

Intimacy With Christ (Part One)

Coming to Know a Deep God

John W. Ritenbaugh

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I feel certain that all of us with an adult mind carry with us a certain amount of apprehension concerning the fairly near future. Given the conditions of today's times, I wonder how much worse it can get, and I know that you wonder the same things. I think we fear that it is going to get much worse than it already is if it goes on for very much longer.

Well I want you to know that John Ritenbaugh believes that it is going to get a great deal worse, even if it does not go on a great deal longer, if my understanding of some of the prophecies is correct. And it is my concern about these worsening conditions because I am absolutely sure that as conditions worsen it is going to exert a greater and greater pressure on us to seek relief by abandoning the faith, because the pressures that are going to be exerted on us will be able to be relieved to some degree by abandoning the things that we believe. I know that from history.

It has not reached the place yet where we are finding it impossible to work, because we have to accept the mark if we are going to keep on working. I think that will give you a pretty good illustration on why these things are going to exert pressure on our faith. That might be the ultimate, that either we accept the mark of the beast, or we do not work, and if we do not work, we do not eat, because that prophecy says that no man can buy or sell without the mark. Up until that time, other things are going to apply pressure on us.

This sermon, I think I can safely say, as are virtually all of my sermons, is aimed at preparing us for the Kingdom of God. But I think that this one can be especially considered as the conclusion to the series that I gave during the Feast of Tabernacles ["What Is the Church's Work Today (Part One)"], because it was prepared even before we went to the Feast to be the conclusion of two of the sermons that I gave there. (But those two sermons developed into four sermons while we were there.) Nonetheless this sermon

was prepared with those other sermons in mind. It does not contain a lot of details. Rather it is going to be dealing in generalities because it is each person's responsibility to work out his own salvation, and part of that is because every life has its own nuances. Thus the details of the things that I am going to be speaking about in this sermon fall on each person to identify and to resolve.

I think that first of all that one of the major problems that we have in regard to overcoming is that we do not deeply consider ourselves as involved in a cause. The emphasis here is on "ourselves" and the word "cause." Overcoming, I am thinking of in terms that we generally link together. We might link together "growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ" and "overcoming." They are linked together. In fact they might be considered separate parts of one process, or they might even be considered exactly the same thing, because to my thinking, if we are growing, it is because we are overcoming, and if we are overcoming, it is because we are growing. The two of them, I think, are inextricably linked.

Now growing in height physically, growing in height and weight is natural, and it occurs as long as we are doing even the bare essentials to sustain life. But growing spiritually and overcoming requires unnatural attention, discipline, and motivation, because a measure of spiritual faith is required, and that is not humanly natural. Thus spiritual growth is something that is **caused** to happen while the person is going against the grain of what it is natural for him to do. This is why overcoming is so difficult.

For this very reason it is very helpful for producing the greatest amount of growth for us to see ourselves as part of a cause. For a group whose cause is preaching the gospel to the world . . . I am using this for very obvious reasons because the group that we separated from had this as its cause. Its reason for being was to preach the gospel to the world. I am not against that. Please understand that. I am not, shall I say, calling anybody into account for this, but I do want to point out something that I think that I have learned over the past several years.

In the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world, there is a built-in measure of motivation, because these groups are almost constantly focusing on numbers, and numbers fascinate us. Numbers give strength to

our reason for being as a part of that group. So, emphasis is put upon, "Well, we've increased in x number of stations that we are now on, x number of people contacted, x number of people writing in, x number of people being baptized, letters received, or call-ins received."

However, there is also a major stumbling block built right into that system, because it lures the unwary into believing that he himself is in right and good standing with God simply because he is a part of the group doing the preaching. What it does is that it subtly promotes a belief in "group salvation." I am going to turn to three scriptures so that we will see that this concept of "group salvation" is wrong even though the whole church is going to be saved—changed—at the same time.

Romans 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God.

Do you see that? Hang onto that thought.

II Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. . .

Brethren, that is taking place right now. Judgment is **now** upon the house of God.

II Corinthians 5:10 . . . that every one may receive the things done in *his* body, according to that which *he* has done, whether it be good or bad.

