the people have. And then there are other activities which members just want to do because the Lord really is leading them to do a certain kind of thing. And then, allowing for that, in fact, encouraging that kind of thing to develop as time goes on would be a very normal and good thing. But usually the kinds of activities that one should encourage in this way are those especially introduced to build up the community itself.

Now, this sounds very, I don't know, narcissistic or something like that, very introverted. But the point is—we're talking about a building up process, now. We're not talking about the way full Christian life is lived. I'm talking about—how do you build a Christian community? And the building is different.

Laying the foundation is a lot different from having the whole building completed. And the things which are most noticeable about a building are not the things which are important in a way. That is, the things that are most important are the foundations that are hidden from your view and they may not look too pretty or anything like that. They're not for that purpose. And they aren't necessarily the things—that people coming by will not look at those—at the foundation and say, "Wow, what a wonderful building!"

They're going to look at the things they can see up above and marvel about all the beautiful things that can be built on this solid foundation.

Unfortunately, when you're talking about beginning Christian community, you have to talk about the foundation, and that's not very attractive, necessarily. And so, there's this certain aspect of things where in the first place the community doesn't do very much, and most of the energy really has to—you have to make a decision to plow your energy into building up the community.

And that is subject to a lot of criticism. A lot of people will look at you and say, "Oh, that's really a bad thing for you to do. You should be out helping the poor or doing some other things," which are—which are things which are obviously extremely important, wonderful things. But they're more the sort of things that Christian communities that are really working well will be doing.

So I suggest that the—that the activities introduced should be those which would build up the community. And then, as much organization as is needed for—for the people, for all the needs of the people to be met as is necessary, just supply as much organization, as time goes on, as is necessary to meet the needs of the people. Never have a—you know, an organization sort of put in from the outside—a this-is-the-way-it-ought-to-be kind of thing, but just let it be flexible, work out whatever is necessary and let the needs of the people be the guide.

It's very important, but building a community is a very difficult task, because you're dealing with . . . people who are associated with each other voluntarily, and it's a little bit, I suppose, like the same kind of relationship set up as you have in romances or some—or dating in some way. This is maybe a bad example, but the point is that when people are there voluntarily, we have to take care to encourage the things which they especially like. And you have to work . . . with everybody, making sure that everybody can fit in. As long as they're there, voluntarily centered on our Lord, then they belong there.

And so, it may be difficult to build a community which does not cut off the voluntary character or the participation of all the members. And it is difficult to restrain yourself

from just running hog-wild in your own directions, as when you get a few people together that just, they—you know, just shoot off, right? You can find a few people who agree with you on something and just go in that direction, instead of taking into account the fact that everybody who's there, voluntarily, centered on Christ, belonging to the community, has something to say about what's going on.

So, the community in fact, I think that—well, the point is this. It seems to me that activities and getting involved with them should be things which are set up in the beginning specifically to build up the community and they either will or they will not. And if—those that do, one should encourage and those that don't, one should not spend very much time on.

The community itself, as I said before, eventually leads to activities, but at the right time and at the—and in a better way. What happens sometimes, it seems to me anyway, is that as a community gets sufficiently strong, it can—there are lots of things that can go on that will not drain off energy. It won't matter if a whole flock of people are getting really enthusiastic for some bigger activity that they should—you know, it's kind of one of the flowers of the community. What they're doing is really great, and it's not important that they, in any sense, plow their energies back into the building of the community now, because the community's okay. It's not going to sap the strength out of the community. And so, at the right time, the community *will* lead to very good activities.

I don't know if I've done a good job of explaining this, but this question of activities versus community is really an important issue. Because almost all the time, whenever you want to get people together, you get them together to *do* something. And that's quite different from the basic ingredient in an environment—which is the people coming together because they share Jesus Christ as their focal point, as a—and they're coming together to share their life in Him.

In fact, you can see that activities could even become a problem in defocusing people from what's essential. They may be very, very good things, but it may turn out that if the

activities are more—become more impressive than the original reason for getting together, namely, the praise and worship of the Lord, and sharing the Christian life, then you may wind up with a very strong activity, which is very successful and everybody can look at it and admire it and then forget about the most essential thing, and you can sort of be just kind of sidetracked.

So, it pays to pay a lot of attention to that kind of thing.

Well, I wanted to talk actually tonight about some other . . .

[Recording ends here.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 106. Spiritual Gifts and the Common Good

*This talk was given by Kevin Ranaghan at the June, 1972, Conference on the Charismatic Renewal in the Catholic Church. He talked about how the spiritual gifts are primarily meant to function in a community setting for the sake of the common good. He also talked about charisms as graced functions in the body of Christ.*

## Transcript

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

KEVIN: What I'm going to say is, in many ways, very basic to the charismatic renewal, but on the other hand it's very, very essential for the charismatic renewal to function *well*. And beyond that, for all Christian life to function well. It's very much at the heart of the key insight that has been moving in the Catholic charismatic renewal and has been leading to the building up of basic Christian communities like the People of Praise.

And that basic insight is—it comes from Saint Paul's teaching on the spiritual gifts. And I want to run through some of Paul's texts and show different aspects of his teaching. Basically, what Saint Paul says, in all his chief texts about spiritual gifts, is that spiritual gifts belong, first of all, to a *community*, to a body, to a local church, if you wish—"church," in quotes—to a local expression of the body of Christ. First of all, it belongs to the body, and then they belong to the individuals and distributed among the individuals in that body.

These gifts are meant to function not in *isolation* from each other, but in *community* with each other, *relating* to each other. And that the spiritual gifts, as a matter of fact, are meant to function in a community setting and not just in anyone's own individual life. And then, secondly, he basically says that these gifts function for the good of the body or for the love, for the building up, of the brethren.

Now, there are four texts that I'm going to be referring to back and forth—and the texts are so similar that it's hard to tell which one I'm talking about at any given time, because the themes run through all four texts. You might want to jot down this: that there are four basic lists of spiritual gifts, or ministries, which Saint Paul gives in his epistles. There are two separate lists in 1 Corinthians 12—we're all very familiar with that. There's another list in Romans 12, and another list in Ephesians 4.

The first thing you notice about these lists is that Paul says that these spiritual gifts are, concretely and on a very gutsy level, workings, services, ministries. That is, jobs to be done or functions of the body of Christ. Very often, when we hear “spiritual gift,” we think of something kind of ethereal and flighty or something like that. And Paul is talking about work, work, hard work. And he gives such a broad variety of spiritual gifts. Some of them are—look kind of dramatic and some of them look kind of humdrum.

But he kind of talks about different types of jobs in the community. And what he basically says is that in just about any job you can think of in the body of Christ is a spiritual gift. *All* the workings, *all* the functions, *all* the jobs in the body of Christ are spiritual gifts. And every one of these spiritual gifts is from one and the same Spirit.

That is to say, the job of being a helper—which to me always sounds like someone carrying around the back end of a board [laughter]—the job of being a helper is just as much a spiritual gift as the job of being prophet. They are both spiritual gifts. They're different, because the jobs are different, the functions are different. Some are dramatic, and some look, kind of—at first glance look kind of dull. But every single one of them is charismatic. That means, every single one of them is “graced.” Every single one of them has the power of the Holy Spirit to enable the person who has that job to do it.

Put another way, for absolutely every job that there is to be done in the body of Christ, there is a corresponding grace, or gift of the Holy Spirit, so that every single one of us must look first of all to the Holy Spirit as the source of power in order to do our job—whatever our job is. On the other side, everybody in the body has some job or jobs to do, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are *available* to us to do our jobs. We have to know

and trust and count upon the fact that the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit are available to us for the tasks to which we have been appointed. Therefore, everyone in the church is meant to be charismatic. Look for just a second at that word, “charismatic.” The root is “charis,” and it means both “gift” and “grace.”

And a charism basically is a job which has the *grace* of God, given freely, that enables it to be done. It is a graced function. It is a gift. It is a job, the ability to do which has been given freely by the Holy Spirit. And it’s really important for us to realize that every job in the body of Christ and every job in every Christian community is a spiritual gift, and that the grace is there to do it, that we need not depend upon ourselves or our own effort alone, but on primarily to depend upon the grace of the Holy Spirit for the power to do our task.

Now, the next big point that Saint Paul makes in these texts is that all these gifts exist in the first place for the well-being of the body of Christ, for the building up and the edification of the church. And I’d like to point out that Saint Paul is not particularly talking so much about the universal church—he would probably mean that, too—but when he’s writing his letters he’s writing to concrete local communities, which were probably quite small, you know, a few hundred people at the most. He’s talking about a local body of Christ. And he’s saying that the spiritual gifts exist among you so that your brotherhood, your fellowship, your relationships with each other, which is the very fabric of your life, so that they can be built up and made strong.

Therefore, the spiritual gifts are never to be seen as personal powers, never to be seen as personal rewards, never to be seen as, oh, you know, “So-and-so has a gift of prophecy—” you know, “—isn’t that just so, so wonderful,” [laughter] as if they were such a wonderful or holy person. The gift is not to be seen as related to the *person*. The gift is to be seen as related to the person only insofar as the person is a member of a body and functioning as a member of the body, because the purpose of the gift functioning is for the well-being of the *body* and not particularly for the edification of the person who has that gift.

One thing you have to face up to immediately in any Christian community situation is that there is no room either for false humility, nor is there any room for envy or jealousy. But the spiritual gifts are distributed by the Spirit among the members of the body for the common good, and do not make a person in any way super-special or highly honored or holy, because he or she operates that gift of the Spirit from the Lord. It's important for us to see that whenever Saint Paul talks about the spiritual gifts, he always talks about community.

Whenever he gives a list of the spiritual gifts, he then turns right around and talks about the mystery of the church or the mystery of the body of Christ. And he always says that these gifts are meant to function in a body situation. He never isolates the gifts from community. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that what he says is this: the community, the grouping of believers, that's the primary dwelling place of the Spirit. The Spirit fills the body, and the body is meant to be joined together under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is Lord of all our lives as individuals, but he is Lord of our lives as individuals to the extent that we are part of his body, because his primary function, his primary relationship to us is as head of a body, and we are called to be members of his body and to relate to him not as if we by ourselves were a whole body, with him as our head, but we are called to relate to him as *a* member of a larger body of which he is a head.

So he is the head and we are the members of the body. And inasmuch as we are yielded to him as members of a body, that much we receive of the Spirit who has been poured out principally on that community or that body. That's why, you know, for example, Paul says, for example, that one member of the body can't say, "You know, I'm a foot, and I have all the spiritual gifts for being a foot, and I say we're going to go *this* way." And the whole rest of the body wants to go in *this* direction. And the whole teaching ministry of the community and the whole inclination, discernment of the community says, "We go *this* way." "But by gum, I've got the Spirit to be a foot and, and my foot says, 'Go *this* way.'"



What he's—what he's criticizing there is a kind of spiritual individualism, which sees individuals related to the Lord kind of directly, without being plugged into the body of which they must be members, and he's really critical of that. He says, you can't do that. You can't say you don't need the other members of the body in order to function fully as a member of the body of Christ.

So this is a really key point with him. And I try to express it this way. He sees us first of all, not as individuals, but as a group, as a community, under the headship of one Lord, all sharing in one Spirit together. And then, once that unity and sharing is established, then the different ministries and jobs are distributed among the members by the Lord, so that all the jobs and all the needs of that local community, that local body of Christ, can exist. But no spiritual gift exists in and for itself, by itself. Spiritual gifts only exist as part of a team of spiritual gifts, a whole collage of spiritual gifts, which must, in fact, function together, function harmoniously, live and work together with each other and serve each other according to their functions.

There's one text in Ephesians 4 [v.12-13] which brings that out very strongly. He's talking about different spiritual gifts and then he says that the reason for these gifts is for the “equipment of the saints and for the work of ministry and for the building up of the body until we all attain the unity of faith in the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood, to the measure and stature to the fullness of Christ.”

And a little further on [v.15], he says, “speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love,” and that text kind of expresses it very clearly.

The gifts are meant as joints. Each of us gifted, each of us with our own function, each of us with our own role to play in a community like the People of Praise, is called upon to exercise his role, his function, in harmony, and in unity, and in an overall coordinated

way together under the headship of Christ. And when that happens, it makes for bodily growth and makes for being built up in love.

Ah, just another word here: the Lord has been teaching us, in the People of Praise, very, very much, to accept and rejoice at the different gifts he is giving us. He is letting us see very clearly that, if I am a teacher, or I am a helper, or I'm a prophet, or I am an administrator, I have that gift so that my brothers and sisters can be stronger. The reason I have a gift is for the good of my brothers and sisters. The reason I have a gift is so that they can be built up.

And therefore, what everyone really tends to seek is how to *love each other* according to the gifts that we have. Who we are in the body of Christ is very much a question of our relationships with our brothers and sisters in our community, who are the other members of the body of Christ we are in closest contact with. And the way we are primarily meant to relate to one another is to serve each other according to the *function* that we have, according to the *spiritual gift* that has been given to us. And our primary kind of goal, a kind of a way we kind of see whether we're in the Lord's will, if we're right in the middle of the Lord's anointing on our life, is to see if, in fact, if we are serving the brethren according to the spiritual gift that we have, and if we are accepting the ministry from them according to the spiritual gifts that they have. And then what you have in that kind of situation is a series of relationships, based upon the different spiritual gifts that we have, all working together and all working harmoniously for the common good.

Now, there is a provision in the body of Christ to see that that doesn't just—that to see that that is not just chaotic and not just a hodgepodge of everybody running around to each other saying, "How am I supposed to relate to you?" [laughter] And, you know, "What gift do I have in place as far as you go?" And "Do I have a different gift for you?" There are, in fact, certain gifts in the body, certain ministries in the body, which we call "foundational gifts." And here I would call your attention particularly to the fourth chapter of Ephesians. Since all the gifted members of the community, since all the graced members of the community are meant to be one body in which each of us performs our own function and loves each other according to the office or the gift we

have been given, therefore, there are some gifts which have, as their basic purpose, the *holding together* of the rest of the body. There's a series of gifts that have as their primary purpose holding together—"coordinating" might be a word—keeping together, joining together, all the rest of the members of the body with their gifts. These are sometimes called "leadership gifts," or they're sometimes called "headship gifts." And since Jesus is our head by being laid out completely for us to be "built on," they can also be called "foundational gifts."

There's a wonderful paradox in the body of Christ, you know, that the Lord, the Lord got on top by being first of all, totally on the bottom. And that works very much in the body of Christ. Leadership in the body of Christ, headship in the body of Christ, is very much a question of laying down your life completely for the brethren, being a foundation which can hold the other members of the body together.

Now, there are a series of foundational gifts which are listed in Ephesians 4. They are apostle, pastor, prophet, teacher and evangelist. And these are often referred to, in basic Christian communities that are developing, as "foundational gifts" or as the "five-fold foundational anointing." And these seem to be basic fundamental body gifts, which a community must expect the Lord to give and to develop so that the community can have order, so that the community can have direction, so that the community can have purpose, and so that each member of the community can come to know with certainty where he or she *fits*, who he or she *is* in the body, and how to relate in a powerful and effective way with the brethren according to the will of the Lord. These five gifts, or this five-fold anointing, serves the purpose of providing a foundation which in fact reveals and makes clear God's will for the local church, God's will for the local community, God's will for the covenant community. And as they operate, they provide a framework which supports the other members of the body.

Thus, for example, a person with an apostolic anointing, or who has a gift of apostleship, very often is a person whom the Lord calls to, in fact, *found* a community. It may be one person—it may be several persons, as a matter of fact—to whom the Lord

gives the vision of the community, the overall plan of the community and what the order or lifestyle of the community ought basically to be like.

And a person who has an apostolic gift is not just a person who, you know, runs into a place and founds a community and runs away, but is a person who stays there and seems to really lay down his life in order that the vision of the community, the order of the community, the purpose of the community can be built up and be matured. So the apostolic gift is related very much to the foundation and the order and the purpose of the community.

A pastoral gift, in comparison, is very much a gift of leading all the members of the community to the cross, of leading the individuals in the community to the face of Jesus, so that they can see and hear and experience and find Jesus' call upon their life. A person with a pastoral gift in a community kind of supports the members of the body and keeps them faithful to the call of Jesus upon their individual lives.

The gift of being prophet is different from just having occasionally a prophetic utterance. A prophet is a member of a community and who participates in this five-fold anointing by being a person who really sees and expresses, both in his or her words and in his and her style of life, a person who is really on the cutting edge of what the Lord is doing, a person who really sees and "points out" in a prophetic sense, to what the Lord is calling the community and combined with that is a continual prophetic utterance which continually reveals to the people the plan of God that God has for the community.

Teacher. Obviously the role of teacher is that of really giving an ongoing explanation and indoctrination to the members of the community in the revelation that God is giving to the body. The teacher is continually explaining, making clear, and making understood, at every level of the community, what the revelation is, what the plan is that God is giving to the community.

And the evangelist continually confronts the body as a whole and the members of it with a whole panoply of the good news, continually preaching and speaking about Jesus, calling, let's say, the members of the community to continual repentance. You've got to

have that kind of a gift too. You've got to have a person continually calling us to repentance, because only as we are continually repentant, so much are we continually open to the continuing outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Now, this five-fold anointing may exist in a small group of people, or it may be spread out in a large group of people in the community, but this five-fold function which works very, very closely together—apostle, pastor, prophet, teacher and evangelist—really provides the foundation for the development of a basic Christian community. And that kind of a call is really a call to lay down life completely and to give oneself over completely to the service of the brothers and sisters. It's a real call to *love*, and it is something that the Lord has revealed to us, and is revealing to other communities across the country, as being really key for the development of community.

Now, one last thing before a trap door opens. [Laughter.] Well, these old buildings, you know!

Let's make it clear, just one more time. Paul always says, in all of his texts, after he finishes talking about the gifts of the Spirit and the body, he always starts talking about love.

That's really clear in 1 Corinthians 13, you know, when he follows with that whole beautiful thing on love. But it's also clear in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4. He always starts talking about the *results* of the gifts—the results of relating to each other according to our functions—as being, in fact, building us all up in the love of Jesus. So that when we love each other and when we serve each other according to the spiritual gifts that we have been given, we, in fact, make it more possible for Jesus to love us. And we, in fact, come more and more and grow more and more into *his* love. And we relate to him more and more with his love and we, we really become built up much, much more into his life.

So clearly the operation of all these different gifts is not simply to have a smoothly working machine in which everybody, you know, moves along and just does their part. But the end result is for building up the life of the Spirit, building up divine life among

us, building up real love in which we are able to lay down our lives for one another, and give ourselves over completely to one another and be Christ to one another in different ways. So the love and the life of Christ can just fill every part of our day and every part of our being. And then, in that way, the community as a whole becomes *the love of Christ manifested to the society around it*. But that only really happens when the body is together according to the spiritual gifts, and when the foundational gifts are beginning to grow, holding together the rest of the body.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 107. Reflections on the 1973 Conference

*In this 1973 article published in New Covenant magazine, Paul DeCelles emphasized the ecumenical and lay character of the work of God in the charismatic renewal and the freedom that is a hallmark of the Holy Spirit's activity.*

## Reflections on the 1973 Conference

By Paul de Celles [sic]

*Dr. DeCelles, professor of physics at the University of Notre Dame, has been active in the charismatic renewal since its beginnings in South Bend in 1967. He is a coordinator of the People of Praise Community and was recently ordained a permanent deacon in the diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.*

Praise the Lord Jesus for the outpouring of his Holy Spirit at the Seventh International Conference!

I hope that during the coming year the news of what occurred during the conference will spread throughout the world. People here in South Bend and Notre Dame marveled at how well-run and peaceful the conference was. Strangers in the neighborhood of the stadium have reported how deeply moved they were by the beautiful singing that wafted out of the stadium during the general sessions. Others noticed the kindness and patience shown by the drivers as they drove from the stadium area. How much joy and singing and happiness there were as the cars paraded out of the parking lots, one after another.

However, some aspects of the general sessions have caused me to reflect on the orientation that the international conference seems to be taking. I think the administration of the conference was truly remarkable. The conference committee, and in particular the True House Community at Notre Dame deserve our prayerful thanks.

But I would like to draw attention to some of the things which went on at the general sessions in the stadium which I think bear reconsideration.

I was surprised at the extent to which the conference differed from our ordinary community and prayer meeting experiences during the years. Many of the characteristics of our prayer meetings that seem to be so liberating were missing during the general sessions. The spontaneity, vivacity, enthusiasm, vitality, expectant faith, trust in God and trust in our brothers and sisters, the love of God and the overwhelming praise and worship to the glory of God, seemed to me to be somewhat missing. The general sessions did not accurately reflect the tone, temperament, culture, attitudes and life-style of the majority of the people who attended them. They seemed to be governed by a narrower mentality. This showed up particularly in the areas of ecumenism, authority, worship and large crowd control.

## ECUMENISM

First, the relationships among the different faith traditions represented at the conference were unclear. From the beginning, our prayer meetings have been ecumenical. In fact, we were introduced to the baptism of the Holy Spirit and to a fuller understanding of many of the scriptural texts concerning life in the Spirit by some non-Catholics with whom we continue to have fruitful relationships. The origins of the Catholic Pentecostal movement are deeply ecumenical. Our prayer group in South Bend and many throughout the world remain ecumenical. The Catholics in our prayer group are faithful to the traditions of the Catholic Church, and participate fully in the life of the Church, just as the Protestants have full participation in the life of their churches.

However, I believe that the non-Catholics who are able to participate in our individual prayer meetings fully were not related to in a truly loving way at the conference. Our international conference, which has had a history of participation by Protestants seems to be becoming imbued with what I would call a strain of “super-Catholicism.” For example, I do not believe it is normal for members of prayer groups throughout the world to read *L’Osservatore Romano*, the official Vatican newspaper. It is neither representative nor entirely honest to be handing out articles from *L’Osservatore Romano*



as the official literature of the charismatic renewal, as happened at the conference. We seem to be saying something like, “See how Catholic we are? We even read the *L’Osservatore Romano!*”

There are legitimate alternative ways we can behave in ecumenical gatherings which remain faithful to our Catholic traditions and which do not offend or violate the spirit of love that exists among Catholics and Protestants. How much must we require Protestants to change in order that they feel comfortable at our international conference? I believe that the criteria that we apply on our individual prayer meeting level are stringent enough. In fact, we should once again return to Protestants as a source of inspiration, expecting them to participate actively in the ministry of the conference itself as they have in the past. This might be easily accomplished by expanding the Word Gift servants to include more non-Catholic participants. Clearly, we could learn a lot from non-Catholics about how to deal with very large, rally-like crowds.

## AUTHORITY

I thought the first half of the main address by Father Harold Cohen was excellent. However, the second half dealing with our fidelity to the magisterium of the Church, raised some questions in my mind. The question was dealt with extensively at last year’s conference in the addresses by Bishop Joseph McKinney and Kevin Ranaghan. I regretted seeing it come up again. While I believe that it is good to be obedient to the pope and bishops, and indeed to all our spirit-filled [sic] brothers and sisters, I do not think it is a wise policy to lead 25,000 people in an extraordinary public commitment of obedience. I am sure that for the overwhelming majority of Catholics who are faithful to the pope, the bishops and the traditions of the Church, this was the first time they had ever been in this position. I am not against obedience to the authority of the Church. What I oppose is a group situation in which obedience is not adequately explained, where people are swayed to make an act of obedience according to what they understand it to be. In many cases this obedience is a type of immature, dependent relationship and is often not even what the speaker meant. For example, in one case I know of, a bishop demanded that a certain prayer group disband. He did not dialogue with the group or its leaders, but chose to close it down because he didn’t believe in the

charismatic gifts. The group obeyed. Six months later, as capriciously as he had stopped the meetings, he allowed them to start again.

I take issue with the notion that we should automatically obey a bishop who asks us to stop participation in the Catholic charismatic renewal. It seems to me that the immediate response should not be “Of course, Bishop. I will no longer participate,” but rather to begin a serious effort to improve the prayer meeting. The bishop should not test to see if this is a good group of Spirit-filled people by ordering the prayer group to disband. That is a bad test. There are other criteria to apply to determine whether a group is in the Spirit. On the face of it, an order to disband only tests whether the bishop or whoever is in authority has the power to have the meeting stopped. It does not automatically mean that the meetings *should* be stopped. Basically it is a test of power, not a test of the Spirit. For example, suppose that something terribly out of the Spirit occurred in a group, the bishop ordered it stopped, and the people obeyed. Six months later the bishop might say, “Well, since you stopped that terrible thing and you’re in such good faith, you may start it up again.” That would be a terrible test of the Spirit. If the problem was bad before, it remains bad. The problem would not be cleared up simply because people were obedient to authority.

Throughout the world, the charismatic renewal is marked by a very strong participation on the part of the laity. In many places there are no priests participating in the prayer meetings, a fact which everyone I have talked to regrets. That being the case, however, it should be reflected in the general sessions at the conference. For whatever reasons, the Lord is working in prayer groups all over the world with a new type of emerging ministry, a new type of broad spectrum of service in the meeting. Yet we find at the major conference assemblies a concentration on participation of priests and bishops and a strong reference to obedience to the bishops and to the pope, with the major addresses being given by priests and bishops. I believe that this is not bad, but rather that it is indicative of a trend toward a clericalism which does not reflect the Spirit-led attitude of thousands of people in the charismatic renewal.

## WORSHIP

At the general sessions, we were urged repeatedly to be quiet, peaceful to let the Lord work deeply and richly within our hearts. Being quiet was referred to frequently as a new way to pray. I don't believe it is a new way to pray. Many Catholics have been praying quietly in church pews for generations. It is not a better way to pray. It is simply quieter. Indeed we pray differently in our own prayer group. An international conference of local prayer groups in which quiet prayer is anything but characteristic should allow for a freer form of prayer and worship.

We need to show more trust that the Spirit of God is active among the 25,000 people present and that we can relax in the Lord. As Fr. Michael Scanlan emphasized in his closing conference remarks, we can expect him to move in marvelous, new and wonderful ways every time we meet. We should in fact make every effort to figure out ways to share the experience of what God is doing in such a large crowd of people, to tap the resources of the Holy Spirit at work among all the people during the conference itself. We should not approach the conference as basically something we "put on" for all those who are coming. Rather let us adopt the attitude that we are facilitators, servants, working to make it possible for God to work in the crowd, to be shared and lived more fully by all present.

This attitude of humble service should dominate our approach to ecumenism, authority and all the other difficult problems we face in the charismatic renewal. When we reach a matter of teaching where there is a difference of opinion, we should not simply call for loyalty to the Catholic position. We should explain the consequences of the Catholic position by some wholesome explanation in the Spirit of God. This would become a great opportunity for all of us to grow together more solidly in the Lord.

## THE FUTURE

When we called the first International Charismatic Conference in 1967, all of us were fresh in the Spirit. So much had happened in such a short time that we decided to gather to reflect on what the Lord had done and let the Lord refresh and guide us together. We came together seeking. This attitude of seeking pervaded the first several

conferences. We need to return to it. To rediscover it will require extensive pre-conference communication among the conference committee and prayer groups and charismatic communities throughout the world.

I think it is inappropriate for the speeches at the general assemblies to be developmental, theological, apologetic, or policy-setting. A developmental talk makes an argument and draws conclusions usually with a lot of therefores and thus in it. The general assemblies should be celebrations first of all. Celebrations of God's glory, his constant mercy, and our salvation. They should be more happenings than classes. They should be healing, saving, miraculous[,] lively and fully participatory. General assembly addresses are best when they build us up in the love of God and all men by signs and wonders and demonstrations of his power.

Let's open up in the confidence that the Lord will do an even greater marvel as we meet in his name next year.

*New Covenant* (August, 1973), pages 24-5.

# 108. The Role of Prophets and Prophecy

*This talk is from a November 16, 1973, community meeting. Paul DeCelles used Old Testament examples to answer the question, "What is prophecy supposed to do?" He discussed the role of prophecy in forming attitudes of mind and heart and in directing us in how we should live. At the end he reviewed recent prophecies. Details: Paul DeCelles, 1973. 21 minutes*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

PAUL: The prepared teaching tonight will be given by me. [Laughter.]

Recently, I guess it was a couple of months ago, at one of our community meetings, we talked— I gave a few words of exhortation about how we ought to be more open to the gift of prophecy in our midst. That we should be eager, you know, to prophesy when the Lord moves us. And I made a few remarks that had the effect of kind of opening a floodgate. There were something like 12 prophecies lickety-split right after that. [Laughter.] Then we—after we listened to what the Lord was saying to us and prayed some more, we went to, we had our break. And during the break, I had suggested that everybody try to talk with each—you know, everybody talking with each other—about what the prophecies meant, and what do you—what you got out of it.

Well, afterwards, I had a chance to talk—a lot of us got together and had a chance to talk at the pastoral team meeting about some of the things that people had been getting out of prophecy that were shared just generally, you know, in the talk. And some things became very clear. One of them is that we don't get very much out of prophecy generally. I mean, none of us. That's not, I don't mean that as a universal statement, but the thing is that, by and large, the Lord's prophecy is, I'd say, an exceedingly pleasant experience, but it doesn't have very much more than that involved with our lives right

now. So we prayed a great deal about that and talked, occasionally, and tried to understand what prophecy is supposed to do. And that's—the fruit of that prayer and consideration is the talk that I want to give tonight.

First of all, it's useful to distinguish between prophecy, as we understand it, and prophets. And it might help us a little bit to understand more of what's going on if we begin to activate the idea of . . . What, can't you hear? Oh, okay [cough]. . . of what [laughter]. He was doing something like this. [Paul presumably gestures and all continue laughing]. Like, itching ears. [More laughter.]

The difference between what one would kind of think of as prophecy versus, say, a prophet, is something like this: You can imagine any one of us sitting around at a community meeting or wherever else, and all of a sudden kind of get seized by the Spirit of the Lord and be used by him to proclaim something that He wants said right then. You're kind of a picture of, almost—I don't mean this in any disrespectful way at all—but kind of a sense of a medium, like—or something like that, or Balaam's ass maybe, you know, where you just kind of get taken over for a moment and you proclaim this, and the only reason that God used you at all and the extent to which he used you was that you were a tongue and a mouth, kind of thing. And you can think a prophecy is something which kind of comes through people like that. And then you, it doesn't matter who said that or anything like that, particularly, it's just that it needed to be said, the Lord said it.

That's one kind of an idea of prophecy. I think that the Lord definitely does that. That that's exactly what happens often. But in the New Testament, we also read, for example, in Ephesians 4, about “the prophet.” And when you think about the prophets in the Old Testament especially, a different kind of a picture begins to emerge. So I'd like to just describe a little bit about the way the Old Testament prophets behaved.

Let me just give you some facts. Old Testament prophets were welcome at the courts. That's a very—well, you know, a little known fact, but it's very useful. Old Testament

prophets were considered an integral part of what was taking place in the king's court, the kings of Israel.

In fact, if you look at what they were doing, in a lot of cases, what they were doing was a kind of *lawyer's* work. They were doing a kind of commentary—for all the people, and sometimes very specific cases, individual cases would come up—and the prophet would say something about how that case ought to be handled. They were doing kind of “case law.” They were concerned with the social and moral attitudes of the people. And their involvement with the people was to *form* the moral and social behavior of the people, which is a lot more than simply giving a message from the Lord.

For example, the Lord would reveal to the prophet something that the people needed to hear, and then Jeremiah might say it 18 straight years. As the prophet would get something, and he would get it maybe again and again, but it was not always just, you know, a direct line from the Lord, kind of an interlinear translation or something where he would simply repeat this. But the prophet became a *force* informing the people so that they became, they took on the social customs which the Lord wanted them to have, and that they took on the moral behavior which the Lord wanted them to have.

Another thing that the prophets did—well before departing from that, there's a moral to that for us. I think that the Lord wants that kind of gift of prophet and prophecy operative now. That it is not enough for those who prophesy to simply give the prophecy and then kind of go on their merry way. That the Lord has kind of entrusted a certain burden to you and a certain responsibility that His word about that matter, which you've spoken, gets enacted, that it's understood, that it's implemented, and that people begin to behave accordingly. Now you can see why it becomes very important to know who your prophets are, because prophets become very influential people in the community, in the formation of the social customs and the moral attitudes. So in the various epistles, you see some remarks like, “Well, you should know who the prophet is.” “Prophecy should be tested and all the gifts should be tested,” and so on. And the thing that's coming through there is that this is not something which is just to, kind of, be

enjoyed—it’s something which *forms* us. And not in some entirely mysterious, deep way in our hearts, but it is supposed to direct us.

I’m not talking now so much about prophecy which says, “Tomorrow we’re supposed to . . .”—say, we were sitting here and somebody gave a prophecy which said, “Tomorrow we’re all supposed to move to Mishawaka.” Now that’s a different kind of prophecy from the one I’m talking about. I’m talking about the kind of prophecy which is formative of the attitudes of heart and mind, and influential about the way we live. Those things need to be reiterated. The point needs to be made again and again. And the Lord does not mean only for you to give the prophecy once and let it lie.

That’s one thing. Now, this, I think, really has to be tested. We’re all going to have to be sensitive to this kind of a different, slightly different way of exercising the gift of prophecy and receiving the gift of prophecy.

Another point I’d like to make is concerning the apparent unclearness of some prophecies. Some prophecies sound beautiful. They involve beautiful green trees beside mountains with flowing water, and marvelous things like that, and everybody likes to hear those, but when you talk with people about, what does that mean . . . “I don’t know!” You know, “I don’t know *what* that meant.” There’s a kind of a sense of analogy which is developed, as we give the prophecy which the Lord wants us to give. And when you listen to some of these prophecies, the way the Lord has been speaking to us, the thing that strikes me is how similar to some parables that the Lord gave they are.

Which brings up another area that we have some difficulty understanding, like, what are we supposed to do with the parables in the New Testament? Because a lot of times we don’t understand them either. In fact, there is a kind of a—this is a little heavy, isn’t it?—but it’s, there’s kind of a connection between parables and prophecy. And I’d like to just take a few minutes and draw that out, because I think it can be immensely useful for how we should make an effort, what direction, what kinds of lines our minds ought to be working along in order to understand what the Lord is saying to us in prophecy.



There is a prophecy in the Old Testament which I'd like to mention in particular, which was a parable. And it's—as a case, it just illustrates the point I want to make. David, you know, had fallen in love with Bathsheba. And so he had Bathsheba's husband Uriah sent to the front line and the thickest fight of the fighting, and then had all the troops supporting him withdraw, so that he was sure to be killed. He says, in fact, "Make sure that he is struck down and dies." So after that happens, he marries Bathsheba.

Then Nathan, who had earlier prophesied—and this is in the Second Book of Samuel, for those of you who might be interested, chapter 12. Nathan had previously, you know, he was known as a prophet. Nathan shows up and he tells a parable.

And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had very many flocks and herds, but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children, and used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his bosom, and it was like a daughter to him. Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him. But he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold because he did this thing and because he had no pity." Nathan said to David, "You are the man."

Now, that's a great way to teach. [Paul and all laugh.] You can see a lot of different ways to try to argue people into accepting a certain position. But parables are a way of proving points, which do the following kind of thing. They, first of all, paint a picture which is fairly simple, which contains the essence of the problem of the case to be solved, and put it out in front of you as an objective thing with which you are not personally emotionally involved. It's a very simple thing, but it's so simple a case, like this case, that anybody would be able to say with David, what a terrible man that man was, and what should happen to him. So that you see the thing out there without your

own involvement saying, you know, feeling any condemnation. And then comes the hooker, which is that you are the man.

And I think the Lord is doing that with us to some degree in prophecy. He puts something out there, in a way which doesn't necessarily appeal to our intellect very clearly. We can't sit and analyze precisely step by step what he's saying, but we get the general picture. And for me, I understand precisely what that message means to me. And different people listening to the same prophecy will get different messages out that will directly apply to their lives. Because, while I have't done what David did to Uriah and Bathsheba, I've done things where that kind of thing, that same parable, if somebody came up to me and, and told me that parable, I would be able to say that I am indeed that man. And each one of us has the possibility of listening to this different way of having what the Lord's ideas are explained to us.

I don't know if that's very clear. It's basically a homiletic way of explaining. It's a way of sermonizing. It's not a discursive or reasoning kind of, or analytical way. It's not like, well, you know, "God said this and then you did this, and therefore these two go together like this and let's work it out and this is your trouble." And "Boy, I—" you know, "—repent." It's not so much like that. It's something which the Lord allows us to project. It's out there, and each one of us can look at it and say, I feel myself a part of what that picture is. And I identify with that, rather clearly, what it means for *my* life. And then comes that blow, which is that I am that man, or the Lord wants me to do that, or the Lord wants me to live my life this way or change my moral attitudes in this particular way.

Now, I'd like to conclude with just a couple of remarks about . . . that there are different kinds of prophecies and people. All of us refer to prophets like Daniel Berrigan. We call Daniel Berrigan, perhaps we used to call Daniel Berrigan a prophet—I haven't heard much from him lately—who I have no doubt is a very wonderful man, by the way. But there—we have kind of, different kinds of prophets. And it seems to me that the prophecies that we get, whether they're from somebody like, say, David Wilkerson, or

Graham Pulkingham or Kevin or Eileen or whoever they might be from, that the question is, what is the source of the *inspiration* rather than, even, what has been said?

Because you see, what I'm opening up here is that the Lord may be using some people to prophesy, to be prophets, where they may be telling us things that we would not ordinarily consider, necessarily, inspired. For example, somebody may tell us that we ought to live a different way and we may say, "Hey, you know, that's not, that doesn't have much about the love of God in it. It doesn't tell me the dos and don'ts," or something like that. It's telling me something about a different way of *living* and that doesn't seem like that's exactly in the same—you follow me?—in the same kind of category, the same way of, the Lord has been teaching us in the past, yet it can very well be the case that what is being said is from the Lord. The question is not *what* the prophet says, but what is the *source* of his inspiration. Is it the Lord who is inspiring him, or is it *The New York Times*, say?

Another thing is that the action of prophecy, the prophecies themselves, should not be distinguished from, one from another by the *ways* in which they're given. Like some people are quite eloquent in making it clear that this is a word from the Lord—different people do it in different ways. Sometimes people give prophecies and act as prophets of the Lord without ever making it particularly clear, you know, by the way in which they're talking, that this is from the Lord. And I'm saying that's not bad. That is, you do not distinguish what a prophecy is, whether it's good for you or not, by the way in which it comes to you. The question is: it's a good prophecy if it's inspired by God. That's the point. So some people may be speaking to us prophetically without saying, "The Lord told me," and we need to take what seems like ordinary language sometimes—we need to take what is being said to us in an ordinary way with the force of prophecy. And I think we've touched on that before in various ways.

I think that, if we pray about some of these things I've said and try to think a little bit more about them, the Lord will open up a whole new kind of dimension, which I think is part of the five-fold anointing in Ephesians 4. It's going to be something which will—it is, it already is. Like, the teachings and the various decisions that are made, say, by any of

the coordinators, are very, very deeply influenced—the impact of the prophecies is just continual on the thinking there. That is, we try to listen to the prophecies and do what they say.

I think that all of us might relax a little bit. Don't try to figure out the prophecies exactly, but rather see how you fit into them, and then get the point of what the Lord wants to teach you. That's one thing. Be open to people telling you things about the way you live, socially and morally, even though it's not in the form of "The Lord, thus spoke the Lord." That indeed there may be the exercise of prophecy without that form. And as a whole, I think that if we develop along these lines a lot of the confusion about how to listen to and understand and apply the prophecies that are spoken at the meetings will be dispelled.

Some of the prophecies that the Lord has given us are things like this: That we should be a light to the nations, a walled city, a narrow door. I won't read—I didn't try to write out all this, but there was this image of a walled city and that we were going to the city through a narrow door. That we were climbing a steep, rough slope, and it was very difficult. We had to hold on to each other almost in single file. That it was necessary for us to drop bundles. That we were supposed to be taking care of the oppressed, inviting the hungry to eat food with us, eating with the poor and the needy. And all those prophecies we've had about God's love for us and God's love for them, that the Lord wanted us to bring them to him. He said, "Bring them to me so that I can touch them." We had a prophecy about prayer and sacraments, and we continually are exhorted by the Lord to love one another. And the last one that I wrote down here was that "I am doing a new thing with you." Now, there are many prophecies—we have had two tonight, and I just, I want to urge everybody to try to find out what the Lord is saying about the way I should change the way I live, how I should go about changing the way I live.

Praise the Lord.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 109. Pastoral Needs Memo

*This was a 1973 proposal to the coordinators about how to meet the pastoral needs of every member of the People of Praise. It was written when the community had grown to be around 85 people, nearly three times as big as it was when it was founded in 1971.*

By Paul DeCelles

## PROPOSAL

TO: the coordinators

FROM: Paul

RE: the pastoral needs of each person in People of Praise

1. There exists a gap in pastoral care in People of Praise
2. There's an uneven attention paid to members of the People of Praise.
  - a. those who ask, and ask again, get helped. Those who don't, don't.
  - b. some are rarely talked to personally about their relationships with God. For example, the gifts of the Spirit, etc. and with each other.

