

Seeing Sanctification As An Exciting Adventure

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If all of you on a daily basis read the same emails as I do, you are probably half scared out of your gourd. I think last year someone read a list of these, but here are some more.

- No Gold in Fort Knox - President and Congress sworn to secrecy.
- FEMA preparing mass depopulation preparing graves with millions of plastic coffins.
- Seniors on Social Security with medical issues targeted for extinction.
- If you don't buy this survival kit for only \$29.99 having the actual value of \$25,000, you will rue the day.
- California to be absorbed into Mexico by October 15, 2013. (That's just next month.)

If we depend on our own resources to protect us in the next few years, this world would be quite a fearful place, but when we realize that our Almighty Creator is sovereign over time all the time, sanctification should and can be the greatest adventure we will ever live through.

Originally I had planned on a working title for this message called "12 practical strategies for overcoming and enduring to the end." That list grew to over 36 strategies and showed no signs of stopping. I learned that I had enough raw materials to take up the time frame of every sermon and sermonette slot at the Feast. Consequently, this message has been whittled down considerably to a handful of strategies which enhances the sense of youthful adventure.

The first of these strategies consists of developing and maintaining a sharp sense of vision; perhaps we could substitute “the sense of vivid imagination that a ten or twelve year-old might experience.” We are all familiar with the caution about maintaining vision in Proverbs 29:18:

Proverbs 29:18 Where no vision exists [also rendered prophetic revelation, divine revelation, divine guidance, foresight, discernment, insight, vivid imagination], the people perish [or behave in an unrestrained manner]. But a person remains happy who focuses intently upon the guidance of the law.

This sense of vision must be of a quality that will carry us beyond the fixed boundaries of our mortal life. Some of us may die before the Second Coming of Christ. We do know that God has placed eternity in our hearts (Ecclesiastes 3:11) even for those that have not yet been called. This wired-in craving is common to all cultures in the world.

Our Elder Brother and High Priest understood this need for a sustaining prophetic vision when he encouraged His disciples, promising them that some of them would not taste death until they would see [or have a vision or prophetic revelation of the wonderful world tomorrow, or rather the coming Kingdom of God] the Son of Man coming in His kingdom.

Matthew 16:28 "Truly I say to you, some of you standing here will not taste death until you see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

He did not say that they would live until the event actually unfolded, but that they would have a compelling vision-the vision of the Transfiguration in verses 1 through 9 of Matthew 17-a vision which left Peter not only spellbound and ecstatic “Lord it is good to be here,” but powerful enough to carry Peter through intense persecution and martyrdom. Stephen was empowered with strength by a similar vision of Jesus Christ and God the Father (the event recorded in Acts 7:55-56).

The vision of a better country sustained Abraham and our forebears.

Hebrews 11:13-16 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they considered themselves strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they seek a country of their own. And indeed if they had thought of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it turned out, they desire a better country, namely, a heavenly one. Therefore God does not feel ashamed to serve as their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

This summer, Julie and I visited the Crazy Horse Monument, north of Custer, South Dakota in the heart of the Black Hills. At this location, the offspring of the late Polish-American sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski feverishly committed to a project that had been started in 1948 (I was 4 years old at the time) and probably, if Christ does not return in that time span, will not be completed in the lifetimes of most of us in this room.

In 1924, Ziolkowski was an associate of sculptor Gutzon Borglum, whose team of sculptors carved the four faces—Washington, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Lincoln—into Mount Rushmore. That project officially came to an end in 1941 (three years before I was born).

In 1929, a Lakota elder Chief Henry Standing Bear wrote a letter to Ziolkowski saying, “My fellow chiefs and I would like the white man to know that the red man has great heroes too.”

Ziolkowski began percolating on the idea, constructing many, many prototypes, finally deciding on an image in 1948, when he started dynamiting Thunderhead Mountain, a location halfway between Custer and Hill City, in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota.