You can see the conclusion has to be that even though all of the church is going to be saved, changed at one time, inherit the Kingdom of God at one time, everybody's judgment is individual. Everybody is not just lumped into a group and saved because they are a part of a group.

Let us turn to one right at the end of the Book. I think that three witnesses ought to be pretty strong.

Revelation 22:12 And, behold, I come quickly: and my reward is with me, to give every man according as *his* work shall be.

Not somebody else's, see. So we were part of the group that very successfully preached the Kingdom of God to the world, but each person's judgment is an individual matter. What this program tends to produce is a situation where the great bulk of the actual work of preaching the gospel is done by a relatively few, and the first thing you know, that program can be deeply mired in—I think you will recognize this term—the "pay and pray" syndrome that very likely is not producing any personal growth at all, or very little. What it is doing is helping somebody else to do the work.

Please do not think that I am entirely against that because a measure of that is necessary, and there is a measure of good in that. So, it is not entirely useless. But I also personally believe that this played a major role in why so many were so unprepared for what happened when the doctrines began changing; why so many of us may have lost our first love, turned Laodicean, and fell asleep. The work was being done, was it not? Yes, that part of the work was being done. But as I have been trying to get across here, there is more to the work of God than preaching the gospel. In one sense (I have made this statement before), that is the easy part. For each one of us personally, the hard part is overcoming.

And so in that kind of a situation it is very easy to ignore our personal responsibility to God to grow and overcome, because we can always justify what we are doing by saying, "The work is being done; therefore I am okay." See? So the gospel is being preached, so why worry.

But here is the real catcher. All of the evidence that it is being done is *visible*, and that is "living by sight." It is visible and contained in numbers, and we are to live by faith, not by numbers. If you are living by sight would you ever say that Gideon's three hundred would whip a great big army of many, many tens of thousands? Of course not. It is only those who are living by faith who could see the reality of the possibility. If you are living by sight, the numbers were all stacked against David. If you are living by faith, David did not have a shadow of doubt that God was going to back him up in whipping that big

giant. This is what I am getting at. To grow, to overcome, forces a person to live by faith. We cannot be living by numbers.

God's purpose is to reproduce Himself. It is to create His image in us, and that requires personal overcoming and personal faithfulness in the experiences of life. That is not something that someone can do for another. Mr. Armstrong could not do that. That is something that each one of us has to do for ourselves, and this is something that rests upon the quality of our own personal relationship with God. It is in this very area that it helps greatly to see ourselves as involved as part of a cause.

Let me illustrate it this way. A marathoner is one who wants to run 26 miles in a race for fame and fortune. Well that is his cause, and the result of having that cause is that he prepares himself to achieve his cause through all of the practice that he goes through, enduring that in order to achieve it. But you see, he has a cause, and it provides the motivation to overcome the physical deficiencies in order to be prepared to finish the race.

The word "cause," according to *Webster's New Dictionary*, means, "anything producing an effect or a result." Let us begin to expand and build on that. It also means "any objective or movement that a person or group is interested in and supports, especially one involving social reform." That is a very interesting one, because that is **exactly** what we are involved in.

Webster's Lexicon of the English Language says this: "The side taken in a contest between individuals or political or religious movements." Let me give you some synonyms. There are scores of synonyms for this word, but I will use some that are, say, appropriate to this sermon. Synonyms for the word "cause" are: prime mover, instigator, producer, generator, trigger, justification, reason, initiator.

You see what a cause does is it motivates and gives a person resolve, just like the marathoner. It gives the person resolve to produce change, like social reform. So a person joins a movement. He joins a political party because that party's philosophy is going to produce the kind of social change that he feels is in agreement with his ideals.

We have to have some of that same sense, and we also have to see that this cause is greater than ourselves. And if the cause is greater than ourselves, we will even go to the extent of sacrificing our lives for it. That is what patriots do in the midst of a war. They see the war as a cause for them to give their lives. They will go to that extent, and so it motivates them to heroic deeds that will produce the victory that they feel is necessary in order for their country to succeed. Well, our country is the Kingdom of God, and God is involved, and He has involved us in a cause, and that cause is to reproduce Himself in us, and a great deal more besides.