**Thesis:** everyone in the People of Praise should be talked to by an elder at least once a week.

**Thought:** there should be links of pastoral responsibility. The coordinators cannot talk to each person each week. But we could talk to some who do.

**Proposal:** this contact can at the moment best be handled by coordinators meeting with some household heads. Different sets of heads with different coordinators.

We should use the pastoral team that meets on Saturday morning as aides to the coordinators in the general work of instructing beginners for becoming members of the People of Praise. Life in the Spirit Series, Christian Living Series, Community Formation

Series, Community Weekends. And special problems that pertain to the community, like polling concerning a question such as, “What does P<sup>2</sup> think of prophecies?”

**Suggestion:** Clem, Kevin, and Paul divide the list of heads into three sections. Be in weekly contact with the set of heads agreed upon, about five each, concerning (1) their needs; and (2) those special problems they can't handle for someone in their care. Make certain that everyone is headed and that both head and he know who.

Copyright © 1973 People of Praise Inc.

# 110. Relationships Built on Jesus

*This 1973 talk reviewed what the Lord was teaching the community about Christian personal relationships. Paul DeCelles noted that our highly technological society isn't necessarily good for developing personal relationships and he described some ways social relationships have broken down. He then described relationships centered in Jesus and built around him.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity*

MAN'S VOICE: Number 14 in the Community Formation Series

PAUL: Tonight we start another set of talks. So we're past that first bunch of talks and in general, we're going to go on to some details on making agreements, and the nature of covenants, and Christian personal relationships, and kind of a state of the world today, and some of the things that the Lord has taught us as we've been living our lives together over these couple years.

There won't be exactly the same kind of focus on kind of—what I called once before kind of a Christian—what was it—Christian therapy. Yeah. It now is going to be more focused on living life in the community as such. So tonight anyway, I want to talk about Christian personal relationships in general today. Kind of just in order to get a picture, to present a picture, of the way the world is and what some of—what the way out is, the way out of the trap.

When the—a lot of what we've learned has come out of an unusual situation in the charismatic renewal. We've learned a lot from the Cursillo movement. The Cursillo movement—I just want to start in with this a little bit—I won't talk very long about it—the Cursillo movement is something which started in Spain, almost 30 years ago now. And when it came over to America, it came by way of Mexico, actually, and then was brought into the United States in a very backdoor kind of way.

And a lot of the things that we learned in the Cursillo movement were things that had to do with making commitments, and things that had to do with openly loving one another with brotherly affection. But more than anything else, what the Cursillo presented was a picture of the way it could be if brothers and sisters would live together the right kind of way.

And I think it's a little helpful to understand that a lot of what the Lord has been teaching us now is a continuation of what the Lord had started explaining to us many years ago, actually, about the—about some of the problems that are characteristic of modern society.

That is, what the Cursillo confronted in Spain . . . Contrary to what a lot of people think, in Spain is, in some of the cities, a very advanced society. There's hardly any difference between Spain—for example, Madrid in Spain, and say, Chicago. They're very similar type cities. The—that's not very flattering to Madrid, maybe, but it's a little, maybe a little nicer than that, but it's . . . But as far as a kind of society that they live in Spain, in those cities, it's a highly technological and technocratic society.

It's something—society, and especially now I want to talk about America, that is: where modern society is based on our capacity to get products out very quickly and to increase the level of the—level of living, the standard of living.

Now the things that are useful for improving the standard of living are not necessarily, and frequently are not at all, the things that are good for developing family relationships, for example, or developing any kind of community relationships.

What they're—the kind of methods that are used, for example, are very functional methods. They're designed—like if you want to get out cars, then one way to do it is to—this is the way it used to be done a long time ago—was to have some people doing a very specialized work here and farther down the line somebody else doing another specialized work—and so on, each one not able to do anybody else's job, just their own job and not able to particularly—to share with anybody along the line. They would stand there all day long. This is a—and they wouldn't, they simply wouldn't have much



of their lives to share at all. But at the end of the line, without any one particular person doing very much to shape the car, the—a car would emerge. And it would kind of be a miracle of efficiency and specialization. Like one guy would be there all day putting in the fourth bolt on the second fender or something like that. And that's what he would do all day. [Inaudible.] Some of these things are were made, lampooned, by Charlie Chaplin, for example—some of these famous movies, which you may have seen.

Anyway, the point is that in that kind of a society which is increasingly technical and technological, there are things that are developed which war against, militate against, personal relationships among people.

Things are set up in such a way that there's a tendency to get more and more impersonal in relationships, and—because the personal characteristics of relationships begin to interfere with the efficiency of the business.

One of the things that—one of the reasons why this happens and one of the—and this thing, this whole approach has led to a tremendously rapid change in society as the—you know, like the production lines were improved upon with a lot of automation and so on. And we get a whole new bunch of products. Instead of having one kind of product, you can have maybe 15 products of essentially the same type, but with a completely different interior just by putting in a different template of some sort, say some place along the automation line. That is, my point is, that you, with a very small amount of effort, you can multiply and diversify and get an enormous variety of products out.

And a lot of these products have led to even further change. It just gets faster and faster. So that, it's characteristic of the world today that most people don't know how to fix anything in their house when it breaks down because everything is too complicated, like the TV set. And nobody knows—the most you can do if you're lucky is change the tubes. Or, if you're really—if you're really good with your hands, you might be able to fix the garbage disposal, but there's no chance of fixing the dishwasher because you can't even figure out how to get it out of the wall. And you don't know how to take the oven apart, and so on, and all these different things, which has lent itself to, more and more, a kind

of an alienation of the *person* from his *surroundings*. That is, it's sort of like a person isn't at home in his own home because he doesn't know how it works even. He's not—he can't really get with what's going on there. He can live off of the bounty that's there. He can function maybe a lot more efficiently and he has meals faster, he can get out of the house more often and things like that. But he doesn't feel like he has any rapport with what—with the things in the house.

And the same kind of thing permeates the personal relationships with the other members of the family and the rest of society. In fact, there's been a real breakdown in this, [Paul clears his throat] in social relationships. It's just like most of us, I'm sure, don't know our next door neighbors, or at least one of our next door neighbors very well.

In our, for example, in our particular household, we don't know the people across the street. We know the names of a couple of the families but one of them is a dentist and every now and then, twice a year maybe, we see him. But we don't—we can't know him because again, the street is too busy, for example, and the kids can't play across the street, all kinds of things like that.

And I'm not trying to paint a picture of modern society as being just an evil sort of thing. I'm just saying that it's a fact of life that the technology that we live with today is a lot more sophisticated than we are. And a lot of this sophistication is such that it makes it more and more difficult for us to know people and to relate to them in the right kind of way.

As a result of this, we have a kind of a bodiless society. We have a lot of individual people. And a lot of the literature that has come out that try to help people to identify, you know, to find out what their value is, and things like that, simply tries to reinforce the *facts* of life. It tries to play on the facts that we are all isolated individuals like this. And what we need to do is to become more individual. We've got to become stronger people so we can put up with this alienation, this fast pace. The fact that we don't know friends—we can't keep them for very long because we're being transferred all the time and things like that.

So we have an amorphous society. That's the kind of society which doesn't have much structure to it anymore.

It's a loose body, and it's a loose body without many common goals or a common sense of values. About the only time you can see people really in agreement is at a basketball game or at a football game, when they're all totally focused on that action out there, then they can all unite. But outside of that, they can't. They don't seem to be able to unite on anything . . . or very rarely.

And at the same time, we have this amorphous structure. We have—it comes with a lack of commitment, or a lack of stability. Now, one place where that's not exactly the case is a family. And as society becomes more and more complex, like I've been trying to describe a little bit of, people have tended to turn more to their families and say that, "Well, what I've got to have, I've got to get in my family." And part of the trouble is that families never have been capable of supplying everything that the person needs. And we've overloaded our family relationships quite a bit, like we've talked about before. But besides that, there's no way to keep modern technology out of our families either, because, for example, when the children go to school, or when we go to work, we're already embedded in this—in this technological society, which is taking its toll on the family relationships as well—like traveling salesmen have to be gone all the time.

People, in any kind of a—in most kinds of executive positions have to do a great deal of traveling; they're gone a lot. And there is the problem of, say, somebody who has to do a very mundane job at work all day long, the same kind of thing, coming home, being tired, exhausted, and without a sense of having accomplished anything and then that kind of sense of frustration begins to permeate the whole family.

Now this—all this change and this rapidity of change and this breakdown of the social fabric of former times, has had effects on people like this. It causes people to begin to try to base their relationships with each other on *feelings*. It tends to make—now this is, it's not complicated particularly, but the thing is that, if you don't see much value in what you're doing—like if you don't have a hold of any kind of a picture of, like, "I'm

really accomplishing something here”—then you begin to look around elsewhere for your values, and especially if you’re turned away from God in some way. Like, modern society certainly has—the technological society has no place in it for God whatsoever. I mean God doesn’t fit into the plans of General Motors, for example, or Bendix or whatever. It just doesn’t have any role, and God doesn’t play any role in the deliberations, has nothing to do with it.

And so, what we wind—what we wound up—pardon me—what we wind up with is a certain lack of a sense of personal worth and a certain sense of *value*. And so when people begin to relate to each other, they try to find out what their value is by feeling love and seeking approval. I don’t know if that’s very clear. That is, I begin to understand that I’m of worth when I know that you care about me with deep feeling. Or I seek a lot of my sense of self-worth by seeking approval from you, like I’ll hold certain opinions and I’ll kind of—when I bring them forward—I’ll kind of, bring them forward in such a way as to check to see if you approve of this. And a lot of us function very much so, on personal approval, looking for approval from people.

This basing relationships on feelings leads to moodiness and depression. Because when people don’t feel real close to us, or when we don’t feel real close to other people, all that’s left to us is a certain sense of alienation and a lack of worth, and depression, and moodiness.

And so we go through these highs and lows, and it kind of shakes, shakes us, you know, like it rattles our teeth sometimes. Our moods change so fast, you know, depending on who’s looking at us the right way. There was a fellow—I’ll have to tell you that . . . . All right, well, I’ll tell you briefly. I had one friend who was so focused on this need to feel loved by others, the feeling that he had to have, that when somebody would walk down the hall at work and not look at him and say, “Hello,” he would—he came into my office one time and said, “You know, that blankety-blank is trying to kill me. He’s trying to deny my existence, you know.” I thought, “Gee, Rudy, you know, that’s really—that’s not right.” But for him, if you just didn’t even—if you made the mistake of not paying

attention to him, or giving him that sign of affection which he needed, it would send him into a tremendous decline.

It also leads—this present situation led to a lot of insecurity and loneliness and isolation, and a lack of certainty and stability in our relationships and in our general situation.

Now, this last thing, this lack of certainty or stability, you know, like things like we really believed, say that something was true, and somebody's come along and improved on that truth, expanded it a little bit. This has happened a lot, for example, in science. People would really believe something, and then five years later somebody else would come along and say, "Well, what you believed was true, really isn't the whole truth, you know, it's got to be expanded." And some people would say, "Well, there's no such thing as truth" and "You just can't put your stock in anything."

And that goes for normal kinds of situations, besides science. There's a—for example: "The church is changing so much. And while, we know, we always believed that it was absolutely essential, say among Catholics, that you not eat meat on Friday and now all of a sudden everybody can eat meat on Friday. You know, isn't *anything* stable? Can't you count on *anything*?" That kind of thing. As things change, it introduces so much uncertainty in people's lives.

And what happens is that a lot of people begin to *fear* that they're being sold down the river, and consequently, they don't want to make many more *commitments* anymore. Because every time they commit themselves to something, the basis of the commitment seems to shift and change, and they wind up with an empty bag. So that there begins to develop a certain sense of a fear of commitment, and there's a fear of order, and a fear of authority that has come in the wake of this. There's a lack—a sense of a lack of affection and a lack of support. And so as nowadays, recently, well, few years back, I guess, I read some psychiatrists' study of a typical citizen in New York. And the claim was that that nine out of ten of the citizens on the streets of New York are neurotic, in need of, in serious need of some kind of psychiatric care.

I would guess that it's to some degree—I mean, if you want to go that route and want to talk that kind of language, then it may be closer to 98% of the people who need help. And the reason for it, I mean it's kind of normal for people to be neurotic. I mean, it's like almost all of us have some kind of—of what psychiatrists would call neurosis, what other people would tend to call just simple . . . lack of sense of worth, or lack of, commitment and stability, and a lack of meaningful service . . . and the lack of responsibility.

At any rate, today, the relationships that people have, they look for—how do you get out of this kind of problem that I'm describing? How do you go about getting into a relationship that's based on feelings? Well, you find a girlfriend, or you find a guy, you know, if you're in that age group. That you've got to get into some kind of an intense personal one-to-one relationship that is based on—or else you find some kind of a group of friends who have common interests so that when you get together with them, you can just share so freely and you have so much to share, the same kinds of interests, the same sorts of things.

And some of the people who are your friends, you will be really particularly good friends with. You'll develop a very high degree of friendship based on feeling or desire to be together, or attraction.

Now the relationships that modern man seeks to have are—sometimes they're private, exclusive and possessive. It's that you are *my* friend, and if I see you, kind of, all of a sudden becoming very, very close with somebody else, I get to feel a little uneasy.

And that's fairly typical. Like, “I don't understand what's happening to my friend. I don't spend as much time with him. He doesn't, he doesn't ask me to go drink coffee with him in the afternoons anymore.” You know like, say, I'm at work, you know, like you come down the hall, “He didn't stop to ask me,” and things like that. And I begin to feel a little bit like, “Well, you know, I'm losing something here and that's not right. He's *my* friend,” sort of thing. Now, that sounds kind of petty, but I am describing a situation that I've certainly gone through, and I bet that most of us here have done the same kind of thing

where we begin to see our friends sort of open up to other people and we feel like we're being left out and hurt, like something's decaying in our relationship.

Most of these relationships are based on mutual attraction or based on desire. The first kind is what we've been calling friendship love and the second, based on erotic attraction anyway, is erotic love.

I don't—I guess I'm—maybe I've painted enough of the picture of how it works. But part of the trouble is that we as Christians regularly have been taught, and understand ourselves, that the right way to—that this is the right way to approach things, and that this is—this is the way we understand the Bible to talk.

When the Bible—in the Bible it says something about “love your neighbor.” We think that means to emote and to have these deep feelings for your neighbor. And that's not what the Bible means, normally, when it uses the word love. It doesn't refer particularly to your feelings as such. It refers rather to a certain network of relationships, of mutual relationships, which are of such a character that God, first of all, commanded them, and that they are of such a kind, that they actually cause the body of Christ to be upbuilt. We'll come back to that some more.

At any rate, my point is that, that in normal Christian writing, you see the same kind of approach: that what we need is the deeper—like encounter groups and so on. And a lot of the—in fact—more recently, some of the movements that have been so successful in the beginning have turned away from their original inspiration and have become more along—you know, developed along the lines of kind of Christian sensitivity or some kind of erotic or friendship love. [Paul sniffs.]

So what's the alternative to all—to this approach? And the alternative is: Jesus. He's the alternative. And the thing is that it's the person Jesus who is the alternative and the solution to all these problems. It's not a new system; it's a person who gives his Spirit in such a way that the law, the way we should relate to one another according to God's commandment, is written on our hearts. And the person of Jesus, living in our lives, at

the center of our lives, begins to *be* the *one* who calls us together as his brothers and sisters.

And he begins to be the glue and the cement that cause the very character of, and the way we should be relating to him becomes the very essence of, the way we should be relating to one another. And the way that he relates to us is the way that he's trying to teach us to relate to one another.

It's . . . not a plan. He's not a plan [sic] with a master plan. He's not a simple Decalogue. He's not a law. He's a person, who comes in and by loving us changes us. And by then living with us and as we live with him and trying to get along with him okay, we begin to change too. And all of a sudden we begin to relate to each other, all those of us who are trying to live with Jesus at the center of our lives, [we] find ourselves relating to each other in a different way. And it's a way which is not based on getting a product out. It's a way that's based on being brothers and sisters in Christ. It's an entirely different focus. I'm not trying to say that technology is all bad, it's just that a lot of it is of such a character that it has cut across this brother-sister relationship so that we are no longer a family together in Christ, under one God, our Father.

And what we need to do is, first of all, turn to him. Because when we do turn to him, he works *miracles* in our lives. And that's different from anything that can be accomplished by a master plan. His Spirit renews us and makes us new people so that the problems that we have, the Lord heals, miraculously in us.

And the relationships that we have—a lot of the problems that we have, as we've talked about before, have to do with the *failure* of us to relate to one another properly. And when the Lord begins to heal those relationships, we find the things that are wrong with us beginning to dry up and heal within us.

So there are some characteristics of this. First of all, it's—these are relationships in Jesus . . . that he wants us to learn. There are lots of things that He wants to teach us about the way to relate.



One of the things is that the—that relationship with Jesus is relationship-centered. I don't know if that's very clear. That is, it's focused on the fact that we *have* a relationship with him rather than on what we can get out of it, what the product is. It's the fact that we *know* him and *love* him and *serve* him that's important. It's not what comes out of it, particularly.

For example, you could say of your—of those of you—of us who are married can say, well, sort of—when we think about our marriage—marriages, we don't think of it in terms of the number of children that we've had, or . . . the amount of money that we've all made and that the children are bringing in and the kind—we don't stack it up that way.

But we think of our marriage as a constantly renewing thing. And it's an ongoing personal relationship between two people. And when we evaluate the marriage, we talk about it *now* in terms of our relationships together—the two people, say. And it's that way—it's—that kind of a relationship is relationship-centered as opposed to product-centered. And that means—relationship-centered means that it should be based on making—on commitments, on making agreements and keeping them. It's on getting the relationship straightened out, not based on feelings.

What our Lord wants is a *system* of love. He wants a new kind of society that's based on the interrelationships of love. Not the feeling kind of love, but the kind of love of—the kind of thing which is each person having care and concern, taking care of, and being concerned for, each of his brothers and sisters in Christ according to the responsibilities that he has.

Well, I think I should quit. There are some more things that we could say but . . . I'll just say a couple more words and then I'll quit.

And one of them is that this—this relationship with our Lord is an open relationship. And our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ is open. It's not in the darkness. That is to say, there's no reason for secrecy. One can live *openly* in a Christian way.

It's inclusive, as opposed to exclusive. It's like a relationship between any two of us, is one that should be open to—and when we see the other partner in the relationship, loving other people better, our hearts should be *delighted* in that fact, because the relationship should foster that sense of growth and love in each person. That doesn't mean that, for example, women should be particularly happy when—if they were to see that their husbands were falling erotically in love with another woman. That wouldn't be right. But that would be the wrong kind of relationship for that man to be getting into. And rather—see—when the spouse sees the other person, the other spouse, opening up to new kinds of relationships based right in Christ, then each person can take delight in that and as you see the whole thing building up more and more in love.

And it should be an *expressed* relationship. It should be affectionate and respectful. It should be—some place in Scripture it talks about (in Romans 12, I think it is, or 11)—that talks about how we should *esteem* one another. We should show each other *honor*: really, you know, really, not flattery, not empty flattery, but encouragement, lifting up, you know. “I really respect you and I really love you,” that kind of thing. The way we use that word, usually.

And the last thing is that Jesus will teach us how to do this. We can count on him to do that. And that's—as always, love is a gift which the Lord pours out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And we can count on him to do that, as we turn to the Lord and make him the center of our lives.

So what I'm trying to present here is a different vision of the way society can be. I'm trying to get, on the one hand, the way the world is and what it, what it really is at root today, in the modern technology, as opposed to what the Lord wants by way of a family with God our Father, with Jesus being our brother, and with the Holy Spirit being in our hearts, and with each one of us being brother and sister to each other. It's a completely different kind of a picture.

The one kind of picture is designed by the world to accomplish the goals, especially of rich men. Right? I mean, that's what technology is for, primarily. And the other thing is

designed by *God* to make each one of us have the adequate care and concern that we need in order to give—to be happy, and to give all of our praise and glory to God.

So one of them is centered on us, in little people. The other thing is centered on big people and *uses* little people. But right now we should break and I suggest that we share ways in which you have seen the Lord teach you new ways to relate to others since becoming a part of the community. Why don't we . . .

[Recording ends here.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 111. Covenants and Agreements

*Paul DeCelles talked about a covenant as a solemn agreement which establishes a relationship. He described the advantages of making agreements and a procedure for making them.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

[Recording begins after Paul has already started speaking.]

PAUL: . . . covenants and agreements tonight. . . .

One of the things that—when you look at Scripture, that stands out is the way in which God establishes relationships with people. In fact, the principal way that he establishes relationship is by making an agreement with them. The agreement that God makes with us is called a “covenant,” and there are lots of examples of the covenant in the Old Testament, and Jesus himself is the new “testament,” or new covenant.

What—when you just take a look at some of them, like the covenant that God made with Abraham, where he promised Abraham that he would be our God, and we were—and our part of the bargain, our part of the agreement, is that we should be his people.

The same kind of thing when he—after the flood, when he wiped out all the people except Noah and those with him, he promised Noah that he would never do that again. And that was an agreement on God’s part, initiated by God. Not—it’s not an agreement that was entered into by equal partners; I mean, it’s a clear-cut difference between God and us. And yet, he still, you know, chooses to relate to us according to agreements and covenants. And the agreement that he made with Noah was that he would never do that again. And then he gave a sign. He said that he—the sign was the rainbow, and when you could—when you saw the rainbow, that was evidence of the covenant, that he would never break his promise about that kind of thing again, or the—not that he had before.

And there are lots of covenants of that sort all through the Old Testament. There's the covenant which he made with Moses, and that got even more particular. He told Moses basically the same thing that he told Abraham: that he would be our God, and that we were supposed to be his people. And then he spelled out in quite a bit of detail what that meant, what it was supposed to be like for us to be a people. And so, he goes through that whole, you know, the whole old law, with all kinds of ways in which we're supposed to relate to one another. And Jesus says, concerning that law, that not one jot or tittle or one iota—which is the smallest Hebrew letter— you know, nobody should change that law at all. But now that we have the Holy Spirit, we're able to live that law, whereas before, without the Holy Spirit, we weren't able to obey the law.

And our Lord has also made a covenant with us in the covenant that we make with him in the covenant of the People of Praise. And we have a definite kind of a way of relating to him and to one another according to that agreement.

What we've—one way of looking at—let me tell you what a covenant is, first of all. A covenant is a solemn agreement that establishes a relationship. For example, the relationship between a husband and wife is a covenant agreement. It's a serious agreement that is made solemnly, and it's made for a definite length of time—in that case until death do they part. And it's an agreement which spells out, at least in—you know, fundamentally, the way that they are going to relate to each other for the rest of their lives.

And we make all kinds of agreements in business and in our various occupations, whatever they might be. We might make an agreement, for example, to meet somebody to go to a movie together. And a covenant is like that, in that we make an agreement. But it's not simply to accomplish a certain purpose, which most agreements are for. But it's also—it's an agreement, the very nature of which is that it establishes a basic relationship among us.

And so, the covenant that we make in the People of Praise establishes the relationship among us that we're brothers. That is, that we say openly, you know, publicly, publicly

committing ourselves to being to each other brothers and sisters, based on the fact that Jesus is our brother, and that we're all sons of God, and that we want to live out that new covenant, that new kind of awareness of the relationship between us and God.

There are lots of different kinds of relationship agreements. The one that we talk about most is the covenant of the People of Praise. But there are also covenants or solemn agreements that people make in households, when they join various kinds of households; it's for a certain kind of purpose, and first— and with a definite kind of relationship. It may involve things like, when we live together, as we live together in this household, we want to relate to each other always openly. We want to be simply honest with each other. We agree to admonish one another, and not to retaliate when we're admonished. We agree to always show the affection that we have for one another. That, if we don't have time to stop and talk with each other, at least we'll greet each other.

And that kind, you know—there are all kinds of ways of saying this: that these are agreements, but they're agreements that are aimed at establishing the right relationship between the members of the household.

The advantages of working with agreements and covenants is [sic] that it allows us to deal with a problem that we call the “two expectations problem.” And this is something like—you can imagine the situation, this has happened, where people move together with different understandings of how they want to be to each other in a household.

One person—we had a situation where one person wanted to regard the household—this happened to be a young lady, who wanted to live in the household hoping just to have a place like a crash pad, basically, and wanted to always have a place that whenever she got in trouble she could, you know—she'd always be—that's where she'd sleep. And if she was lucky, she hoped that people would do things like cook some dinners occasionally, and she'd be there when she could. And if she couldn't be there sort of easily, she'd be eating dinner someplace else, if she ate at all. And fundamentally, what she wanted was just a place to live.

And somebody else who lived in that household wanted to have a relationship of a real kind of sistership, sisterhood. She wanted, not only, you know—she wanted to grow in affection for that person, and she wanted to spend some time, and she had all kinds. . . . Especially that kind of thing: she wanted to share time and interests. She wanted to have an opportunity to talk, and to develop a friendship.

And so, the one thought that that's what she was getting into; the other one thought that she was getting into the other kind of situation. And it wasn't clear to them. They didn't say very clearly what they wanted to be to each other before they moved into the household.

And after a while, you know, after a couple of months—in fact, it was even shorter than that—one of the women was complaining to me that “*that* one wants a kind of relationship that I can't—I really can't give her. She wants to be very close to me, very personal, and I don't feel like I—I don't have the time for that, and I don't really want that.” And she felt like it was just not working right at all: “There's something wrong with this.”

And the other one felt like the other one was kind of a boor, and hardhearted, and didn't care about her at all. And all she wanted was some, you know, kind of a free ride. And so, there was [sic] a lot of problems—there were lots of problems in that relationship and in that household, right from the beginning.

And when the—when a household comes together and makes it clear what they hope to be to each other, what they can expect, what they—what each of them wants of this kind of a relationship, this kind of a living situation, then you get away from that two expectations problem, which is a very big problem.

It also—making agreements like this, or covenants, makes it possible for us to arrive at a new level of trust. And the point here is that, whether you feel like it or not, if you've made an agreement, you're committed to it. And your commitment goes deeper, you know—commitment from the heart—goes deeper from a commitment [than] from the way you feel about things.



Sometimes we tend to want to say, “Well, I’d like to be in this kind of relationship as long as it works well. And as long as it’s going well and I’m enjoying it, I’d like to be in this kind of a relationship.” But the kind of agreement—when you make an agreement, it changes it. It’s not simply that you should be to each other the right kind of way because you feel like it, but that you *said* that you would be, and you agreed to it. And you spelled that out in some detail so that you—in fact, when—even when you don’t feel like it, and you don’t feel right about it, so to speak, you still do what you said that you would do, and that you are to each other what you say you’re going to be.

And the impact that that has on us as individuals is that we learn that we can, in fact, trust one another, that we do do what we say.

Sometimes this happens: I’ve noticed this a lot, that—it doesn’t happen much now, because I think that we’ve really learned a lot about serving, and how to take care of our own things and how to take care of other people’s things. But some years ago, when people would borrow tools, for example, they would borrow them, and then they would just kind of disappear from the scene, and the person who loaned them didn’t write down, you know, like, “Well, I gave my ladder away to so-and-so,” you know, who said something like, “I’ll bring it back as soon as I’m through with it.” And the other person takes that, you know—on occasion would take that very lightly. Which [sic], “when I’m through with it” meant something like, “when I’m through with the job I’m going to do with it, and when I have time, and feel like it, I’ll bring the ladder back.” And, of course, sometimes that would go on for a month or two or three.

And then the other person would wonder, you know—he’d go out to fix his gutters and say, “What happened to my ladder? I can’t even remember where it is. You know, you just can’t—this is terrible, you know. Every time I want to do anything, it’s not there. I can’t do the work that I want to be doing.” And it ruins the day, makes it impossible to do that job.

But more seriously, it damages the sense of trust that should exist between brothers and sisters, [so] that, the next time somebody, whoever it might be, asks me to borrow,

say, whatever it might be, I have a tendency to say, “Well, better put that in writing,” or “I guess I just don’t expect to get that back” and things like that. There’s an element of even kind of—sort of bitterness that can crop up in that kind of thing.

So, when we make commitments, and make them clearly, then things take place in the right kind of way, and what we discover is that a new level of trust is arrived at.

Another thing is that it allows—making agreements and covenants makes it possible for a group of people to begin to function according to a purpose, to have one purpose in mind. It’s like, in the People of Praise, we agree to be brothers and sisters for the sake of, you know—in the name of Jesus, for the praise and glory of the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is, we have a definite purpose in mind, that we want, you know—we are saying that we’re going to be to each other brothers and sisters for the sake of praising and glorifying the Father and Jesus, and doing the work that Jesus wants—you know, that Jesus is doing here in his body. We’re committing ourselves to doing that work, to being his servants, to being his slaves.

And that—if you don’t have agreements, if you don’t have it very clearly in mind what the common ideal is, or what the purpose is of our union, then things can’t take place. You run into, you know, like, somebody wants—say, like, Phil wants to set up—or let’s say we want to have the Community Formation Series. And we—say, we arrive and [are] ready to start, and there are no chairs set up. Well, if that’s the case, then we can’t go on. We have to stop, set up the chairs, and take time out. And by the time we get started, it’s too late to get on with what we really wanted to do.

So, when Phil has agreed—like, he’s in charge of putting up the chairs on Friday night, and he’s in charge of the physical arrangement generally, and he has real authority over that. That—when he—as he has committed to us in the brotherhood to live out his commitment, then we can, in fact, count on him doing his job, and we can do our job. And we can be here, and be to each other what we’re supposed to be at this time.

Now, there are—I’d like to talk a little bit about making agreements. You might want to jot this down.

One thing is, raise a problem area in the right kind of way and at the right time. I'm going to just give you some steps.

First of all, raise a problem.

Second thing is: reach a solution together.

The third thing is: state the agreement specifically enough to make it effective. For example, who is supposed to do what, when, where, and for how long.

Then, make sure that everybody in—who's a party to the agreement assents to the agreement verbally.

Remember the agreement. Write it down if it's necessary. Write it down somewhere.

And call on—and then, the sixth step is: call one another to it. That is, remind each other of the agreement that you've made.

And finally: regularly review the agreements that we've made. Are they being done? Should they be changed? Are there further agreements that we should make along these lines?

So, let me talk a little bit about some of these things. Some of them are self-explanatory. I'd say that the—when you're making agreements in a group, whoever is leading the agreement-making has to be careful to see to it that everybody's freedom is protected. Because a lot of times you'll be discussing something. . . . It's good to start off with kind of a brainstorming session.

Let me explain that a little bit. In brainstorming, what you do is, you kind of “shoot from the hip” and say any crazy thing that crosses your mind about the problem that's being talked about. Like, how could we solve this problem? Okay? Somebody may come up with something really fan—you know, weird, way off—way out from [sic] left field.

The advantage of allowing it to take place—in fact, encouraging it, if you’re in the process of kind of leading this sort of thing, doing it yourself to start it off—is that it frees people up to think some thoughts that were otherwise sort of unthinkable to them, that might be exactly what God wants done. Sometimes some of the craziest things are exactly what God wants us to do. Or maybe we’ll put them a slightly different way, but they turn out to be, you know—the kernel of that weird thought was right on the mark, and that that is exactly what we ought to do. You know, we ought to get at what was being discussed in that—or what was mentioned in that particular wild idea.

And when you go around, giving—make sure that everybody has a chance to say things voluntarily. And if somebody hasn’t said anything, then you should stop and say, “Well, what do *you* think about it?” Single them out and say, “You haven’t said much about this,” or, “You haven’t said anything. What is your opinion about what we’re talking about? Do you have any ideas, or do you have anything you want to say?” And everybody should contribute.

It may be simply that, “Well, I really don’t have any ideas, but some of those ideas sounded really good to me.” That would—that might be enough. Not everybody has to kind of come up with the right idea. If there’s only one idea and there are 10 people talking, then the one who said it first is the one who says it first. But everybody should say something. Maybe many of them will say, “Well, I really like that particular idea, that particular kind of agreement.”

And then, take the time to sort of verify that everybody understands what it is that’s being agreed to. Spell it out. And sometimes there’s a mistake in the language that you’re using. Sometimes, what we found, when we make—we’ve made some agreements with Dick Keusch, for example, on various occasions. And Dick is—has always been very careful to clarify the language. Like, the language that we use in writing down some of the agreements didn’t really capture the—at first, they kind of talked about the general area and the spirit in which we were addressing the problem, okay? But they were so—they were unclear.

So—but he has a tendency to do something like this: he'll say, "Well, what if a situation like this arises?" And he'll mention an example, and then, "How would this agreement have any bearing on that?" Or, "How does it help resolve a problem of that sort?" And frequently, you'll see that what you've said in the agreement is more than you wanted to say. You've agreed to more than you meant to agree to—you know, and later on, if you don't take care of it, later on somebody will come up and say, "Well, what about this? Didn't we agree to this? Isn't this an example of that?" And then, the individuals party to this agreement would say, "Well, I didn't really mean that, when I made—you know, when I assented to that agreement."

So, what we need to do is to be clear enough, you know, take the time to consider the different possibilities and the meanings of the phrases that we use.

Then go around and see to it that everybody agrees. You know, like, "Do you understand? Do you agree?" You know, "Yeah." And maybe [the person questioned might ask] some more questions, and then say, "But I really—I do agree to that way of saying it. That's what I want to do." Next person says, "Yes, that's exactly right. I want to do that. I understand that [inaudible]." And so on down the line.

And you come to, say, me, and I'll say [Paul switches to a nonchalant tone of voice here]: "Yeah, I guess so. . . ."

Well, at that point, everybody should stop and say, "Well, let's start over," you know. Because I'm not agreeing! I don't—I'm not going to get into this kind of an agreement with my *heart* unless I, say, either understand it, or really do agree to it. And maybe it's a matter of just making a small change in the wording, or a small change in the direction of the agreement.

So, take the time to go back and rework it, and work it out.

Now, as I mentioned before, some of the agreements that we have, especially the covenant in the community, and some households, have special kinds of agreements

that are solemn, that establish relationships, that are, in fact, covenants. They're—they should be stated as a relationship. They shouldn't be stated as a business contract.

We can also—for example, we say, in the covenant that we make in the People of Praise, that we agree to have—to take care and concern for everybody individually in all things: material, spiritual, and financial. Now, does that mean that I'm supposed to take my bank account and just sign it over to a common fund?

That's one way that you can take care of one another in all things material and financial: that I would consider my house, just—you know, my house is at the disposal of the coordinators. They can do with the house whatever they want to. They can just run the house. Now, that's a possibility. That was, in fact, very similar—that is what happened in the Acts of the Apostles in chapter 4, that kind of thing.

The—but that's not what we say. What we say is that we want to take care—we want to have that kind of relationship that we know that we can count on each other for whatever we need. And we agree that we will take care of each other in that kind of way.

For example, one thing that—this kind of a relationship existing has affected some people's insurance programs. Some people have cut back on their insurance programs, and others have increased their insurance programs for the following reasons.

One was that "I'm carrying \$150,000 worth of insurance—death benefit insurance." That is to say, "I expect that, if I die, I've got to provide for my wife and my family because nobody else in the world cares about them. And I've got to have enough money so that they can carry on with some kind of a trust fund in that way." Okay? Now, that's one way to proceed.

Now, one person in a situation like that, after being in the community a while, decided after talking it over with the coordinators that he would, in fact, cut back on his insurance so that he wouldn't be paying that huge premium, in order that he would be able to take that money and use it for the sake of his brothers and sisters now. And the idea there is that if—he knows that if he were to die, that his family, in fact, would be

part of the People of Praise, and that we would take care of that family. And the question in his mind was, “Well, I want to cut back. How far should I cut back? Should we just get rid of all the insurance?” That’s a possibility.

So, we talked about that. And what he—what we agreed to was that the thing to do was to have enough insurance to basically kind of insure the People of Praise. You know, it’s like—it would be—you have kind of a responsibility to all your brothers and sisters not to—well, you have a responsibility to leave them enough money so that they can, in fact, take care of your family without an unnecessary burden, you know, an overwhelming burden. Unless it became necessary, you know, that somehow—that the burden—that there would be, in fact, a whole support system without any insurance.

Now I’m not trying to sell you any insurance. [Laughter.] What I’m getting at is that, without saying specifically what the nature—what, rather—without saying specifically what the agreement is concerning the way we’re going to take care of each other, we’re able to say that we *are* going to take care, we’re committed to take care of one another. Those who are underway are committed to *try* it. Those who make the covenant are committed to *do* it, you know. But that’s a different kind of a statement, that they really are committed to that.

We also need to make, around covenants like this, at least covenants that establish relationships: we need to make some agreements. So, for example, some people do need to know if—what the nature of, say, the status of their house is. You know, is this a house which is owned by People of Praise, or is this a house which I should buy? Is it a house which, if I die, goes over to somebody else? What exactly is the character of the specific agreement about the disposition of this land and this property?

Now those are some pretty heavy things. But what I’m getting at here is that, on the one hand, we are making a full commitment, a total commitment of our whole lives, when we make the covenant of the People of Praise. We say that [sic] “I want to throw in completely.” Like, “I’m committing my whole life to the People of Praise.” Now, exactly

how that's worked out will vary according to the agreements that are built upon the basic covenant, and the basic commitment.

So, we need to get into covenant agreements more slowly and carefully, so that we will be faithful to them. We need to understand the relationship that's being talked about first. How do you, in fact, live as a member of the People of Praise? What does that entail, in fact? What are people expecting of me? What am I agreeing to?

We also need to get to know the people that we are committing ourselves to.

And, the last point about covenants that I want to make is that covenants should normally be solemnly agreed to, before the Lord. This is an agreement that we make in—you know, with the Lord witnessing the agreement, that we're really committing ourselves. And that's—that—for example, the covenant—when we make the covenant of the People of Praise, that's exactly—the Lord is kind of the witness and the guarantor of the covenant which we're—of the agreement that we're making with each other.

Well, let's stop now, go to our discussion groups quickly. We've only got about 20 minutes to discuss. And I'd like you to share ways in which you have seen covenants and agreements work to help relationships, and discuss how we can make use of them more effectively.

Let's—I want to remind everybody again to be here on time. We've got to be able to start. . . .

[Recording ends here.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 112. Overcoming Pride

*In this 1974 Servant School talk, Clem Walters used passages from Luke 14, Matthew 4, Luke 17 and Matthew 25 to talk about overcoming pride by becoming a submissive and humble servant.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: For anyone that missed last week's talk, this is Servant School talk number two.

Last week we discussed our need to die to our pridefulness and cease being a prideful people. As you recall, we learned that even the angels had difficulty with that. Lucifer, in fact, because of him wanting to be greater than God, and succumb [sic] to pride, was cast out of heaven, and became Satan.

So the thing we wanted to look into tonight is, how do we counteract pride? What do we do about that? And what we plan to do, then, is—tonight, is search the Scriptures to see what the Lord has taught us in his inspired word about how to counteract pride—in other words, die to our pridefulness.

In order to do this, we must become submissive and obedient. And by becoming submissive and obedient, a submissive and obedient people, this leads to humility. We must become obedient and submissive, a submissive and obedient people. That is, submissive and obedient to the Lord through our brothers and sisters and the spiritual gifts the Lord has given them.

Through the Holy Scripture, the Lord has taught much about our need for humility and obedience, and the means to attain that. I'd like to read now from Luke 14. I said that I was going to search the Scripture. You see all those little tags in there.

Jesus noticed how some of the guests were choosing the best places. So he told this parable to all of them: “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not sit down at the best place. For it could happen that someone more important than you had been invited, and that your host who invited both of you would come and say to you, ‘Let him have this place.’ Then you would be ashamed and have to sit in the lowest place. Instead, when you are invited, go and sit at the lowest place, so that your host will come to you and say, ‘Come on up, my friend—’

[The Bible probably closes accidentally.]

. . . This is very powerful! [Clem and all laugh.]

[Pause, finding the passage again.] So your host would—

“. . . come to you and say, ‘Come on up, my friend, to a higher place.’ This will bring you honor in the presence of the other guests. For everyone who makes himself great will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be made great.”

In another passage, we’re told, “How can you consider yourself greater than the rest? Isn’t everything you have a free gift from God?”

In Matthew 4, we’re told again how to become humble and to be obedient.

Then the Spirit led Jesus into the desert to be tempted by the Devil. And after spending forty days and nights without food, Jesus was hungry. The Devil came to him and said, “If you are God’s Son, order these stones to turn into bread.” Jesus answered, “The Scripture says, Man cannot live on bread alone, but on every word that God speaks.”