As a free-spirited and independent-minded man, Ziolkowski refused government or corporate assistance, preferring to rely on donations from individuals who were just as committed to the vision as he was. At the age of 40, he fell in love with a young art enthusiast, Ruth Ross, who was just as committed to his calling as he was. They had 10 children together. Seven of their 10 children became dedicated to the vision of their father and mother,

and are actually blasting and carving the rock from Thunderhead under the supervision of their mother, the widow of Korczak Ziolkowski, who died in 1982 from a brain hemorrhage, without ever seeing (except from his mind's eye and the many prototypes he had constructed) the fruits of his labor.

Chief Crazy Horse's face finally emerged between 1995-1998, brought to completion by his dedicated spouse and offspring. His daughter, Monique, had improved upon the original engineering design, and actually brought the work along at a much more rapid pace.

When I lived in Rapid City in 1973, Ziolkowski's work received some scorn in some circles from mockers who felt that this crazy Pollack was "putting everybody on" as he would pick up another load of dynamite from town and head back to the mountain. Very few visionaries, except for members of his own family, had faith that Crazy Horse would ever appear on the mountain.

When Julie and I drove through the Black Hills back in 1986, we stopped at the site, but despaired when we could see absolutely nothing that resembled a carving. But this past summer, on the way back from a family reunion in Minnesota, we again stopped at the Crazy Horse Monument. This time, I became a believer in Ziolkowski's vision. The image of Crazy Horse, after 65 years of blasting and carving—a time frame nearly the entire time I have been alive—has unmistakably appeared in the mountain.

When it reaches completion, it will be the largest mountain carving on the face of the earth—the sculpture's final dimensions are planned to be 641 feet wide and 563 feet high. If we compare this carving with Mount Rushmore, we realize that the heads of the four US Presidents are 60 feet high apiece—the entirety of the Rushmore monument would easily fit within Crazy Horse's face.

God, as the Master Potter or Sculptor, has been chiseling away or blasting away at our human nature ever since our calling, and sometimes we despair that any character whatsoever will be created after all the fiery trials, tests, and course corrections. Just as Korczak Ziolkowski developed enough faith to literally move a mountain, we must develop enough faith that God Almighty can blast away a mountain of raw carnal human nature, replacing it with Godly character.

The Ziolkowski family has been busily chiseling away Thunderhead Mountain for almost as long as I have been alive, and have not seen any real progress on the mountainside until 15 years ago. Their father never lived to see the image of Crazy Horse appear just as our father Abraham never lived to see the heavenly kingdom—except in his mind's eye. So, unless we have a rock-solid vision of our ultimate destiny in our mind's eye—rehearsing it year by year participating in God's Holy Days, continually viewing the prototypes of Godly character modeled by our Elder Brother Jesus Christ—we will lose the zeal to continue.

For our second strategy, let us turn over to John 10:17-18. The second strategy in our quest for making character building and sanctification an adventure is to assiduously replace a sense of victimization or irksome slave-like obligation with a sense of self control.

John 10:17-18 "For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father."

Our Elder Brother Jesus Christ has set us an example that we should not perform our life's tasks out of a begrudging sense of coercion or cowering, but instead out of a voluntary commitment.

The overall theme of John Ritenbaugh's series of sermons on government was not that we were supposed to knuckle under spiritual martial law or coercive ecclesiastical authority, but instead we were to govern ourselves, never going beyond the boundaries God has given. Through our entire lives, we need to study diligently to find out what our responsibilities are to God and fellow man, developing Godly character.

Herbert W. Armstrong repeatedly reminded us that character cannot be created by fiat, but must be shaped and guided through daily decisions. John Ritenbaugh has stated in his sermon "Preparing to Rule" that we are going to be shaped by what we are aiming for.

God has given us free moral agency and the power to choose. When He called us, He imbued us with the power of His Holy Spirit providing us, as we recall in Philippians 2:13, the capability of willing and doing righteousness, but also the ability to decline or refuse His rulership.