Now I also feel that it is in this area of whether we feel that we are involved in a cause that a person discovers whether his conversion is merely to words and feelings, or to the reality those words represent. That is one of the major factors that God is discovering in this trial that has hit the church—where peoples' beliefs really stand.

Unfortunately, from my own perspective, I think that He is finding that many people have only been converted to what I call "to words." It is nothing but intellectual agreement or conversion to technicalities. But they are not converted to conforming, not converted to a personality that is Jesus Christ whom we are going to marry; not converted to a way of life, implying character, conduct, and preparation for the reality of Christ's return, the establishment of the Kingdom of God, participating in a government, fulfilling God's cause of bringing **all** of mankind into the image of God. That is God's cause. He has enlisted us, called us into it to join in this cause with Him, so that when that time comes He has a group prepared to carry the cause on to the rest of humanity.

I know that the first time that I saw *Les Miserables*, that song at the intermission brought tears to my eyes, "Won't You Join In Our Crusade?" I thought of it in terms of what **I** was involved in. We are involved in a cause that is going to bring about the greatest cultural change that has ever occurred on the face of this earth. We have to be trained in order to be prepared for the time that this thing is really put into gear. We are part of an advance party that is being prepared for that, so that when that time comes, we will be ready. So our cause, individually and personally, is to yield to

God's creative power, personally and individually in growing and overcoming so that when that time comes we will be ready.

As we begin another post-Feast of Tabernacles season, I want to add several simple suggestions to this to help us know that we are part of the most worthwhile cause that has ever hit the face of this earth—suggestions that will also help us to gauge whether we have lost our first love, and also at the same time to hopefully reveal the depth of any latent Laodiceanism that is within us.

The suggestions that I am going to give are simple, but carrying them out is probably going to be the hardest job any of us have ever faced in our life because they are **extremely** difficult. But if we do not make some effort, we may very well neglect. In fact I know, to some degree, we are going to neglect this great salvation that has been offered to us.

I do not know how familiar you are with the book of Hebrews, but this is one of the propositions that is behind the writing of this book, because those people to whom (at least it might appear) the apostle Paul wrote to, were neglecting their salvation, and so it is one of the first things that is mentioned in this.

Hebrews 2:1-3 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

Then from that point on he goes on to mention that we are the heirs of the world—heirs of the universe—with Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation. Do you know the word "sin" only appears three times in the book of Hebrews? Sin was not really the issue. The issue was **neglect**. There are only faint indications of persecution. That was not the issue. The issue was

neglect. There are *many* references to faith, because it was in the use of their faith that led to the neglect. These people were walking by sight largely, and there was a reason for that.

So my concern is that this world, simply because it is there, and simply because we have to live in it, simply because we have to earn our living in it, simply because we have to have our families in it, simply because we have to rear our children in it, puts such pressure on us, that if we are not careful, if we are not resisting it, it is going to **make** us neglect our great salvation unless we are really living by faith, and that will empower us to resist it, by being aware of it.

Turn with me to another very familiar scripture in Matthew 6. We will just touch briefly on this, and why this is so important.

Matthew 6:33 But seek you first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

What things? The things for daily life—food and clothing. He is talking about the necessities of life, and so He tells us to seek **first** the Kingdom of God, and let God **add** the things that we feel are so necessary for life to us. This is a command. We ordinarily do not like to think of it in terms of a law, but this is a command, and therefore it is a law—that we are to seek *first* the Kingdom of God. To add emphasis to it, it appears in the Sermon on the Mount, which is where Jesus laid the groundwork for all the other teaching that would follow. So here in the Sermon on the Mount we have in succinct form the most important principles of God's way of life for us here and now, things that we have to learn. It is not everything, but it certainly consists of those things of first rank, and of first rank is that we seek first the Kingdom of God.

This is important, or I should say that its importance lies in giving guidance toward setting priorities and making choices in the use of **time**. I think foremost is the use of time, because life is time, and without this kind of guidance from our Savior and Lord and Master, it becomes very easy to neglect salvation, because it is a matter of faith. The world is a matter of sight. The world is a matter of sound. The world is a matter of touch and

taste. Because of this the things of faith are not often matters of immediate concern pressing us for action because human nature, which is with us all the time, is driven by sight.