Then the Devil took Jesus to the Holy City, set him on the highest point of the Temple, and said to him, “If you are God’s Son, throw yourself down to the ground. For the Scripture says, God will give orders to his angels about you; they will hold you up with their hands, so that you will not even hurt your feet on the stones.” Jesus answered, “But the Scripture also says, you must not put the Lord your God to the test.”

Then the Devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in all their greatness. “All this I will give to you,” the Devil said, “if you kneel down and worship me.” Then Jesus answered, “Go away, Satan. The Scripture says, Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

In the *Jerusalem Bible* commentary regarding that reading, it says that Satan’s tempting of Jesus is quite compatible with Christ’s sinlessness. That Jesus was forced [sic]—was faced with the idea of becoming a material and political king with all of its accompanying human privileges of wealth and glory and power. But instead, he chose utter dependence on God, that is, humility and obedience to God’s will.

From Luke 17, again we’re told how to become obedient and submissive, thus becoming humble:

“Suppose one of you has a servant who is plowing or looking after the sheep. When he comes in from the field, do you say to him—”

This is the servant, that is—

“. . . ‘Hurry along and eat your meal’? Of course not. Instead, you say to him, ‘Get my supper ready; then put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. After that, you may eat and drink yourself.’ The servant does not deserve thanks for obeying orders, does he? It is the same with you; when you have done all you have been told to do, say, ‘We are ordinary servants. We have only done our duty.’”

We might say, in comment to that, that it doesn’t seem that it’s very fair that the hungry servant who has been out in the field working all day must be obedient, in preparing the master’s meal before being able to sit down and eat himself. But this very reading seems to be a prime example of the type of sacrifice *we’re* all called to, in dealing with our prideful nature. And we should be able to respond by saying, “We’re *only servants* and we’ve only done our duty.”

Again, we’re told in Matthew 25:

“It will be like a man who was about to leave home on a trip, and he called his servants and put them in charge of his property. He gave to each one according to his ability. To one he gave \$5,000, to the other \$2,000, and to the other \$1,000. Then he left on his trip.

“The servant who had received \$5,000 went at once and invested his money and earned another \$5,000. In the same way, the servant who received \$2,000 earned another \$2,000. But the servant who received \$1,000 went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money.

“After a long time, the master of those servants came back and settled accounts with them. The servant who had received \$5,000 came in and handed over the other \$5,000. ‘You gave me \$5,000, sir,’ he said. ‘Look, here are another \$5,000 that I have earned.’

“‘Well done, good and faithful servant,’ said his master. ‘You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts. Come on in and share my happiness.’

“Then the servant who had been given \$2,000 came in and said, ‘You gave me \$2,000, sir. Look, here are another \$2,000 that I have earned.’

“‘Well done, good and faithful servant,’ said the master. ‘You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts. Come on in and share my happiness.’”

That passage goes on. And . . . you know what happened to the guy that hid the money. The servant [sic] was very angry with him. That passage . . . directs us to becoming absolutely faithful and totally dependable in little things—that is, being humble—so to earn the Lord’s exalting us with greater things and with greater work.

From Matthew 24, again, we . . . just pull out of Scripture the Lord telling us how to become submissive and how to be humble:

“Who, then, is the faithful and wise servant? He is the one whom his master has placed in charge of the other servants, to give them their food at proper time. How happy is that servant if his master finds him doing this when he comes home! Indeed, I tell you, the master will put that servant in charge of all of his property.”

In other words, the servant who was faithful in small things would then be placed in charge of the other servants, and even greater things.

Again, from Colossians 3:

Slaves, obey your human masters in all things. And do it not only when they are watching you, just to gain their approval, but do it with a sincere heart because of your reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for men. Remember that the Lord will reward you. You will receive what he has kept for his people. For Christ is the real master you serve. And the wrongdoer, whoever he is, will be paid for the wrong things he does, for God treats everyone alike.

I see that being called as servants is twofold. And that is: a) we have to die to our pridefulness, thus becoming submissive and obedient, which then leads to humility. But also to serve the Lord himself. It's twofold. But to serve the Lord himself in our labors, through serving our brothers and sisters.

From 1 Peter 4, we have another lesson. He says,

Open your homes to each other without complaining. Each one, as a good manager of God's different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God. Whoever preaches must preach God's words. Whoever serves must serve with the strength that God gives him. So that in all things praise may be given to God through Jesus Christ, to whom . . . belong the glory and the power, forever and ever. Amen.

So we've listened to a lot of Scripture tonight that directs us to becoming submissive, and to becoming humble. But after hearing his word through Scripture, and receiving his teaching through it, Scripture also teaches us and tells us what we have to *do* once we *hear* the word. It isn't enough that we merely *hear* the word, but we've got to *respond*. There's—there is a need for response on our part.

So from James,

Do not fool yourselves by just listening to his word. Instead, put it into practice. For whoever listens to the word but does not put it into practice is like a man who looks in the mirror and sees himself as he is. He takes a look at himself and then goes away, and at once forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks closely into the perfect law that sets men free, who keeps on paying attention to it and does not simply listen and then forget it, but puts it into practice, that man will be blessed by God . . . in what he does.

What I'd like to do now is just stop and . . . pray for a moment. And then I'd like to open it to you. I'd like to open discussion to you for any input regarding this talk, or any input . . . regarding your first week as being [sic] servants.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 113. Satan's Way and Christ's Way

*This Servant School talk described how the decision to serve one another humbly in the same way Jesus did involves one in a spiritual battle with Satan. Clem Walters used Ignatius of Loyola's Two Standards meditation to point out that Satan tempts with riches, honor and pride, but the Lord's way is marked by poverty, insults, contempt and humility.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: . . . This is Servants talk number four. I think what we'll do in numbering the talks is we'll include the sharing of those people who will come in from time to time to share their experience in Servant School or in serving.

Now that we've become aware of our personal pridefulness and our pridefulness as a people and our need to become humble, we need to explore and acknowledge the spiritual warfare involved in our personal decision, the decision that we must make.

Under that, the first choice we can make is to continue to be a prideful people or a prideful person. Being self-centered, selfish, a lover of self, a lover of our own ideas and ways, ways of doing things. And then the other choice we have is to become a humble people. That is, dying to ourselves and following Jesus's clear example and his teaching. This teaching is from Scripture, which was meant for each one of us.

That is, the teaching is to become submissive and obedient, humbly serving one another. And that is, being submissive and obedient as Christ himself was submissive and obedient to the Father, even to death on a cross. And humbly serving one another in the way that—and through the example that He gave us, that is, of washing one another's feet.

This choice that we must make involves a battle, or warfare, which began right at the beginning. The battle lines were drawn after Lucifer, and after Lucifer's prideful fall from the courts of heaven, and with Satan's absolute desire to overpower God, so to, himself, reign supreme and reign as God himself.

The battle has raged ever since—with all creation, ourselves included in that, caught in the crossfire. And you can use your imagination and think of a crossfire. That is, pictures in the newspaper of people who are very innocent people with large, frightened eyes, who were caught as innocent people in a war. They were nonetheless injured and suffering, but they were caught in the crossfire between the lines of battle.

From Adam and Eve, right through to the present, we and all creatures and all creation have been caught in this crossfire. It was Satan's implanting pride into Eve, and then on to Adam, which caused their fall. And, as you recall, they disobeyed God, assuming to be his equal. That is, pride was involved in that disobedience. And that was at the urging of Satan himself, that Adam and Eve, through pride, thought themselves to be as great as God or equal to God.

I want to read from Genesis to describe the consequences of that prideful act. This is the third chapter.

Then Yahweh God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, be accursed upon all cattle, all wild beasts. You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust every day of your life. I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. I will crush your head and you will strike its heel."

To the woman he said, "I will multiply your pains in childbearing. You shall give birth to your children in pain. Your yearning shall be for your husband, yet he will lord it over you."

To the man he said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate from the tree of which I forbade you to eat, accursed be the soil because of you. With suffering shall you get your food from it every day of your life. It shall yield you brambles and thistles, and you shall eat wild plants. With sweat on your brow shall you eat your



bread, until you return to the soil as you were taken from it. For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”

As a result of this battle and our being wounded, in other words, being caught in the crossfire, we’re forced to live our lives in a way far different than God originally had intended for us. It is true that Christ’s death reconciled us with God and made possible our eventual total union with him. However, we are forced to live out our lives constantly bombarded and tempted by Satan. We are very much still involved in the raging battle.

Satan attempts to control our lives through our carnal self, that is, our flesh, and through demons and spirits. In other words, there—those are the two fronts of his battle plan: an attack through self, our carnal flesh, and then the other attack, the other front that he has in his battle, is an attack from the outside, through demons and spirits.

Control through carnal self represents our flesh, the fleshy part of us, ourselves. In other words, control from within. That’s one of his battlefronts. And the other battlefront is control through evil spirits and demons, which are separate entities, which have only taken up residence within us and can be evicted through deliverance. And, in fact, this is the basis for a deliverance ministry, not only here in the community but the deliverance ministry throughout all the churches. And we’ll take that up and talk about deliverance later, as many of us have already been very involved in—in being prayed for deliverance—prayed with for deliverance.

Don Basham, in his book *Deliver Us from Evil*, gives us a surefire way to test to see if Satan is controlling us from within. In other words, it’s a way to test which of the ways Satan is attacking us, which of his battle plans he’s using at a particular time with us. And this is how he suggests in this book that we proceed in testing to see which way we’re being attacked.

First, you treat your hangup as a carnal or a fleshy sin. You confess it, ask forgiveness for it, believing that forgiveness has been granted. Now we must apply willpower, discipline, and prayer to the habit patterns that have entrenched themselves in this

area, this sinful area that we're working on. And whenever they reappear—that is, these habits, the habit patterns that have entrenched themselves in us—whenever they reappear, we must put them under the crucifixion of Jesus, under the power of his resurrection, knowing that he is able to effect change and healing, even when we're not.

If by doing that, and that surefire test—in other words, treating it just in that way, if that produces no victory—then you can assume that you're dealing with an evil spirit that you need to be delivered from. In other words, you're being attacked from *without*, from the outside, and you need to be delivered from the demons and spirits that you're being —that are being thrown at you, or [that] you're being attacked [by], or that are dwelling in you.

We can now clearly choose to request reinforcements in our battle against Satan. We can choose to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, and the Spirit of the living God as our wisdom and protection, and thus win the battle over Satan and his control of our lives through these demons and spirits, through this attack from the outside.

To further identify the ways Satan attempts to control us in his unending battle with God, I'd like to now touch on Saint Ignatius's meditation of the Two Standards, and then one of his other meditations, which is the Three Modes, or the Three Forms of Humility.

For many of you, this is not new. You've either made the exercises or you've heard them. At least you've heard the meditation on the two camps during the Community Weekend at one time or another.

The Two Standards, or the two camps, examines Satan's ways and Christ's way and Christ's plan for the world, and is aimed at this decision that we must all make. It's aimed at helping us in making that decision that each one of us in our lives must make. That is, to follow Christ, serving in Christ's army, with the knowledge of the ways and schemes of Satan used to draw men away from Christ and into Satan's camp.

So a part of this meditation will be using your imagination because we're going to draw a battle plan. We're actually going to use our imagination and proceed in in this.<sup>1</sup>

A meditation on the two standards. The one of Christ, our Supreme Captain and Lord, the other of Lucifer, the mortal enemy of our human nature. Here it will be how Christ our Lord calls and wants all men beneath his standard, that is, beneath his flag, beneath the standard bearer in his army. And how Lucifer, on the contrary, wants all men under his standard, or under his flag.

Okay, we need to first have a mental picture of the place of the two camps, the two armies that are formed. On the one hand will be Christ and the others—the other will be Satan himself. So we need to use our imagination.

Here we need to see a vast plain covering all the region about Jerusalem, where the supreme leader of the good is Christ our Lord, and the other plain or the other camp, the other encampment, the other army in the region of Babylon, where the evil chieftain of the army is Lucifer.

So I think you have—you can draw a mental picture of the two places, the two camps.

“The first point is to imagine how the evil chieftain of all the enemy is seated in the center of the vast plain of Babylon on a great throne of fire and smoke, a horrible and terrible sight to behold.” And if you want to use your imagination even further, you can see yourself walking through that encampment, that army encampment of Satan, and looking at the people that are there. You might even, in walking through the camp, see the fear, which is certainly a way that Satan uses to control mankind. You can see fear in the eyes of the people as you walk through there. And you might even imagine that the smoke that you see there in that encampment, and the dust, is just foul, that the smoke itself is—has a smell of sulfur. And it burns your nostrils and burns your eyes as you’re walking through.

“The second point is to consider how he calls together”—this is Satan—“countless demons and how he scatters them, some to one city and some to another”—he might even, say, to one prayer group or to one household, and then some to another —“throughout the whole world, missing no providence, [sic] no place, missing no state in life, nor even any single person.”

The third point is to listen to the harangue which he delivers to them, “how he spurs them on to ensnare men and to bind them in chains. He bids them first to tempt men with the lust of riches, that they may thereby more easily gain the empty honor of the world, and then come to unbounded pride.”

The first step, then, in his snare is that of riches, that is, of money and of things. The second sn-, in his snare is honor. That’s very closely tied to the first, being rich and having things, and then becoming puffed up and being honored. And then all of that leads to the third and—item in his snare is pride.

“From these three steps, Satan leads on to all the other vices.” Okay, so I think we have that picture and we can very clearly expand that with our own imagination.

In a like manner, we’re to imagine, on the other hand, the supreme and true leader, who is Christ our Lord, and imagine his camp.

This is around the plane of Jerusalem.

The first point to consider is how Christ our Lord takes his stand in a lowly place in that great plain about Jerusalem. And he is beautiful and gracious to behold.

And in this camp, as you use your imagination again, as you walk through the camp, you might picture a very blue, beautiful day. And how warm the sun is as you walk through this camp, and how it’s on a grassy plain. There’s no dust and there’s no smoke. It’s very crystal clear. And as you look around and see the people in this camp, as you walk through, you notice a very peaceful look in their eyes and a depth in their eyes, and a love in them. You might even pick a beautiful red rose that you notice blooming as you walk through, or whatever your—your color is.

The second point is to see how the Lord of the entire world chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples, and sends them throughout the whole world to spread his sacred doctrine among men of every state and condition.

The third point is to listen to the discourse which Christ our Lord makes to all his servants and friends whom he sends on this mission, charging them that they should seek to help all men. First by encouraging them to embrace the most perfect spiritual poverty. And, if it should please His Divine Majesty to choose them for it, also to embrace actual poverty. Secondly, he encourages them to desire insults and contempt, for from these two things come humility.

So, then, there are three steps. The first: poverty opposed to riches that Satan was bombarding us with. The second: scorn or contempt, which is opposed to Satan's leading us to worldly honors. And the third is humility, opposed to Satan wanting us to be prideful and a prideful people.

From these three steps, let them lead men to all virtues.

Assuming that we, after listening to that, desire to serve in Jesus's camp, or his army, thus rejecting Satan's plan of riches and of honor and pride, and assuming that we want to become humble servants, let's further examine Saint Ignatius's meditation of the Three Modes, or the Three Forms, of Humility.

I hope no one's having real difficulty listening. This is written in a very different way, and it's hard to—sometimes hard to listen when the way is quite different than our way today, some centuries later.

The Three Modes of Humility.

The first mode of humility is necessary for eternal salvation. This requires that I humble myself as much as possible for me, in order that I may obey in all things the law of our God, our Lord. Accordingly, I would not give consideration to the thought of breaking any commandment, divine or human, that binds me under the pain of sin, even though this offense would make me master of all creation or would preserve my life on earth.

So that's the one form of humility.

The second mode, or the second form, of humility is more perfect than the first. I'm in possession of it if my state of mind is such that I neither desire nor even prefer to have riches rather than poverty, to seek honor rather than dishonor, to have a long life rather than a short one, provided that here be the same opportunity to serve God, our Lord, and to save my soul. Nor would I, for the sake of all creation or for the purpose of saving my life, consider committing a single sin.

So that's the second form of humility, which is a little better than, a little more perfect than, the first.

The third mode or form of humility is the most perfect. This exists when the first and second forms already possessed, and the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty being equally served, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches, in order to be more like Christ our Lord. When I choose reproaches with Christ thus suffering rather than honor, and when I'm willing to be considered as worthless and a fool for Christ, who suffered such treatment before me, rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in his [sic] world.

What I'd like to do now is take just another minute or two in just quiet prayer and meditation before we move on to discussion.

[Recording ends here.]

Endnotes:

In the following passages, Clem quotes from *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* by St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 114. The Trap of Money

*Using examples from his own life, Clem Walters taught Servant School members to examine their attitudes towards riches and warned of the dangers of trusting in money and possessions.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: This is servants' talk number five. I think it might be well for us, as we lead into talk number five, to recap, at least just for a second, a little bit of where we left off last week. And, that is to recap Satan's kingdom [sic—should be "camp"] as we went through the meditation last week, and Satan's plan for all mankind. And that is, that he sends out his demons and spirits, inflicting mankind with a desire for riches and for honor, and those things leading to pride.

In fact, you might even recall the mental picture that you had last week, as we entered the camp of Satan with him on his throne. And what you saw on the faces of the people there in his camp, and how it was that he was sending out those demons, and his spirits, to inflict all of us with this desire for wealth, this desire for riches and honor, which leads us to be a very prideful people.

So, I think what we need to do tonight, is to look at our attitudes, then, towards riches, to look at our attitude towards possessions, and things, and money. It might help us to focus on what, in fact, Satan has done, and what he continues to do to us, and what part he may have had in the input into lives to this point.

In addition to being bombarded in the world by an ideal of play and pleasure—and that's something that we'll talk about in another talk, we'll take up at another time—the whole ideal—the fact that we're bombarded in the world with an ideal of play and

pleasure. But in addition to that, our whole society has been ingrained with a love of things, and we're a part, unfortunately, of that society. We all have a love of things.

It's not an accident that we have this love of things. Industry pays millions of dollars annually to implant in our minds so-called needs—we'll say needs—for their products. That is, for cars, and motorcycles, and boats, and clothing, furniture, and we can go on and on, and on—television sets and all kinds of things. What they're doing is pushing us onward to bigger and better things. So it makes the wheels of industry turn.

Most advertising is geared to our prideful natures. The advertising is geared often to keeping up with the neighbors. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is the old cliché. In fact, many ads for the sale—advertising automobiles, as an example, the ads or even the brochures that you can pick up at an auto agency, puts [sic] us in the position of driving that big new 1973 or '74 Plymouth Fury.

For Don's sake, my notes did say Chevrolet Impala. [Clem laughs.]

But, the brochure puts us in a position of driving that big new car, down our own block, with all the neighbors outside. Usually, the brochure has a false scene, with a man puffing on a pipe and leaning on a rake—he's our neighbor. As we drive this new car down our block, and they're all out in their yards, and they're noticing us and this big new car. The interesting thing about that brochure is, usually, there's a blonde in the car with us, she's pictured in the car.

It brings to mind a method that I was taught many years ago. I sold cars in the fifties—1950s for an organization called Hull-Dobbs. Hull-Dobbs was, at one time, the largest Ford company—the largest Ford organization in the world. That is, they had Ford agencies all over the United States and in Hawaii.

But, they had it down to a science. And what they trained us to do was to, by all means, get that person that was looking at the new car, *into* the car—into the new car. And I'm sure that any of you that have ever shopped for a new car find that that's not an accident, that they really try to get you—either in a demonstrator—but in those days, we



were trying to get the people in the actual car that they were interested in. If they said they liked a blue car, a blue Fairlane two-door, it was your job to take 'em to the lot that had 150 cars, and to put 'em in that car, and get 'em on the road, get 'em out, suggest that they go home. Just let them take the new car and suggest that they take it home and show it to their wife, or suggest they take it home to show it to Grandma or the kids.

Well, the whole prideful nature was involved in that. That is, if you've got—if you got that person in the car to go home, down his block, where there, in fact, might have been someone raking leaves, or someone noticed him, it was very difficult for him to say no to the sale. It was very difficult for him to come back after an hour, or three, or four hours, and to return that car. Because, by that time, everyone had noticed that he was driving this nice new car, and the kids had taken a ride in it, and grandma had too, and they all wanted it. So it worked very well. It work—it was just, it worked, and it preyed on human nature and our prideful natures.

Houses, if you've noticed the ads, especially Place and Company, they have—they do a good advertising job in this area, in selling houses. And houses are sold on the basis of gracious living, where space abounds for entertaining friends. And, usually, the ad or the brochure will show a very spacious family room, and someone in a long formal gown serving drinks, or what have you. The idea there, again, is that you're entertaining friends, that you're something because of the house that you have and the things that you own.

The point of all this is that advertising agencies and, for that matter, industry—who pay millions of dollars to the advertising agencies annually—have come to the same proven conclusion as Satan, and that is that we can be reached through our prideful natures. And, in fact, they can get to us, and they can get results through our prideful natures.

We begin to judge our worth by the quality, or the quantity, of our things.

Through all of this, and as that begins to happen or has happened, there's another sin which begins to emerge. And that is that, as we begin to acquire more and more things, we begin to develop a worship of idols. We begin to worship false gods. And those false

gods, and those idols, are our possessions. That, in fact, in a very subtle way, we begin to love, and cherish, and adore, and serve our possessions and things.

The more things that we acquire, more and more of our time, and energy, and thought processes are required to maintain, and preserve, and service those things that we've acquired. In a very real way, we begin to serve our things, and through that we begin to worship our things. It begins to creep into that whole process. We begin to spend energy and time in maintaining, preserving, and servicing the things and possessions that we have.

About the best example that I have in my own life of that is the fact that I used to buy a new car every six months. That went on for many, many years. It really didn't make any difference that I could buy the car at cost, at near the dealer's cost, and that every time I bought one, and sold it, I made a profit. In fact, I would order cars that I knew someone wanted. In fact, oftentimes, they were sold as I bought them. I would drive them for six months and sell them.

But the difficulty with that was that I *really* took care of those cars, not only because I might have a sale for them, or I did have a sale for them, but, as I bought these new cars—and each time I bought one, it seemed to be larger, and bigger, and better than the one before, with more accessories.

So what began to happen is, that I was so careful, and I preserved that thing, those cars, to the degree that I wouldn't allow my children to eat an ice cream cone in my new Country Squire with air conditioning and stereotape [A device for playback of recorded music using a magnetic tape]. That, as we took a Sunday drive, that I was really concerned about them keeping their feet, even when they were little, off the seats, or off of the side panels, or they couldn't bring crackers, cookies, or anything with them. It was okay if we stopped at a park along the way and we ate, but we didn't eat in the car, because I was really wanting to preserve and to care for that thing.

And it wasn't that the kids were going to destroy it. It's just that, in fact, many of those cars had the type of upholstery that would have washed off had an ice cream cone been

spilled on it. The point was that I began to serve and, in fact, worship that—those things that I had.

Here's several other examples. I—in 1969, we decided to buy a travel trailer and go camping. At that time, the kids were the age that it would be good to just go, and to camp, and to travel. So we bought a brand new—a 22-foot travel trailer. Well the problem with it—we had a great time, by the way, I really enjoy camping. We, as a family, grew a great deal together by just camping in the wilderness and being together.

But the difficulty with that travel trailer was that, I would not just allow it to be a travel trailer, that I had to maintain it, that I had to see that there was no rust, that it was waxed, that we maintained and cared for the inside so that it was in perfect order and condition. And I spent untold hours every year getting it ready to go, for camping that season. And I wouldn't let it go until, in fact, it was really waxed and clean after storing it over the winter in the fairgrounds, in a building. Or, seeing that it had red lead, as I recall, was the anti-rust type material that I put on the frame and the undercarriage. Even the areas that you couldn't see were really well cared for. Well the problem was that—and I expected Julie and the kids to keep the inside in the same way—the problem was that we began to worship, and that thing began to become an idol, because we spent untold hours, and time, and energy in serving that *thing*, that travel trailer.

I would imagine, if I thought about it, there would be many other examples that I could give of how it is that, as we acquire more and more things, that we begin to, if we're not careful, begin to serve those things.

Another word for riches can easily be money. We talk about riches—maybe the first thing we think about, rather than things, would be money or wealth. And Satan can certainly reach us in our attitudes towards money. In fact, it's been said that money is the root of all evil. And, I don't think that's too far off the mark.

I'd like to read from 1 Timothy regarding the statement that money is the—or could be, the root of all evil. Paul says to Timothy:

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and are caught in the trap of many foolish and harmful desires, which pull men down to ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the source of all kinds of evil. Some have been so eager to have it that they have wandered away from the faith and have broken their hearts with many sorrows.

In fact, many of you have either read in the newspaper, or have heard of, people being murdered for less than a dollar. In fact, that's—every time that happens, there's usually a picture in the paper about someone that was murdered, and they only got 72 cents, or some ridiculous thing. In fact, it wasn't too long ago in South Bend, that a man was shot—I think it was on West Washington Street, just arguing over money. It was in broad daylight, many people around, and they were outside where they could be seen. They were arguing over money. And one of the persons was—pulled a gun and shot the other man. There's—that's just a minor example of what's going on all over the world.

I've also had several personal experiences with money that I'd like to share, and the purpose of sharing is possibly to arouse in you, maybe an examination of *yourself* and your attitudes towards things and towards money.

I think my attitude towards money goes back to—oh, maybe to my very early childhood. And that was that I came from basically a very—a working class, and a poor working class, at that, family. And, I can recall as a small boy, renting. In fact, I can recall going from place to place, never really living—leaving this area. But always we were renting, and usually it was apartments. And, I can recall feeling very insecure during a lot of that. And I can also recall, as I was getting older, my determination to make a lot of money, and to really make it big, and to have a lot of money.

And my—I think the—my thought during those years was that I, in some way, could be secure if I had a lot of money. And the first thing that I was going to do with that money was buy a house, you know, just a house. But it was a house that would be my house.

And I can recall that that began very early. And I can recall then, the summer after graduating from high school—in fact, maybe even in between that time, before I got to

graduate from high school, I started to work very early. And—but work wasn't just for the sake of making money to buy things. I was socking that money away. I mean, from paper route to a lot of other enterprises. They were all legitimate enterprises, by the way.

But the difficulty was that I wasn't buying things, or giving the money possibly to my parents, who needed it. But I was putting it away in my own bank account.

I recall graduating from high school and thinking—everyone directing me to college saying—although no one in our family had ever gone on to college, that it was really a good thing to do. And, I really didn't have any idea what I'd do in college, but I agreed that I would go on to college. And I had the money to go to college by that time. At least, I had enough to get me through for a while.

But the interesting thing happened. First of all, I don't think I really wanted to spend that money to go to school. But that summer, I latched on to a fantastic job. And my reason for taking it was that I needed more money so that I could go on to school. I latched on to a sales job selling cars for Hull-Dobbs, the company that I had mentioned, and I made a lot of money that summer. And, by the time fall came and it was time for me to leave that job to go on to school, I didn't. I didn't go on to school. I stayed at that job. And I kept piling away the money.

Well, I never did go back to school. I just kept piling away the money, and I kept amassing more and more money, and I would do that in a variety of ways. I would not only work very hard—I worked long hours because I was single and I didn't really—it was—in a sales job, the more you work, the more you make. So, I stayed with it and I worked many long hours during the week, and I worked weekends, too. And I would skip lunch, as an example. That was a prime way to save money. I could skip lunch. Or, during those years I can remember figuring out where I could go for a free lunch. I was—I became a first class freeloader in that regard.

So the whole thing began to be a disease. I began to *love* money. By the time I was 20, I had a net worth of well over \$10,000, and the bulk of it was in cash. But, I can honestly

say, that I wasn't happy. It was a good way to start out a married life with a lot of money, but I wasn't really happy.

I don't think there's any need to go on beyond that. The point is—oh, by the way, I did spend a lot of that money at one time, too. I went into business and I lost a lot of it. The point was that the whole thing began to be a disease, and I wasn't interested in just making money so that I could share it, or I could spend it on my family, who certainly needed it during those years. But I wanted to make that money for the sake of making more money and seeing the balance grow.

I'd like to share with you from Mark:

How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

Again, speaking to the same—our attitudes towards money, from Matthew 6:

No one can be a slave to two masters. He will either hate the first and love the second or treat the first with respect and the second with scorn. For you can't be a slave of God and money.

What happens—and through my own experience—as we amass riches and money, is that we begin to rely and depend on our money rather than God, in fact, we begin to depend and rely on our money rather than *anyone*. Our security becomes—our security is our money, rather than God. We tend to then place ourself [sic]—once we've amassed money, we tend to place ourselves mentally in a superior position based on the money we have, or the quality of our things, that is, our riches. And all of this separates us from our brothers and sisters. We've placed ourself in a very superior position because of the quality, or the quantity, of our things.

And in fact, from this very superior position that we place ourself, we tend to judge others from that position, from our pintacle [sic, likely pinnacle]. We begin to look down

on anyone that has less money or whose things, whether it be cars or homes, don't quite measure up to what we have.

Paul told Timothy, in 1 Timothy:

Warn those people who are rich in this world's goods that they are not to look down on the other people and not to set their hopes on money, which is untrustworthy, but on God, who out of his riches gives all that we need for happiness. Tell them that they are to do good and be rich and good works, to be generous and willing to share. This is the way they can save up a good capital sum in heaven.

From Proverbs we're told:

Give me neither poverty nor riches. Grant me only my share of bread to eat, for fear that surrounded by plenty, I should fall away and say, "Yahweh? Who is Yahweh?" Or else in dissolution, take to stealing and profane the name of my God.

I see it, that we're called neither to desire poverty or riches, but only desire our fair share of bread to eat. That's really what we're called to do.

Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our *daily* bread." He didn't say, if you think about it and look at that, he didn't say, "Give us this day our monthly or yearly bread." He said, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Again, Paul spoke to Timothy. In 1 Timothy, he said:

Well, religion does make a man very rich if he is satisfied with what he has. What did we bring into this world? Nothing! . . . So then if we have food and clothes, that should be enough for us.

I think looking at that realistically, in this day and age we have to try to strike that happy ground, that happy medium. That, in fact, we have to have a certain amount of money to buy our daily bread. We have to have a certain amount of things to exist today.

I think we need to all pray and ask the Lord to show us what our true wants are and what our true needs are. There is a difference between wants and between needs. That, in fact, we can learn to separate things that we merely are longing after and want, and the things that we need to sustain our daily life and to live the life that he's calling us to live.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 115. Work: the World's View and God's View

*This Servant School talk contrasted a worldly view of work and service with what Scripture says. Clem Walters explained how answering the Lord's call to a life of service leads to true joy and happiness.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: Well, if my numbering system is right, this should be Servant School talk number six, yes?

What I'd like to explore tonight is our attitudes of work and service. And this is based on the assumption that we're *already* involved in work and service. And we've been serving now in the capacity of servants for several weeks.

And looking at the world's view of work and service, it's one nearly—the view is nearly one of forced labor. And that is, people working only for a paycheck. In other words, just doing a job, with no joy in the work. The attitude is like, “Well, if I have to work to earn money”—in other words, “If I'm forced to work by my employer” —“I can't just accept the paycheck and make myself scarce or just do as little as possible.”

If the attitude is one that, “I've *got* to work, I might just as well get it done quickly, so to be able to begin the recreation, or the playtime, or the fun time, or the non-working time.” As a result of this, we have nearly a *total* disintegration of quality workmanship in this country and in other areas of the world, with the attitude of just getting it done quickly, and with no pride in the workmanship, or without really putting our hearts into our work. There's just no pleasure or pride taken in the quality of our work or service with that attitude.

We're taught in the world to separate work and service from play and pleasure. And in the world, the emphasis is certainly placed on play and pleasure or recreation.

Most people want to get the work, which they describe as a necessary evil, out of the way, so to begin the play, that is, the recreation. But while doing the necessary work, they've got their minds on the play. In other words, we're daydreaming while we're working. We're considering this work as an evil—necessary evil. We have our minds on the recreation or playtime.

Thus, in that process, we find absolutely no *joy* in the work that we're doing. And the reason we find no joy in the work that we're doing is it's—there's a contrast between the work and what we're thinking about, and that is the play and recreation. So in that process, we're rushing through the work thinking about the play or recreation time, so much so that we've blown the recreation or playtime out of proportion, so that when we finally get to the play or to the recreation time, we're disappointed, since it doesn't measure up to what we thought it would be.

And as an example, there are a lot of people that plan a vacation and they save. Maybe they have a vacation club. Or you hear them say, "I can hardly wait until March, until I get to Florida, until we leave for Florida." And when they get *back* from that vacation, they're planning the next one. Well, the difficulty with it—it's all right to plan vacations. But the difficulty with that is that as we plan that and as we have our minds on that *constantly*, it never *really* is what we expect it to be. We're disappointed when we finally get to Florida. In fact, oftentimes it rains for 14 days, or it's cold.

There's just a lot of other examples of how it is that with this worldly view of work, that is, taking no pride in the work and not really working, but just wanting to rush through it to get to the play and pleasure—with that attitude, we're very disappointed. Because the play and pleasure or recreation never quite measures up to what we've imagined it might be.

You must admit that what I've described is a sad, sick, frustrating approach to work and service, but I believe we're all a part of it by our experience in the world.

Satan teaches us to desire riches, as we've discussed before, in this worldly kingdom, and to be play and pleasure orientated. And there are signs of that all around. We talked about advertising last week, but this play and pleasure is thrown at us from the springtime pleasure of Salems, to getting away from it all with United<sup>1</sup>, as an example.

My own experience goes along with what I've described as the worldly experience. That is, I was hoarding play-and-pleasure time selfishly, thinking about it a great deal. What I found myself doing in earlier years was rushing through yard work. We have a large yard and a lot of grass, and that was before we had teenage children who could ride the lawn mower. And it was before the time that the children were old enough that Julie could give me help in that area.

But I vividly remember while I was doing this yard work, rushing through it, finding absolutely no pleasure at all in the work. I was just in a big hurry to get that work done, and what I was thinking about while I was doing that work, rushing through the yard work or doing the repair work around the house, was going fishing, as an example. I was—that's what I had in my mind. Or playing golf, or the other 150 things that I *really* enjoyed doing when it comes to play and fun.

Well, the difficulty was that the golf game, or the fishing trip or all the other things that I had been wanting to do never quite measured up to what I thought it should be. I never did break a hundred, or when I got out and finally went fishing they weren't biting, or when I finally got out there, I found that I didn't have much time. By the time I finally found the fish, it was dark and time to come in or some ridiculous thing like that. But it was very real, and it was a very frustrating experience.

And I think that whole experience that I have described would have taken in a good number of years of my life. I think it was quite by accident, because it was before the baptism in the Spirit for me, that I discovered the joy and happiness resulting from just *meager* efforts of service, meager efforts of serving other people. But I praise the Lord for that.

I'd like to read from Romans 12. Paul is saying:

So then, my brothers, because of God's many mercies to us, I make this appeal to you. Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. Do not conform outwardly to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God, what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

What Paul was telling the Romans was, "Don't conform to the world's way."

The Lord continues to show us that we're called to a life of service. And it's through that service that we find true joy and happiness. I'd like to read from Paul's letter to the Corinthians.

[loud humming noise]

Hope that squeak isn't me. [laughter]

Pardon? [man in audience says something inaudible]

This is from First Corinthians 10:

Well, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God's glory. Live in such a way as to cause no trouble either to Jews or Gentiles or to the Church of God. Just do as I do. I to [sic]—try to please everyone in all that I do, with no thought of my own good, but for the good of all, so that they might be saved. Imitate me then just as I imitate Christ.

So what he was saying to them is that, "I try to please *everyone* in all that I do, with no thought of my own good."

I think that work for its own sake can and should be a joy. And I think it's a matter of setting our minds to it and willing to do the very best job that we're capable of in our particular service. It's a matter of—it's the old saying of—getting your head screwed on

straight and making up your mind and willing to do the very best job in the particular service that you're doing.

But in order to do that, we have to purge from our minds the worldly view of play and pleasure, which is the world's ideal, to quite a different ideal. And that one is to accepting a work/service ideal in the Lord. In other words, serving the Lord through serving our brothers and sisters.

I'm also very convinced that God created men and women to do manual labor. And I know that's against the American way, but—and with our mechanized age. But it's pretty clear to me that the whole body, that means the physical body, feels better and we have a much better mental attitude after we've worked, after there's been physical exercise and we've worked.

And what I'm saying is that it's really *good* to work hard. In other words, it's really good to put out, in other words, to remove the governor. Maybe I'd have to ask Don to explain the technical terms of what a governor is on an internal combustion engine. But at any rate, it's a thing that allows the engine to only go so fast. It's just limited. I think that we need to remove the governor as we work. We need to work hard, and we need to put out. That it's good to work hard, and we feel better physically and mentally if we do that.

I'd like to read from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Paul says to them, and I—we've heard this before, but I think it's good to repeat it:

Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling. And do it with a sincere heart, as though you were serving Christ. Do this not only when they are watching you to gain their approval, but with all your heart do what God wants as slaves of Christ. Do your work as slaves cheerfully then, as though you serve the Lord and not merely men. Remember that the Lord will reward every man, whether slave or free, for the good work that he does.

And looking at that, it doesn't say, "the good *works*." I'm sure we're going to be rewarded for the good works. But it says, "for the good *work*", that means work, like, you know, like sweat, work that we do.

[loud buzzing]

We're also called to use our different gifts of service in accordance with the grace that God has given us. As the Lord gives our particular service and gives us the gift of service, we must use it. And he tells us from—in Romans again, Romans 12—how to go about that:

So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us. If our gift is to preach God's message, we must do it according to the faith that we have. If it is to serve, we must serve. If it is to teach, we must teach. If it is to encourage others, we must do so. Whoever shares what he has with others must do it generously. Whoever has authority must work hard. Whoever shows kindness to others must do it cheerfully. Love must be completely sincere. Hate what is evil. Hold on to what is good. Love one another warmly as brothers in Christ and be eager to show respect for one another. Work hard and do not be lazy. Serve the Lord with a heart full of devotion. Let your hope keep you joyful, be patient in your troubles and pray all times. Share your belongings with your needy brothers and open your homes to strangers. Ask God to bless those who persecute you. Yes, ask him to bless, not to curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Weep with those who weep. Show the same spirit towards all alike. Do not be proud, but accept humble duties. Do not think of yourselves as wise.

Again, in Paul's letter to the Galatians, he tells them to never tire of doing good. It's from Galatians 6:

Do not deceive yourselves. No one makes a fool of God. A man will reap exactly what he plants. If he plants in the field of his natural desires, from it he will gather the harvest of death. If he plants in the field of the Spirit, from the Spirit he will gather the harvest of eternal life. So let us not become tired of doing good. For if we do not give

up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest. So then, as often as we have the chance, we should do good to everyone, but especially to those who belong to our family in the faith.

So Paul tells them and is telling us never to tire of doing good. But he says, never tire of doing good, *especially* to those who belong to our family of faith.

Again, Paul tells Titus, “You must keep your minds occupied in doing good works.” From Titus 3:

I want you to give special emphasis to these matters, so that those who believe in God may be concerned with giving their time to doing good works. These are good and useful for men. But avoid stupid arguments, long lists of names of ancestors, quarrels, and fights about the law. They are useless and worthless.

So he’s telling us to keep our minds occupied in doing good works.

Again, Paul addresses the Hebrews. From Hebrews 13:

Let us then always offer praise to God as our sacrifice through Jesus. That is, let us always give thanks to his name with our voices. Do not forget to do good and to help one another, for these are the sacrifice that pleases God.

So he’s telling us there, “Don’t forget to do good and help one another, for this is a sacrifice that pleases God.”

As we continue to respond to his call of service, that is, the call of service not only in Servant School, but the call of service all of our lives, we must make sure it’s based on love. And from First Corinthians 13, I’d like to read you that passage that we all know about love:

I may be able to speak the languages of men and even of angels, but if I have not love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell. I may have the gift of inspired preaching. I may have all the knowledge and understand all secrets. I may

have all the faith needed to move mountains. But if I have not love, I am nothing. I may give away everything I have and even give up my body to be burned, but if I have not love, it does me no good.

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or conceited or proud. Love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable. Love does not keep a record of wrongs. Love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up. Its faith, hope, and patience never fail. Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary. There are gifts of speaking, but they will cease. There is knowledge, but it will pass. For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial, but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear.

What I'd like to do now is just stop for a minute and thank the Lord, and then we'll move on to discussion.

Endnotes:

Clem references 1970's advertisements for Salem cigarettes and United Airlines.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 116. Slaves to Whom?

*In this Servant School talk, Clem Walters used Romans 8:1-9 to talk about how we can either be enslaved to our sinful human nature (the flesh) or enslaved to righteousness for holy purposes. He then recommended asking ourselves three questions which will help reveal whom we serve.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: This is Servant School number 9 tonight.