One of my concerns, because I see it having impact on me, is that because we live in a world created by Satan, it is very easy for us to be overwhelmed by **busyness**. He has made us feel a sense of urgency about accomplishing wrong things, so that we are virtually tyrannized into activity that has little or nothing to do with the Kingdom of God.

This is not something theoretical. We are constantly hammered at it by our bank, our employer, on radio, on television, in newspapers, magazines, the telephone, to keep ourselves busy entertaining ourselves; working in the garden, shopping for a car, shopping for clothing, shopping for furniture, running to the gym—and on and on it goes—and not one of these things is of and by itself sin. They may even be very good activities, but they have to be scrutinized by one living by faith as to their **real** value. Sometimes that might really be painful because it is going to involve some sacrificing of things that are awfully close to us personally.

How many of you have been sucked in by television into watching a soap opera, day after day, because the producers and directors of those things are **skilled** at creating interest and always chopping off the story just about when it looked as though it was beginning to get awfully good. So they grab your interest for the **next** day, and then the next day, and the next, and the next day, and on and on. It does not have to be a soap opera. How about your favorite sitcom or adventure series, or a sporting event, and so forth? What we find is that we find time for those things, see, and **then** complain (I am great at this) or feel guilty because we let another higher priority slide by and passed over.

One man that I read of who happened to be a pastor in another organization said, "Nobody knows this, but I am running on fumes. I am lonely, hollow, shallow, and enslaved to a schedule." This part about being enslaved to a schedule, that is something that I can fall into very easily, so I can relate to that. But think about what he said in a wider sense, and that is, incessant activity produces things. It has fruit, and part of that is it leaves people strung

out. It makes them impatient, especially if you are enslaved by a schedule. You are always impatient to get through this thing so that you can get onto the next thing. It is a situation that produces resentment at others who are hindering you from carrying out what you feel you need to do, and worse yet, empty.

Now here is the trap, and that is, such a person involved in incessant activity may feel productive; indeed may even *be* productive, but what is the eternal value of what they are producing? "Vanity of vanities," Solomon said. "All is vanity." This is what the book of Ecclesiastes is about. It is about the use of time. It is about the importance of activities. And what conclusion does he reach at the end of the book? "Fear God and keep His commandments. This is the **whole** man."

See, there is wisdom. Solomon did not fill in all the details, but he gave us plenty to think about. What should have priority in our life? He did not fill in all the details for the same reason I cannot fill in all the details, for God has given each person the responsibility of thinking this through, and **each person** has to make the decisions in working out his own salvation because everybody's life has its own nuances to it, and not enough could be written to cover every possible situation. So God leaves that to us, but He does give us the generalities.

I will tell you, I am finding that a person who is maybe constantly producing because he is involved in incessant activities, that person may find that, depending on what he is involved in, he may not be producing much overcoming at all. I mean of things that are really important, that is those things that have to do with the Kingdom of God and his relationship with God. Because what it does, I am finding, is that kind of a circumstance leaves the person with plenty of involvement with people, but I am also sure, with very little energy left for coming to know God—especially coming to know God deeply. Do you know why? Because there is very little time for *intimacy with God*. A lot of time with people, but then again maybe it is not the people who really matter. But there is plenty involvement with people.

Have you ever looked into something deeply? Let me change the word there. Have you ever looked into something deep? Let us begin there. I have two

pictures in my office of deep things. One is on a calendar, a *National Geographic* calendar of a deep valley between two mountains in Scotland. The other is a picture taken by John Reid of the Grand Canyon. I can look at those two pictures and meditate on them, and honestly I can derive a great deal of pleasure from them for long periods of time. The one has endlessly interesting rock formations. Way off in the distance is a slice of the Colorado River, snaking along about a mile below the rim. I can see trees that must be seventy, eighty, ninety feet tall, and yet against the canyon wall they look like they are miniatures. There is a deep sense of stillness there so that you feel, at least I feel, from looking at those pictures almost as if I am in a cathedral, and there is a sense of awe there of God's creative power and the beauty that there is.

The other picture, the one of Scotland, is a montage of lush greens, all different shades of green. At the bottom of this valley there is a shepherd's home, or maybe a farmer's home, I am not really sure. It is so small against those mountains that it appears like nothing but a speck as compared to the mountains that are towering over it.

Both of those pictures make me feel overwhelmingly small and insignificant, bound and enslaved by time, because I see timelessness there, and time is so important to me. I can be lost in a reverie thinking about what must have happened there eons ago, and who trod those places. What were they like? What kind of personalities did they have? What kind of character, what kind of minds, what did they think about as they experienced what I am looking at? Those pictures make me think as though I am nothing more than a blink of an eye or a breath or a whisper into the teeth of a hurricane.

Yet I know the God who created those things is aware of **me** personally and individually. I see in those pictures things that make me want to know Him and to be like Him, to be able to do things like He does, to have the kind of mind that those pictures show me. When I look at them for a while, it always brings me back. Every time without fail, it brings me back to why I am here.

The God who made what those pictures show, **is He deep?** What kind of a mind did it take to conceive of such beauty? What kind of a mind did it take to have the power to bring that kind of thing to pass? We can take a picture of it, but He made it! He thought it out. When He made it, I am sure He was

thinking about us coming along and having that as a witness of Him, something to make us think, "Who made this? Why did He do it? Why am I here?"

I Corinthians 2:10 But God has revealed them unto us by his spirit: for the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.

Is God deep? God is deep, and that is what those pictures on my wall remind me of, how deep He is. I can hardly go anywhere in my little office there without seeing those things.

Romans 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!

God is very deep, and we need go no farther than His awesome creation to illustrate the depth of His mind. David himself said that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. God's mind in this area alone is so deep and expansive; that after 6,000 years of looking into the human body, men have barely begun to scratch the surface at how individually different we are, even though we appear to be the same. And everywhere man looks there are new avenues to open and to look into.

I read I Corinthians 2:10 because God has given us the tool that we need and the invitation through His calling to plumb into His depth. But His primary concern in this Book is that we search into His mind in regard to moral, ethical, and spiritual areas that pertain to the conduct of our lives in relationship to **Him** first of all, and to man secondarily. The emphasis here is in regard to the word relationship.

Just before Trumpets, we heard a sermon that asked us, "Do we really believe what God says?" This was the sermon where it was asked, "Is Christ Christian?" then proceeded to go to statements and acts that Jesus Christ made that seemed to rail against the common ideas of people, that He even would do such a thing, or think such a thing—like to make wine.

When we extend that principle out, do we really agree with God? Do we believe what He says, or do we have reservations about what He says? Unfortunately the answer to this is that all of us have reservations. We draw lines, that we will go this far and no further. This is where the overcoming begins to come in—overcoming those barriers that keep us from using our faith in the way that we should.

It is obvious to me just from judging myself, that we do not believe a great deal of what God says with much depth because we seem unwilling to put our faith in action, and from what I have seen happening in the greater church of God, I am afraid that very many people have been converted only to words, and that they do not really believe the living truth behind those words. The words are important, but remember, words are just one step toward knowing God. They are part of the scaffolding that leads to Him. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing comes by the Word of God.

But really it is not until we come to the place where we really begin to know God that faith really becomes **active** in a positive way in our life, because our faith then is not just what it says in a book. Our faith is in the **personality**. Our faith will then be in the **living God!** And those words are merely symbols of that God. I mean the things we see in print. This is why the relationship is so important, because salvation is in the personality. Salvation is not merely in words that are written in a book. Jesus Christ is our Savior, not the words that are written by ink in the book, and we have to be converted to the **personality**. He is the one we are going to marry. So it is essential that we get to know **Him**. We do that by living by faith. Living by faith. And that means walking as He walked, experiencing what He experienced.

Psalm 36:6 Your righteousness is like the great mountains; your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, you preserve man and beast.