What I'd like to talk about tonight is that of slavery to our human natures, versus being slaves of Jesus; that is, being slaves of our sinful worldliness on one side—in one camp, our human natures kind of over here, and on the other—in the other camp, being slaves of righteousness, that is, being slaves of Jesus Christ. I think a good way to begin would be to focus on Webster's definition of the word "slave." That might give us a starting point, might make the subject a little more clear when we begin talking about slavery.

Webster says that: "Slave. Number one: a person held in bondage." Secondly, "A person who is like a slave in not being master of himself, his possessions, etc., as a slave to ambition." That's the example that Webster uses in that definition: as a slave to ambition. That is, a person held in bondage, like a slave, not being the master of himself or his possessions.

We also need to look at what Scripture tells us about our human natures. If we're going to talk about slavery—to our human natures versus being a slave of Jesus—we need to look at Scripture and see what it tells us about our human natures.

This is taken from Romans 8, verse 1 to 9:

There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Jesus Christ, has set me free from the law of sin and death. What the law could not do because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin and human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like man's sinful nature to do away with sin. God did this so that the righteous demands of the law might be fully satisfied in us, who live according to the Spirit, not according to human nature.

For those who live as their human nature tells them to live have their minds controlled by what human nature wants. Those who live as the Spirit tells them to live have their minds controlled by what the Spirit wants. To have your mind controlled by what human nature wants will result in death. To have your mind controlled by what the Spirit wants will result in life and peace.

And so, a man becomes an enemy of God when his mind is controlled by what human nature wants. For, he does not obey God's law, and in fact, he cannot obey it. Those who obey their human nature cannot please God.

What that passage is telling us is, to have our minds controlled by what human nature wants will result in death. To have our minds controlled by what the Spirit wants will surely result in life and in peace.

I think, as we begin talking about slavery, we need to also keep clearly in mind Satan's battle plan we talked about in earlier talks. And one piece of strategy that he has in his battle plan is attacking us from within, using our weak human natures, and being able to camouflage the attack by telling us lies. And some of these lies sound like this, some of the lies that he tells us. He lies to us by saying that, "We're only human." He lies to us when we say, "I've got to have a little fun in my life," or, "Everyone in my family has done that, and has been that way." He lies to us when we say, "I can't change because of my early upbringing, or my early environment." And then we can go on, and on, and on.

But, the point is that all those things are lies, and it's part of Satan's attack, attacking us from within. Satan's attack from within, enslaving us in ways not always obvious. That is

to say that, oftentimes, the attack from within is in such a way, and is so camouflaged, that it's not obvious that we're being attacked, or in fact, that Satan is even involved.

In some very nitty-gritty examples of this, of being attacked without realizing it, could be in the areas of some personal habits that we have. It might be being hooked on nicotine, hooked on tobacco, and smoking, as an example. It could be in drinking, excessively, alcoholic beverages. It could be the taking of drugs, and not necessarily in the ways that we think of someone taking drugs. If someone is hooked on drugs, we consider that in one area. But the area that I'd like to consider and talk about would be as an attack from within: could be our dependence on antidepressants as an example, or sleeping pills, or tranquilizers. And there are others.

We could be attacked from within in some other habits in our lives that we can't control. I maintain that it's no accident that we can't humanly control these habits. And the reason that we can't humanly cope with some of these habits is because we're under attack in those very areas of our lives. When we seriously think about it, we're enslaved to our habits and our sinful human natures. That's in one area.

We're either enslaved to our habits and our sinful human natures, or the other camp is that we're enslaved, or slaves, of righteousness for holy purposes. And that is that, in that other camp, that if we're enslaved, and slaves of righteousness for holy purposes, that we're slaves of Jesus Christ. Now, if we're slaves to our human natures, it certainly will result in death. It might be a very slow death, but a very sure death. If we're slaves of Jesus Christ, it surely will bring us life and peace. It's a life and peace that we can realize immediately, and gather immediate fruits by being enslaved to Jesus for holy purposes, for righteous purposes.

The thing that we have to do is not to fool ourselves as we consider this, as to who we're enslaved to, if we're enslaved to our human natures, or we're enslaved to Jesus. We need—we just have to stop fooling ourself [sic], and really fairly represent the facts as to who we're enslaved to. We're enslaved to one or the other. There's no in-between.

There's a very practical way to proceed in deciding for ourselves to whom we're enslaved. There might be other ways to decide this, but this is a very practical way. And that is to honestly ask ourselves three questions.

And the first question is: what do we think about? I don't mean what do we think about when we sit down and have quiet time. I mean, what occupies our time, our mind, or our thought time during the day? That's the first thing that we should ask ourselves.

Secondly, we should ask ourselves: what do we spend our leisure time doing?

And the third thing that we should ask ourselves is: what do we spend our money on?

And that is, as we consider those three questions, the thing that—things that we hold most important in our lives are what we think about, what we spend our time doing, and what we hold important enough to spend our money on. Now the whole area of money and things we've already talked about. We've already covered that.

With regard to the area of what we think about, that question—that area can be most revealing if we honestly ask ourselves what we think about. Oftentimes, we find ourselves thinking about, or we could make ourselves—or, as we analyze this, we could find that we're making ourselves the hero, and well thought of, in various situations. That is, the hero-rescuing-the-damsel-in-distress type thought. But always kind of being the hero, when we think about it, or being well thought of, or being thanked, or acknowledged.

We could even be thinking about tonight's TV program, or maybe this afternoon's program, the serial. We could be thinking about a planned or imagined vacation, or we could be thinking about a new house, or a new car. We could be thinking about clothing, new clothes. We might even find ourselves thinking about sleep during the day.

The question of—in that whole area of what we spend our leisure time doing, can also be very revealing. And you might say, "What leisure time?" That—because I—that's what I asked, when I began thinking about that question some time back. [Clem chuckles.] I said, "What leisure time?" Well, when I asked that, or said that of myself, "What leisure

time?” I found that I wasn’t being exactly honest with myself. I’d been kind of conning, or kidding, myself with regard to time. I had fallen into the mistaken notion that I had no non-work time.

And as I began to analyze that, prayerfully, I discovered that, at that particular time in my life—it’s been a few years ago—that I had four hours per workday of non-work time. And if you multiply four hours per weekday of non-work time, times five days a week, that was 20 hours. And then, when I added Saturday, which was a non-work time, at that particular time in my life, it was another eight hours. Not everyone would have eight hours on Saturday, but I had at that time. So, that made the total 28 hours of non-work time. And then, when I threw in Sunday—at that time, there was about 12 hours of non-work time. At that particular time in my life, I had 40 hours of non-work time per week!

Some people have—we’ll project this in another way—some people have six hours of non-work time per workday. If you multiply that times five, you’ve got 30 hours, and if you throw in at least eight on a Saturday, doing some work on Saturday, throw in another eight of non-work time, you’ve got 38. And if you throw in 12 on a Sunday, you’ve got 50 hours of non-work time.

The question was, at that time, what was I doing with my time? As I began to project those hours, and look at the reality of the non-work time that I had at that time, the question was, what was I doing with that time? Well, at that particular time in my life, I was sleeping more than the required or necessary eight to eight and half hours per day. It was one of the things that I determined I was doing with part of that time. And, I was watching a lot of television. In fact, that was one of the things I had been thinking about when I analyzed one of the earlier questions, was that—tonight’s TV program, or when “The Untouchables” would next be on, or the Wednesday night fights, or some of those other things that I really liked. I also found that, at that time in my life, that I was keeping up a lot of hobbies, like fishing, and golf, and hunting, and some of them I kind of did all at one time, too. And there were others. I also found that—and at that time in

my life, I was reading a lot of non-essentials. I was reading a lot of magazines and newspapers.

Until the Lord put it in my heart to analyze just what I was doing with my time, I just had no time for personal prayer, or reading Scripture, or other religious reading, and I really had myself conned into believing that I had no time for those things.

I'd like to share just one example, one isolated example, of how I was enslaved at that time. And of all things, you'd never guess, it was the newspaper. I found that in prayerfully considering what I was doing with my time, and why it was that I couldn't pray, or why it was that I couldn't read a good book and develop a good reading habit, one of the things that first came to the forefront was that I was enslaved to the newspaper. In fact, the newspaper had a very high priority in my life. In fact, it was one of the very first things that I got my hands on as I came in the door in the evening. And I didn't just scan that newspaper. I read every word of every page. I was one of the best-informed people in the world. And what I also would do was save the best areas of the paper 'til last, the things that I really liked, I would save those parts of the newspaper, even the daily paper, 'til last. And I won't tell you what my favorites were at that time. [Clem chuckles.] In fact, I remember the loss that I felt each day, and I—it was a real felt loss when I was finished with the newspaper for that day. I felt a real loss.

One of the things that the Lord taught me through that was, that for those things that I held to be important in my life, that I did find time for those things. For those things that I valued and held to be important, I put those things first. I found time for those things. So, what we have to do as we analyze this is—[to analyze] to who we're enslaved—to our human natures, or we're enslaved to Christ Jesus—is we have to stop conning ourselves, kidding ourselves, playing games with ourselves, and just face the facts.

I'd like to quote from that same Romans 8:1-9 passage in closing:

We heard that what the law could not do because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin and human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like man's sinful nature to do away with sin.

And, when you think about that: Jesus has complete and total dominion over Satan and Satan's control of our lives, and that Jesus has complete and total dominion over Satan's lies, and his ways. All we have to do is to decide to serve in Christ Jesus' army, placing ourselves in his camp, claiming his protection and his power.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.





# 117. Prayer, Study and Action

*This Servant School talk addressed the importance of making personal commitments to prayer, study and action as a way to become better slaves of Christ and to help overcome any bondage to the flesh. Clem Walters gave practical suggestions about each of the three areas.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: Based on my primitive numbering system, tonight is Servant School talk number ten. I see some nods, so that must be right.

Tonight's talk is meant to be a follow-up to last week's talk, which asks us to honestly evaluate our present status to determine whether we are slaves—that is, in bondage—to our weak human natures, or to Jesus Christ. In the process of evaluating that, it's important that we admit to ourselves the true present state of affairs in each of our lives.

And once we've done that, we then must take some action. That is, we can't just allow ourselves to do nothing once we've evaluated our present state of affairs.

I'd like to quote from James 1, and this is a passage that we had used in an earlier talk. This is verses 22 to 25.

Do not fool yourselves by just listening to his word. Instead, put it into practice. For whoever listens to the word, but does not put it into practice, is like a man who looks in the mirror and sees himself as he is. He takes a look at himself, and then goes away, and at once forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks closely into the perfect law that sets men free, who keeps paying attention to it and does not simply

listen and then forget it, but puts it into practice, that man will be blessed by God in what he does.

So that passage has told us that we shouldn't fool ourselves by just listening to his word or to words. But instead, we must put into practice what we've learned or what we've heard.

If we're presently in bondage, that is, a slave, to our human nature, thus being open to Satan's attacks through our habits, thought processes, where we spend our time, and on what we spend our money on [sic], we must call upon the name of Jesus, ask him to wash us clean of our sins, and commit ourselves to be *his* slave, to be in bondage *only* to Jesus Christ.

Now, if help is needed to accomplish that—once we've evaluated our present state of affairs, and we find to some degree that we are in bondage to our weak human natures, and we have difficulty, then, asking Jesus to wash us clean of our sins, or we find difficulty in committing ourselves or those areas of our lives that we in fact are in bondage to our human nature, if we have difficulty with all of that, then we have to admit that we need some help. And there *is* help that is needed. And that is through the brothers and sisters in the prayer room.

And if that's too late [in the evening], it's possible to call Jeanne for an early appointment and to have someone from the prayer room team spend some time, and to help you through that and through those areas.

But once that's accomplished, there's something else that we have to do. In other words, we must take action to fulfill that commitment to Jesus—that is, to be in bondage and be a slave only to him.

It just doesn't happen automatically. That is, once we've evaluated our state of affairs, we've sought help from someone in the prayer room team, as an example, or a group of people to get through that, then we've got to take some further action. There's just a logical consequence, a logical step that must be taken. And that is—the way we proceed,

then, to become a slave of Jesus or to be in bondage only to him is to commit ourselves to regular, daily *prayer, study, and action*.

And for those of us who may have heard those words some years back, having made a Cursillo, you'll recall that the three go together: that prayer, study, and action have to be considered together. And the way it was described during the Cursillo talk is about the best description that I could think of, and that is to consider the three items as a tripod. And if you consider a three-legged tripod, if any of the legs of that tripod are shorter than the rest, the tripod becomes unstable. That is, if prayer, study, and action—if any one of them are shorter or out of proportion to the other two, then the tripod becomes unstable, and it tips, and is very likely to fall over.

If any of the legs of the tripod are missing, of course, it no longer is a tripod. It can't stand, and it's of no value at all. That is, if any one of those important ingredients in committing ourselves to be a slave of Jesus—that is, prayer, study, and action in a regular, daily commitment—if any of those are missing totally, then the tripod falls; it's of no value. So the same, then, is true of our prayer, study, and Christian action.

If there's a shortage of one or two of those legs of the tripod, we too become unstable.

If one of the three elements are *entirely* missing, we can't stand up under Satan's attacks. We tend to fluctuate, from being very high—way up high—or very low. But finally, we fall, just as the tripod with one leg missing falls.

So one of the exercises tonight will be, a little later, asking everyone to make their own personal, private, written commitment to prayer, study, and action.

And it's just for your own private use. That is, it's not for anyone else's eyes, or it's not to be turned in or anything. It's just a matter of—sometime a little later—of making that commitment. What I'd like to do before we do that is to briefly comment on each area of prayer, study, and action, offering some practical suggestions on how you might proceed in making a commitment—a commitment to the Lord, to be his slave.

To the item and the whole area of prayer—and this is not meant to be complete by any means; I'm sure a lot of you will think of some items that should be added around the whole area of prayer.

If Jesus Christ is the most important person in our lives, that is, the very center of our total existence, on whom our very life depends, shouldn't we at least talk with him each day? He should rank at least as high as the people we live or work with. We at least say, in most cases, "Good morning" [Clem laughs lightly] to those people that we work with and live with, and we at least say, "Good night," and oftentimes there's a lot of other conversation in between. But shouldn't Jesus rank at least as high as that?

The Lord, through prophecy, established communal household morning praise and evening prayer very early in the community's development—People of Praise community. Some of the things that are used in household morning prayer and evening prayer are such things as, song, the Psalms, Scripture. The households are open to prophecy and all the other word gifts, as an example.

But even though the Lord established that in the People of Praise very early, the fact that we're all committed to communal morning prayer and evening prayer, we found that that was not enough.

We must develop a *personal* prayer habit. Now, there are many forms available in developing that personal prayer habit. But I recommend very highly the use of our own "21/31." And for those of you that haven't seen that or don't know what that is, I'll pass a few around later. There are 15 points on the 21/31, and as I recall, the difference is whether you spend two minutes on each point or three minutes [sic—it would be one or two minutes], as to whether the whole thing takes 21 minutes or 31 minutes. That's what it stands for.

But the point there is that we've got to develop a personal prayer habit, each and every day, if we're going to be a slave of Jesus and be in bondage only to him. And it's important that as we do that, that we use a format, that we use something in writing—a form, a regular form—because if we don't do that, we tend to drift off. We find ourselves

planning our day, if we do it in the morning, or thinking about other things. And at least partially, that's eliminated if we use a format or a form. Some people might have a format or form that's just as good as the 21-31, but I recommend it very highly.

Many people in the households in the community can tell if you've missed your personal prayer time during the day. It has that importance in each of their lives, and the overall makeup of the life in the household. So some people are able to say to you, without—you know, in love, "Clem, you've missed your personal prayer time today, haven't you?" Because they can tell it.

Okay, under the whole area of prayer, another very important prayer opportunity is regular Mass and church service worship. And many people commit themselves to an extra weekly Mass or an extra weekly service. And many Catholics, in the area of prayer, still say—commit themselves to a daily rosary.

Okay, the other leg of our tripod. We'll move on from prayer to *study*. If you're going to be in bondage, that is, a slave, to someone, shouldn't you find out everything about that person before making that commitment?

In fact, I'm sure that you can remember the old saying that you're known by the company you keep. That was something my mother beat into me as I was nearing the teenage years: that you're really known by the company you keep. And you can get into serious trouble by just being in the wrong group at the wrong time.

So shouldn't we find out everything about that person that we want to be in bondage and in slavery to? A good way to proceed, in knowing everything that you can about Jesus is to read the New Testament. And a good way to do that is to read it from cover to cover. And for that to have some meaning, you need a translation that is a little easier to read. And there are many translations.

Many people commit themselves to just a few pages a day of the New Testament. That's a good place to start in knowing about Jesus. Some can make a chapter or two a day. But the key in your commitment is to having a regular, daily commitment to something

in the New Testament. And it's good to start at the—right at the beginning of the New Testament and begin reading. If it's two pages a day, a chapter a day, or whatever you can do, the idea, the main point there is, you're consistent in that.

Now, while doing this, you can still continue to pray for passages and continue to use the New Testament or the Old Testament in that way also. Just because you're beginning and you have a bookmark in Matthew doesn't mean that you can't pray and use the Bible for that. Allow the Lord to speak to you in that way.

So after you've gotten through the New Testament, then it's good to begin on the Old Testament. Because if you're going to learn about Jesus Christ, after getting through the New Testament, it's really important that you begin working on the Old Testament.

If you find yourself being bored reading the Old Testament from cover to cover, especially with those whole areas that are very repetitious, and you find all those names that you can't pronounce, you know, all that . . . thing, feel free to disregard that. Feel free to—when you get to a whole page of names, if you're bored with that, you have difficulty with that—skip it! If you find areas that it's very obvious that you've read in an earlier passage and you already know what the outcome is, then skip it. You can even speed-read those things.

But the key there is after the New Testament, to begin working on the Old Testament consistently, and make your—make a commitment to that. After or during that time, in the area of study, you can pick a good book or a good magazine; I might recommend *New Covenant*. In other words, you're committing yourself, then, to reading a few pages or a chapter a day of a good book, or of a *New Covenant*, or both.

Now, oftentimes, it's important to get assistance in selecting the right book, so that you don't start out with something that you're not ready for spiritually or otherwise. And there are a lot of people that can provide you with some help who've read just a lot of books, and they kind of know what, you know, what they might—what it might do, and how it might affect you. So if you need help in that area, after making a commitment, I'd

be happy to direct you to a number of people who, if you just tell them kind of like what you're interested in, they can direct you to that. But the key there is to get on with it.

And again, committing yourself to a few pages or chapters a day. If you just can't get into the book that's been recommended, it's one of those books that, you get into it about a chapter or two, and it's just very painful, you just can't get with it: just don't get bogged down with it. Set it aside, or give it back, and start over.

But the point there is to start again, if you've made a commitment, to reading a good book, a spiritual book.

I might just briefly share with you: in 1965, I committed myself, in one of these written commitment things that I'm suggesting to you, to reading just two pages of Scripture a day, and just two pages of other good spiritual reading—a book—per day.

And since 1965—of course, oftentimes you can't stop with two pages; oftentimes, you find yourself moving on to the third or fourth page—but the point was that my only commitment was to two pages a day of each. But since 1965, I've plowed through a whole shelf of books, and all the way through the New Testament a couple times, and the Old Testament as well.

So it might sound like a very meager commitment. But if you stay with it on a daily basis, it will help you know Jesus. And it will help you know who it is that you're going to be in bondage to and committed to.

So the whole area, then, we'll move on to that whole other area, the other leg of the tripod, and that's action. So if we're going to be in bondage to Jesus Christ, being his follower, responding to his call to be a disciple—that is, to spread the good news, and spread the good news over the whole world—we can't be turned in on ourselves.

But our prayer and study must have some outward expression. So if we're doing all that prayer and we're doing all that study, it must be expressed in action. Now, this action could be witnessing and laying down our lives in daily service in our own household.

That could be one area that we could begin action, the third leg of the tripod. Could be that we're going to lay down our lives in daily service in the households, in our work situations. Or being open to receiving and using, for the sake of others, the spiritual gifts. That's a—that is an area of action, to be really open to receiving the spiritual gifts and using them for the sake of others.

This action could be actively participating in community outreaches. That is, at the prayer meeting, as one example; that could be your action. It could be just being with people before the prayer meeting, being open to picking out someone and talking with them. Or working a Life in the Spirit seminar, or all those other things that are involved around the prayer meeting.

This action could be active or just financial support of your parish or church activities. Or, as most churches and parishes have, a social or Christian Action committee or commission. And if you can't support it actively, you may be able to support it financially in some regular way. Certainly a very worthwhile form of action.

In that whole area of Christian action, you've got to remember that there are a lot of good things to do. But we must choose wisely, that is, selecting the best of the good things to do, remembering that the action leg of our tripod must not become imbalanced or too long.

And there are many examples of people who have become imbalanced in the action part. They become "Christian action" people, and they have not stayed with their prayer and their study. And as a result, they've burned out. That leg of the tripod was far too long, and it toppled over. And they're—they burned out.

In the time remaining, which is just a very short time, I'm going to pass out just a piece of paper. And this is for your own private use. It's not to be handed in, and what I'm asking you to do is to use this piece of paper as a reminder to begin, in the few minutes that's remaining here, or just to take it home and have that piece of paper—just a plain old piece of paper—as a reminder that if you're going to be committed to Jesus and be in bondage to him, that the only way that it will actually *work*—and I promise that it



does work—is if—that you do make this commitment. And you should do—make it in writing for yourself. For many years I had my commitment taped on the mirror, where every morning, as I shaved—that was a sure place to be every morning—that I could see it. That meant that everyone else in the house could see it too.

So, as the paper goes out—I'll do that in a few minutes—I'll just summarize very quickly some of the examples in each category. In other words, in each—each category of prayer, study, and action. I wanna give you just a summary, quickly, of some of the things that you might commit yourself to, so that really sticks, and it means something to you for the rest of your life.

In the whole area of prayer, I talked about communal household morning and evening prayer and commitment to that. And if you already have a commitment to that, then you need to maybe commit yourself to participating more actively in your household prayer, being open to using the spiritual gifts, or saying something to build the others up.

One of the things I mentioned was making a commitment to personal prayer. I suggested a form, which was 21/31. Another thing I suggested in the area of prayer was that you might commit yourself to an extra Mass or worship service. And I also suggested that you may want to consider committing yourself to a daily rosary.

In the area of study, I suggested that you commit yourself to a few pages or a chapter of the New Testament, starting at the very beginning. Or, after finishing that, moving on to the Old Testament. I suggested reading, and committing yourself to reading, the *New Covenant*. I suggested that you might commit yourself to a good religious book. I suggested in study that community or CRS tape cassettes is a very valuable way to study.

In the area of action, I suggested daily service to household members, or work situations. Servant School is a very good form of action. I suggested use of the spiritual gifts, being open to that and using them as your action. I suggested the com—the prayer

meeting, and other outreaches of the community. Or, to be active or to offer financial support of the church's or parish activities.

I think the point of it all is that the only way that I know to persevere in your commitment to be a slave of Jesus and to serve only him, and to have that deepened daily, and for the rest of your life, is to commit yourself in writing: to think it through, to pray it through, to write it down, and to—each and every day, to stick with it, ask the Lord to help you stick with it.

And there'll be great rejoicing in heaven by virtue of that.

Okay, I'm just going to pass out the pieces of paper, and it'll just merely be a reminder. You can take them home, and work with them.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 118. Motives for Serving

*This Servant School talk described some common reasons for serving, such as avoiding punishment, getting a return favor, being noticed, etc. Clem Walters talked about serving simply out of love for the Lord (with purity of heart).*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: Looks like we're gonna have a little balancing act here without a stand for anything. Jim will help me.

I think before we begin tonight, one of the things I'd like to mention, not only for all of us here, but for those who pick up the teachings on the tapes, and that is, the procedure to go about if for some reason you cannot be available for your service. In other words, if your work or service is coming up and you're sick, or for some reason you see that you're going to be out of town, or you can't be there, the first person you should contact, with as much time as possible, would be the head of that—the head servant of that particular area.

So, if you know that you're gonna be on vacation or you know that you have to be away on a night that you're expected to serve, you should sometimes give him as much notice—he or she—as much notice as possible, by contacting the head servant in your area and telling them that you will not be able to attend. That will give them enough time to find someone else to serve in your place.

If for some reason, you're ill, and you know that a little bit in advance, then you should also contact the head servant in your area. Or even if it's the night of your service and you're really sick and you can't attend, you should also let he or she know that you can't be there. And, it might be too late for them to do something about it, but at least they know why you're not there, you know, they'll try.

Oftentimes the head servant, when you call that person, might say to you, “Can you find a replacement?” And that’s a little unusual, because the replacement should come from Servant School. If it’s servants’ work that we’re doing, it would be good if the head servant sends you off to find someone, that you call one of the people in the present Servant School first. That would be kind of the first thing to do. I guess my preference would be that the head servant would take care of that. That in fact, if you can’t attend, that you let that person know, and as long as you give them a little notice, that that person then would be responsible for finding someone—that the head servant, would be the head servant’s responsibility for finding a replacement for you. I guess that’s the best way to put it.

Any questions about that?

We’re gonna talk about motives for doing work and service—explore. This isn’t meant to be an exhaustive study of motives for doing work and service, but we’re going to explore a few motives, and see if we can’t find out what the Lord teaches us and tells us as his—the proper motive for doing work and service, for being motivated.

As an example, a child, or maybe even when we were children, we did work and service, responded, to avoid our parents’, ah, mother or father’s punishment, or maybe denial of privileges. We might have been told that if we didn’t do the work that was assigned, that we were going to find that we were gonna be warmed with a brush or yardstick or in some other way physically punished for not doing the work. Or, we might have been told that we couldn’t watch television. For my time, I’ve gotta go back even further than that and say that maybe I couldn’t ride my bike if I didn’t do the work.

In much the same way, an adult might serve the boss or his company so to avoid the punishment of losing his job. So, in both of those examples, the motive for doing the work and service is to avoid punishment from someone.

Another example of a motive might be a wife, might do the work and service around the house to avoid punishment, and that punishment might just be the bad mouth of her husband, if the house was disorderly as an example, when he came home. Or the dinner

was not served at the time that he expected dinner to be served. Or that his shirts or uniforms were not ironed or cleaned and in their proper place when he needed them. So, in that example, that woman, that wife might be doing the work and service to avoid the bad mouth of punishment, of her husband. So, the motive, then again, is of—for doing the work and service, is to avoid punishment, either physical or mental.

Another example: an adult might do work and service to get a salary increase or to win a promotion. And his motive could be to buy more things. In other words, to get a salary increase or to win a promotion then might mean that he could buy more things, that is, objects. And in so doing, winning worldly status and honor that that raise would bring. In that example, the motive for doing the work and service is to buy more things, or to be able to keep the things that he's already bought if they were purchased on the time payment plan. The motive is to then win worldly status and honor in that example.

Many people are motivated to work and serve others expecting to get return work or service. And I know of examples where people have maybe built a home, and they have given so many favors or work hours to a plumber or to an electrician, or to a carpenter, tradesman. And, on the given day, then, recall that, and call on them for his own use. So, in that example, of doing work expecting it in return, a return favor, the motive then is to gain a measure of security. You build up a measure of worldly or human security and having all those favors and all that work due you.

Another example of a motive for doing work and service is that work is often performed to please others. It could be, just to be, to please someone, out of love for them. It could be that you are doing the work and service for a husband or for a wife or for a community brother or sister. But you—you're just doing that to please them. But down deep, oftentimes, in fact, most cases when that happens, we're expecting to be thanked, at least thanked or acknowledged, for that work and service.

I can think of doing work and service for my own children and just training them, in fact, to say “thank you” for the work or the service or what I had done for them. I think that's

good. We should train our children in that way. In fact, for years, we've been encouraged to do good deeds for others.

And this being the time of Lent, it's a good time to think of good deeds for other people. In fact, we have a reminder at home, where we place popcorn in a large bowl each time that we do a good deed for someone in the house, we don't tell them. So, the children are constantly doing something good for another party in the house, and the only way you know it is if you see this bowl of popcorn growing during Lent, and then we have a smashing party with the popcorn at Easter, you see? But, so we've encouraged even our children, then, to do good deeds for others, and that's good too.

But the difficulty with all that occurs—and in fact, we become very discouraged and disappointed when the efforts go unnoticed—when we do the work and service to please others. We tend to grow very discouraged when the efforts go unnoticed, and in fact, they don't even seem to be appreciated.

I can give you some examples of that. I recall some time back, in fact, at our house, we all have bicycles. And we, now that the children are getting a little older, we have three-speed bikes. But even before that, it seemed that the bikes were always in need of repair, and not having any older boys, the repair work on the bicycles always fell on Dad. And I can vividly remember going out without them knowing it and kind of—and repairing bikes. I kind of took some time and decided that I would go from the littlest bike to the biggest and pump up tires and repair and get the shifting mechanisms in the right slot, what have you.

And oftentimes even taking the kids out, another example, and suggesting that Peter, my son, learn how to do these things by accompanying me, or maybe holding the screwdriver or doing something. But in fact, in time, I didn't give him enough to do, so he kind of faded into the woodwork and disappeared.

Then later, they ride off. They just come and ride off and use the bikes. In fact, they didn't even say thank you for my repairing the bikes. So, I'm kind of disappointed in that

whole thing, because I really did expect at least a thank you, or some acknowledgement that in fact, the bike is better for my work.

Another example from home is that last fall, Julie worked one whole day to surprise me, so that when I got home in the evening, she would show me the fruit of her labor. In fact, she did. She built a rock garden. And that rock garden required a lot of time and energy and hard work on her part. In fact, when I got home, she was still dirty and she had to—the dirt ground in under her fingernails, having worked very hard. She'd gone out, in fact, to several people's houses to gather some of the rocks. They were big rocks, and they were hard to carry. But she built just a magnificent rock garden. And there were all those things that you put in rock gardens, like ivies and moss and things.

Well, the problem was that when I came home, I didn't handle that too well. She had really done it to please me, and when I saw it, the rock garden was exactly in the spot where I knew a gas line had to be run in just a few weeks. So, she was very disappointed. She had done that to please me, and I couldn't hide the fact that I was really disappointed because it was in the wrong place.

Another example of working to please others might be in servants' work. We work hard. Already we find ourself, in some of the servants' work we're doing, working hard, and the hours are late, and we really are laying down our lives to do that work and service, and it's dirty work sometimes. And we would expect that at least someone would thank us, but they don't. It seems to go unnoticed. So, we're very disappointed and discouraged.

I contrast this with what the Lord seems to be saying to us. In fact, he says we're called as brothers and sisters to serve one another simply out of love of God, simply out of love for him. And that means that if we serve our brothers and sisters purely out of love of God, that there is no other purpose or motive involved in that, except just to serve God. In fact, someone much wiser than I gave a label to that whole thing, and that is, it's called purity of heart. That if, in fact, we have a pure heart, that we do work and service

and we care for other people purely out of the love of God, not expecting anything else, but just the opportunity to serve our Lord.

Now, we'll go back to those shared examples that I gave you earlier, that is, of the bike repairs and the rock garden and the unnoticed Servants' work. Had the work, in all those examples, been done out of the love of God, and only for him, it really would have made no difference. In fact, it makes no difference at all, if the kids didn't seem to appreciate the rideable, better bikes. If the work had been done purely out of the love of God, and for the love of him, it made no difference that I didn't appreciate the location of that rock garden, or didn't appreciate all the work that Julie had done. Or, had our servants' work been done purely out of the love of God and only for him, it really doesn't make any difference that no one notices the work that we're doing in Servant School. The only thing that really does matter in that is that, had we had a pure heart, if we were able to have a pure heart, that God was being served by our serving our brothers and sisters in whatever we were doing. If the work and service is done, or even attempted out of the love of God, it really doesn't make any difference if anyone notices or gives us credit for our labors.

Further, further, it doesn't even matter if we succeed in our task, since we can reach perfection, and that is, we can reach the perfection of a pure heart just by our willing, getting our minds in gear and *willing* to serve, or even deciding to try. And that is, that once we decide to try, and once we *will* to serve with a pure heart, we're on our way to perfection in that regard, regardless of whether we succeed in actually pulling off the service, or pulling it off to the degree that we had hoped to—, like in completing it.

St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Galatians, first chapter, verses 9 and 10:

We have said it before, and now I say it again. If anyone preaches to you a gospel that is different from the one you accepted, may he be condemned to hell. Does this sound as if I'm trying to win men's approval? No, I want God's approval. Am I trying to be popular with men? If I were still trying to do so, I would not be a servant of Christ.



What Paul was telling them, and I believe telling us, that, he's saying, "Am I trying to be popular with men? If I were—if I was still trying to do so, I would not be a servant of Christ." So, we're being told that if our motives for doing work and service are to be noticed, which is very, very normal in the world, but if our motive is to be noticed or to become popular, we in fact are not servants of Christ in that activity, in that work.

St. Paul told Titus, the second chapter, verses 11 to 14:

You see, God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions. We must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives while awaiting the appearance of our great God and savior, Jesus Christ. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people, so that it could be his very own, and would have no ambition except to do good.

I believe that the Lord is calling us, too; each of us. He's saying that each of us must give our worldly ambitions, to be popular, to be noticed, to be better than others, that we must give way, that all must give way to a purity of heart, only wanting to serve our great God and King, to work only for him, by serving others in the very best manner we're capable of.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 119. Servant Leadership

*This Servant School talk described what it means to be a leader and illustrated the world's faulty notions of leadership. Clem Walters described the qualities a person needs to become a consistent, effective leader for Jesus.*

## Transcript

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

CLEM: Do I have to repeat that school's out after tonight for those who. . . . [Clem and everyone laugh.] No. No, Servant School is not over. Servant—this—the Servant School will probably run about, you could probably count about nine months from the first time we met that you'll be involved in service. But, we're gonna take a semester break as far as the teachings, and which will allow me to sift through some additional material. And I'd like some input during that time for all of you. In the meantime, though, you'll continue in your regular service. We won't be gathering here, though, for a few weeks.

I'm going to be very interested. I'm looking over two books. One is used in Ann Arbor [Word of God community]: Watchman Nee's book. I think it's *The Christian Worker*? That the title? And they use that book as a discussion-type book for their service group. So we'll be reviewing that to see if we could use that. I'd be very interested to hear what anyone has to say about using something like that. And I'd be very interested to know what your views are about gathering weekly to continue working through material that are [sic] not really teachings in nature, but more discussion in nature.

I also have some material that came from Ann Arbor, that they've used. I have the outlines of their talks, of the—of their service talk. And I haven't had an opportunity to work through them and digest them and see if it's something that we would like to use, or the Lord might want us to use here. That's kind of where that is. So, what we'll do is, after tonight, you'll continue in your service, but we won't meet here. The—you won't

have to come. And there'll be an announcement made at a community meeting when we begin again. It could—it's gonna be at least a couple weeks, could go as long as four weeks before we crank up again.

Questions? I see your hand up.

[inaudible]

Okay . . . good. That's not a hand up, Gloria?

[inaudible]

Okay. . . . And what we're going to look at and talk about tonight is what it means to be a leader. So, we're gonna be talking about leadership. And as we work through this talk, we'll even be using another name for that—the word, “leader” and “leadership”—and we'll coin one: we'll call it “servantship.”

There are reams of material—it's a lot of books and courses—written on, and on what it means to be a leader, or how to become a successful leader. In fact, in my role at the CRS, I'm opening a lot of mail that comes in. There's just a lot of companies that dwell on sending out training courses, information about training courses about how to be a successful leader. It's just reams of materials. And very good courses about that.

I think that the reason for all the interest that people have with regard to that whole topic of leader and leadership is that people see that it's the leader in the world that controls and dominates. And, he as the head—the head of whatever it is that he's leading—is the one that, in the worldly view, is the top dog. He's making the big money, as an example. And the big money, and we've talked about that before, it buys the clothes and the houses and the furniture and the cars and the vacations to Acapulco, or maybe even to Hawaii.

MAN'S VOICE: [inaudible]

CLEM: [Clem laughs.] Amen. How I long to go to Hawaii someday, hmm. . . . So, in fact, as we think about that—the reason there’s so much interest in that—is that people have that worldly view—that it’s the leader who controls and dominates. And by virtue of that, he’s the guy that’s in the plush office, who they see propped up on the desk, and he’s the guy that’s making the big paycheck and controlling many lives.

I’d like to look at another view of a leader, and this leader is a national political leader. And they maintain their status and position with wise views of public relations people. They surround themselves with public relations people. They use (very wisely) speech writers. They have a sense for what people want to hear. A national political leader is very wise in the use of wardrobe, wearing the proper clothing, makeup. He might even travel with his own barber—personal barber. A national political leader has organizers and pollsters. And in fact, in recent years, a national political leader even has his dirty-tricks men that he hires that travel with him. So that’s another view of a leader, a very worldly view of, when we think of leader, we think of a national political leader.

And when you consider all of that—the public relations people and the speech writers and the wardrobe and the barber and all of that that goes along with that—that all leads to a big buildup. And it’s giving that leader the proper image, getting the proper image across to the voter. I can’t forget watching President Nixon, as an example, as he traveled to China, and—some—time back, now. But I vaguely remember watching the television screen when Nixon came to the door of the jet, and for just an instant, he did not know that the cameras were on him. And you could see the different view. It looked like it was a different man, a man that was standing there without knowing that the cameras were on him, changed drastically in the way—the side that he had to the camera and the way that he stood, and the way he proceeded, the minute that he knew that the camera was on him. So there’s a big buildup with that national leader. And he certainly wants to maintain that.

And now I’d like to take ano—just a brief look at another leader, and that is our local civic and business leader. He might be one of the men that we have pictured with the feet propped up in the earlier example. This man is probably the backbone. At least, we

consider, or the papers call him the backbone of the South Bend community. In most cases, they have full-time secretaries. They have staff secretaries, or staff people, to keep up with the community activities, often doing the actual work. The secretary or staff people do the actual work, with the leader getting the credit and building his own image as he uses that material to continue his involvement in that organization or that civic group. In fact, it's very good for business, in addition to being a good buildup for him. And in the process, there are newspaper articles and pictures, and much publicity, which is very good for him and for his company.

I think in the above examples, those few examples of our view of a leader, it would take a supernatural, or an unnatural resistance, for these leaders not to succumb to being self-centered, prideful people. In fact, they have all the necessary ingredients that we talked about earlier. That is, the ingredients of honors and riches, which lead to pride. And we've already discussed that pride is Satan's tool for dominating. And I believe that in that situation, that Satan, in fact, does dominate those people and those leaders. And in fact, through them, through those leaders, many other people are dominated by virtue of Satan's hold on them, through that big buildup, leading to honors and riches, and developing into very prideful people. I can't help but feel that a big part of our problem today in—on the political scene—has to do with that very point. . . that Satan is then in control, of various . . .

By virtue of our living experience in the world, I believe our views of leadership to be faulty, by virtue of our life and what we think about him, what we think of a leader. I'd like to state some things that are very positive, that's very different than our worldly mold or view of leadership. I believe that being a leader does not refer only to those that are shouldering responsibility, whether that responsibility is an institution or association, that is, companies or organizations of any kind. It does not refer to being a leader even in the People of Praise, as an example.

I think that everyone *is* or *should become* a leader—that everyone is right now, or should become a leader, in some sphere or area of their lives. Really what I'm saying is that

everyone *can* and *must* do something with a sense of responsibility. In other words, everyone *can* and *must* be a leader.

For example, we become a leader when in some area of our daily lives, we are sensitive and open to seeing a need. That's the first element, is that we're open and sensitive to seeing a need, and then assuming personal responsibility for doing something about that need. And then, followed by action, and that action of filling the need or doing something about it. When stated quite simply, we become a leader when we see a need and go about filling that need. And that's very simple, and it's very different than the view that we might have had of a leader, or of a lead—of leadership. We become a leader when we see a need and go about filling it.

Although the definition can be stated rather simply, there are some very necessary qualities that each of us must acquire to become a consistent, effective leader for Jesus. And the key word in that sentence was “consistent.” Because without the qualities that I'm going to mention, we can only occasionally be a leader. It's almost—without the qualities that I'm going to mention, we become a leader almost by accident, kind of like by being in the right situation at the right time. *With* the qualities, each of us can consistently and effectively be a leader. And in fact, we can become a dependable leader—that is, almost as dependable as Dodge was, some years back. That's very dependable, consistent.

I want to cover some of the qualities, then, that will allow us to be a consistent, dependable leader. And I've got them in two categories. The first category is that of a natural—we'll call “natural qualities.”