God's judgments are like a great deep. Let me begin asking a question here now. The Bible is part of the scaffolding that leads to God, and His judgments are written in this Book. Now all His judgments are not here. Some of His judgments are on view in the creation. One of His judgments

was to put the Grand Canyon in there. One of His judgments was to put those huge mountains there in Scotland that look so awesome. He decided to do that as part of His creative effort in beautifying the earth and giving man a pleasant place to live in, and something that might stir in man the desire to seek after Him to get to know the One who made all these things.

But the judgments in regard to relationships are in the Book. They are part of the scaffolding. Here we have a testimony right from the Book that says that God's judgments are **deep**. In other words, we are not going to understand them by merely skimming across the surface of what He says. That is a start.

Now please begin to tie this in with my concern about being so busy in this world, my concern about the use of time. Are we going to understand God's judgments to any depth if we do not have any time to spend time searching into His judgments? I know that you are beginning to see this intellectually, and like I said, these suggestions that I am going to make are simple, but they are going to be among the most difficult challenges you and I have ever faced in our life. I mean actually **making time** to search out the deep things of God and **really** get to know Him, combining the study and the prayer with living by faith.

Job 12:22 He discovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death.

Here he is talking about God again and some of the things that He does, and if we are going to be like Him, we need to think about things the way He does. If we are coming to know Him, then we too will be able to discover deep things, things that are hidden, because we will begin to think like God.

Daniel 2:22 He reveals the deep and secret things: he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.

Here we have Daniel telling us that God is willing to reveal deep things. He wants us to know Him, and He is willing to reveal Himself to us. Even as God revealed to Daniel the deep things that were buried in Nebuchadnezzar's mind that Daniel had no possible way of even knowing, because Nebuchadnezzar could not even remember the dream, only that it terrified

him. Yet God pulled those deep things out of Nebuchadnezzar's mind, put them in Daniel's mind so that he could then tell Nebuchadnezzar not only what Nebuchadnezzar dreamed, but also what the interpretation was. So God is willing to reveal deep things. But is He going to reveal deep things to those who have no relationship with Him and are not really looking for them? We will continue to see as we go on.

Let us go back to the book of Job again. These verses reflect back upon the difficulty of finding out God.

Job 11:7-8 Can you by searching find out God? Can you find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what can you do? Deeper than hell [or the pit, the grave]; what can you know?

Well that could be very discouraging if you did not know other parts of the Book, and that God has given us the tool that we need to establish a relationship with Him—the tool that we need to search out the deep things of God and His promise that He **will** reveal the deep things. You can see that God does not want to hide Himself from us at all. He wants His children to know Him. You see, there is our part that must be done.

Now in Psalm 111:10 is one of these things that we must do. We will not dwell a great deal on this, but it is important.

Psalm 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding [that is knowing] have all they that do His commandments.

This is an important key, and that is that He does not reveal them only because a person makes an effort to look into them, because brethren there have been people who have spent the major part of their life looking into the Bible, but did not obey the things that were written in there, either because God never really gave them the tools that they needed, or called them and opened their mind to His purpose. So with the combination of the lack of calling and of them not being obedient to His Word, they could not really find Him.

What we find here is that God does not reveal them only because a person makes the effort, but because the effort, combined with obedience to them will produce "knowing God." It comes in two parts. We will call it the academic part and the practical application part. We have to do both, and basically what we can understand from this is that God does not reward intellectual vanity. God is a rewarder of those who *diligently seek* Him, and **then** put to practice in their lives what they learn. We can add to this Acts 5: 29 where it says He gives His Spirit to them that obey Him, and it is by His Spirit that these things are revealed. It is His Spirit that guides us into all truth.

Now we should be seeking to know Him so that our faith will be increased. We can make sort of a concluding statement there. Now it is not the end of the whole sermon, but it is a conclusion to that part. That is why we want to do this seeking after God: so that we can know Him.

I once read a quote from a man by the name of Richard Foster. He was the author of a book called *The Celebration of Discipline*, and you might get out of the title what the main purpose of this book was, and that is that people be able to make better use of their time. In his book he felt that making the best use of time had most to do with not scattering our searches all over the place. This man was not interested in searching out God. It was just a general principle that he was trying to teach, and that is we are much more specific in the spending of our time, to look deeply into things. It was his proposition that we were better off being an expert in one thing than we would to be a "jack of all trades and a master of none." He felt that it was best to become a master at one area than it was to just spread ourselves out with trivia all over the place; thus the title, *The Celebration of Discipline*, because it takes discipline to do that kind of thing.

Anyway, I think this quote is interesting because he says about our time right now:

Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is primarily a spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people or gifted people, but for deep people.

I think it is interesting that he is saying you do not have to be intelligent in order to be deep. In other words, you do not have to have a super-duper IQ in order to be deep, but you do have to be dedicated to not allowing yourselves, your time, and your efforts to be scattered all over the place, learning a little bit about everything and not really being good at anything. So he felt in order to be deep there has to be focus toward one specific area.

The hard part in this is that this takes time, and in this hurried and hassled age Satan has devised, we are moving through life more like a herd of elephants on a stampede than like a flock of sheep grazing contentedly on a pasture God has arranged for us.

One of the major problems here is television. To me television has been the great intellectual- and maturing-level instrument of our time. Shows on American television are almost uniformly scripted to an eighth grade or less level. I mean to get an eighth grade level show is aiming at where most peoples' minds have ceased developing. **That is a shame! Eighth grade!** They do that because they know that anything aimed higher than that is going to make their audience so narrow that it will not be profitable to put the show on. That is why virtually every program that is written at a higher level than that is on a public station that is supported by public donation. If you are going to get anything that is aimed at a higher level, it is probably going to be on those stations.

Eighth grade is neither mature nor deep. That is elementary, but it shows the level of American education, the level of American intellect, or at least the level to which American intellect has been developed. There is virtually nothing on television that does anymore than stimulate feelings. It does not challenge intellectual thinking.

We have a book at home in our library called *Four Reasons for the Elimination of Television*, and it is one of the reasons, or at least in some of the illustrations that this man (who was in marketing by the way, and I think that is very interesting) was writing why television ought to be eliminated. One of the reasons that he came up with, is that it is virtually impossible for television to depict love. Think about that for a while. What is on television? Virtually everything on television is action oriented, from the cartoons to sports. Even the shows are action oriented. They picture violence of some

kind. The reason love cannot be displayed on television is because love is so full of nuances that it is impossible to visually depict, because love involves a flowing of one mind to another. They can show sex; but that is not love. They can show passion; but that is not love. The man knew what he was talking about. He said on that basis it ought to be gotten rid of, because all it can do is depict the lowest levels of human experience. Some of those things are exciting, but that is feelings.

Now the kind of thinking that will move a person toward depth is hard work, and television discourages both thinking and hard work. It instead turns people into passive watchers. It virtually eliminates conversation even, because people who watch television essentially watch it alone within a crowd. I am not totally against television. I do not want you to think that, but I do want you to understand that this is an area that usually most of us can find a great deal of time to be used doing something else.

Proverbs 2:1-4 My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you; so that you incline your ear unto wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures. . .

A little bit later God identifies Himself by portraying wisdom, or personifying wisdom. It is really Himself. If you are going to incline your ear unto wisdom, if you are going to incline your ear unto God, [just another way of saying that], he says you have to seek after her like silver. Silver normally is not just lying on top of the ground. You have to **dig** for it, and it is hard work. That is what he is telling us. You have to search for her like hid treasures. He means things that are hidden under the ground.

Proverbs 2:5-9 . . . Then shall you understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God: For the LORD gives wisdom, out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is as a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of his saints. Then shall you understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yes, every good path.

You see, it is hard work. So the things of God require digging similar to the finding of precious metals from the earth. And when we do digging like that, we are going to come up with something of great value. What it is going to be is a solid foundation for a relationship with God, because what we will turn up with is the truth about the truth.

I am going to stop here. I almost hate to stop because I do not know whether I have enough for a full sermon next week. If we do go on, we are going to pick up in II Corinthians 11, and in II Corinthians 6, and then on to Philippians 3 to an example of the apostle Paul and what was the great cause in his life. I think that you will find this to be very, very interesting, and really to me quite inspiring.