So, the first of these natural qualities that we need to be a leader is to know and always remember the ideal. And that ideal, I might suggest, would be to love and serve the Lord, our God, with all our minds, hearts, and souls—in other words, our whole being. By loving and serving one another—in other words, being a leader for our brothers and sisters by serving, by serving them with a pure heart, wanting only to serve and to love God. So, the first thing in that natural quality—the first natural quality is knowing and

remembering the ideal, and that is to love and serve God by serving our brothers and sisters.

The second item in the area of natural qualities is knowing reality. And that is, being realistic enough to know what is attainable and what is not. It's a very important quality in becoming a leader.

Another of the natural qualities that we must acquire is that of self-discipline. That is, once we've decided to act, even when the going gets tough, we force ourselves to continue on. In other words, it's a matter of the song, "there's no turning back" [from the song, "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"]. So, self-discipline, then, is one of those natural qualities that we must acquire, to consistently and—be a leader and be dependable.

Another of those natural qualities is that we must have a feeling for others, that is, an ability to identify with them and their needs—in other words, place ourselves in their shoes. Or, another simple term is "to walk a mile in their moccasins." But it's a very important quality in being a dependable, consistent leader—having a feeling for others.

Another of those natural qualities is that we must show initiative. We've got to adopt a mentality that if I personally don't fill the need, whatever that need is that we notice, that if I don't personally fill the need, not another single person in the world will fill that need. The—whether that thing gets done or not depends entirely on my initiative.

Another item in the natural qualities is that we must be generous, remembering that everything that we are and have has been a generous, free gift from God, and can we do less for others and with others than to be that generous?

In addition to those natural qualities that we need to acquire to being [sic] a dependable, effective, consistent leader, there are several supernatural qualities. And what we have to do with supernatural qualities that we desire is to ask God to give them to us; but they're God-given.



The first is faith—the supernatural quality that we must acquire—and we have to ask God and depend on him to give that to us—to give us a lively faith. The second supernatural quality to being a leader is hope. And I bet you could guess the third: it's love, or charity. And then, the fourth is—the fourth supernatural quality that we must acquire is that of humility if we want to be a leader for our Lord.

In 2 Peter, chapter one, there's a brief summary of these qualities. Verses five to eight:

For this very reason do your best to add goodness to your faith; and to your goodness add knowledge; to your knowledge add self-control; to your self-control add endurance; to your endurance add godliness; to your godliness add brotherly love; and to your brotherly love add love. These are the qualities you need, and if you have them in abundance, they will make you active and effective in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, to become consistent in our personal leadership by serving others, we must form a habit of putting the qualities into practice—in other words, training ourselves so to become *automatic* in leading, and that leading, then, is to be translated into—to be automatic in serving whenever an opportunity arises. Once we've disciplined ourself [sic] to form a leadership—that is, a service habit—that is, training ourself by doing, by actually serving, being a leader in that way—we will find that being a leader will become spontaneous, and the more we practice it, the easier it will become.

The world 2,000 years ago was given an example in leadership that will never be surpassed, when Jesus, our Lord and Savior, filled the need of all mankind by reconciling all mankind to God, the Father, by laying down his life for us in the ultimate service of dying for us.

I'd like to quote from Isaiah, and it's found in Acts 8, verses 32 to 34. . . . It's speaking of our Lord Jesus, when it says:

He was like a sheep that was taken to be slaughtered. He was like a lamb that makes no sound when its wool is cut off. He did not say a word. He was humiliated, and

justice was denied him. No one will be able to tell about his descendants, for his life on earth has come to an end.

[Recording ends here.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 120. Consulting the Community

*At this February 15, 1974 community meeting Paul DeCelles spoke about why, when and how the coordinators will consult the community as a whole. Although the procedures (the “how”) for conducting a consultation have changed over time, this recording reflects the spirit and purpose of People of Praise consultations. For more historical context see the “Explanation of Terms” section of Resource 100, “Background Information.”*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

[Tape begins after Paul has already begun speaking.]

PAUL: . . . This is not so much a teaching as it is a kind of explanation of the process by—that we’ve been using and have grown in and are now able to articulate with some kind of regularity, concerning the way in which we arrive at community decisions.

So, mainly, decisions are made by heads. Heads in various kinds of—like, heads of households, are responsible to see to it that certain decisions are made concerning the household. Exactly how those decisions should be made, whether the head is the one who should make them or whether it’s—he should make them after consultation in the—one way or another way, is something that’s worked out differently in different cases.

But heads are primarily responsible to—for seeing to it that decisions are made, on the part and for the sake of, those people over whom he has concern. We’re not changing that; that’s just the way of life in the community, that heads have that responsibility, whether it’s the head of a household or a head of a ministry, or whether it’s another kind of headship, which is the headship which is represented in the branches [“branch” was the term used for a geographic subsection of the community, like an “area” in the community today] and the branch meetings, for instance.

Or, also for those things which have a bearing on the life of—that we live, that part of our lives in increasing or varying degrees, the life that we live together, the life that we hold in common. To the degree that we're doing that—those aspects of our lives which are lived in common—decisions concerning those things are made by the coordinators, who are the heads of the community.

Now, most decisions can be made with normal consultation with those who are involved. And all decisions should be made after talking things over with everybody who is involved. But normally this just proceeds in an ordinary kind of fashion. You talk with people about the situation, about the situation that—about which you're supposed to make a decision. You consult—everybody's consulting, and then a decision is arrived at, in whatever way the head deems best for that circumstance.

That's also true for things in the community as a whole. There are normally ways in which the coordinators, whether it's through the branch meetings, or through individual — talks with individual people in the community, or whether it's through the sharing at the pastoral team meeting, or whether it's through prophecy and the gifts of wisdom and discernment—however it may be, there's some kind of normal consultation that's taking place, open to the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. And so, decisions on a day-to-day basis, on behalf of the community as a whole, those parts that pertain to our living together, are all made sort of ordinarily.

Sometimes, though, there's a need for the coordinators to consult the whole community gathered together. And we've had some recent examples of this. I'd like to just call your attention to these things.

One was when we were talking about what the right relationship—what kind of relationship should the People of Praise, as a whole, have with regard to the True House community? We talked about that at great length during the summertime. And, on the basis of what we prayed about, and what was shared there, and all the things that people were telling us, we were able to formulate and make some policies and make some decisions about the stance that we should take—one of those things being that we

would, as coordinators, accept responsibility for a certain kind of care and concern over the members of True House, which we referred to as “shepherding.”

And there were other things that came out of that. Another thing, for instance, was the decision to invite all of True House to come to the Friday night [weekly community] meeting. That has not yet taken place, because the coordinators of True House have asked us to allow them a certain amount of time before we send out this blanket invitation. And they want us to do—they want us to send out the invitation. That seems to be the consensus of their feeling, but they want to do it at sort of the right time, and they think that within a week, now, roughly a week, would be the right time. [Unintelligible comments from the audience.] So, that’s the reason why—that is one of the reasons, anyway, why nobody from True House is here.

The second time that we had a consultation of the community as a whole was concerning our involvement with the Charismatic Renewal Services [CRS], in particular, but in general, our—the People of Praise participation in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services Committee: how we would, as a whole, be involved, or whether we *would* be involved, whether it was God’s *will* for us to be involved, with that kind of national ministry—in fact, international ministry.

I just want to make a footnote on that now. [Paul coughs.] Pardon my—but it’s something that came up at a recent Service Committee meeting, that we were advised that the—Pope Paul VI and Bishop—Archbishop Hamer regularly read *New Covenant* [a monthly magazine published by the Catholic Charismatic Renewal from 1972–2002]. [Laughter and inaudible comments.] They are very much keeping track of what’s going on. And they want to know what’s happening at our Service Committee meetings. And so there is certainly a very great international kind of activity with regard to the Catholic Church there, and the leadership which Pope Paul manifests as a religious leader for the whole world, as well.

Well, that was a very difficult and complicated decision, about what we should do about Charismatic Renewal Services. We talked about that at great length, had a lot of input

from everybody, and we talked and I—as I recall, we asked the members who had made the covenant, in particular, to say exactly what they felt about all this that we were describing at that time. On the basis of the information we got, we made a decision to participate in CRS—that is, Charismatic Renewal Services—to accept the responsibility for running the international conference in June, and some other responsibilities.

Now, exactly—because we’ve taken part in this, there are some things that are beginning to shape up, concerning the Service Committee itself, which we have to talk further about. We’ll come back to that later. In fact, next week Kevin is going to explain the developing situation there, and we’re going to enter into a process that I want to describe in the rest of my talk now.

Anyway, the next point was that we also talked about—with the community as a whole, gathered together, some long time ago—about the formation of the council. And subsequent to the formation of the council and its operation and its effective working, and this. . . . And the revision of the council into two things—into the pastoral team, on the one hand, and expanding the council, in a certain sense, and broadening it to the pastoral team; and also the selection of Clem as a coordinator [in addition to Paul and Kevin]—came out of all those talks and subsequent consultation with the community as a whole about the formation of the council.

And the last one that I want to mention is the kind of thing that we did when we wanted to change, I think it was one or two words in the covenant. And we talked a great, long time about that. We took a—maybe six months in all, to thoroughly consider the ramifications of what the change in the wording of the covenant would imply, what they would be. And finally, after getting a sense of the—what it was that the community as whole—how God was leading us as a whole, after consultation with the whole community, we made that change in the reading of the covenant. That—now, for the new people, that’s—the covenant that you heard on the Community Weekend is the covenant which has been changed, okay? There are no more changes foreseen right now; however, changes are possible, in the same way that we made that change then.

There are really two times for consultation of this kind of—of this sort. They involve—it's a matter of major decisions that concern either a change in direction of the community: for example, the entering into the whole question of a national and international ministry on the part of the People of Praise. That was a change of direction. We had been focusing all of our energies on building up the People of Praise and working at the —at building up the Wednesday night prayer meeting. And now the Lord—at that time, the Lord was saying that he wanted us to go—that he wanted to lead many people to us; that he wanted us—the nations to be looking at us. And again, we had tonight the prophecy about how—the two prophecies about what the Lord said about—that he was going to accomplish great things with us; and the other one being, that—how he is, in fact, accomplishing remarkable things with people that we don't even know. He's changing hearts and converting them by virtue of our prayer, prayers of praise and thanksgiving.

So the Lord—anyway, my point here is that, when there is a question of a change of direction of the whole community, that that's a time for us to have a community consultation.

The second time is when there is a change in the order of the community. When the order and the headship/subordination kinds—the different kinds of things that are happening, when that takes place, there also should be a community consultation.

The purpose in consulting the community is to discover what God's will is. It's not a matter of trying to please the majority of people. It's a matter of, in consultation with everybody, discerning what it is that God wants us to do. And that's the primary function of talking with everybody. And then, as soon as we know it, we should do it.

The coordinators still have responsibility for life—for the life of the community. That's the coordinators functioning like shepherds, and—in that shepherd passage in John where Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd,” and “I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly.” That's the key function of shepherds, to guard the life that we

live in common. And therefore, because the coordinators have that responsibility, they have to make the decisions, and they have to have the power to make the decisions.

But they need to rely on prophecy, discernment, and wisdom, as we do regularly in the prayer meetings. You may notice—not tonight, but ordinarily—I tape-record every one of the community meetings, every prophecy that’s given at a community meeting. And I listen to it two or three times a week, in order to see what it is that—and we talk about these at our coordinators’ meetings: “What is it that God is saying to us in prophecy? How are we supposed to be moving?” Because he’s the one who’s leading us. The same thing with prayer, discernment, and wisdom, as all the gifts are operating in the community.

Now, we also have to have—along with those things [prophecy and the other gifts], we have to have a consultation of the community, and we suggest—we are—we’re saying: “This is what we’re doing, and we should continue to do this. To discover God’s will, we normally have been using, and intend to continue using, this form.” There are a couple of new twists in it, but they just make the old form better. They’re not different, really.

The first thing is that it’s necessary to present the matter that has to be decided—the matter that’s under discussion—to the community as a whole. That would normally happen—like, in Kevin’s talk next week, he will present the matter for everybody to consider.

The second thing that we need to do is to have a short discussion for clarification purposes. Like, “What? I didn’t understand what you meant by this. Could you explain what it is that is the proposition?” It’s not a matter of asking for [sic] “What is your argumentation in favor of it?” It’s a matter of—or “[your argumentation] against it.” It’s a matter of clarifying what the question is, and what are the implications of the question.

The third thing is that there should be an explanation of the proposition in the branches. That takes place in a fairly comfortable way already. And then, the people in the branches—in the branch meetings—taking that to their households and continuing the clarification and discussion, leading discussions about what it is that’s being



discussed, right? Just to get everybody focused on what the issue is so that we can clearly get relevant answers to the question.

The fourth thing is that there should be these discussions in all the households, not just the households of those who have representatives in the branch meetings.

The fifth thing is that there should be a further clarification and a general discussion, if that's necessary. So, this takes some time, obviously: at least a couple of weeks. After a couple of weeks, discussing this all around the community in households, or in whatever meetings there may be, it may be necessary to come back together and say, in a meeting, like, right about now: "Listen, there was one thing that I just can't quite get through my mind, into my head. What did you mean by this?"

And then, finally—or, not "finally"—the sixth point is that we will then have a mailing. Now, this is something which is a new wrinkle, but it's the same kind of thing. In the past, what we've done is, we've asked all the people who are underway, who have not made the covenant, to just be quiet for a while and let all the members who have made the covenant now comment. That we want in particular—since it's—since they have already pledged their lives, to live their lives together in such a solemn commitment, it's crucial that they are the ones who need to be consulted about the way, you know, any change in life of the community should take place.

So, what we're going to do is mail to all the covenant members—have a mailing sent out, which will also address the question, asking them specifically, as—you know, as specific answers as possible. Like: Do you favor, or do you disfavor this proposition? Do you—what have you been getting as you pray about it? Or, and also—I mean, all these things: What have you—what do you think about it? What do you feel about it? And we'll work up a form which will make this—make it possible.

Whether you've been praying about it—sometimes people in the community just haven't gotten into some of the issues. And they don't feel comfortable in walking up and saying, "Well, the Lord told me," you know (which is not a very good thing to say in any case). But, walking up and saying something like, "Well, I've been praying about it,

and I really think it's from the Lord that. . . ." They wouldn't do that, because maybe they just haven't gotten into it quite that way. But they have a strong feeling about it. And it's perfectly legitimate for everybody to voice that strong feeling and say what it is that's on their mind about these decisions that have to be made, about these matters that have to be decided.

We also want to have feedback from all the people who are underway. And that'll take place in all these discussions. And it also can take place in the way of writing down whatever the Lord may give you, any passages that you have, in the normal way that we've done that in the past: to write that out, and, and give it to one of the coordinators. And we collect these things, and we read them over before making a decision.

The seventh point is that the conclusion, the decision, will be reached by the coordinators. That's their function: to make decisions. That's one of their functions. And after the decision is made, it needs to be clarified again, and explained as to exactly what the decision was that was arrived at. It may be something different from what had been discussed. You know, it may be that the Lord made it very clear that we were sort of asking the wrong question, and that what he wanted us to do was *this*. Not to invalidate the whole consultation process—not to change the subject, for example—but the point is, that what the Lord may teach us through all this may be quite different from what any individual had thought before.

And what we need, then, is a very clear statement of exactly where we stand and what the decision is that has been made, so that we all know how to relate to one another in light of the new life decision. So, there will be an explanation, and that explanation, at the general community meeting should—that should take place there. And subsequent to that, it will be discussed again in the pastoral team meeting the following morning. It'll be explained there—not to be re-debated and to be re-decided. And then, eventually, the—with the branch meetings, and with all the households and all the ministries again. And so, the explanation of the life and what the Lord has led us to will be throughout the whole community.

And the last thing that I want to mention now is: that's the process. And we're—we've changed it, we've improved it slightly. And we're going to put that into effect, tonight. Aha! We don't happen to have a mailing for it, but it wouldn't be time for that mailing anyway.

But it is time for us to present one particular issue (and, as I said, Kevin is going to present another one next week), which is that the coordinators feel that there is a general need for some more coordinators. And what we want everybody to do, is to pray about whether or not the Lord has given us any more coordinators in the community. And we'll begin this process.

There's not much to explain about this. What we're aware of is that there's a need for more coordinators, so that decisions can be made better, and that the decisions can be broader-based, and that more people can get the adequate pastoral ministry, and some other things can be done better. [Paul pauses here.] So that's what we see as a need. But it isn't so clear that the Lord wants—has got us in the situation where that need can be met. And what we have to find out is whether there is anybody that you feel—or any several people that you feel—might be coordinators, that the Lord might want to be coordinators.

And we will begin that process. I don't think there's any need for clarification of that. There may be need for clarification of the rest of the talk, now, but next. . . . So we will begin discussing that question, and you can talk among yourselves, all of us together in all of our various living situations and ministry situations, about what that might be, who it might be that the Lord might be raising up.

Now, I want just to conclude this with one remark about. . . . We're not talking—when we get— send out this mailing and get the returns—we're not talking about a majority vote. And it's not polling the People of Praise. What we're doing is trying to discover what God's will is. And we'll be able to do that better by seeing all the responses that people send in.

So, that's all I want to say. Praise God. Are there any questions about that?

Adrian?

ADRIAN: [Inaudible.] . . . Would additional coordinators then mean additional branch meetings? Like, that is, would we instead of three branches now have five branches, or four?

PAUL: No, not necessarily. It's not that they—that we need more branches, particularly, right now. It's just that we need more coordinators. We can—there are various kinds of services that coord- —that a new coordinator, or several new coordinators, might take on. One of them, for instance, would be—it's not necessary that it be a coordinator who does this, but we need to have a more regular control over, and care for, concern for, the whole process of initiation. And, right now we have to do the initiation thing—we do it in parts, various different ways—and it would be better if it were overseen generally.

There are other things. But the main thing is that it—that our decisions will be better, where—as many people as we are, our decisions will be better, better arrived at, by having more people to discuss and to consider the teachings and all the different directions the community's taking.

That's—now we're talking about coordinators; we're not talking about head coordinators. We still have two head coordinators, Kevin and me. And we're talking about other coordinators, the first of whom is Clem. But, now even that is a little bit—needs a little explanation, perhaps, because we're all coordinators, and we all equally participate in the decision processes concerning the life of the community. That's becoming increasingly the case.

The question of planning the coordinators' meeting and taking care of the coordinators is a task which falls to—well, this is kind of silly. We're talking about *Clem*. [Laughter.] But, as we envision what's going on [it] is that we're taking—one of our responsibilities is to take care of the coordinators. Are you taken care of, Clem? [Laughter.]

CLEM: I'm so happy! [Laughter.]

PAUL: Does that answer your question?

WOMAN'S VOICE: Paul?

PAUL: Yeah.

WOMAN'S VOICE: It's not entirely clear: what's your job description of a coordinator?

PAUL: A coordinator is somebody who has responsibility for the life of the community. And that means that he is the head of all those things which we hold in common—he's one of the heads—and the coordinators as a body exercise that headship. Okay? The coordinators as a body have headship, too, and that's Clem and Kevin and me. But their—one of the things that's necessary is—their function is to be head of the community. Okay? That's the—the coordinators as a whole function at the level of headship for the life in common. And that means that they make decisions that affect the life in common, life in common. Is that clear?

WOMAN'S VOICE: Yeah, that's getting clear.

PAUL: For example, the decision about what we should do concerning True House was finally made by Clem and Kevin and me. Now, there are other possible decisions that people might have arrived at, but that was our responsibility, to make that decision. It's been our decision, for example, about the way people are admitted to the community. That's something which is very much what we do. We're very, very much on top of that. We need, because of other demands, to make sure that that's done more consistently and better. But that's a function that we—in other words, those who are coming underway, like those who have to make—who can make the covenant—the question of who should make the covenant is a question which is a decision that the coordinators have to make. And things like that.

WOMAN'S VOICE: But you must have something else in mind, then, if you kind of feel the need of more coordinators. Because you certainly wouldn't need more coordinators to decide who should make the covenant, would you?

PAUL: Yeah, we do.

WOMAN'S VOICE: I mean, you must have something. . . . [Inaudible.]

PAUL: Yeah, even for that. Even for that. That needs to be shared more broadly. But also there's the whole question of the formation of teaching, and the direction of the community as a whole. Now, you see, these talks that we've been—this is the fourth in a series of four, which is interrupted twice, by two other talks. But these four talks have been also carefully worked out together. That was a function of the coordinators. It's principally—Kevin and I have been doing that. But that's something which is a function of coordinators: planning those teachings, and so on. That's a major thing. And we need more of that, actually. And there are lots of other things, like the initiation thing.

But the fundamental—in my mind, as I see it, one—there's a fundamental question of what's the best way to make decisions. When will you have an—the best possible decision-making method? It seems like [this happens] when you—when there are maybe a few more than three coordinators who are making the decisions, and [you] have more people, with a lot of exchange and a lot of taking care of one another, a real body of coordinators loving one another the right way, arriving at the decisions that need to be arrived at. In other words, the decision-making should be a community thing, rather than just, say, two people talking to one another, or even three. We need more. In my mind, that's the most important thing. I think that that will make us all have much—a much deeper sense of responsibility for what's going on in the community.

Another question?

KEVIN: Do you want to say something about testing: have [sic] a period of testing for new coordinators?

PAUL: Oh, yes. Yes, thanks. Ah, what we'll do, with regard to the coordinators: if it looks like—if it becomes pretty clear that somebody seems to be being raised up as a coordinator in the community, as was quite clear in Clem's case, we will—we'll pick

them, and the coordinators will pick the people who will be coordinators, according to the consultation. We'll take all that into account, and make a choice.

These, by these—by the way, the covenant members will get these letters and then mail them back—should sign them, of course, with all the indications of why they're doing this: why the—what's going on, why the decision—why they would recommend a certain course of action. Or, in this case, which people and for what reasons.

After they are appointed—they will be appointed provisionally, or for a period of testing, maybe six months to a year. And they would function as coordinators, then, attending the coordinators' meetings, one of which, for instance, is a three-hour meeting every Tuesday. Another one is about an hour and 15 minutes—an hour and a half, sometimes—meeting on Thursday afternoon. And then, they also would come to the branch meeting if they're not already in the branch—I'm sorry, the pastoral team meeting—and so on.

So, anyway, the main point I wanted to make there was that there would be a period of testing, when, rather than just taking somebody and making him a coordinator, it's better if we make him a coordinator and see how he functions as coordinator, and if it's ratified by the fruit that—good fruit is being borne. Then we would have him come out and pray with him, with laying on of hands, and have that—have him installed, really, as a coordinator.

Any other questions?

It's clear, isn't it? At least it's clear. [Paul and others laugh.]

KEVIN: Are there any questions on the. . . .

PAUL: Tom has a question.

KEVIN: Yeah, Tom.

TOM: Something you said made me think of—that maybe we’re supposed to, like, do this, with regard to [inaudible: “who we think the new”?] coordinators. . . .

PAUL: Right.

TOM: Are we going to do that?

PAUL: Yes. That’s to be done now. So, tomorrow morning, we will be talking at the branch meetings, and—wait a minute; whatever it is—the pastoral team meeting. We’ll talk about it. We probably will not have branch meetings tomorrow, is that right?

KEVIN: Why not?

PAUL: Oh, okay. I guess we will. There’s a wedding. I thought maybe it. . . .

KEVIN: It’s in the afternoon, isn’t it? It’s at two. Two o’clock.

PAUL: Oh, so there’s time. Okay. That’s—Barb Ward is marrying. . . .

KEVIN: Phil Sutton.

PAUL: Phil Sutton.

KEVIN: That’s what all this is for [various decorations and refreshments], because the reception is here.

[Various reactions, including laughter, indicating, “Now I understand what’s going on.”]

PAUL: So, we should begin the. . . . [Laughter.] Everybody thought it [decorations and refreshments] was for us! [Laughter.]

So, the process of consultation concerning the new coordinators should begin. But one should not enter into it, by the way, in any kind of a spirit of parties or factions. It’s not a



matter of caucusing, so as to declare—campaign our man, you know [laughter], and to see how we—well, that’s just clearly out of the question.

KEVIN: Sure. It’s funny!

[All laugh.]

MAN’S VOICE: Could we be told who now is, other than the three coordinators, are [sic] on the pastoral team as of now?

PAUL: Yes. The—I always have a hard time—if I can just remember where everybody sits. If they’d all sit in the same place, it’d be easy. Carol Pajor [Miller], and Terry Kelly. I’ll just look around the room. Jeanne [DeCelles] and Dorothy [Ranaghan] are, and Pat Lewsen [Rath]. There are four women and a man there, right? That’s five. Did you get ’em all?

MAN’S VOICE: Pat Lewsen is . . . [inaudible]; you said four women.

PAUL: Right. That’s Carol, and Jeanne and Dorothy, and Pat. Then there’s Terry Kelly, and Tony... Rowland. [Laughter.] Ken Peters, Joe Bagiackas, and Joe Zakas, and Dick Keusch. [Laughter.] And Kevin [more laughter]. Kevin and me.

KEVIN: Clem.

PAUL: And Clem.

MAN’S VOICE: And Paul Go.

PAUL: And Paul Go.

KEVIN: Leave anybody out?

PAUL: Did I leave anybody out? Did you get all those down? I’d like a list when you’re through. [Laughter.]

KEVIN: He may have the idea that you can only pick people from the pastoral team.

PAUL: Oh, yeah, yeah. There are 12.

KEVIN: Fourteen.

PAUL: Fourteen.

MAN'S VOICE: Twelve. Yeah, 11 plus three!

PAUL: Right, right. Now, it's not a matter of—being a coordinator is not a matter of, sort of like, promotion from pastoral team to coordinator, okay? [Laughter.] In fact, I—there's a passage in, like—I forget now. It's a passage that has to do with little children. When the disciples were arguing with each other—they were “discussing,” Scripture says. It didn't say they were arguing. [Laughter.] They were discussing who among them was the greatest, and it's better translated. . . .

[Recording ends here.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 121. How to Pray with People

*In this talk, given at a February 27, 1974 Christian Growth Workshop, Jeanne DeCelles describes the prayer room ministry that regularly happened after the Wednesday night prayer meeting and relates many stories from her experience in the prayer room.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

JEANNE: Just raise your hand. Okay. Or pull on your ear or something like that. My voice is going to be uneven I'm sure, because I just got over being sick. My name is Jeanne DeCelles, and I'm the head of the prayer room ministry, which is held every week after the large prayer meeting upstairs in the church. How many of you have been to the prayer room and know what I'm talking about?

Okay. If I don't talk too long, and we have time to break into discussion groups, it would be a good thing if there was someone in each group who had been to the prayer room and you could share, you know, some of the experiences that you've had up there.

The prayer room ministry has evolved. . . . Would you mind all sitting more or less in the same area, so I'm not with my back to anybody? [Jeanne chuckles.] My voice isn't all that great tonight. The prayer room ministry has evolved over the years since 1967 but we always had some *kind* of prayer room ministry. It was just different things at different times.

When we first started having the prayer meetings, over at Notre Dame in the administration building on campus, we did not have what you'd properly call a prayer room, but we did offer people the opportunity to be prayed with specifically at that time for the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and that's what you would say the prayer room ministry was used for primarily then.

Now the prayer room ministry is almost never used for that. In fact we really had to be careful because we don't want to offend people, but the prayer room ministry is not the place to send somebody if they want to be prayed with for the baptism in the Spirit. But at that time, we weren't praying for, you know, specific things in specific ways, and we didn't have a Life in the Spirit Seminar. So, [if] somebody wanted to receive the baptism in the Spirit in those first early months of the renewal, they just went and we laid hands on them and we prayed with them for the baptism in the Spirit. We also prayed with each other for healings and things like that.

Later on, the prayer meetings were held in our home. And I remember [Jeanne sighs and chuckles] noticing one night that there was something going on in every floor of the house and in all different rooms. I think including one of the bathrooms was being used [laughter] for some kind of a ministry or somebody praying with somebody. We had what we called explanation sessions in the basement. The big prayer meeting was held upstairs afterwards.

Some people who had had explanation sessions would go in the living room and we would pray with them for the baptism in the Spirit. One of the girls who was living with us was sleeping in my husband's study at the time, and we used her room—her bedroom, and my husband's study—for a room to talk with people or counsel with people or pray with people for whatever they wanted. Occasionally there would be an overflow back into one of the other bedrooms. We used everything except the rooms where the children were sleeping—as I recall, we never had to do that—but the hallways were filled with people, and one night a young man had an epileptic seizure on the kitchen floor during the prayer meeting, and we carried him upstairs and we prayed with him up there in our bedroom, and he was healed.

So, even then, the prayer room ministry was a very effective thing, and God was doing very great things. But it was highly disorganized, obviously. We didn't really know what we were doing.

Later on after we moved the prayer meeting to a local parochial school, we had what we called—I think we called it a prayer room then. We were still praying with people at that time in the prayer room for the baptism in the Spirit and, as I recall, at that time we used the last two rows of seats in the auditorium in St. Joe grade school. And I remember that God worked very powerfully there on several occasions and it was certainly not the ideal prayer room situation.

As more people began to use the prayer room ministry we began to use things like classrooms down there and it was somewhere in that period, I don't remember exactly, when one of the leaders of the prayer meeting at large said to me one night, "That would be a good thing for you to do. Why don't you be head of the prayer room team?" And that's how I happened to be head of the prayer room team today, as far as I can remember.

Later on when the People of Praise took over this large prayer meeting and servicing it completely, I was again sort of recommissioned by the People of Praise to be head of the prayer room team. But that's basically how it happened.

As we became more aware of the fact that we needed sound teaching before we received the baptism in the Spirit, we did develop Life in the Spirit Seminars, and at that time, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, being prayed with for the baptism of the Holy Spirit was moved out of the prayer room ministry. And the prayer room ministry itself became more of a clearly defined ministry connected with the prayer meeting. And that's the way it's been pretty much for the last four or five years I guess. As it became obvious that more and more people were going to need prayer support in asking for healing, and people were needing counseling, people were needing guidance, we began to ask people to make a commitment to the prayer room team. And at the present time we have nine people who are solidly committed to being here every Wednesday and to being upstairs every Wednesday from 10:30 on until everybody is taken care of. Not all nine of us are there every week. We try to give everybody at least one day off from this ministry a month, and hopefully when we add a couple of more in the next six weeks we'll be able to have more time off.

The prayer room ministry is an opportunity for anybody attending this large prayer meeting to seek several things. First of all, we used to have a custom at the end of a large prayer meeting, especially when they were held in private homes, of just all gathering together and laying hands on each other as people would request it, for a blessing or anything else, you know, that we might want to ask each other to support each other in prayer for. That goes on in the prayer room. And at the present time what we're doing is we're asking people who want that kind of prayer, just a brief prayer for a blessing or guidance or something like that, to go to the altar rail. So, if you just want something simple like that, then you should go upstairs and just kneel down at the altar rail and someone will come along and take care of you as soon as possible. There are usually one or two people assigned to do just that, to just take care of people at the altar rail.

If you want to talk more, if you feel like you need to explain your need more fully, or if you want counseling of some kind, or if you need discernment of spirits or something like that, then you should go and sit in one of the pews in the back and you should spread out because some people really like privacy, you know. When they're being prayed with they don't like to be surrounded by a whole lot of other people. So when you do that, in charity to other people you should spread out. When you go up there, don't go away in the back. We might miss you because it's dark back there, but don't sit right next to each other. [Jeanne coughs.] Excuse me.

We are not trained counselors. None of us has any degrees in counseling. One person on the team at present time does have an advanced degree in clinical psychology, I believe. I'm a registered nurse, so I've had some training in that area. But I don't think that any of us would call ourselves trained counselors. But we do find ourselves up there giving a lot of counseling. And what we find we have to do is just turn to the Lord and really count on him to pour out in abundance every week [Jeanne chuckles] the gifts that we need to speak his word to the people who come to the prayer room and he has never failed to bless them. In fact when we're looking for someone to join the prayer room team what we look for is whether or not the person has obvious gifts that are necessary. They may have an obvious gift of healing, for instance, but more importantly they may have a very

strong gift of discernment. Or, they may—you may find that people are going to that individual for guidance. People are going to that individual for pastoral care of some kind. When they have a problem, that's the person they go to, and the person seems to be able to really rely on God to give them the discernment that they need to understand what needs to be spoken to that person's heart. And that's what we really look for more than for any degrees. Not that we have anything against degrees in psychology—we don't—but it's a spiritual ministry, and that's what we count on there. We don't count on some of the gifts that we may have in the worldly sense, which are fine. And we want people on the team to use the intelligence that God has given them. We also count on a very strong gift of wisdom.

We count on an ability to help people be at ease about sharing some of the really deep problems close to their heart and we count on them for toughness. Very often people come to the prayer room and they hear things they don't want to hear, frankly. If you go to the prayer room and you feel that the advice you've been given there is somewhat harsh or difficult, I would recommend that before you just reject it, you really pray it through because no one up there is interested in being harsh and no one up there is interested in doing anything but speaking the Word of God to you as clearly as they possibly can, and with as much love as they possibly can. There's one thing that you can count on up there, and that is love. You will really be loved when you come to the prayer room ministry. You may not feel like people are saying to you exactly what it was that you came up there to hear. In fact, frequently people will tell you that that's not your problem at all, your problem is this. Your problem is that you're not submissive to your husband. Your problem is that you're not a good head to your wife. It's not your job. It's not your children. It's not, you know, any number of things that you may think you've really zeroed in on what's wrong and that's what you ought to be prayed with about.

If after praying and really seeking God's discernment there, the person on the prayer room team says that they think, in fact, what's going on there is that you need to be more submissive to your husband or you need to lay down your life in a better way as the head of your wife, you ought to listen to that, even if it's not what you wanted to hear. And you ought to really *try* to do what that person recommends. Now that isn't to

say that you should never question what you hear. You should, especially if you don't *understand* the advice you've been given. You should question it and you should find out what that person is trying to say to you if they haven't made it clear.

The procedure that we use in the prayer room is that most of the time we pray by twos. Sometimes that's not possible. Sometimes I wind up with an uneven team up there and so when I'm making assignments, if someone's ill or something, like I wasn't there last week, and so things were kind of uneven. Someone may have to work alone, but we really feel strongly that it's for our own protection and for the protection of the people we're praying with, that it's much, much less risky if there are two people praying.

The reason for that is that if I'm praying with you and let's say we go out in twos and one person is always the leader of the team, which means that the other person is in submission to the leader of that team of two, and we move that around. Like, I really find it very, very good to be submissive to someone in the prayer room ministry. It's a very good thing for me to do every so often. That is the check on my discernment. It's a check on what's going on with me there. So I mix it up a lot, you know. When a person first starts to work in the room, obviously they're not going to be head of a team, but eventually they will be asked to do that when they feel comfortable doing it. They're sort of in charge and I'll explain more the reason for that later.

They will listen to what you have to say, pray with you, do whatever the Lord seems to be leading them to do. The other member of the team is there to be primarily a prayer support, to be praying all the time that you're talking. You know, if you're really pouring your heart out, you can be sure that there's at least one person who's listening very closely and praying but listening too and another person who's just *praying*, who's just literally taking you to the foot of Jesus' cross and putting your problem squarely there at his feet where it belongs. That person is supporting the team leader and that person is supporting you in your prayer because when you come to the prayer room, you're coming for a lot of different things, but you should be coming to *pray* and what you're asking for basically is for people to support you in that prayer.



You're asking for two or more to be gathered in the name of Jesus for the sake of you. That you can find the answer to whatever it is you need to know. And it may not be some big hairy deal. You may just want to know, should I go to college next year, should I go to graduate school or should I do this? Should I start looking at community more closely? I'm having a problem getting along with my mother or my husband or my children. It, you know, it may be something big. On the other hand, it may not be something so big. You don't need to wait to come to the prayer room until you need something really, really big.

Another reason that we find it's good to have two people with a clearly defined leader of the team is so that there won't be confusion. In fact, that's the primary reason. Sometimes in the prayer room we deal with the problems of the world. Sometimes we deal with the problems of the flesh and very frequently we deal with the problems of Satan, the enemy.

We don't believe that every single problem that comes up to the prayer room ministry is the work of Satan. But on the other hand, we have learned over the last six or seven years that a lot of the problems that we have are, in fact, the work of Satan. And we're not a bit afraid of him, because he's just damned and he can go to hell, and that's what we tell him to do. And we deal with him a lot in the prayer room. And whenever you're dealing with Satan, one thing that you want to be sure and avoid is any kind of confusion. So, when we pray with you up there, we might say to you, "Now, I really, I discern that there is a spirit of confusion or anxiety," or doubt or lust or hate or theft or whatever. The prayer room team leader will say to you, "So and so, I want you to renounce the spirit of confusion." Now what we mean when we ask you to do that is we want you to do it right then, and we want you to do it out loud. And it's important that you do it out loud. We don't care how loud you do it. We don't care if you stand on your head while you're doing it. All we want is that you should say out loud, "In the name of Jesus, I renounce you spirit of confusion." We do not ask you to bind that spirit or cast that spirit out or deal with that spirit in any way, we just ask you to hate his guts, and we want you to really concentrate on hating his guts and renouncing him with all your mind, your heart, and your will.

You see, most of us are not accustomed to the idea that God said we have to *love* him with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, our whole will and all our strength. And at the same time, we have to *hate* Satan exactly the same way. You should pour as much strength into hating Satan as you do into loving God. And it's really important that we understand that because some people have this mentality that he's a cute little rascal, and he's nothing of the sort. He's abominable, he's filthy, and he's out to kill you. So when we urge you to do that, don't be spooked by that. Don't be afraid of that. Just renounce whatever it is with all your will, with all your strength.

The prayer room leader will then deal with the spirit and the other person will pray. If you've got *this* person binding a spirit of confusion and *that* spirit [sic] binding a spirit of anxiety, and the person who's being prayed with doing something else, you're going to have all kinds of confusion. And if there's anything that Satan loves, it's confusion. He really can work powerfully there. So we just keep everything very, very much in order and the leader will deal with the spirits and cast them out or bind them and all you have to do is just hate their guts [Jeanne chuckles], and count on the Lord to do the work, and the other person will just pray.

Now, if while you're being prayed with you discern that there is a spirit at work in you, then you should call that to the attention of the leader. Just say, "You know, I think maybe there's a spirit of such and such. Would you deal with that?" And then we'll do that. Or the other prayer partner may say, "I think there's a spirit of such and such," and then the leader will deal with that. But it's important that everything be done in order, and the best way to do that is for one person to lead and the other people to pray. So that's the way we do it.

In fact, order in the prayer room is really important. And that's why, if you've ever come up there with someone to pray with them, we ask that if you want to go up and just pray privately with someone, it's very helpful to us if you would go over to the other side of the church, because it causes confusion in the prayer room ministry. People don't know who's on the team and who isn't on the team and what's that person doing there, you know. Or we have had visiting prophets come to the prayer meeting, and then they

come up to the prayer room and they start running around laying hands on people, praying with people for all kinds of things. They may be very powerful in their gifts. I'm not saying that they aren't or that, you know, we're the only ones that have got it. Nothing like that at all. But this is the way our prayer room ministry is set up, and we ask that everybody who comes up there observes that order in order to eliminate any confusion or any, you know, disruptiveness—particularly people who just come in and start kind of praying at random with people. It just can be terribly, terribly disruptive and on at least one occasion it has done some harm. It has caused an individual a great deal of difficulty and harm. That's why not just everybody comes up and works on the prayer room team. There is a definite team, and those people are committed to be there every week, and they have recognized gifts that have been recognized over a long period of time, gifts of discernment.

Now one of the most important gifts in the prayer room is discernment. So I'd like to talk just a little bit about that. I think there's a lot of misunderstanding about discernment. I think some people think of it as some kind of a magic wand. You know, I've had people come up to me and they say, "Well, I was here several weeks ago and this person had a discernment about me. She discerned me in the head or she discerned me here," or something like that. And there's just confusion, and I don't mean to make fun of it, but I think it's important that we do understand what discernment is. It's not magic. But it is true that when God pours out his Spirit, he gives us the ability to tell what is of his Spirit and what is not of his Spirit and what is of the flesh and what is of the world, and that's basically what discernment is.

There's nothing, you know, very immediate—it's not always a vision. Sometimes it is. There's one person on the team, for instance, who very, very frequently will in fact have a vision when she prays with someone. The Lord will really give her not only a strong word of knowledge about that person and the needs of that person's heart, but will also give her some kind of a vision. She has a very, very strong gift in that area. Not everybody in the prayer room team has that strong a gift.

My gift does not work that way at all. I don't—very rarely. I may have more prophecy about people, for instance, than I would have a word of knowledge straight from the Lord about, you know, this person needs to forgive her sister, for instance; but that will happen. With at least one member of the team, it will happen frequently that she will have really strongly from the Lord, “This is not this person’s problem, what she’s telling you. Rather, the problem is that she’s never forgiven her sister for something her sister did, and that’s what she needs to hear.” Now of course that kind of thing just unjams all kinds of things in a person and unblocks a lot of things so that the Lord can deal with them and can heal them and can pour out his healing love on that person. And it’s very, very powerful and very effective, and we really thank God for it. But not all discernment works quite that way.

Some discernment may be just praying for a passage in Scripture, for instance. Generally when we pray for a passage in Scripture, if the passage we get is very harsh, or if it speaks to a very touchy problem, if we think it will embarrass the person, we might ask the other member of the team to leave for a minute so that we can talk to them privately because we don’t want to embarrass anybody.

Or if it seems harsh . . . Usually if I get a passage that’s very harsh and I’m not real sure about it, I’ll pray a little more and test it. And then I’ll tell the person, and then you can tell, you know. But all the gifts have to be tested and I’m not trying to imply that you should never test the gifts that are used in the prayer room. You should. But on the other hand, you should not just flatly reject some advice that you get up there because it’s not what you came to hear. If you’re only coming to hear what you want to hear, then you don’t need the prayer room ministry anyway. But if you *can* listen, God can speak very, very powerfully to your heart up there and can really unblock a lot of things.

All of the prayer room ministry involves a great deal of teaching and most of the teaching—all of the teaching in fact, in the prayer room ministry will be teaching of the People of Praise, and I don’t mean to make that sound so high-flown. Basically, what I mean by that is that over the last couple of years, God has taught the People of Praise a lot of things, particularly in the area of relationships with other people: how to be

forgiven, how to seek forgiveness, how to seek reconciliation, how to forgive people [Jeanne coughs] and how important it is to forgive people in order to be delivered of a lot of the things that are really weighing us down, really dragging us down a lot.

Teaching about headship and subordination within the family and within other relationships—the Lord has just really given us a lot of good teachings about that. And in the prayer room ministry those are the teachings that you will get if you come up to the prayer room. It's not necessarily particularly Catholic teaching. Most of the people on the team are Catholic because most of the people in the People of Praise are Catholic, but that's not by design or desire, and we're really eager to expand the ministry to include more people who are not Catholic. But occasionally you may get some advice that seems to you peculiar, you know, peculiarly Catholic. And if you have difficulty with that, or if you think the person praying with you is not aware of the fact that you're not a Catholic, and therefore that kind of language may be or that approach to things is, you know, uncomfortable for you, then you should tell them, you know. They may not know that you're not a Catholic.

One thing that I think it would really be useful to learn from the prayer room ministry is how to pray with each other. You know, we should all be able to pray with each other for anything at the drop of a hat, literally day and night, and we've learned that the way I just described to you is a good way, you know, eliminating all confusion, making clear, you know, making sure that there is no confusion allowed to enter in. Not seeing Satan behind every tree, but understanding that some of these problems that we have are a matter of repentance. Sometimes we just simply have to change our mind. We have to decide to behave differently or we have to give up an opinion or an idea. And that's not Satan, that's repentance that we need to do ourselves. Being able to see those things is really something that I think God wants for all of us, not just for the prayer room team. And you should be able to pray with each other in your homes or at work or wherever you are with other Christians. If you need something, you know, if you need somebody to support you and pray with you, go and do it, you know. It's a good idea to pray in twos for the reasons that I mentioned. But everything that I've told you about the prayer

room ministry you could, you know, reasonably be expected to do with each other whenever you need it.

If you want to send someone to the prayer room ministry . . . other than the things I've mentioned, such as healing and counseling and blessing and guidance—if you have, if you know somebody who's got a really serious problem and you will take them to the prayer room, you know, that ought to help. If you bring them up, and we ask you to leave [Jeanne chuckles] while we pray with them, please don't be offended. That person may need to hear something from the Lord, and they may need to hear it without you there, and don't be offended. We really have to protect people's privacy there. Everything that is said to us in the prayer room is confidential. Someone on the team may come to me and say, "This person came to the prayer room and they had this problem, what should I have done?" or "Did I do the right thing?" or "Should we enter into an ongoing counseling relationship with this person?" or something like that. They might share that with me, but by and large, we try to share relatively little even with each other on the team about what is said to us up there or about any problems that come to us up there, because we want people to feel really confident and secure, that they can really bare their heart and their soul up there if that's what's needed. And it's not going to be the topic of conversation at dinner the next day. You really want people to be sure of that. So if, for instance, you bring somebody up to the prayer room, and we ask you to leave while we pray with them, I beg of you, please don't be offended. In fact, if anything happens to you in the prayer room that you don't understand, please come and tell me.

Really silly misunderstandings arise sometimes. And they're very trivial, but it is basically a misunderstanding, and usually there's a very reasonable explanation for it. I mean, everybody up there is tired at 10:30 on Wednesday, and they are not going up there till midnight in order to do something to harm anybody. We're really there for only one reason, and that's to serve you and to serve the Lord. And I don't think there's one of us that doesn't have to go, well, we usually leave during the last hymn, because we have to go and just be alone for a while with the Lord. And I think basically the prayer that every one of us makes is, "Look, I haven't got a *thing* to give any of those people,

and if you want anything done tonight, Lord, you're going to have to do it because I'm really beat." And the Lord really blesses that, and when we come out of the prayer room, we're usually, as a matter of fact—I kid about it, in fact—I'm usually so built up and so exhilarated by what God has been able to do that I have to overcome a terrible temptation to go out and have a pizza with my husband and stay up too late and be too tired the next morning, after having gone up there at 10:30 positive that I could not put one foot in front of the other. I think we're all attacked a lot too by the enemy on Wednesday nights about 10:30. I think he'd like us to be too tired to go work in the prayer room, [Jeanne coughs] but if you send someone up there, don't build them up to expect some magic power, you know, that's going to just take care of everything. God can do that and sometimes he does. We have had healings of a really miraculous nature in the prayer room and we expect them and we expect it to happen more, not less. But on the other hand, a lot of, in fact I would say 75% of the problems that came to the prayer room in the first four years that I worked in the prayer room were marriage problems, frankly. And almost all of them were unequally yoked wives whose husbands did not want to be the spiritual head of the family or wouldn't come to the prayer meeting, you know, or wouldn't pray with them or things like that. That was really the big problem. Well, obviously, one session in the prayer room is not going to heal that problem. A lot of times the most we can say to a woman is, "Go home, be submissive, convert him through your love and your generosity and your holiness and come back next week if you want to, and we'll pray with you some more." [Jeanne chuckles.] And sometimes that's all we can do.

We can't solve those problems. We're not marriage counselors, but we do a lot of marriage counseling. We talk to an awful lot of people with marriage problems and it's clear, I'm sure you can see, that those things are just not going to be healed after 10 minutes in the prayer room. We can help people forgive each other, you know, but we hardly ever see both partners in a marriage. We prefer it that way, and sometimes we have to say to people, we will not talk to you again unless you bring back your spouse next time. We're not going to talk to you anymore about your marriage. We have done that, but don't give them the impression, you know, that everything's going to be fixed up just really super.

Sometimes that happens, and praise God when it does, but a lot of people's problems just are not, you know, that kind of problem. And a lot of what we can give people is ongoing support, ongoing help and a firm promise that there will always be somebody up there in that church on Wednesday night if they just want to pray. So bring everybody up, but don't give them the idea that it's magic. What time is it?

MAN'S VOICE: [Inaudible]

JEANNE: Okay, I think rather than break up now, it might be helpful if you all would tell me if you have any questions about the prayer room ministry.

MAN'S VOICE: . . . your chances that like if I wanted to pray with somebody there . . .  
[inaudible]

JEANNE: I think if you really go to the Lord and tell him that you're really counting on him, and beg him for, you know, discernment or wisdom or light or understanding or whatever you need, that you needn't worry about that. I think Christians have a right and an obligation to pray with each other, like I said, at the drop of a hat. Now, when it comes to long term counseling, you might want to think that over more. You might want to send them to somebody more experienced and when it comes to dealing with Satan, just a simple, you know, "In the name of Jesus, I command you to depart from this servant of the Lord and go to hell and don't bother him anymore." You can do that. No reason why you can't do that. But—you might not be able always to identify spirits accurately. You don't necessarily need to, you know, just tell them all to go to hell.  
[Laughter.]

But I think basically most Christians should be able to do this with each other. At the same time, I think God has really gifted the prayer room ministry in a very, very special way. People in the People of Praise who are living in households expect to be ministered to and to minister to each other in the way that we do in the prayer room; but at the same time, we also encourage people in the People of Praise who are in households to use the prayer room ministry, you know, when they feel like that's what they want to do rather than do it in the household. Ideally we should be able to deal with these things in



our households no matter how tricky they are or how difficult they are, but maybe you're having trouble relating to somebody in the household. And you're gonna have to pray it through with them eventually, but maybe you need to go up there first and get some help with it and then go back to the household and pray it through. But I think we all ought to be able to pray with each other this way.

WOMAN'S VOICE: [Inaudible]

JEANNE: Sure if you want to. A lot of people do that. We stay there as long as there are people coming. We don't go home till everybody's taken care of, and we don't want anybody to be afraid to come, no matter what. And if you come up there and you open the door and it's packed, that's all right, don't worry about it. If you can wait, we can do it, but you may have to wait; and that's one big heartache to me is that a lot of people come up and they're impatient or maybe they have other reasons, but they don't stay. I feel very badly about that. I hate to see somebody get up and leave, but we do the very best we can and we have a pretty big team now, so you shouldn't have to wait very long. But you shouldn't be put off or think that you're troubling us or being a pain in the neck or anything if you have to stay till midnight, you know. We don't mind. Not a bit. If you want to come, we'll take care of it—or, the Lord will. [Jeanne chuckles.]

WOMAN'S VOICE: [Inaudible]

JEANNE: When I pray for a passage, I ask the Lord to give me something—and that it be the first thing that I find on the page, you know. When I pray for a passage I just open it. Very rarely the Lord will tell me a passage, but I'm a well-educated Catholic, and I don't know the Bible very well. [Laughter.] So if the Lord says to me, "Romans 152,000," or something, it's not gonna mean anything to me, you know. We kid about that around the house: "Remember what it says in Ephesians 4!" There are very few passages that I know that well—that the Lord would not, I think, ordinarily deal with me that way. There are some people that he does, you know—he says, "Philippians 4," or something like that. But basically when I pray for a passage, I just ask the Lord to give me something,

and it will be the first passage that I get when I open the book. And sometimes I have to test that.

WOMAN'S VOICE: [Inaudible]

JEANNE: Ah [Jeanne sighs] the strongest kind of example I can give or something like that is that one time, this has happened twice, in fact, in the prayer room, I've [sic] been praying with somebody, and the Lord has told me very clearly that the person had a problem with lust. When I, you know, it's very hard to say to this innocent, sweet looking little housewife that she's got a terrible problem with lust. [Laughter.] "Oh, I can't say that, Lord. There's no way I'm going to be able to tell this girl that."

So, I'll pray for a passage and if the passage confirms it, then I'll go ahead and minister that word to [sic] the Lord. Now, that's happened to me twice that it's been somebody that I just, "Oh, I can't do that, Lord. Oh, no!" [Laughter.] So the first time it happened, I got alone with her, first of all—somebody had come up with her. At that time there were four of us, I think, on the team. So we didn't pray in pairs. We couldn't. So I was alone with her, and I ministered that word to her and her face just—it was just like a gift from God to me. She just beamed and she said, "That's exactly what it is, and I'm so glad you told me. Let's pray about it." [Laughter.] And so we did, and we dealt with it, and praise God, it was really good.

MAN'S VOICE: [Inaudible] . . . why don't we recognize it?

JEANNE: I don't know. I don't know. We kid ourselves sometimes that—she wasn't involved in any adulterous affairs or anything like that. She was just being assaulted by a spirit of lust, and that's the way we dealt with it. It was obvious to me that there was no sin involved, but that she was really being attacked. And she was very much relieved.

Now, on the other occasion, I tested it by waiting to see if my prayer partner would confirm it. I asked my prayer partner to confirm it. I had a really good prayer partner that night, and I trust her and she trusts me. [Jeanne chuckles.] Neither one of us would do it! Neither one of us would say it. The girl left the prayer room, and I turned to my

partner and I said, “You know, I think I may have just blown it. I think that person has the spirit of lust and I think we should have dealt with it,” and she said, “I *know* we should have dealt with it.” So fortunately we had kind of an ongoing relationship with this girl, so I went and got her and came right down here, followed her, [with laughter in her voice] went over into a corner with her, and we prayed about it right then and there and dealt with it. But I really felt like I’d been rebuked by the Lord. You know, I really felt that I had blown it and my prayer partner had too. The two of us sat there on that word of God, you know, because we didn’t want to say *that*. [Jeanne sighs.] So we don’t do that very often.

WOMAN’S VOICE: Sometimes when you become aware of . . . in your own mind . . . you can

. . . deal with it yourself and say the name of Jesus . . . [inaudible].

JEANNE: Yes, you certainly can, but I think—it’s really a good idea to seek another Christian to pray with you. I think it safeguards you against, you know, being deceived and it’s a good and healthy thing to do, and especially it’s a good and healthy thing to do because if there is one thing that Satan can’t stand it’s being brought out into the light, you know. He just simply cannot abide it.

It’s like in the *Spiritual Exercises*, Saint Ignatius recommends that the way we deal with Satan is like a wife who is called on the telephone and propositioned. And so she goes directly to her husband and tells him and by doing that it’s brought into the light and is absolutely undone. [Jeanne chuckles.] What can the guy do? You know, the next time he calls, her husband’s gonna answer the phone and say that he’d appreciate it if he didn’t do that again, because she’s brought it out into the light. If she shoves it under the table and gets all panicky and upset about it and doesn’t tell her husband, then it’s kept in darkness, and she’s compromised twice because when he calls back, he’s going to say, “I see you didn’t tell your husband, you must be interested.” So then she’s really compromised.

WOMAN’S VOICE: [Inaudible] . . . you agree.

JEANNE: Right! That's right. Yeah. So it's much less risky—you should bring everything you can into the light. Satan simply cannot abide the light and just can't tolerate it. And if it isn't Satan, if you're wrong in your discernment, the person may be able to help you find out, in fact, what is wrong.

WOMAN'S VOICE: How often do you find [inaudible] a basic problem [inaudible]?

JEANNE: Quite frequently. In fact, whenever we go through any extended forgiveness with people, we always include that. We always urge them to forgive themselves

. . . all that garbage, get rid of it all. [Jeanne chuckles.]

MAN'S VOICE: [Inaudible] partners come to the prayer room, it might be an obvious question

. . . like a husband and a wife . . . [inaudible]

JEANNE: You mean in a marriage situation?

MAN'S VOICE: Yeah. Or in a bad relationship . . . [Inaudible]

JEANNE: We don't so often recommend it in a bad relationship. Maybe that's a good idea. You may have just given me a good teaching. We do in a marriage, if possible, but frankly, it's almost always impossible, because usually the marriage problems that we get are people who are what we call unequally yoked, and so the other partner won't come. The other partner won't have anything to do with the prayer meeting much less the prayer room.

But we have had some occasions where both partners do come to the prayer meeting pretty regularly, and they have really deep problems. And frankly, you just have to hear both sides of the story before you can really give any intelligent advice to people. When you come to the end of discernment, when you've told them everything that you know how to tell them, you've given them all the sound teaching that you can, you may have

to get them both together or at least get him together with someone in the prayer room and her together with someone in the prayer—maybe the same person won't talk to both of them at once, but we like to have both of them come.

WOMAN'S VOICE: [Inaudible]

JEANNE: Oh yeah, we do that a lot. Yeah. We don't think there's anything magical traveling across the miles or anything, but a lot of people come up and say, "You know my sister is dying of cancer in Minnesota. Could you pray with me that she'll be healed?" Basically what we're doing there is supporting that person in—two or three agreeing, you know, in the name of Jesus, to claim that healing or whatever. We don't always claim a healing, we really try to be led by the Lord there, because sometimes we pray with people and they're not healed. And we just have to seek what is God's will there. But most of the time, if a person comes to me and says, "I want God to heal me, will you pray with me for a healing?" I do it. When a person asks me, you know, that's enough of a sign from the Lord for me to at least pray with them. Sometimes they're healed, sometimes they're not.

[Recording ends here.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 122. The Origins of the People of Praise

*The Cursillo movement, Catholic charismatic renewal, thousands of people baptized in the Spirit, spiritual gifts, personal growth . . . out of this the People of Praise was formed. How did it happen? How did the community get its name? What were the difficulties and the miracles? How was the covenant written? These questions are answered in this talk given at a February, 1974, Community Weekend.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

[Tape begins after Paul has already begun speaking.]

PAUL: . . . and what I—what we want to accomplish in this talk is to give you some kind of an idea of the history of the community. In order to do this really well, it would take a—an awful long time, but . . . we can nonetheless do something in a few minutes. In about—maybe a half an hour or so, we could give you kind of an orientation as to the origins of the People of Praise.

I'd like to start back in about 1963. In 1963, the Cursillo movement came to South Bend. It was brought here by Monsignor Sabo, who is still very active in the work of the church here, and also by a graduate student named Steve Clark, who was in the—over at—University of Notre Dame. There are other kinds of things that had been going on besides the Cursillo movement, like the liturgical renewal that was very active, and there were groups meeting and . . . in part—taking part in a kind of a liturgical renewal movement. Some of these people were meeting rather often to have just plain prayer meetings; they would get together and—in large groups, and pray—not charismatically, but prayer meetings.

The Cursillo movement was immensely successful, in the beginning especially, in getting—accomplishing two things. That is, people who went to the Cursillo, the three-day retreat part of it, were more—very often, about 95% of the time, converted to the Lord in some kind of a dramatic way; and they also were—at the same time that they were converted, they were converted in the context of a *body* of people, and they immediately knew where they fit in. They had a whole bunch of other Christian friends, and it began to be pretty easy to share the Christian life, the people who made that.

One of the things that the Cursillo fostered was something called “Group Reunions” and “*Ultreyas*.” And the *Ultreya* is a very big, large prayer meeting. That’s what it’s designed to be, basically, with some teaching in it [and] a lot of sharing. We call it “*rudencia*”: sharing your life experiences. And the Group Reunion was a small group of friends who would share their life in Christ on a weekly basis—as also the *Ultreya* was weekly—and they would share their *commitment* with each other—a commitment to God—and they would review their commitment with each other. Well, both of these things we did, in the beginning, in 1963, with quite a bit of enthusiasm and a great deal of success, by the hand of the Lord.

What we learned there, in particular, was that—how important it is to have somebody with whom you can share your life in Christ; how crucial it is to be built up, together, with a group of people. But a lot of people did not continue, or persevere, in those activities. A lot of people did, but quite a few did not. And it was—it became increasingly clear that something was missing. There was a whole lot of action, but not very much was of a lasting character.

In 1967, we have the beginning of the Charismatic Renewal in the Roman Catholic Church, which took place something like this. I remember sitting out at one of the Cursillo leaders’ meetings, which were also held weekly, and a fellow named Steve Rall, who is very active in the Charismatic Renewal in Lansing now. . . . Steve was on the—was a leader in the Cursillo movement, and he asked me what I thought of the Pentecostal movement, and I said I’d never heard of it. And he told me some details about it that he’d read about, and I was very surprised. And my response was—at the time was, “Well,



it sounds very good, but I'm not gonna go after it. If it comes my way, I'll have to look into it." And then six months later, it came our way! [Paul and crowd laugh.]

And what happened was—has been written down in a couple of books, which—if you want to look at that in some detail, I suggest that you take a look at *Catholic Pentecostals*, by Kevin and Dorothy, which has a—kind of a—very particular look at that, and a very detailed look at the beginnings of that—the Charismatic Renewal. Ins—in a way, what happened was this, that—I'll tell you, just briefly, some of it, because some of you haven't read the book.

The [sic] fellow named Bill Storey, who taught at Duquesne University, and Ralph Kiefer, who was a student of his—graduate student at Duquesne University—had also both been very active in the Cursillo movement. And they went to a conference—one of the inter—leaders' conferences, I think it was, in New York City. And at that conference, Steve Clark, again, who reemerges from Lansing, asked Bill Storey if he'd read the book *The Cross and the Switchblade*. And he hadn't, and so Steve asked—Bill's a—is a—professor of Liturgical Studies. After reading that, and actually to some degree, before having read that, he and Ralph had been praying and had been looking around for some kind of a prayer fellowship. Having read that book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*, they decided that they would get involved with one of the local prayer groups and seek the baptism in the Spirit.

They did; they received. And soon after that, they were talking in various places, wherever they had their—wherever their friends were; they would go and talk with them. They didn't make a big—in fact, they were being very careful not to just run out and tell everybody all about it at once.

But they did come here, and they talked to a group of about 11 people—I forget exactly how many were there. And after a couple of meetings, the whole group insisted that they should be prayed with for the baptism in the Spirit. And so they were prayed with.

And after that, they—we were in touch with Ray Bullard, who is a member of the Full Gospel Businessmen's Association. And Ray was just a great blessing to us, and he

taught us very many things, about life in the Spirit, and how to be more and more open to the gifts of the Spirit.

Well, we began—what we began to find out was that the thing that was missing before was the power of the Spirit. We had the right message, and it was really the gospel of the Lord. But the power of the Spirit, in these activities that we'd been involved with before, had not yet been fully released. So, we entered into a period of seeking the Lord, wanting a lot more *of* the Lord, and a period of time in which we learned to be guided by the Lord: how to accept the guidance of the Lord, how to pray for it, and so on.

We stumbled around in a lot of different ways at this time, not knowing how to proceed, even as late as a couple of years later. I remember a group of us from around that—well, especially from the Word of God, in—which [sic] is now the Word of God in Ann Arbor. And some people here in South Bend had—it was—the occasion was the baptism of our youngest child, who's six—so it was six years ago. And—Steve is—Steve Clark is Johnny's godfather, and a group of people came down with him for that occasion.

And I remember after the baptism, we were sitting around, trying—we just kept asking the Lord to bless us and to make his will known to us. And at one point somebody said, “I just”—somebody just stood up in the circle and moved a chair into the middle of the ring, and went back and sat down someplace else. And we all said, “Why in the world did you do *that*?” And he said, “Well, I just felt like the Lord was guiding me to do that.”

And then we prayed some more, and pretty soon one of the people got up and walked over and sat in the chair. We said, “Why did *you* do *that*?” [Paul and all laugh.] “I don't know!” [Paul and all laugh.] “God just—I think God was leading me this way.” And it's true, we did pray with him. We didn't know whether it was something the Lord was trying to teach us about who should be the head of what's going on, or whether this person needed prayer in particular, or just exactly what it was. And we were all just bewildered. And we were bewildered most of the time, as a matter of fact. [Paul and all laugh.]

But that was all right, and we were learning how to be guided by the Spirit. And we read, and we studied the Bible a lot more, and we began to see how, in fact, God has worked with his people in the past, when they were open to the Spirit. And we're still learning how to be guided by the Spirit.

But there was a period of time there where it was an intense problem, being guided by the Spirit. We had to find out what the Spirit of God was saying to us, what he was trying to accomplish. That he was *with* us was—there was no doubt. That his power was present and powerfully moving and changing hearts, that was clear. But just exactly what he wanted us to *do* with a changed heart was not at all clear.

Right after the first group was prayed with for the baptism in the Spirit, there was a period of time where it was kind of a “flowering.” Everybody in that first group contacted people who [sic] they had known before—like, the following day, one of the people who was in that first group talked to me, and told me about what had been going on, and prayed with me that very afternoon for the baptism in the Spirit. We didn't have the Life in the Spirit series at the time. [Paul and all laugh lightly.] And we started having prayer meetings. Because that was—we had some history of prayer meetings in the area. But also, it was—that was the context in which the spiritual gifts had been explained, and released, and seemed to have meaning and content. So we met to pray.

We had, on occasion, several prayer meetings a week: one at Kevin and Dorothy's house, one at our—at the DeCelles house, and one on campus. And then sometimes they would go—we would drop one of them and stay with two others and then drop two of them and stay with one. And finally we came down—after a long period of time, of trying different kinds of things, trying to figure out what the Lord wanted us to do—to having one large prayer meeting.

In the beginning, we had a prophecy about how many—how the Lord was going to gather people from the east and the west, and from the north and the south. And he was all going—he was gonna bring many, many thousands and thousands of people here. This was—this particular prophecy came in the context of a prayer meeting in which

there were about 20 of us! [Light laughter.] And we couldn't believe that at all, you know! But we kept saying things: "Well, if it's prophecy, we'll be able to tell. It'll become—it'll come true; and if it isn't, it won't come true."

And, well, as a matter of fact, that summer we began to experience something of this—of what was going on. . . . Well, even before the summer, after two months of trying to find out what the Spirit of God was doing with us, and trying to evaluate what was going on, we had what we call the "Michigan State Weekend," which is [sic] a little retreat kind of thing, where we just thought we'd get together and put our heads together and find out what the Lord was trying to really accomplish with us.<sup>1</sup>

And at that—that was a little retreat to which—Steve was in Michigan State University at the time, working as an assistant on the chaplaincy there—brought a group of people who had also been baptized in the Spirit down for that retreat. So there were a group of about 50 of us, 60 of us, who got together that weekend, which—that weekend has since been repeated, and has become the annual International Conference. We held that first one over in the little building on the campus by the Log Chapel. In fact, some of our things were in the Log Chapel. It's a very, very tiny little building.

That summertime, the Lord began to fulfill the prophecy of having so many people coming. The summer students arrived, and—quite a few, maybe several thousand summer students arrived. And it seemed like most of them wanted to go to a charismatic prayer meeting! And we were—we had big introductory sessions and so on, explaining what was going on, in the auditoria around campus. And people would come in maybe two or three hundred strong—strangers, you know—coming in to go to a prayer meeting. So we had these prayer meetings on campus for them.

And many, many people, whose names we didn't even write down, were baptized in the Spirit, and they just—they kind of passed through the prayer meeting, and would go on back and take the—take what they had learned about the baptism of the Spirit, and just the fact of being able to pray with confidence and in faith that the Lord would bless us, and to pray with expectant faith, that the Lord would give us gifts—[they would take all

this] *back home*. And they—so they were laying hands on people and leading them in the baptism of the Spirit, like everybody else was. That was one of the things that was most crucial in the development of the charismatic renewal in the United States, and in the entire world.

We had many people who came here to go to Notre Dame, and some, for some reason or other, who would stop off when they heard about the prayer meeting, like the—Father Valerian Godet, who is in Rome now, who started the Rome prayer group, which has since had many other—there are now many prayer groups in Rome. [He] was a superior of an order who has—he'd stopped by here, and came to one of the prayer meetings. We've had that kind of thing—many Mother Superiors of orders and so on have come to—had come to the prayer meeting at that time. And they would go away and take all this back to their whole orders.

All this was growing, but not without some difficulty. A lot of people—we ran into some situations where people exercised “gifts” that they didn't have. And knowing exactly what to do about that, and learning how to handle situations like that, in love, is some—was a very painful experience.

We also had a great deal of controversy surrounding us at the time—like the. . . Various journals would write stories, or publish stories, about the strange goings-on. Like, the campus newspaper got ahold of what happened to Jim Cavnar when he was prayed with for the baptism in the Spirit. And they put out an issue of the *Scholastic* magazine with a lot of hands shown over the top of somebody's head. And inside, they had a long story about how, when Jim was prayed with, he smelled sulfur as the devil departed.

And that created a bit of a problem [light laughter]. But it was a lot like what Saint Paul said, you know. He said, “I don't even care, necessarily, [if] what you're saying is true or not.” He says. “As long as you're talking about Jesus, the word's being preached.” And many people didn't like *The Observer* or the *Scholastic* [Notre Dame campus newspapers] anyway. And so they would read that thing. And all they would find out is

that something was going on; they wouldn't believe the *Scholastic* interpretation of it anyway. So, as—amid all the controversy, we continued to grow.

The Lord—after that first Michigan State Weekend, the Lord worked a miracle, in which a couple of people who had been hit by a car and were bleeding—one from the mouth, and another one looked like he had a broken back—they were healed as a crowd gathered around them, and somebody from the conference went over, and laid hands on them, one in one group and another in the other group, around one—a group around each person—and prayed that they be healed, and they *were* healed.

So, all the gifts began to be manifest. Certainly prophecy, and tongues immediately. The gift of miracles was increasing. . . . A gift of *love* that existed began to really take life between the members of the prayer group itself. When Jim Cavnar again—back to—he was one of the—in the first—the very first group—when he was prayed with, for the baptism in the Spirit and he had this experience of smelling sulfur, he also had a reconciliation with his roommate, Jerry Rausch, who was in the same room. They were being—that is, they were being prayed with, together, at that first prayer meeting.

Jim had been unable to talk to his roommate for about a year, and he had—it was a—had a classic case of paranoia. He was even hearing footsteps behind him as he walked down the street and things like that, and he'd turn around to see who was following him. And as he was prayed with, in fact, that whole thing was lifted, and he jumped up and—he got up and he went across the room, and told Jerry—asked Jerry to forgive him. And then, Jerry did forgive him, and there's [sic] many tears of reconciliation. And that friendship has been restored. And Jim and Jerry, as well as Steve Clark and Ralph Martin, are the four original members of the Word of God community in Ann Arbor.

Most of our troubles in the beginning, I think, had to do with learning how to yield to the gifts of the Spirit: how to protect, to some degree, the freshness of the Spirit. And not trying to—when we were baptized in the Spirit, to immediately explain what had taken place in terms of what had—what we had known before. To simply kind of explain away

the baptism in the Spirit in categories that were familiar to us from the past. We needed, in fact, to be really radically open to the Lord, and yielding to him.

We had a very difficult time explaining the baptism in the Spirit to everybody. And we would call on similar things from early church history, or from the lives of the saints, or something. When we were trying to explain to people what the baptism in the Spirit is, we'd say—like, I used to say, “Well, it's just like what happened to St. Teresa of Avila, at what's called her second conversion.” Or, somebody else would explain it as “what Saint Martin of Tours was involved with,” you know. And we were passing books like that around: Lallemand's *Life of Saint Martin de Tours* [sic].<sup>2</sup>

And we really had not worked up much of an explanation, as we would refer to the history, that this sort of thing had happened before: “If you think we're crazy, you should read about Saint Francis Assisi.” [Laughter.] You know [Paul laughs], that sort of thing.

But we were always praying with people right off the bat, you know. If somebody walked in, and said they wanted the baptism in the Spirit, we'd say, “Well, kneel down, brother.” [Paul laughs.] And we tried to lead them in that. We'd give them a little bit of an explanation, but it—in the beginning we had only about an hour's explanation. And then after a while, we began to catch on that it would take—that we might as well take our time, and talk to people—maybe an hour and a half [Paul and all laugh], you know, and —or three times; maybe they should come three times.

And each time they would come they would have somebody different who would take them in discussion, you know, and explain to them their personal experience. And there was not much development of any ideas there. We hadn't worked out a great deal of understanding.

But as things continued, we did grow in understanding, and we worked up several approaches to covering different kinds of ideas that needed to be covered in order for people not simply to receive the baptism in the Spirit—because it still seems to be the case that people can be baptized in the Spirit at the drop of a hat—but in order to have people. . . . I mean, they can receive the gift of tongues and be open to the Spirit. But

they won't know any more about what to do about this than *we* did, in the beginning—unless they have adequate explanation about how to proceed, and how to yield to God, and how to recognize his guidance. How to turn their lives over entirely to the Lord.

Now, after a long time of various kinds of things like “Days of Renewal,” where we were gathering people from around the whole area; anybody who would want to come from however far away to a monthly day of renewal was welcome. We'd have a talk, a central talk on the day of renewal, and a lot of sharing around there in small-group discussions. And sometimes we'd have workshops that would take on certain things like prophecy or tongues, to explain them. And we'd have a lot of—usually we have some kind of a liturgy together.

Also, on those—around those days of renewal, we found that it was a good idea to have the day ahead of it—on Saturday—a Leaders' Day, so that the leaders of the different prayer groups around the area would come first, and there would be a talk or two for them. And slowly we began to work up a lot of things put together that were helpful in the area of forming prayer groups and leading them adequately. And being more and more open to the Spirit.

Now I'm going to condense a great deal of material here, which we could talk about some other time, when there's more time. Eventually, when the—one prayer meeting had a core—the large prayer meeting had a core of people who were coming regularly, which core was, say, about 100 people strong. But the prayer meeting itself was quite big: say, 200 people, 150 people.

Kevin and I wrote a letter to the people who had been coming regularly. That is—and we defined “regular” as being if you'd been there for the last three prayer meetings. [Paul and all laugh.] Okay? To—we invited everybody to come together—here, as a matter of fact—in order to—I mean, at this location—to explore together the meaning of some prophecies that the Lord had been giving us for nearly a year. About how he wanted us to be his people, and he wanted us to be a covenant, to accept his covenant. So—and that he wanted us to be a community.



So, we asked people to come together, if they wanted to, if they were willing to pray together on a regular—making some kind of a commitment to come every Friday night to explore together what the Lord meant by these prophecies. For example, what would it mean to be a covenant community? What would it mean to be a community? What kinds of agreements should we have with each other?

Of—we wrote these invitations and signed them each by hand to—I think we sent out 80 of them. And approximately 30 people came the first time, and 25 people came the second time, and 25 people came from then on out. That is, we—out of the original group of 30, five people found that—the—what was being talked about was something that they wouldn't be able to get involved with. And then the rest of them came on back.

So we met for six months of Fridays, in which we kind of stumbled around to some degree, like we did in connection with the baptism in the Spirit. Only this time, we were talking about covenant community. We didn't know very much about what all that would entail, but each person felt free and had an opportunity to say what he would like it to mean, or like it to be like.

Kevin and I took the initiative there to have kind of an agenda, or discussion, at those meetings. And sometimes we would give a little teaching, if there was something that needed to be explained about: something in Scripture, or something that the Lord had been doing with us. We would take turns explaining these things.

Out of this, we had the—we had come to several main points, which we'll be getting into later on, in one of the other talks. One of them is that the Lord *did* want us to be his people, and that meant that we should have some kind of a regular meeting, which we'd been having: a community meeting. Another thing is that we should have order, that there had to be headship in the community. And the third thing was that there had to be financial responsibility. So the Lord wanted us not simply to be a mysterious or mystical union of people, but that he wanted us to be “something” that had goods, for example. And that we should get involved in that area of sharing and taking care of each other, and things material, spiritual, and financial.

So, after six months of meeting, we were able to put down, on paper, an agreement that we all wanted to make together. And we went through the agreement, called “the covenant,” word by word. And everybody said that they understood it, you know. And then by the end of six months, all those who wanted to make this agreement with each other did. And nearly everybody did. A couple people—three—maybe three people were unable to make that agreement at that time. They eventually did make the agreement, later on, when it became that—when it was in the Lord’s time for them to make it.

Now, at the time that we had done this, we also decided to take respons—more responsibility for the big public prayer meeting that was still going on. We had put in [sic] a Life in the Spirit series, and we had some growth talks, and we had various kinds of meetings for the purpose of taking care of the needs of that prayer group.

And as soon as this—as the—as this group of people that had been meeting, to form community, to respond to God’s initiative in that regard, took responsibility for the prayer meeting, the prayer meeting grew. And we’ve noticed that every single time: that as soon as somebody who ought to, takes responsibility for a particular area—a particular kind of thing—that thing flourishes. Even though, you know, the person may not be the best head in the world. If there is some kind of exercise of order there, the Lord blesses it, and it flourishes. This is a way we—that we’ve been learning to proceed in faith, and it’s one of the things that we’ve been learning about community: that a lot of things are coming out of community, and out of the *faith* of the community, that simply cannot—that we would not have been able to find out on our own, just simply yielding to the Spirit.

And our community meetings, which had been closed for six months (we stayed with the same group): we began to open up. But in a very controlled way. That is, that [sic] the only people who were making a series of growth talks, which we called the Life in the Spirit—Christian Living Series, rather—and who had no impediment against coming into the community. That is, people who definite—say, who were not living in Michigan City, but who were living in the vicinity, and it was *possible* for them to become part of the community, or something like that. Then, these people were given a way . . . how to

get into the community, that the community agreed to. And so the community began to grow, too. And we've been doubling in size each year. Which is—when you're very small, that's not so big, but the next time we double, it's going to be pretty impressive! Praise God. [Paul laughs.] Now—right now, there are about 100 people in the People of Praise. And we'll come back to an explanation of some of these facts later on.

During—and while—during the time that we were praying, about the different kinds of things—about the community. . . . At the same time that we were talking about being a *headed* community, having some authority in the community—order—the Lord also began to tell us that he wanted us to be *named*. That is, that we should not only be a community of *things*, you know, like . . . but also that we should be *nameable*. And we had a lot of names, but we decided—how were we gonna go about the business of finding a name? What name did the Lord want for—want us to have? And one possibility was that we could just say, “Well, we like this name,” and, “I like this name,” and so on, and then we could vote on it.

[Missing words?] . . . Because, somebody would—we would go away praying about “What was the name of the community?” And next week we'd come back and somebody—well, five people would have five different names for the community. They thought the Lord wanted us to name—to be named those things. We collected quite a large number of them. And each time—we finally began to catch on that each time the person who was praying would get a name like this, it would really be from the Lord. And the Lord *did* want us to be a community that could be named that. And we began to grow.

One of them, for example, was the Family of Faith And the Lord wanted us to be a family, and he wanted us to be a family *of faith*. And we would pray about that. As we began to catch on to all these different names, the Lord began to accomplish increasingly in our midst: *by way of naming us, he was changing us*. And he would name us this, and we would change; and he'd name us that, and we would change. And he was kind of calling us into existence by naming us in these different ways!

One was The Vine and the Branches, which is a name that Bob Olson had received from the Lord. Bob is one of the charter members of the People of Praise, and he's dead now. He's praying for us in heaven. It's a good thing to pray to Bob, by the way, and ask him to pray to the Lord for you, sometimes, for various kinds of things. He's very good, I think, with smoking, if you have a problem getting rid of smoking. [Paul and all laugh.] And alcoholism, too. Bob was an alcoholic—had been an alcoholic—though the Lord delivered him completely from that whole thing. It's just really a wonderful story. We'll tell you about that some other time, though.

So, as the Lord gave us these different names and changed our hearts, and as we kind of came into line with what he was calling us, he eventually, as we were. . . . One night, we decided, well—it had kind of come down to one or two names, and we would just pray it through and see what happened. And we prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed, and—it was—and then there was a prophecy: that the Lord had—the angels and saints in heaven were rejoicing at the fact that our Lord had called us “his People of Praise.”

And from that—immediately, that was agreed to; there was corroboration. There was a passage that was prayed for, and received, that had essentially the same kind of message. And when Eileen, who was one of the charter members, went home that night, she had kept a diary of the—of all of our six months of meetings. And she looked at the very first meeting that we had. And there had been a prophecy, the very first time we met, that the Lord said he had called us his Peo—that he was calling us his People of Praise.

[Long pause.]

Now, since that period of time, the Lord has continued to add to our numbers and teach us a great deal. Like—as—whenever we learn something, we add more seminars. One of our seminars now has 36 weeks in it! [Paul and all laugh.] That's not that painful, actually, though; don't worry. [Laughter.] But there is—the Lord has taught us a lot about how to serve, and we now have a Servant School, in which people learn as they

come into the community, about it. You don't get into that immediately, by the way. In fact there's not—as you go into the community, you don't jump into all of this at once.

We have a whole approach to the question of healing: healing persons, healing personal relationships. The problems of the world and the flesh and the devil, and how to handle those. And the Lord has blessed us with a great deal of wisdom in these areas. And we're able to minister to people, as a—the community as a whole, and living in the community, so that these problems disappear, by the grace of God.

The Lord is leading us in new ways all the time, so that it's a *history* that I'm trying to describe, but it's not a *dead fact*. It's an *organic* thing. And anything organic is changing: growing and changing. Anything that's alive is either decreasing or increasing. And even as it's increasing, it may be kind of changing within itself. Like, a human body has some cells, say: you take in and you give off a lot of nourishment, but even some of the cells are replenished, and there's change going on all the time.

There's no way really to explain the People of Praise as though it were one thing that you—like the Lions Club, or something like that. It's rather—it's a body of people. It's a—it's one whole organic thing. It's the body of Jesus Christ. And as that, it's alive and changing constantly. And you can't describe that in terms of simple lines of, well, "These are our promises and our agreements." You've got to explain it in terms of "What are all the relationships?" "Who are all the people who are in it?" "How is everybody being built up together in the Lord?" "How is the Lord the *Lord* of this people?" "How is it all working out?" And that's constantly changing, from week to week. Each week, every single week, something new and important is happening, and it's something which is. . .

I know that—I think everybody in the People of Praise would say—all those who are underway or who have made the covenant—would say that they have never been more *alive*. And I've felt this myself, particularly in the last year. If I get any more alive, I think I'll burst! [Laughter.] It's not possible!

And then I've been thinking about what Jesus said, that he had come—for that was the reason that he came: to give us life, and to give it to us more abundantly. So, it's going to be even more and more lively as time goes on.

This would be a good time to break. And I'd like to suggest that in our discussion groups, which Dick is going to explain in a minute, that we take up—take this opportunity to tell each other what the Lord has done to us, what is our personal testimony, and share it with each—everybody in your discussion group. Just take about five minutes or so to do that. And make sure everybody has a chance to get through that.

Praise God.

[Recording ends here.]

#### Endnotes

1) The “Michigan State Weekend” was held at Notre Dame, with participants from both South Bend and Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan.

2) Paul is likely referring to the book by Sulpitius Severus; Lallemand is an artist who painted a famous portrait of Martin of Tours.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 123. Brotherhood Among Leaders

*Strong leadership is essential for a strong community. Paul DeCelles pointed out potential problems that can exist within groups of leaders and explained the importance of brotherhood among them. This document appears to be a talk given to some kind of gathering of charismatic renewal leaders in March, 1974.*

From the beginning of the Catholic charismatic renewal, we've seen many prayer meetings come into existence. Some of them grow and grow. Some start and then dissolve. Others come into existence and struggle for a long time and never seem to bear much fruit.

When you look over the whole U.S.A. at the different prayer groups, you can see that where they're strong there is some form of strong leadership.

Since 1967, it's become more and more clear how important it is that there be groups of leaders who accept responsibility for the development of what God is doing in particular areas if the renewal and the power of the Spirit is to flourish, and spread throughout the country and the world. One could say that successful leaders' groups are essential for the future of the renewal. So what we're discussing here this weekend is of vital importance.

As we look back over the experiences we've had in these years, we can learn from them—the successes and the failures. We can see that many of the failures that have occurred are due to the problems that exist among the leaders. That the leaders themselves sometimes fail to accept the responsibility for the development of what God is doing in their area. They fail to grasp the vision the Lord offers them, or they fail to accept the responsibility to work out the personal problems they encounter in dealing with each other. Whatever difficulties the leaders have among themselves begin to show up in the life of the groups. Some groups do not grow at all because of the lack of leadership. On the other hand, some groups split because of difficulties that exist among the leaders. The division among the leaders may manifest itself in factions. [Handwritten Scripture

reference here, probably Ephesians 4:1.] And sometimes without leadership some groups are overwhelmed by too rapid growth. Ordinary problems become so numerous they submerge the group. I've seen some prayer groups in which a lack of confidence, on the part of the leadership of the group, paralyzes the group. They don't experience the kind of sound teaching they need in order to have the confidence to exercise the gifts of the Spirit consistently. And so the word of God is not transmitted to them adequately. And after some hardships come, work commitments begin to crowd out the first growth in the life in the Spirit and these little groups fail in many cases. But having observed that most groups fail because of the failures of their leaders let's look at some of the problems that leaders have to face.

The problems can be classified as structural or personal relationship. By structural I mean systematic problems or problems in the system, the organization, the structures that you have to work with. Personal relationship problems are obvious—the ways in which leaders relate to each other and with everybody else.

As all groups grow, with each change in the group we encounter new structural problems. For example, in the beginning—especially the small prayer groups—we may have no acknowledged leaders nor acknowledged leaders' group and that creates a big problem. People don't know who they can turn to. They don't know who to rely on to lead them in their life of the Spirit. They don't know where to look for the kind of guidance they need.

Another kind of structural problem is one that sets in when there is no clear body of people who are making decisions for the sake of the whole. Things need to be decided and they aren't. So things just drift. Things get done somehow by a kind of "muddling through" but by the time they're done the clarity of vision, the thrust of what God wants to accomplish, has been blunted. The word of God has been muted and the certainty which Christians have a right to experience seems to be lacking.

Sometimes a few people tend to do almost everything. They prophesy, teach, share, give their witness talks, they talk with people, do pastoral care, take care of any money



problems and responsibility for what was going on. And that is all very good but there is a difficulty in involving others in service, so that the sense of the whole prayer group growing in effective love and service of one another will be slightly hindered by the fact that we just don't know how to include others in service.

As well as structural problems, all of us have experienced as leaders some personal relationship problems. We've had disagreements that have led to bad feelings and resentment. Sometimes relationships may have broken down completely. People who had for some time been able to work together, for some reason perhaps unknown to even one or the other or both, a bad feeling develops, some kind of resentment causes a breakdown in the way in which they relate to each other, leading to questioning commitment, causing factions. Not knowing how to relate to one another, we sometimes wander into numerous ambiguous situations where we expect things of one another that the other person doesn't even know they are supposed to perform. We wind up with hardship, heartache and confusion.

During this conference we hope to focus on these needs and we'll offer some help here trying to share with you experiences that we have had and the successes that we know of throughout the country, where some of these problems have been met and dealt with and effectively overcome. We want this to be a time of reflection for you. A time when you can examine your own leaders' group. We urge you to use this conference thoughtfully to examine your own leaders' groups and use this time to grow in the personal relationships among yourselves as effective leaders and to solve some of your own problems in your own leadership groups.

When we were on our way to the National Service Conference in January this year in Ann Arbor, I was still considering what I would say to my group when I had to give my talks on Households. And I asked everybody in the car what kind of advice they thought was the best kind of advice to give people who were in the positions of headship in households. My wife said, "Tell all heads of households that they have to be brothers first." And I thought about that and had, in fact, planned to say something about that before. It's been our experience with leaders developing in our own community, that

leaders succeed or fail to the degree they are capable of experiencing and manifesting general brotherhood to other leaders and to the rest of the people in the group. In fact, the first criterion for a person being a leader in a community or in a prayer group is that he be capable of genuine brotherly love.

Brotherly love should be the basis of the relationship among the leaders themselves. And this is ideal. The goal among leaders ought to be brotherhood—not just structure and not just accomplishment and function. We should be concerned for the quality of the relationships and the spirit of the relationships we have among ourselves. We have to spend time at it. Work at it. And work at improving the quality of the way we relate to one another. What we hope for in our prayer group or community is the development of genuine brotherhood in Jesus among all the people. Unless the leaders themselves share in the qualities of that kind of relationship, how are they ever going to be able to bring it to others? We're all called to be brothers and sisters first. And then some brothers and sisters may be called to be leaders. But the primary commitment and the primary relationship among all of us in the prayer group is that we are brothers and sisters in Christ. And in that context some of us have special tasks, special responsibilities and care for the whole, and are called by God and recognized by our community as exercising a care and concern for the whole.

A leaders' group itself should then rise as a kind of a leaven within a community, within a prayer group, according to their own life and commitment. Consider the kinds of things which leaders ought to do for one another as members of a leader's group. Leaders share common burdens and a special kind of need to receive support from others with responsibilities like their own, who understand their problems from a similar perspective as well as their insights and experiences with solving common problems. One kind of support that leaders need is a very personal support, a kind of concern from other persons' lives. We need to experience and to give and to have a kind of concern for other people's lives. Now, it's not just a matter of getting jobs done. It's a matter of caring for the persons, taking care of the people, having care and concern for them. It's very easy, I know in my own case (and I've seen it happen to other leaders) for us to get wrapped up in our job as leaders, to neglect to relate to other leaders as

persons in need of love and support. We might look upon our meetings as occasions to solve problems and do things. They're not jobs! Relationships are not jobs. We may have business meetings of some sort, but we need to spend time together to give personal support. I mean that we have to be available to be simply brothers and sisters together. And this means a real commitment of time to one another. I believe that in our own community when we understood the importance of spending time together, we really turned the corner on becoming a community. The Lord showed us it was important for us to alter the way we spend our time, time commitments and our patterns of life so that we could take the time to love one another as brothers and sisters, to take care of one another. We also need to make a commitment to take responsibility for one another's needs and to help one another work things out. We need to feel that commitment on the part of others and we need to make that commitment to them. To take the time to help a person, another leader or to be open to being helped ourselves in our personal problems. To work things out, to solve problems, to experience that special kind of ministry and brotherly support from one another. We really need, as groups of leaders, not simply to be doing things, but being something together. We need to be a body of brothers and sisters bound together by love and commitment to the Lord.

Now whenever a group of people gets together for an extended period of time with an understanding of what their relationships are to one another, and a network of agreements is worked out, inevitably there are going to be difficulties, problems in the groups. What we need to have is a way of handling problems as they arise. I'm going to give you a couple of examples. One kind of problem is the problem that arises from a lack of commitment on the part of the leaders to working together and working out difficulties as brothers and sisters. When we had a service group of about 25 people meeting to care for the little prayer group, that service group was growing in love and affection, and the Lord was accomplishing a lot through the prayer meeting, and it was building us toward a new level of commitment and participation, but we had one episode where one person wanted to lead the prayer meeting. And it just didn't work well when he led the prayer meeting. He had led it before and was not very successful. It was the consensus of the whole service group, which was responsible for deciding who

would lead the prayer meeting, that this person ought not. And so with various threats that he would leave if the rest of the group didn't agree with him, he undermined the whole sense of commitment, and eventually did leave, saying, "Well, I'll go start my own prayer meeting." His lack of commitment caused a breakdown in the sense of solidarity of moving forward together. Sometimes it is extremely difficult to stand there and work out the difficulties that we have. Sometimes you know that if you were to say something very straightforwardly one of the leaders would just bolt out of the group and have nothing more to do with the prayer group, etc. You know how you have to hesitate—you don't want to say it, you know that by saying it you would cause so much trouble, so you tend not to say it.

Another kind of problem that we've run into is factions. These things come about so easily. Since we've been involved with the charismatic renewal and the Lord's been working the way he has, I've come to appreciate to what an extent factions is the way in which the world normally works. A kind of party spirit. Caucusing that occurs when you're meeting in a group and there are different elements of the group that met beforehand to plan out their strategy of how they were going to function in this meeting so as to bring about the end that they desired, even against the will of the rest of the people there. Factions are caused by people who tend to operate politically, carrying over from their past in the world a certain way of operating—building up a following for a particular point of view—instead of talking to those with whom they disagree when there is disagreement, searching Scripture for the answer, being led by the Spirit, working things out. Instead of doing that the person begins to talk to those he considers sympathetic and tries to build up a following of people with like minds to come in with power. We all need to avoid the tendency to draw lines and to separate, and to say, this is Paul and this is Apollos and the two of them can go separate ways. We need to agree to talk together with a commitment to love, a commitment to unity, being open to repenting of the bad attitudes that we have and speaking frankly to each other according to the Gospel. Factions damage the work of the Spirit in Christianity most seriously. When there are damages that have occurred in our relationships, we need to learn to ask forgiveness and face the facts and talk about the difficulties we are having. Even if we can't talk about them well, if we can't adjust to them well, we need to be in

that kind of a situation where we confess to each other that we don't want to be bad, that we want to be right with each other, that we are willing to work at it. 1 Corinthians 13: . . .

Another kind of problem we have is we need to avoid wrong attitudes—like competitiveness, jealousy and envy. We might feel that we're not as lovable as other members of the prayer group. Or we feel bad that someone does a better job at something we had tried before. We sense that we have failed in some way in the past, watching how well they do the same thing that we should have done. This kind of attitude we need to repent of, change. We need to admit that that's wrong.

We shouldn't be carrying around a great burden of guilt in these matters. We need to recognize these attitudes as being wrong and to avoid them in the future. Assume the last place rather than the first place.

We need to repent of the notion that everything that comes to our mind should pop out of our mouths, and take seriously what St. James says in his letter about how important it is to control the tongue and to avoid gossiping. We also need to avoid individualistic tendencies. It's easy to see developing according to some kind of spiritual functional line, one's an expert prophet, another an expert in pastoral care, another is an individualistic troubleshooter. Rather there needs to be a body of leaders who *work together* realizing that none of us is wise enough or tested and proven enough to be on his own. We need to be in mutual submission to one another (Eph. 4). This kind of submissiveness is a protection to each of us and to the whole community. Where we have this sense of shared responsibility it will help us all to be more accountable. That we are doing our share and others are doing their share and we can be sure that the work is being done by all of us together, which enables us to feel more supported and takes away that sense that everything that happens, happens because we do it.

Another kind of problem we run into is the problem of learning how to speak of problems in the right way. Not letting discussion of problems become the source of criticalness. We can begin to allow someone to tell us what they really think of

something we have been doing, or attitude of mind we seem to be having and we listen patiently as they tell us: “You really should prepare your talks better,” or “You really could do a lot better job of leading the prayer meeting if you just concentrate on it and focus on it ahead of time.” We listen to them in their criticism of us and in a kind of sense of pain and anger we may say, turning the tables on them, “The problem with you is that you never could submit to the leadership of the prayer meeting.” That is, we get into this type of situation that the discussion of the problems that exist among us becomes an occasion for criticalness, an opportunity for us to attack rather than to work problems through.

1 Kings

Wisdom – Solomon – we need it.

Paul DeCelles

March, 1974

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.

# 124. Following Jesus Wholeheartedly

*This talk was given at a June 7, 1974, community meeting at which several people made the covenant. Kevin Ranaghan talked about Luke 14, emphasizing that anyone who comes to Jesus and doesn't put everything else second can't be his disciple. Kevin urged everyone to count the cost and decide to pay it.*

## Transcript

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

KEVIN: This afternoon, I asked the Lord for a Scripture to read and then to talk about, which would be something for all of us, and something, in maybe a special way, for our brothers and sisters who are going to make the covenant with the People of Praise tonight. And the Lord gave me this really great Scripture. It's from the 14th chapter of Luke:

Now, great multitudes accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he *cannot* be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and *count the cost*, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

Or what king going to encounter another king in war will not sit down first and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy and asks terms of peace. So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."

Jesus has told us over and over again how much he is our Lord, how much he loves us, how powerful he is, how he dwells in our midst by the power of the Spirit, and gives us everything that we need. We praise him as the completely glorious and victorious Lord. We say that he's completely light and glory, that in him there is no darkness at all.

We know—I think we know very much right down to our very roots—how complete Jesus' love for us is and how complete and all-sufficient his giving of himself for us is. But this Scripture, I think, takes a somewhat different point of view, one that doesn't contradict that, but one that speaks very much to us and our basic attitude in following after Jesus, whom we know can do everything for us.

As I read this Scripture, I got the idea of it—see, the Scripture says, “Now great multitudes accompanied him, and he turned and said to them”—and I just saw this huge horde of people following after Jesus. And Jesus has been going around all over the place, teaching. He's been proclaiming the Kingdom, he's been proclaiming the basic gospel, and he's also been teaching. He's been giving—he has been giving all sorts of wisdom about God and man and how men should live before God.

And great hordes of people are following after him. And they're just a lot of people who are really into Jesus. Jesus is the thing they're doing. They're following after this great guy where he's really wise and he's—he has this great teaching, and it really turns a lot of people on, and they're following along, and you can just kind of see them trooping down the road, and people are scurrying to get up close to hear the—the latest thing that this great teacher may, you know, drop from his lips and all sorts of people really think that they're with Jesus as they scurry after him.

And then he just stops, and he turns around—and, just praying about it, I saw Jesus kind of dusty and dirty and sweaty, and he's been working hard and doing—doing the mission that the Father sent him for. And he's kind of tired out, and he just turns right around and faces all these people who are following after him, who are really into him, who say they're really with him, and he says, “If anyone comes to me and doesn't put *everything* second, or third or fourth or fifth, to coming to me, you can't be my disciple.”



“If you are really going to follow after me, if you’re going to be my disciple, if you’re going to really continue down the path where I am leading you, if you’re going to go that way, you’d better decide right now to despise everything else that is precious to you: your mother, father, sisters, brothers, even your own life.”

“Count it as nothing in comparison to what I mean to you. If you’re going to be my disciple, you’ve got to carry your own cross.”

What an absolutely, thoroughly repugnant, repulsive thing for Jesus to say. But, boy, he made it absolutely clear: “Being my disciple, following after me, is not a matter of just picking up the neat tidbits of teaching that I give, or going along with this neat crowd of people, or having a great feeling being around me and my friends. But it means picking up your own cross and following after me as I carry my cross before you.” And he says, “Stop right where you are and count the cost. See very clearly that to be with me, to be really with me, is to be willing to let everything else go, is to renounce everything else you have or that you’re attached to.”

And clearly, you know, to all of us, there’s a huge difference between being into something or being attached to someone interesting and exciting and glorious and glamorous, even who does all sorts of good things for us, and really putting him absolutely ahead of everything, as the person to whom we’re totally committed.

In verse 33, he says, after the example of building the tower and counting the cost, or the king who wants to make war and—and counting the cost and figuring out exactly what it’s going to cost him to win, he says, “Your price is this—the cost of being my disciple—whenever of you does not renounce *all* that he has cannot be my disciple.”

And I—when I read this, I really praised the Lord for giving us this Scripture tonight.

Now, the Lord who’s calling us to follow him is the Lord of Glory. He’s the Lord of this complete and unsurpassed love. He is the Lord who saves and heals and transforms and liberates and speaks his word to us constantly. He is the Lord of heaven and earth. We know that.

But he is calling forth from us—who, coming together in this community which he is forming, profess that we really want to be his disciples, that we don't want to be on the fringe of activity with him, but that we really want to follow him completely—he's telling us, reminding us, what his terms are. And he's calling on us *all* as we commit ourselves to the life that he's calling us to lead.

And as all of us try to renew in ourselves our commitment to live the life of the People of Praise, as the Lord has taught us it is to be, that we are to do that with this attitude that he's calling us to: of renouncing everything, but putting *him* absolutely first.

And he calls us to a path of discipleship that he gives us every indication will be hard. He tells us it *will* be carrying a cross, that it *will* be dying, that it *will* be dying to ourselves, that it will be spending ourselves, that it will be stumbling and falling. But the path of discipleship after him—he does not tell us in this passage that this is going to be easy. And this doesn't contradict at all his love for us, and his power and his salvation and his miracles.

But he calls upon us to be completely willing, as we renounce everything, to follow him and the plan he has laid out for our life and is revealing for our life in the People of Praise. He's really calling us—on us, to spend ourselves completely for him, and to spend ourselves completely for each other, and to put ourselves, and everything else that is precious and important to us, way, way, way down on our list of priorities. But for it to be our first priority, to follow *him* and to live the life that he has called us to in the hard service, in the working out of personal relationships, in the laying down of our time and our money and our comfort and our energy and everything else, in order to *really* be his disciple. I think Jesus wants to make that clear to us tonight.

And the Jesus who's making us clear to that tonight [sic] is the same Jesus who told us in the prophetic words that Bob had a little while ago, and in all the prophecies we had Wednesday night, just how fantastically he loves us, and is caring for us, and is taking us where we are, and meeting our needs, and forming us, and molding us, building us up. I really praise God that Jesus tonight is showing us what it costs to be his disciple.

And I believe that at the same time he's showing us, he's giving us his Spirit and prompting us inside to sit down, to count the cost, and to decide to pay it.

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 125. Teaching Children to Pray

*This talk was given on June 19, 1974, at a Wednesday night public prayer meeting. Bud Rose talked about taking responsibility for teaching his children to pray, and Sharon Rose shared about the resulting fruit she has seen in their family.*

## **Transcript**

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

BUD: We're Bud and Sharon Rose. We live in a household in the community of People of Praise. There's myself, my wife, we have four children by the name of: Kevin, Trice, Tami, and Christopher. We have one person who lives with us, who is a young adult, and that is our household right now. We are presently in the process of praying, possibly, that someone else may move into our household.

This evening we would like to share with you how the Lord helped us teach our children to pray. It became apparent—by the way, can everybody hear me?—it became apparent in 1971 that Sharon and I not only had the responsibility for our children's religious education, but that we had to take an active part in this whole area of Christian guidance.

We had seen the results, in one of our sons, where we relied on someone else in a religious education class to build him up in what we thought was a religious experience. That was the receiving of the Holy Eucharist. We were very disheartened with what we saw. We saw that he was not really taught properly. The person who had done this was an eighth grader who was trying very hard, and gave it all she knew how. It was not her fault. It was ours.

We immediately made the decision to take an active part in their religious education. But at that time, we were not having any particular experience with the Lord ourselves. It was not until January 1972 and the baptism of the Spirit that I started to have this

new relationship with the Lord. Sharon had started this relationship about two months prior to that.

The children could definitely see that we were changing our priorities. We were reading the Bible and praying together for the first time! They could also see that instead of parties that we were now going to prayer meetings.

So, for the first point I want to make that it was—that we had to release ourselves to the Lord and make Christ the center of *our* lives. Then the children had to see that we were depending on the Lord in a real faith, for all our needs. He became the focal point of our lives. We soon realized that the children should be sharing the same kind of relationship with Jesus that we were experiencing. We'd gotten this through the passage in Matthew chapter 18, verses 19-21, where it says, "Where two or more are gathered in my name, I'll be there amongst you." And we really knew that that passage was meant for our family. That we as a family had to be there, together, praying to the Lord and asking him to bless us. And we had to give him praise. And that this was not a wife and husband affair, but a family affair. Through spontaneous-type night prayers, we started the children in asking the Lord to bless them and to protect them. This seemed to grow so that soon after, during the daytime, we would have the children pray for any special needs they might have: headaches, cramps, or just a nice day.

The second point is that we were developing a friendship between Jesus and the children. Sharon will share with you how, in one instance, the Lord really showed us he was keeping his word and answering the prayers of his children.

SHARON: This particular instance that Bud is speaking of happened soon after the two of us were baptized in the Spirit. . . . This particular morning, Kevin, our youngest, who was then four, woke up with a terrible case of the flu. And he just kept vomiting and vomiting, and it was a consistent thing, and he even couldn't keep down a glass of water. So finally, after he'd vomited like three times in the span of maybe 20 minutes, I said to him, "Kevin, this is absolutely ridiculous. Jesus does not want you to be sick." I said, "Let's pray together and ask him to make you well." I said, "You pray and

ask him to make you better and I'll pray with you." So we did this. And we prayed together. I still remember sitting in the rocker and holding him in my arms while we were praying together.

And as we finished praying and asking the Lord to make him feel better, he looked at me and he said, "I'm hungry." [Laughter.] So I got him a bowl of cereal and some milk and a piece of toast and some jelly and waited. [Sharon laughs.] And there was no adverse reaction! But that wasn't all: in about a half an hour Bud came home for lunch, and he brought with him a pizza. [Laughter.] Kevin looked at the pizza and he said he wanted some. And he sat there and he ate three pieces of pizza. Again, no adverse reactions.

So that afternoon, as the children came home from school. It was a beautiful day outside and they—Kevin wanted to go outside and play with them. And I said, "Hmm." He was still in his pajamas. I said, "Kevin, I really don't think you'd better, you were so sick this morning." He looked me straight in the eye and he said, "Why not, Mom? Jesus has healed me." [Laughter.] So that was like a giant step for me. It was a real lesson in faith for me. And as we shared it, what had happened, with our other three children, was a real teaching in faith for them, too. And they began to learn of how much the Lord loved them, how he wanted to care for them. And he wanted to care for every one of their needs, and he didn't want them to suffer.

BUD: It was not long after this period that we moved to South Bend, and the Lord put us in the hands of his teachers in the People of Praise community at the Wednesday night prayer group. It became apparent that I was not really heading our household and maintaining order that the Lord had set up for us.

So, the third point I want to make is that I had to include, and provide, an opportunity for us to pray as a family in a regular time schedule. I had to set this prayer time up as a top priority. That meant that we had to get up one half hour earlier than normal, to be sure that we made time for the Lord. We tried all different ways, but the Lord just can't be squeezed into a regular time schedule. And He doesn't want to be squeezed into a

regular time schedule. He wants you to make time for *him*. And he really taught us that lesson.

So, we made the household agreement to get up at 6:30 and pray till 7:00. And the peculiar thing about that is, we do this every morning now, and, you know, I don't keep a watch. I don't wear a watch. And we always end at 7 o'clock. The Lord knows that we can't go much past that, otherwise we'll be late.

We have always included our children in all our household prayer time in the last year. We don't exclude them in any of our prayer time. They are our family, they are our household, and we include them in all our prayers.

Sharon will share with you some of the experiences and fruits that have been born from this prayer time.

SHARON: Our children learned in a hurry that the Lord honored their prayers as they continued to develop their friendship with him. This regular prayer time with the household seemed to make them more aware of his presence without—with them throughout the whole day. And it made it much easier for them to turn to him for their every need.

As they turned to him, and he heard their prayers, we were able to see developing a real trust and reliance on Jesus with them. I'd like to share some of the ways that our Lord used to show them how much he loved them.

Our oldest child, Christopher, used to have strep throat about—at least, at the very least, five times a winter. After he learned the power of prayer, at the earliest sign of a sore throat that he would be having, he'd come to us and ask us to pray with him. And the Lord would heal him. It would never go any farther than that first sign of a sore throat. He learned that he didn't have to go through the penicillin shots and the trips back to the doctor, and another penicillin shot if it showed that it wasn't gone.



So since we began to make Jesus the center of our family life, Chris has only needed a penicillin shot for strep throat one time, and that was on a particular occasion. And the Lord really taught him a lesson. And on this one night, when he told us that he had a sore throat, and we started to pray with him, his prayer was “Jesus, I don’t really want to be well enough to go to school tomorrow.” [Laughter.] So you can guess what happened. [Laughter.] Just this past weekend, he confided to us that that was the worst sore throat that he had ever had, with all the strep conditions that he had had. So he had to have the penicillin shots, he had to go through the whole thing. So the Lord really taught him a lesson, and he hasn’t forgotten it. [Laughter.]

On another occasion this past summer, when we were coming back from a trip in Tennessee, all four of our children were being plagued with sore throats. For a couple of days on our vacation they had complained very briefly of a sore throat. But as we started our trip home, and we were traveling in the car, they really started complaining. And so, as we looked at their throats, we could see how red they were and that, we could see also, that they had white spots on the back of their throats, which I’d seen many times in Christopher’s strep condition. And we knew that by the time we got home that evening, it would be very late at night, and it would be too late to call a doctor. So, one by one, as we’re traveling down the freeway, they’d take their turns climbing into the front seat, and we laid hands on them and prayed with them. And the next morning, all four of them had healed throats.

There have been many other occasions, too, in which the Lord has shown them his power and his love. This past winter, Kevin had a bad case of the flu again. And with it he had stomach cramps. And he’d get stomach cramps so badly that he had to double over. And it just came to me as I walked into the kitchen, and he was bent over in pain, for him to use the name of Jesus. The minute he said the name of Jesus, he could stand up and those stomach cramps were gone.

Just Saturday night at the Mass over the weekend, I went with him between—Tami, who’s eight, had a stomach ache just before Communion. And we talked about Jesus

healing her with his Body and Blood in Communion. I really believe in the healing power of the Eucharist. And he did just that. After Communion, her stomach ache was gone.

As their lives focused in on Jesus, and began to flow from him, as they continuously now turn their hearts to him more and more, their prayer life deepens, and they can turn to him in even more complex situations. I'm reminded of a few weeks ago when our daughter, who is ten, was trying out for cheerleading, and I felt her anxiety over the situation and knew that anxiety was not of the Lord, that the fruit of his Spirit was peace. So I went in and talked with her and shared about the fact that Jesus had a plan for her life, and that if her becoming a cheerleader would give him more honor and glory and was part of his plan for her life, that she would make cheerleading. If she didn't make cheerleading, she should still rejoice, because he had something better for her in his plan for her life.

So the immediate result was a beautiful peace in place of this anxiety. It was a beautiful thing to see. She did make cheerleading. And so her next question was, "How can I give God honor and glory by being a cheerleader?" So we sat down again and we talked about how when girls come together in groups—that she now had the responsibility to make certain that their talk was always upbuilding. That if someone happened to be saying something bad about another person or one of their classmates, she had the responsibility to only say good things, and to put in a good word, and to always act as the Lord would expect her to act and as she knew that Jesus wanted her to act.

It has been a truly amazing thing, the relationship the Lord builds when we as parents simply work—as an intermediary between himself and them. They realize quickly how much he loves them and how much he cares for them. And their hearts respond as anyone's heart responds to love that's shown them.

BUD: We really could go on and on with sharings of things that happened with our children's healings. And even this morning my son came to me again with a sore throat, and I prayed with him, and I asked him tonight, I said, "How's your sore throat?" He said,

“It’s gone.” And it’s just really taken as a normal practice now that when anything is wrong, they want to be prayed with for the healing.

So you can see that the Lord provides many outside opportunities for us to pray with the children as we provide the scheduled prayer time and allow him to help us grow as a unit. This prayer is carried over into many aspects of their lives, and allows the Lord to work powerfully in them.

The next and the fourth point is that we must be sure and control the environment that our—that surround [sic] our children. They relate strongly to their peers, and in most cases follow them rather than the adults. This is where the community has played an important part in helping us fulfill our obligation to teach our children to pray. Our children pray and relate in their spare time with community children.

I’d like to share with you how our children actually ask for the baptism of the Spirit. One day last fall, our daughter was playing with the daughter of another community member. The playmate was so—was relating how her mother had prayed with her for the gift of tongues. That evening, our daughter shared with our family, all the other children at home. [Background noise.] The—and the next day they decided that they wanted to have the gift of tongues also.

So Sharon and I explained to them the responsibility of the gift, and that they would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit if we prayed with them for the gift. In other words, it just wasn’t the gift of tongues that they were asking for, but they were actually asking for the baptism of the Spirit and that they really would have a responsibility once this actually happened.

Three of our children asked for the gift of tongues and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we prayed with them. They all received the gift. The fourth and oldest wanted us to pray with him, but he would not ask Jesus for the gift. He did not receive the gift and he did not receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit at that time.

Later that evening we heard him crying in bed, and I went up and I asked him what was wrong. He was upset about the fact that he was not given the gift of tongues. I talked to him for a while and told him God loved him very much and wanted him to have the gift, but that he must really want it, and had to ask for it out loud. He did so, and after two to three minutes of praying with him, he received just a fluent gift of tongues, and the Spirit was really there.

We could see that in giving the children the opportunity to pray, that they needed guidance on *how* to pray. We had already taught them to open their hearts to spontaneous praying, but we had not done much with Scripture or just sitting and listening to the Lord.

The fifth point I'd like to make is that we saw that we must guide them in a format in praying. We must control the environment of the prayer time, to show it is a priority. In other words, this is really a special time in our home. We had to set up a format and we had to set up a priority. This is not something that we take haphazard[ly]. This is number one right now in our home.

We follow a very basic prayer group format for household prayers in the morning. We praise and give glory to the Lord. We sing songs. Everyone reads Scripture passages, and sometimes they will draw out of it what the Lord is telling them. The smallest of the children will do this also. We wait for prophecy, and we'll sit and listen in silence. We end with prayers of petition, giving Jesus the glory and praise in a thankful way.

Our evening prayer, which follows immediately at the end of dinner, starts with praise and thanksgiving for the day. I then pray for a meaningful teaching that may help us draw from the day's experiences. We then sing, and have prayers of petition, and then end with a prayer of thanksgiving. In praying for a meaningful teaching this might—this usually is—I pray for a passage, and we try to draw something from a passage that could be used from the day's experience.

I have not mentioned much about personal prayer, or prayer done in private, but only because it's so important. I didn't want it to get mixed up with other forms of praying.

The head, the father, must be sure all members of the family are taking and scheduling personal prayer. This is when we—when they talk and listen to the Lord. They're listening to what the Lord has to say to them. For children, this period cannot be long. It can be but a short time. But it must *be*.

Also, the children should know that the parents are getting their prayer time in. This is a must: that the children know that the parents are getting their prayer time in. This supports what you tell your children.

So, in summary, in teaching our children that prayer is putting themselves in the presence of Christ, and developing the friendship that is related to every aspect of their life, first, Christ *had* to be the center of *our* lives. And then his life was able to flow through us to, secondly, to develop a friendship between Jesus and our children. Thirdly, the father must assume headship and responsibility for scheduling the prayer time for the household. With this goes the responsibility for follow-up, to be sure that all the members are following the schedule that has been set up. Fourth, a healthy Christian environment will enrich the child's friendship and prayer life with Jesus. The fifth and final point is that all this prayer life must have a format that is orderly and headed.

This whole process takes time. And not any two children react—will react exactly the same, or at the same rate of growth. We must remember, though, that this is a work *for* the Lord and *of* the Lord and will be completed in his time and not ours. Thank you. [Applause.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 126. Being a Man, Being a Woman

*Paul DeCelles looked at 1 Corinthians 11:2ff. and 14:34-36, 1 Timothy 5:9-10, Titus 2:2-7 and 1 Peter 3:1-7. He comments that this is not about "a law" but rather about exploring together what God is saying, with the attitude of "I want to be as much of a man/woman as possible." Then he talked about giving cultural expression to the differences between men and women.*

## Transcript

*This document is a direct transcript of an audio recording, and may contain transcription errors and other minor edits for the sake of clarity.*

PAUL: We're talking about, in these several talks, about some extremely timely subjects, evidently. Tonight, when I got here, Carol brought me some of the mail that had come in over at the office, and I was surprised to get a copy of the *L'Osservatore Romano*, which I don't read, or [inaudible] very often. But it's, you know, it's a fine paper. [Paul and all laugh.]

And they have in here, in the centerfold for all of us to view [laughter], "Women in the New World." And I haven't read it yet. [All laugh.]

She also brought me something else I haven't read yet. It's a copy of *New Wine* magazine, which I myself find to be a very good magazine. This is my subscription to *New Wine*, and it—which I get after everybody else is through reading it, evidently. [Paul and all laugh.] It's kind of a "community asset."

And there's—this whole issue is dedicated to the restoration of womanhood. And so I feel like: on the one hand, the *L'Osservatore Romano*; on the other hand, *New Wine*. And I just—I hope that some of the things that I have to say tonight will be found in some of these things. [Paul and all laugh.]

I want to continue the talk along the same kind of lines that Kevin was giving us last time, concerning the relationship between men and women in the community and the

relationship between men and women in general.

But I want to start by saying that none of the coordinators . . . it's not our opinion that we have a very big problem with problems between men and women. It does—really, we're not so . . . like, say: "Gee, there's just an awful problem here, and we've got to take care of this because everybody's misbehaving one way or another." It is—I don't think that we feel that that's what God is saying to us, that there's a big problem that has . . . and things have to change.

But rather, I think what's happening is that the Lord is accomplishing a lot of things in individual hearts in the community. And we need to be able to take this opportunity, the way the Lord is leading us, to say clearly what the Lord has said in Scripture about what it is to be a woman and what it is to be a man.

Because that's—like, these two articles are not accidental. I think that the Lord is moving by the power of his Spirit to teach the world how to set these two things straight: what it is to be a man, what it is to be a woman. And what we want to do is to say it clearly so that . . . basically, so that all of us can say, "Yeah, that's exactly right, that's where we stand." So that we can sense the unity which is really here. I don't—none of us expect sort of like a big debate about this. That's not because we don't want to debate, particularly—that it doesn't seem too important—but it's rather a matter of everybody having an opportunity to kind of give their "Amen" to what the Lord is accomplishing.

And I sensed, after Kevin's talk last week, that that happened with regard to what Kevin had to say, that it was a . . . I could sense that there was overall quite a sense of peace and that people—some people said, for example, "Well, he didn't say anything that we didn't already know, or that we didn't already believe."

And that's right. But that was the first time that we had said that *together*, and we had taken that stand, and everybody could assent to that. And that deepened what the Lord is doing in our hearts individually, and made it something . . . a communitywide thing.



Tonight, I want to talk a little bit more about what Scripture has to say about men and women. I want to recapitulate very briefly some of the points that Kevin made.

The first point—I think he was really right on the mark, in locating the fact, first of all, an evident fact—that there’s a problem in the world in the way men view themselves and the way that men view women, and the way women view themselves and the way they view men.

And he located that disorder. He traced it back to, essentially, a rebellion against God. That it’s a rebellion, according to Saint Paul in the Letter to the Romans. It’s the rebellion against God, which is being expressed in an unwillingness on a man’s part to accept the way God made him. Or it’s an unwillingness on the part of—it’s a rebellion against God that’s being expressed on the part of a woman who is unwilling to accept the fact that God has made her a woman.

And what Kevin was urging us to do is to get it straight, in our own minds and in our own hearts, that whatever it may mean to us as time goes on—that whatever it means, and we’re going to, I hope, find out more about it—that each man here should say, “I want to be as much of a man as possible,” and for each woman to say, “I want to be as much of a woman as possible.”

I think that all these talks that we’re giving, as I look back over them and look forward to what else might come, . . . as we’ve in our meetings on . . . and the coordinators’ meetings and that long session that we had together—what I sense the Lord is trying to accomplish with us, above everything else, is to give us a new approach, a fresh approach, and a very strong and authoritative approach, to the word of God.

And so that one prophecy which we received tonight struck me in . . . particularly when it was—it was the prophecy about, that the enemy is on the prowl for our lives. And he’s trying even here to do some damage. That he wishes to destroy us tonight. And then the prophecy went on to say, “My word is coming on earth in a powerful way.”

And I feel that that is the chief work which the Lord wants to accomplish through these major community teachings. He wants us to kind of “crack” Scripture, to take a different approach to Scripture, to face it, to look at every page of Scripture and say, “Yes! Whatever it means, yes!” you know, and enter into a continuing dialogue with the Lord and with each other in an effort to explore and to discern and discover what it is that God is saying to us on every page of Scripture, and every dot and iota. . . .

There’s probably no doubt—there *is* no doubt about who is behind the confusion about what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman. And the widespread common teaching, the ordinary daily experiences that we have in the world, all were working toward, very clearly, making it the case to confuse us, to enervate us, to take away our strength and our power by confusing these roles. And that’s a confusion which is caused by the devil himself. And I think that’s why we had those prophecies about the enemy tonight: because this is an area which is a key piece of the strategy of the enemy in the world today.

There are—as Kevin said last time—there are lots of things about us which are pleasant and attractive, desirable by the world. He mentioned two: the fact that we’re a community and the fact that we have a lot of experie—spiritual experience.

But there are a lot of other things that we are involved with that the Lord is teaching us that the world does not like—in fact, it hates.

Recently, I ran into a situation—many of us in the community did—where we were being attacked as a community. And as I . . . it was a long attack, long article on a talk. And my first reaction when I read this—it’s not important, many of the details of it, but— [my reaction] was, “Oh, there she goes again,” kind of thing [chuckling among the listeners].

But . . . then I settled down after a few days [Paul and all laugh], and I took a closer look at it. And I reread the article, and it’s laced with inaccuracies and aggravating things. But I began to see that there was more to it than just those irritations. That, in fact, where . . . on every major issue where we have taken a stand, others are taking a very vigorous stand opposing us.

For example: making covenants and making agreements. Where we stand, others are taking the side that that's not right. That's really a wrong way to proceed. That it's elitist, it's a "new church," it's "come-out-ism." All kinds of things are attached to that. An attack on those agreements.

Another kind of thing that we are into is headship and submission. And that's being attacked head-on. For example, in this article, headship and submission is wrong; it's a wrong thing, according to this author. And that's common. That's not just, you know, peculiar to this one person.

The same thing now. The second—the next point, rather, was—the main point was that our attitudes in the People of Praise concerning the roles of men and women are all wrong. And the stands which are taken, very often and increasingly clearly, are that basic scriptural stands that we take are being confuted, they're being put down and argued with. And what's happening, it seems to me, is a more and more clear situation where the word of God says one thing, and where others are saying things that are against the word of God.

I think that the People of Praise is small potatoes, you know, in a certain kind of sense. It doesn't matter that *we* may be scorned or humiliated or treated badly, but when the word of God itself is being argued against, then something very . . . you know, like you can see the battle kind of shaping up.

And I think that what the Lord is doing with us is making it possible for us to understand Scripture and to take it *all* seriously. To begin at the beginning and work through and understand, get a hold of, what God is teaching, what he has—what he *has* taught us, and what he wants to teach us.

We need as a whole to continue in that repentant state that the Lord is calling us to so often, and be willing to do something that is unacceptable to the present age *just because* it's God's plan. It may be very unpopular and it may cause a lot of criticism, but we have to be in a situation where we're willing to do something unacceptable in the present age.

A lot of us, you know, hear all the time the notion of—like Kevin covered so well last time —about the whole question of, “Well, you look at Scripture, but you have to understand that that was written by a certain people with a certain mentality for a certain group of people in a certain age, etc.” You know, in other words, you kind of place it back there historically and you comment on that, and then you get around a lot of what is said there.

Now there’s—whereas, in fact, we’ve made a lot of progress, we’ve learned a great deal, and there’s no reason for us . . . for example, they didn’t know even that the sun was the center of the solar system. They thought the earth was. And there are so many things that we have learned, say, since the Scientific Revolution, the whole rationalism . . . and there’s so much now that we’ve learned from various kinds of . . . just understanding psychology and the human nature through experiments.

None of the coordinators want to say that there isn’t progress. There certainly *is* progress. In fact, I think that one can say that we know more about Scripture today than the people who read the letters when they were “hot off the press,” like the epistles that were sent. There’s a pretty fair chance that in some ways we understand more about what’s being said there because of so many other . . . excavations and so many other kinds of resources that are available to us. There’s a pretty fair chance that we are in a position to really understand what Saint Paul was saying there.

There *is* progress, but there’s a difference between saying there’s a progress in understanding and saying that what God said at that time is no longer true for us, because we have progressed and we’ve outgrown God’s teaching about, for example, the nature of man.

So I want to read some passages from Scripture. And the point here is, first of all, just as a whole community we need to draw our attention to these passages and look at them eyeball to eyeball, we have to know what God is saying in these passages.

All of us have been deceived to some degree by the spirit of the present age. We all have some kinds of hang-ups in the area of, for example, sexuality. Somebody in the prayer

room ministry was telling me the other day that, something like—I forget who it was who was talking to me—but it was something like, he didn't use to put much weight on, you know, the kinds of things which some modern psychology used to—psychiatry used to, about sex.

But after working in the prayer room ministry for a while, he began to be pretty clear on the fact that an awful lot of people have an awful big problem with sex. And I'm not just talking about fornication and adultery, which are fairly natural kinds of things, but rather the kinds of things where—not even necessarily immoral acts, but kind of wrong attitudes, and unwholesome asp—you know, reflection on one's own personality.

It's just kind of a problem. It's like a problem of sex is really a big problem that is encountered all the time in the prayer room. I don't think we're all, by any means, as hung up on sex as Freud said, and I'm not trying to say that we are. But, on the other hand, he had a lot of insight there, and whatever . . . however he arrived at it. And he did have some things even *he* was able to see.

All of us have been deceived to some degree.

Now, when I read these Scripture passages, I'm not trying to read them from the point of view of, "This is now The Law, and let's all toe the mark." Rather, what I want to do is get them out there, sort of—this is not all of them, either; I'm going to read just a selection—but I want to get some of them out there, and it's kind of amazing the consistency in the picture that emerges when you read these texts together.

The idea is not, in fact, to say, "Well, this is now the way we're going to *do* everything in the People of Praise." What we need to do is to begin to explore together, in a process, what it is that God is saying to us in these Scriptures. What is the spiritual truth which the Lord is teaching us in these various passages?

We need to pray about them, talk about them, talk about them a lot, and try to discover. . . . having taken the stand: "I want to be a man," "I want to be a woman." Having taken

that stand, look at these Scriptures to say: “All right, that’s what it means to be a man. That’s what I want to do.” You know, *whatever* that might be, “Let me see what it is.”

“How can I, in fact, in light of that, become more of a man?”

“How can I, in light of that Scripture, become more of a woman?”

Let’s look at 1 Corinthians 11. This is 1 Corinthians 11, verse 2.

I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you. But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ. The head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head. It is the same as if her head were shaven, for if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair. But if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil, for a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God. But woman is the glory of man, for man was not made from woman but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels.

There’s . . . I can say something about that . . . [laughter] the “angels” part. The angels, in the early church, were given a position of looking order—over the order of a prayer meeting. They were there, in the midst of a prayer meeting, to take care of the problems that might arise. They kept peace.

We ought to think of that, by the way, I think, at some of our prayer meetings, whenever there is any kind of disorder that comes up. You can have confidence that the Lord’s angels are there to minister to that.

Nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor man of woman. For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman, and all things are

from God. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not nature itself notice?

“Does not nature itself?” He’s not . . . I mean, that word “nature” is a deep word. He’s not saying: “Isn’t it the way the Greeks do it? Isn’t it the way the Jews do it? Isn’t it, you know, the way the Romans do it?” What he’s saying is, “Isn’t it by nature itself,” that teaches us that “for a man to wear hair—long hair—is degrading to him. But if a woman has long hair, it is her pride, for her hair is given her for a covering.

“If anyone is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practices—practice, nor do the churches of God.”

What he’s saying there, something—toward the end, I’ll come back and comment a little bit more on some of these things—is that he’s not situating this comment about women in Greek culture, in Jewish culture, in Roman culture. He’s situating what he’s talking about in *nature*.

And then he says, not only is it in nature, he said, but it’s what we do in “the churches.” That is, in Christianity as a whole, this is what—this is the way it’s done. He’s not appealing to the fact that, you know, it’s *acceptable* to a lot of people. He’s saying this is the way *we do it*, and it is not, in fact, acceptable to a lot of other people.

Let me go on to 1 Corinthians 14 before saying very much more. Let’s take a look at 1 Corinthians 14, verses 34 to 36.

Again, he starts off, he says, well, you remember, this is the chapter which has a lot to do with the order in the prayer meeting. And since he’s talking now, to some degree, about the way women ought to behave at prayer meetings.

And now again, he situates this, what he’s going to teach here, in terms of what is done in the Christian culture, what is being done in “the churches.” He’s not situating it in what’s acceptable to the rest of mankind. . . .

“Just as in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silence in the churches. For they . . . ,”—now, that’s like, “. . . should keep silence at the prayer meetings”—“For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the Law says . . . ” as even the Law says. “If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.”

Let me go on. [Paul laughs.] Quickly! [Laughter.]

1 Timothy 2—

MAN’S VOICE: 1 what?

PAUL: 1 Timothy 2, verses 8 to 15. “I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.”

There was some confusion recently. I was talking to somebody about that and they thought that that meant that men should be hitting their wives when they weren’t angry. [Paul and all laugh.] That’s *not* what that means. [All laugh.] That is, the “lifting of holy hands” is, obviously, is the way we pray, and is the way they prayed in the early church, too. And they *should not* be quarreling, and they *shouldn’t* be angry, and so on. Okay.

Also, that women should adorn themselves modestly—

Okay? They should dress right.

—and sensibly, in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire, but by good deeds, as befits women who profess religion. Let a woman learn in silence, with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach, or to have authority over men. She is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived, and became a transgressor. Yet, woman will be saved through bearing children, if she continues in faith and love and holiness with modesty.



Again, he's talking about something which sounds like . . . well, you might say, "That's the way *they* did it. We want to do it some other way." But his—he goes so far as to explain why he wants this to be the case. And the explanation is devastating, in my estimation. He couldn't pull out, I believe, any bigger guns than he pulls out.

He says, because . . . "Go back to Genesis," he says. This is the way that *God made them*. That's the way God made *man*. And that's the way he made *women*. And that's a very strong statement.

You might say, "Well, Saint Paul was confused about the Old Testament." But that seems like Saint Paul *couldn't* make a stronger case for what he's trying to say there, whatever it is that he's trying to say.

1 Timothy 5, verse 9. Now, this is, the context here is, he's talking about enrolling widows. And the idea is that he's going to . . . he gives a little synopsis of what the career of a good wife—you know, looking back on her life—what she can look at, what is it that she accomplished. So these are some of the characteristics of a good wife.

"Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than 60 years of age, having been the wife of one husband."

Now, that particular phrase is . . . is not . . . it's by no means clear what it means to be "the wife of one husband" or to be "the husband of one wife," which is used in Timothy. But one thing . . . I don't know what it means, but one thing that some exegetes have offered, which appeals to me, frankly, is the idea that what that means is—it's like, to be a . . . a one-wife husband means . . . to be the husband of one wife means that you, you kind of put all your heart into it, that she is your prize, you know, to love her with all your heart. To be a wife who has one husband is the same kind of thing. It's—this is a very unflattering kind of parallel, but it's like a dog who has, you know, he's a "one-man dog." Meaning that . . . now, I think that that's . . . [listeners start laughing] . . . what it means is—you know what . . . you know what that means? [Laughing grows louder.]

Okay. You're all a bunch of poets, that's what's wrong. [Paul and all laughing.] Okay.

“And she must be well attested for her good deeds. As one who has brought up children, shown hospitality, washed the feet of the saints, relieved the afflicted, and devoted herself to doing good in every way.”

So when you look at the career of a good wife, what you see are those kinds of things: hospitality; washing the feet of the saints, whatever that might mean, again; relieving the afflicted and devoting yourself to good works in every way; having brought up children.

Let me go on to Titus 2 [inaudible] Or, 2 to 7.

“Bid the older—” Well . . . here: “But as for you, teach what befits sound doctrine.” And then he goes on to say what befits sound doctrine: “Bid the older men be temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.”

Now, there’s a characterization of what a man’s career ought to look like, though, you know, a man—those are manly characteristics: temperate, serious, sensible, sound in faith—that means, you know, okay?—in love, and in steadfastness. And the image that you get there is kind of a rock that you can lean on, that you can count on.

And then he goes on, “Bid the older women, likewise, to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink. They are to teach what is good . . .” Now, “They are to teach what is good. And so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.”

And one last passage to read here is the letter . . . 1 Peter 3, verses 1 to 7.

Likewise, you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior. Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes. But let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit,

which in God's sight is very precious. So once the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves and were submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are now her children, if you do right and let nothing terrify you.

Then he goes on to talk about men:

“Likewise, you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life . . .”

Notice he's talking—he talks about a difference between the men and the women, and then immediately comes back and says that . . . don't forget that you're basically equal in the sight of God as far as destiny and dignity are concerned, that you're “joint heirs of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered.”

One of the things which is—I'm not going to comment on all these things. I think what we need to do—and we're going to try to make it possible by some structures within the community to get into this in an ongoing kind of way, to explore together what it is that the Lord and the Spirit is teaching us in passages like these—what it is that we can do to live out our manliness and what it is we can do to live out our womanliness.

But a few comments I want to make. One of the things, when you take those passages, that comes through is that you get a very strong impression that women should be quiet. That is, that when you're around women you should have an awareness of an inner state of being, of their being with God, of their being with themselves, that their being with their head, that that attitude, that way they are with themselves, God, and their heads—produces a gentle and a quiet spirit.

The first thing is that there is a sense of being at peace with herself, having it—being happy, at peace, about being a woman, being glad and peaceful about being a woman, being glad, or being peaceful about being a man. Being under authority in the right kind of way. There is a sense in which the inner peace that's described in there comes

through . . . when the person—when the woman is in the right kind of headship relationship, the right kind of attitude toward her head.

A lot of the [inaudible] of the times you can see it. I think that you sense that women sometimes are talk . . . not all women, by any means, nor is this a particularly, say, dominant problem in the People of Praise. But you can look at it and say that it is frequent that women talk compulsively, that there is sometimes uncertainty and confusion in what they say, and that that kind of belies— or, rather, betrays a lack of inner peace, that they're not really confident to be at rest with themselves, with God, and with their heads.

All the trouble of that sort starts with rebellion against God. And it comes through the whole culture, through the whole world, and our flesh, and through any sins that we may have committed. What *we* need . . . is to accept being a man and to accept the fact that we're women and take joy in that, for that's the way God has made us.

There are some implications about the community in some of these passages.

1 Corinthians 11, when it talks about women being covered with the veils and so on, the hair. One thing for sure that it means is that women are supposed to pay deference, they're supposed to have signs of deference, toward their heads in public gatherings. It should be clear that that woman who's speaking is headed, that she is under headship.

Then there's a subtle point there. There is a way for anyone to talk as though he's talking on his own authority. And we all have sensed that, when people speak, sometimes you can just say, you know, where did *that* come from?

And what the Scripture is saying, what the Lord is saying, is that there ought to be—it ought to be apparent that, when a woman speaks, that she pays respect without stopping to say, you know, "As my husband told me I could say. . . ." [Laughter.] But there ought to be some kind of a way that it becomes clear that I am, in fact, in submission to my husband or, if I'm not married, that I am in submission to my head.

I think that . . . one area where we may have an ongoing kind of problem in the community is, on the other hand, in the area of men being men. I think that there's a very strong sense in Scripture that men are supposed to play the role, a role of headship. That they're supposed to take responsibility for all kinds of things under their authority.

And it's not at all un-understandable that there are so many divorces, when men are so loath to accept responsibilities for their families. That men are running away from authority, running away from the responsibilities of headship.

And I think that it's—that *that*, if there *is* a problem in the community, in this whole area as a whole—I mean, that's kind of a discernible problem—it would be that the men need to accept more responsibility. Suppose, say, that some—suppose that we were at a prayer meeting where no women spoke. I would say many of us would sit there and say this was a pretty boring prayer meeting.

That is, did the men bring anything to this meeting? What did they want to accomplish at this meeting? What's the purpose of this meeting? What are the goals? What are the objectives? How do we get there? Did anything happen here?

Those are all the kinds of things that are characteristic concerns of men. And men should bring those concerns to the community meeting and to the Wednesday night prayer meeting, and to all the meetings that we have.

You can see, too, that there is a different sense of women's services that are described. They're not all . . . the ordinary kinds of services. I also refer you to the—I guess it's chapter 31; at least it's the tail end of the book of Proverbs, where there's a description of a good wife. Those are not the characteristics—these in here, like, that I pointed out, and those in Proverbs—are not the things that we ordinarily consider as being things that women should be doing. That that's what a woman's role consists of.

Maybe the services in the community have been structured along manly lines, and making it—have made it difficult for women to do women's things. We are investigating

that, trying to find other ways to make it possible so that the kinds of things that women are designed to do can get done as part of a community life.

I want to take a few minutes—I'm going over time a little bit. Is that okay? How much longer?

MAN'S VOICE [quietly]: [unintelligible] ten minutes.

PAUL: Okay. There are some more practical things that I think we can glean from these passages.

We need to have . . . a way to express role differences in our Christian culture, in our lives—that the role differences are not based on the culture of the times, but that the role differences are rooted in the Godhead: in God's plan, in nature, and is the common practice and the teaching of all the churches. That's what's coming through there.

We need to discover what is the proper way to express the inner reality that "I am a man," that "I am a woman." And that [way] may vary from age to age, but that there is a difference, and that there is a real deep need to express that difference, to articulate it, to, you know, make it visible and real.

That's true. We *have* to do that. We have to find some ways of making it clear that, I'm a man and you're a woman.

One of the things that's pointed out in Scripture, and that we ought to consider in this community, are hairstyles and clothing. Inner reality needs to have a cultural expression, or it begins to be mysterious and suddenly disappears. We need to express somehow these inner realities, and we need to be, in this community, open to what the Spirit is leading us to, to express our maleness and our femaleness.

There are lots of ways of talking about this, I think, and I want to stick with this one in particular that we've agreed to here. One is that some of the differences between men

and women are just plainly biological. Only a woman can have a baby. And if the man tries to nurse the baby, it ain't gonna work. [Some chuckling.]

So, that role of nursing the baby is not going to work, and that is simply biologically attached. Now, the situation here is that . . . suppose that, say, there's not nursing going on, but rather using bottles. It's not at all unreasonable to let that biological reality, which isn't maybe being used there, just be extended in a natural kind of way: Let the women give the babies the bottles.

That seems very simple, but that's a way in which women can *manifest*, and can *express*, their womanliness. And let the men *not* do it, except in extreme circumstances when it's, in charity, necessary for the sake of the woman and the baby.

There are other kinds of things about biological differentiations. And that's something which we can talk about, we will talk about, in some of the other teaching units that we have, when we have time to go into them in more detail.

But overall, when you—when you consider the situation, women are basically nurturant. They're life support. They are helpers. They keep life together.

I've been marveling at [Mennonite Bishop] Nelson Litwiller's wife. I've been talking to her recently, just to see what, you know, what kind of a life does she live? What kind of a person is she when they travel so much and he's, you know, he's—you know how he is!

Well, she's a *very* strong person. And you talk to her and you get a sense of tremendous inner peace, quiet, gentle spirit, but also firm, solid. And you find that what she does is, she takes care of Nelson. She's, you know, they go together. They stand side by side. Nelson proclaims the word of God, he works miracles in the name of the Lord. He's doing so much of that. And she's right with him, taking care of Nelson, to make sure that he really is well taken care of, so that the word of God can be preached.

There's another category, you might say, of kind of “vestiges” of our biological role—vestiges from it, something like, and when we were very . . . in ancient civilization, we

used to have to—the men would have to go out and do the hunting.

Now we don't have to do the hunting. You might say, well, you know, there's no hunting to be . . . why did they do that? Well, because they were stronger, and they would carry the deer back. But we can follow up on that kind of thing. You see remnants of that sort of behavior in men and in women. There are some kinds of things that follow on that, like, say, is . . .

Ah, women are certainly capable today, with all the power equipment around, to take care of just about everything around the house, if they know how to use the equipment. When we didn't have all that power at the fingertip, that had to be a man's job, because he was the only one strong enough to do it. Now, a woman could run a bulldozer, and they—in, fact they hold jobs like that.

But when we're trying to find a way to express our femaleness and to find a way to express our maleness, let's take these signs of ways that we could go . . . and work on—and say, "That would be good."

Let's let the men remember, sort of, you know—like that was kind of a natural thing. Let's let the men take care of major maintenance around the house. Let's let the women take care of the domestic and homemaking, the home management kind of thing, that they used to do, and that they do now. And let that become an expression . . . for us, like saying, "I am a woman," and take joy in that.

Another area is in the area of clothing. It's kind of purely symbolic.

Another one is, say, women going through doors first, or, men walking on the outside of the sidewalk so that, when the carriage goes by, the mud gets sprayed on *them*. [Chuckling.] Right? It's . . . when . . . now[adays], you might make the case where they ought to walk on the *inside*, so the women won't get mugged. [More laughter.]

Well, you can't be protected [all laughing] . . . you can't be protected anyway. So, why not walk on the outside? You know, it's kind of a carryover, and it's purely symbolic, but



why not walk on the outside? That's what a man does. That's the way I want to express my manliness.

There are lots of other things, like: Women should not have to endure abusive language from a sales clerk when you're with them. If there's any rough kind of negotiation to be done, it would be a good idea to ask the woman to, you know, quietly go aside so that they don't have to hear what's about to ensue. [All laugh.]

You can see this also in the area—I think it's pretty clear in the area of clothing. And again, the prayer room experience is quite good on this, that a lot of women dress in such a way that they make it clear that they don't like being a woman, they don't want to be thought of as a woman. And I think that women should concentrate on dressing in a womanly way, in such a way as to assert . . . whatever that might be.

I mean, again, I don't know what that means exactly, but there are some extreme cases where it's quite clear that you can't tell whether that's a man or a woman because of the way they dress. That very often, that's a very strong statement on the part of that person, that they don't like, they don't honor, they don't respect their own womanhood.

And you can say the same thing about men: the soft clothing, the jewelry, the adornments that some men wear in a very obvious kind of way are very unbecoming manhood. And they're the kinds of things, when you look at them, you could say, why not let the men dress like men? If you're looking for ways to be thoroughly manly, then why not dress like that?

The same with regard to hair length. Why not dress like—why not wear your hair like a man? A man's length, you know, the way men wear their hair. Why go on with very long hair in such a way that . . . this is not a crucial thing, like, you know, there's no sin involved or anything like that. I'm not talking about that. But when we're trying to find ways of saying I *am* a man, openly, then let's wear our hair at a decent length.

You can say the same thing with regard to the cars we drive. . . . There are just lots of—when you start looking at the way we live our lives, you know, are there areas where we

can perceive that we could, in fact, kind of live out and state our manliness in this kind of way? And then there are some areas that are purely arbitrary, which I won't—I don't have any time to go into.

The Lord is asking us, I think, in the community, to look into especially the way we dress. The men should be men and women should dress like women.

And also in the area of hair.

And that extends to our children.

In the area of households, let's go along the line . . . of the chores. Let the women do the chores around the house. And let the men do the maintenance. And let that be of such a character that you can say, you know, this is the way I'm expressing my manliness and my womanliness.

What our Lord is doing to us is really getting quite personal. It's getting kind of close to the bone. And the reason for that, I think, is that the Lord is—as he's been saying to us, he wants to move in our lives in a deeper and deeper way. He wants to make us a new creation.

A lot of what I have said is arbitrary, but most of what I said is just that there's a *difference* between men and women. And let's find ways to express those differences. The key thing is that men should accept responsibility. When you get a chance to accept some responsibility, men, take it. You know, if there's something you can be in charge of, take it. Scripture says, you know, it's a good thing to want to be an overseer. It's a good thing to aspire to more responsibility.

And that's what we need to do. That talk I gave to the Wednesday night prayer meeting a few weeks ago, a couple of weeks ago, and it seemed like I was talking to the children: I was really trying to talk to the fathers, saying that, Fathers, be concerned for your children, and take responsibility for where they spend their money! And take

responsibility for when they get in, and the way they dress, and what they learn, and what they think, because you're going to be held accountable for that.

Again, the point is that men need to look at their children and accept responsibility for their children at all ages. The men need to, for example, perhaps drive the children to school rather than let the mother drive the children to school. Let the men do much of the, in fact, the major formal teaching and training of the children at all ages.

And we can talk about that in another series. The Lord is really *is* accomplishing something, despite how long I talked. [All laugh.]

Copyright © 2022 People of Praise, Inc.



# 127. Freedom and Leadership

*This is an edited transcript of a talk given to prayer group leaders in the early '70s. In it Paul DeCelles described what God means by freedom and then talked about how leadership is service that sets others free. He also talked about what leaders should be doing and about the problems within themselves they need to confront. He concluded by commenting on the importance of supporting a leader.*

There's a passage in the writings of Jeremiah which I'd like to read a little bit of. This is in chapter 50.

Lost sheep, such were my people; their shepherds led them astray, left them wandering in the mountains; from mountain to hill they went, forgetful of their fold. Whoever came across them devoured them, their enemies said, "No blame to us; it is because they have sinned against Yahweh their true fold and the hope of their fathers."

And again in the prophet Ezekiel in chapter 34 [:2] there's a passage which I'm sure you're all familiar with, which goes like this:

. . . prophesy and say to them, "Shepherds, the Lord Yahweh says this: Trouble for the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Shepherds ought to feed their flock, yet you have fed on milk, you have dressed yourselves in wool, you have sacrificed the fattest sheep, but failed to feed the flock. You have failed to make weak sheep strong, or to care for the sick ones, or bandage the wounded ones. You have failed to bring back strays or look for the lost. On the contrary, you have ruled them cruelly and violently. For lack of a shepherd they have scattered, to become the prey of any wild animal; they have scattered far. My flock is straying this way and that, on mountains and on high hills; my flock has been scattered all over the country; no one bothers about them and no one looks for them.

And it goes on like that for a long, long time. What I want to talk about in this talk is leadership and being a shepherd. When we're talking about leadership we may think that now we're getting into something kind of specific and detailed and it doesn't

pertain to all of us or something like that. In fact, when we talk about leadership we're talking about an area where there has been a certain kind of failure. We're talking about a situation where perhaps we ourselves as leaders have been failing and we're beginning to see maybe some of the consequences of those failures. On the other hand, if we're not leaders, then we still have to hear about leadership because we have to know what it is and what it ought to be, so that we can in fact support it properly. So that we can respect it as a genuine gift from God and cooperate with that grace.

One of the first things that struck me when I first got involved with the charismatic renewal, sort of at the beginning, was how it was that we'd walk into a prayer meeting and it was really impressive how free everybody seemed to be. I think it was shocking to people who would come for the first time to see the kind of liberality, for example, the crazy gestures or the praying in tongues or the laying on of hands or the songs or even the late hours or some other unusual thing that was going on—everybody felt that he had a right to say what he thought was from the Lord. And so it seemed that everybody was saying something. And the overall impact of it was such that you'd look at something like this or look at our typical prayer meetings today and say, "Man, there's a lot of life there; there's a lot of action, tremendous amount of vitality. Something is always going on and it's very unpredictable. No two meetings are alike. At any time, there's just so much life." Well, the Lord came to give us life. Jesus said, "I came that you may have life and have it more abundantly." He came to set us free. The work of redemption is the work of setting us free; it is Jesus setting us free from our bondage to sin, our slavery to the enemy.

Now let me tell you what I've done: I've talked a little bit about leadership and I've read something to you about what the Lord thinks about leadership. If people are not being led and they're going astray then he's laying a very heavy burden on the leaders. He says, "I'm through with you leaders. I'll get some more and in fact I'll be the leader myself." On the other hand, there is in fact a real sense of freedom in our prayer meetings. And we run into a conflict right away, because on the one hand we feel like we need leaders and on the other hand we want to be free, and we put in antagonism to

each other freedom and leadership. And there's something wrong with that, and I want to talk about that a little.

In fact, Jesus came to set us free, free from sin and free from death, so that we can live forever with him. It says in Scripture that once we were slaves to sin and now we are free in Christ Jesus. Once we were dead but now we live. St. Paul says in his Letter to the Ephesians, chapter two [:1],

And you were dead, through the crimes and the sins in which you used to live when you were following the way of this world, obeying the ruler who governs the air, the spirit who is at work in the rebellious. We all were among them too in the past, living sensual lives, ruled entirely by our own physical desires. . . .

He's saying that we were dominated, ruled and governed by our own physical desires and our own ideas. Our ideas control us, so that by nature we were as much under God's anger as the rest of the world, but God loved us with so much love that he is generous with his mercy. Here comes the punch line. When we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life in Christ. It is through Christ that we have been saved, and he raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven.

We are truly free, free sons of God. But what we usually mean by freedom is a little bit different from what Scripture means by freedom. In St. Paul's Letter to the Romans, chapter six [:12], he says,

That is why you must not let sin reign in your mortal bodies or command your obedience to bodily passions, why you must not let any part of your body turn into an unholy weapon fighting on the side of sin; you should, instead, offer yourselves to God, and consider yourselves dead men brought back to life; you should make every part of your body into a weapon fighting on the side of God; and then sin will no longer dominate your life, since you are living by grace and not by law.

It goes on to say,

Does the fact that we are living by grace and not by law mean that we are free to sin? Of course not. You know that if you agree to serve and obey a master you become his slaves. You cannot be slaves of sin that leads to death and at the same time slaves of obedience that leads to righteousness.

The point is this: We have to make a choice. We are either going to be slaves to sin and the enemy and death or we are going to be slaves to God. He says, we are either going to be slaves to sin which leads to death or slaves of obedience that leads to righteousness. We think what we mean by “free” is that we’re free to follow God or we’re free not to follow God or free to follow Buddha or Mohammed or whatever else or free to follow our own passions whatever they might be. When we think of freedom, it seems we have a right to choose among equal types of things. And that’s not true, that’s not what God means by freedom.

In the Scripture, what freedom means is vitality, life, vigor, wholeness, enthusiasm, splendid joy, patience and kindness, a fantastic life. God has come to give us all those things as opposed to the old things that we get when in fact we are living according to our passions, living toward death, which is slavery to Satan and to sin. Let me finish reading in Romans 6:

You were once slaves of sin, but thank God you submitted without reservation to the creed you were taught. You may have been freed from the slavery of sin, but only to become “slaves” of righteousness. If I may use human terms to help your natural weakness: as once you put your bodies at the service of vice and immorality, so now you must put them at the service of righteousness for your sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you felt no obligation to righteousness, and what did you get from this? Nothing but experiences that now make you blush, since that sort of behavior ends in death. Now, however, you have been set free from sin, you have been made slaves of God, and you get a reward leading to your sanctification and ending in eternal life. For the wage paid by sin is death; the present given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.



On the one hand we have Satan and slavery to sin, and on the other we have Christ and life everlasting.

You are free to choose God. Freedom to follow Satan is not freedom at all, only slavery. Freedom in the Scripture means life, abundant life, full of enthusiastic joy for the Lord and all the fruits of the Spirit that follow from walking in the way of the Spirit. You can refuse to do what God wants, but there's no middle ground. You're either for Christ or against him, and you're either for the enemy or against him. There's no kind of no man's land in the middle.

Our whole life in Christ does flow from within us. It flows from God. The life which we live in Christ is something that the Father is continually giving to us, it's coming from without, from outside of us. In fact, in order for us to be really free, to experience all the fruits of the Spirit, it's necessary for us to commit ourselves to doing what God says, and that's obedience, and that sounds like it's the opposite of freedom, but it isn't. This experience called salvation-freedom that I've been describing is meant to be permanent, but it requires vigilance on our part to maintain this kind of experience. Now, we are free but we're not entirely free right now, and we can all say with St. Paul how it is that the things which I do, I don't want to do, and the things I don't want to do, I do. And so we know that there's something wrong. We just say, "What's wrong with me?" and St. Paul says, "I know what it is; it's sin." What we experience in fact is that sense of being dominated. We experience that slavery to our passions and to sin, and we do feel downcast. We're downcast by the things of the world, by our work, by some of our friends and some of our acquaintances, by our own flesh and our own inadequacy to do what we set out to do and by the enemy.

Christ came to free us, to give us life and to manifest all the works of the Spirit in our lives, like vitality, joy, enthusiasm and life everlasting. Jesus has died to liberate us and he's paid the price of our ransom with his death on the cross. He's led the way and he continues to lead the way to freedom. Jesus said that the truth shall make you free, and if we adhere to the word of God, revealing and enlightening us by his Spirit, we shall be free. But what are we free for? We're free for service, we're freed by God to live for his

purposes. He intends for us to serve one another. So God has set us free, and it's freedom to serve, it's freedom, so to speak, to freely choose to become a slave to one another in Christ and for his sake.

Now we are in fact freed as a people, not just as individuals, but the whole people was just taken out of bondage by Christ. And when one of us is not free then to some degree all of us are not free. When one of our brothers or sisters in the prayer group is under bondage, is oppressed, then in fact we also, to the degree to which we are really brothers and sisters in Christ, we also share his oppression, his bondage, and we are less free. In our prayer groups, our work has to be to set people free. We've got to work to make it possible for people to come into the whole life of Christ, into real vitality, the real love of God. When somebody is not free in our group, that's a call to the leaders to work to set that person free, and that may take a great deal of time. We should work to make it possible for all men to live in the full life of Christ. So leadership is service, service in the Christian community means service to set people free.

Most of the leadership that we've seen or experienced or have exercised ourselves has in fact not been liberating. I speak from experience about that. The problem is that we don't know very much about how to really liberate people. We don't know, for example, how to speak the truth in such a way so as not to burden a person with the truth but rather to speak the right truth the person needs to hear which will set that person free. You know, not every truth that comes to mind is the truth that needs to be spoken. There's a time and place to say what needs to be said. We have to know what it is, we have to be willing to say the truth that needs to be heard that will really unchain a person's life for Christ. Leadership, then, is service that sets others free. It's part of God's order for the total liberation of all people.

Usually we think that if somebody's a leader he's a boss. We know what a boss does; he tells me what time I have to get to work, what my tasks are for the day. If I don't do that I'll get less pay or I'll get fired or worse. A boss is somebody who sits up on top and doesn't really know what's going on with me at all and he couldn't care less. He simply issues orders; he uses me and that's sort of what I mean. I don't mean that every boss

we have is a boss like that but we do get the feeling that we're part of a machine and the boss is the guy who pulls the levers and we're simply supposed to fit in whether we feel like it or not. And we all know that we'd better fit in or out we go. But that's not the kind of leadership our Lord is talking about. He talks explicitly about this kind of thing. He says, you know people in authority over you in the world lord it over you. They dominate you, but look at what I've done for you. I've tied a towel around my waist and I've washed your feet. In other words, he puts on the garb of a slave and he did the task reserved for slaves. "So for you I have become a slave and now I'm telling you to do the same thing. You've got to be slaves to one another." Now, that's not a boss; that's a leader.

A leader, in fact, is one who fits into God's plan and is one of the real liberators of his people. Leadership does have some elements of slavery attached to it. Sometimes leaders ask us to do something and there is an element of, well, I ought to do it, you know. But you have to remember that slavery that is from God is slavery to God. And that's what Christ calls us to, and that's what he calls freedom.

It's difficult for Christians to ask anybody to do anything. Usually what we try to do is to paint it in such a way that the person would love to do it. If he had thought of it on his own, he would even have been happier. "The only drawback about the whole thing is that you're mentioning it to me. If I'd thought of it myself, I would have done it a long time ago." In other words, in that whole system I've tried to describe, we see a kind of rebellion at anything anyone else tells me. And that's not right. There is in fact a need then for leaders to do some saying and to do a lot of doing, to do what they're told themselves. But one question that leaders ought to ask themselves is: Is what I'm doing—saying or doing—really helping my brothers and sisters to appropriate the freedom of the sons of God? Am I listening to what they're saying to me? Do I know what the people's needs are? Do I care about them? Am I spending enough time planning to see how I can help somebody? Do I look to see what God is doing among us all? Am I a servant?

Now there are lots of ways in which we have been dominated and that we dominate others ourselves. One way is that as we live sometimes we wind up imposing our ideas on people instead of in fact really listening to what the Spirit is saying through them. Sometimes we manifest a kind of false generosity: as I mentioned to the community one time, anybody in the community is perfectly welcome to use my power sander. I don't need it anyway. I can give from my superabundance. But in fact making a big splash over my superabundance—you know, here's my sander, everybody in the community use my sander!—that kind of generosity is in fact something that I do as opposed to a need that is met. It's a false generosity. It's something which in fact puts a lid on genuine generosity. In fact, in our prayer groups, do we find people who are willing to give up everything to follow the Lord? If no one is doing that in our community we ought to in fact wonder, well, what am I doing wrong? What kind of model of generosity am I showing to people? False generosity is enslaving. It makes people dependent. How much effort, how much money, how much time are you genuinely willing to lay down for the sake of your brothers and sisters in Christ? Going around pretending that everything is fine, with a kind of false face, in fact obscures the face of Christ. And it keeps us from an authentic and deep realization of the kind of generosity that the Lord is calling from us, the generosity that he showed us on the cross.

Another kind of thing we've all experienced is this: there is a temptation from the enemy who is always trying to divide us. He tries to get factions against factions—to get his idea against another until he causes a clash.

Then there's a real action on the part of the world that goes like this. I know of one large corporation which has as a corporate policy that every executive has to be transferred every three to six years. The reason for this is: say you're living in Chicago and you're running this operation, wheeling and dealing with a lot of people and you know them pretty well and after about two or three years you've made a lot of deals. The thing is that after three years some of those deals are going to be called up—you know, like, "I did a favor for you now it's your turn to do a favor for me" or "we're friends aren't we, why don't you hire my son?" You know, a whole bunch of deals like that. So this corporation says, none of that. It says you can make all the deals you want to that are

favorable to the corporation and at the end of three years they're going to move you so that all those IOUs are torn up by us when we move you. The idea there is that they don't want you to get close to one another, to become interdependent. In fact, the corporation seeks to divide people and in fact divide families and a lot of other things as well. By families I don't mean like taking a husband out of the home. I mean to divide the husband, wife and children from, say, their grandparents and from their other brothers and sisters, nephews and uncles and people like that. There's a real tendency on the part of corporations to move people in such a way as to continually divide them. That's part of the way the world works. It tries to keep us apart. And we ought to be very careful about that.

The third thing that I want to mention is the way in which we are manipulated by words. A lot of times we use words, as leaders, which have tremendous power and impact. But frequently we don't mean them. That is, we have to really reserve power words for power things. We should be careful not to take a really wonderful thing and apply that word to something which is in fact not the real authentic thing. For example, we should not call something a great miracle when it isn't. We ought to, in fact, be careful about the way we manipulate people with our vocabulary and our words and our emotions and so on. Manipulation is one of the standard techniques for dominating people. You see this a great deal in things like labor unions, politics and prayer groups as well.

So how are we as leaders supposed to function? Well we should work for unity instead of dividing and ruling. Our basic thing should be to try to keep the people together. If you see somebody drifting off, going his own way, gently go after the person and encourage him to come back, to take part, that everybody really does want to know what he thinks about something. People really are concerned about him, and that there are a lot of ideas and right now we can't resolve which is the right idea. "Why don't you come on back and we can work this out." So somebody who is a leader works to keep people together, does what Jesus died for. He tries to keep us all going together.

Also he works at another level of unity within the community. A leader ought to be a reconciler. When there is an argument between two people the leader should become a

peacemaker. He needs to, in fact, develop the techniques that are necessary to bring about genuine reconciliation. One thing, for example, that all of us can do is try more and more to be genuine reconcilers. Some of us should teach in our communities how to achieve forgiveness—how to ask for it and to receive it and give it. That is a very important issue for leaders. We have to know how to reconcile people. We also have to know when is the right time not to be reconciled. There are some issues that are deep enough for us to go on a separate way. But we'd better be very, very careful and sure that we're really in God's will when we make such splits.

Instead of being manipulators we need to be authentic servants in our lives now for the sake of our brothers and sisters. We should not be too ambitious. Instead of being misleading in our use of language we should be authentic, speak the truth simply, honestly. We should be trying to create a new order as leaders which is the antithesis of the world—a new way to live.

Now, all of us need to concentrate on preaching and teaching. If you feel that you don't have the gift of preaching and teaching and your community needs it, then ask God to give it to your community and then try it. But we do have to have preaching and teaching in our prayer groups. And along the way we have to develop a kind of ministry of grace of praying with people which is at all times overcoming the work of the enemy in our lives. We have to have people, for example, who can run a prayer room and make it work, where problems can be met and discussed and healed, where something authentic is taking place and lives are changing, where prostitutes are dropping their prostitution, where people who are angry and violent become gentle men, where people who are liars begin to speak the truth, those who exaggerate begin to be humble and those who are rich begin to be a little poor.

With regard to the devil we need in fact to speak the truth. We need to confront him and tell him to go to hell. In general, we need to encourage a climate of freedom, that people must realize that the Lord has set them free, that he died that we may be free and have life and vitality. As St. Paul says in his Letter to the Galatians, "When Christ freed us, he

meant us to remain free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.”

There are two big problems that I would like to highlight. One of the biggest problems is that leaders down deep in their hearts really do believe the gospel, especially where the gospel says, if you want to be my disciples pick up your cross and follow me. And so I think that maybe even at a subconscious level we may down deep in our heart know that to be a leader means to suffer. And after all, who really wants to do that? Well, I'd say we don't have to *want* to do that, as long as you *do* it. Our Lord gives a little parable about this problem. He talks about two sons. One son says, “Oh, sure I will, Dad” and off he goes and he forgets to do what he was asked. He doesn't pay attention and nothing happens. The man asks the other son and the other son says, “You're always asking me to do things! I won't do it. No!” And then a little later on he quietly goes and does it. Well, we may very much be like the people who are in the second category, we may complain quite a bit and may not want to pick up the cross and follow the Lord, but let's do it anyway.

It's very hard to accept responsibility for leadership of prayer groups. We know down deep in our hearts that there are great things happening in these prayer meetings, that God is moving very strongly, that changes are taking place and we just down deep don't want to be held responsible for any failure—in the power of God. We'd like to seem humble and say, “Well, I'm not really a leader. George is a leader, or at least he ought to be. He looks like one,” when in fact it's our responsibility.

Some of us may, in fact, want to be leaders—or at least we want to be thought of as leaders—out of some kind of sense of pride or prestige. We want it that way as long as things are going well, but when the heat is turned up we'd rather not be thought of as the leader of “this crazy group.” “Look at the way they pray with their hands up and everything like that.” I know that in each community where there has been a turning point in the direction of a life together of more than just some kind of a weekly service, as soon as it got off of the weekly service and started ministering to deeper needs of the people and frequently to strangers, . . . a turning point when the prayer group started to

become a community was when some people accepted the fact that, whether they liked it or not, God was giving to the community as a whole gifts of leadership in their person. That as soon as people accept the responsibility for what's going on, a new kind of thing begins to happen in the community as a whole. A new kind of order, a wholeness, a completion begins.

The second half of this, though, is: what about all of us who have to follow leadership? The key thing there is that nobody wants to lead anybody who doesn't want to follow. Part of it is a mistaken notion which I'm trying to deal with. But leaders are so reluctant to accept the responsibility that they'll be very ready to duck out at the first signs of pressure. I'll give you an example. Finally I'm willing to accept responsibility for, say, this thing. I mean, I don't want to and I'm scared to death of this kind of thing, but here I am, and then you go and you have your first meeting. And somebody says, "I won't do what you ask me!" And then right away you say, "Nobody could lead you people!" And so you quit and to some degree that's right. But what needs to be done is for the leader to say, "Okay, I can't lead people who won't follow. I can't work to set everybody free if nobody will in fact support me in this kind of work." And so this aspect of support is absolutely crucial. Now, we have suffered so much from bad leadership—domination, you know, "You do this for my glorification"—that this is an area where, as a community, as prayer groups as a whole, we simply have to ask God to heal us. He's got to change our hearts as regards the whole question of headship or leadership, and he's got to change our hearts as regards submission. But there's one sure way, I guarantee it, on the Lord's word, that it will work. Don't be afraid of it. All you have to do is pick up your cross and follow Jesus, because that's the way to life everlasting.

Copyright © 1975 People of Praise Inc.