Our Heavenly Father wants the best for us, but does not want mind-numbed zombies with no will or backbone. Most of us in this room at one time or another have experienced the pain of unrequited love. Would we desire that some magic elixir like Love Potion No. 9 turn our fickle love object totally under our control—rendering her or him pliable and docile like some lovable puppy dog?

We would not want a relationship like that, and God does not want a relationship like that either. God has no intention of forcing His love and affection upon us, desiring that if we accept His calling that we are doing it without any external bribing or coercion.

Educator Jerome Bruner, in his book *Toward a Theory of Instruction*, differentiated two different kinds of motivation used by educators, namely extrinsic, consisting of external motivators (rewards or punishments or figuratively carrots and sticks), and intrinsic motivators—those natural inner drives like curiosity or excitement about discovering new things. Bruner chides educators for not tapping into the intrinsic motivators, but instead on relying on carrots and sticks, stultifying the natural desire to learn. Richard Ritenbaugh, when he described the developing brain of a child, pointed out that instead of encouraging the explorative urge to learn new things, public schools seem to turn off this natural proclivity.

A child with intrinsic motivation (and an adult with intrinsic motivation) does not have to be bribed or coerced into learning; it comes naturally. An employee with genuine intrinsic motivation does not have to be bribed or threatened to become productive. Korczak Ziolkowski could not have come with enough money to pay his offspring for their tireless project carving Crazy Horse for the last 65 years, nor perhaps his grandchildren for the next 30 years, nor did he have enough orneriness to cow them into submission. He did not have to. His wife and children work hard at what they do because they voluntarily bought into the calling that previously claimed their father.

Likewise, when we commit ourselves to our calling—the purpose or plan for which God has fashioned us—we must do it from a deeply placed felt need instead of a grudging sense of obligation. It is Our Heavenly Father’s will that we fervently attach or commit ourselves to His way on the basis of our own free will.

Because God has given us the priceless opportunity to choose, victimhood is never an option. As John Ritenbaugh pointed out, victimhood is an invention of Satan, forcing us to look at life as a perpetual curse rather than a blessing. The apostle Paul, in Philippians 2:12, when he admonished us to work out our own salvation, indicated that we are participants in the sanctifying process with the ability to choose options.

Viktor Frankl, in *Man’s Search for Meaning*, reminds us that “Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way,” adding that “When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.”

In the most hopeless venue of German concentration camps, Viktor Frankl, by exercising his power of choice, found a deep profound sense of freedom—a kind of inner peace and serenity experienced by few human beings save the apostle Paul in his prison experiences. Frankl, in encouraging his fellow prisoners to consciously choose psychological responses, teaches them to stop thinking in terms of drives that push, replacing the concept with goals that pull, stating specifically and profoundly “Life can be pulled by goals just as surely as it can be pushed by drives.” My mother-in-law Barbara Keegan once gave me a coffee mug with the aphorism “Bread and water can just as easily be toast and tea.”

The concept of living by pulled goals rather than pushed by drives was expressed by one of my former colleagues, George Geis, when at one point when the conversations at faculty dining had started to yield diminishing returns said, “My need for accomplishment has exceeded my need for affiliation,” a statement more refreshing than, “Well I suppose we should return to the salt mines.”

When we consider any kind of addiction, whether marijuana, crack, cocaine, alcohol, or even overeating, we realize that the addict does not have the ability to choose when to say no.

One of the most pitiful, as well as one of the most transformative, roles that Dean Martin ever played in the movies was the sheriff's deputy who was trying to overcome an enslaving drinking problem in the movie *Rio Bravo*. One of the most disgusting scenes occurred when a brazen cowboy threw a silver dollar in a spittoon and ordered the deputy to drink the contents of the spittoon if he wanted money to have a drink. The sheriff, played by John Wayne, rescued him from the embarrassment, but the humiliation remained until he started to take a drink and then with super-human resolve poured the glass back into the whiskey bottle, retaking charge of himself.

Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig have their clients internalize the aphorism, "Nothing tastes as good as being thin feels." There is absolutely no satisfaction that trumps overcoming an enslaving habit; true freedom comes from internalizing and keeping God's Law. Bondage comes from breaking God's Law. The world's religions have the whole concept backwards.

Many mainline Protestants contend that the law was useful only until Christ replaced it by faith, citing:

Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may receive justification by faith.

But our Savior blew this silly notion out of the water by cautioning in Matthew 5:17-18,

Matthew 5:17-18 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all becomes accomplished.

The difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is not that the former had law while the new had grace, but that in the Old Covenant the motivation to keep the Law was a system of carrots and sticks or extrinsic

motivation, while the motivation to keep the New Covenant is intrinsic—a change of heart from the inside. Jesus magnified the Law, realizing that sin begins in the heart and mind rather than as a set of isolated motor activities.

Hebrews 8:10 is one of my favorite scriptures, and one I have referred to in all of my Feast of Tabernacles messages. Let us start in verse 7.

Hebrews 8:7-10 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have existed no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says, "BEHOLD, DAYS COME, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH; NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT; FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT, AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD. FOR THIS COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS, AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS. AND I WILL RULE AS THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BECOME MY PEOPLE.

Conversion, sanctification, and glorification are all incremental steps in a life-long process in which we move from a reactive approach to lawkeeping—motivated by rewards and punishments—to a proactive approach—motivated by a deeply placed inner desire to yield and comply to the law's principles, knowing intrinsically from experience that they work for the good and harmony of all.

The third strategy we will investigate to transform overcoming or character building (the sanctification process) into an adventure is to acquire Godly sublimation, replacing a bad habit or misdirected drive into a positive or Godly use.

Ephesians 5:18-19 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

In these two verses, we have an application of diverting a basic tissue craving into an artistic or spiritual application, what psychologist Abraham Maslow would describe as moving from inward-oriented survival needs to outward-oriented self-actualization needs, or what our Elder Brother tried to steer the apostle Peter from—inward love for self to outward love for others.

The musician takes pleasure in making music, but the happiness intensifies as he or she gives pleasure to someone else rather than just performing for his own satisfaction. In psychological parlance, sublimation is defined as a mature type of defense mechanism in which socially unacceptable impulses or idealizations become consciously transformed into socially acceptable actions or behavior, possibly resulting in a permanent transformation of the initial unwholesome impulse.

Sigmund Freud, who has been credited with formulating the concept, defined sublimation as the process of deflecting libidinal or sexual energy into acts of social value, such as art, music, sculpture, or some other culturally acceptable way. Freud believed that these other outlets enabled individuals to remain psychologically balanced. Back in 1969, Keith Thomas, then pastor of the Minneapolis Church of God, made the observation that if Freud had been a converted man, he would have been a powerful teacher for God's truth.

I think we all realize that the concept of diverting unwholesome energy to productive energy did not originate with Freud. Our Creator used what we could term “godly sublimation” to redirect misguided carnal impulses into wholesome ones, such as channeling of Jacob's conniving into single-minded prevailing, and the hatred of Joseph's brothers into an a means of the family's salvation as Joseph proclaimed in Genesis 50:20.

Genesis 50:20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, {but} God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

The miracle of Paul's conversion on the Road to Damascus proves that God can convert misdirected energy or zeal and transform it into a powerful force for good. Often we see the miracle of God's micro-managing our lives, nudging us so to speak to take something which we botched or misdirected and turn it into something good.

Now the tragedy is that human nature has taken something intended for good and twisted it into something unwholesome or evil. We desperately need to comprehend that sin and perversion are nothing more than otherwise wholesome Godly energy expended in the wrong places. Sin can be alternately described as mischanneled energy. There is an old Yiddish proverb which reads:

Shpilt tsu di shoh iz kain zind nito

If done at the right time, it is not a sin

God Almighty is the Master Engineer of the entire universe who constructed the drive-reduction mechanism which is found everywhere in nature from the single cell to the multi-level organism.

In my 2006 Forerunner article, "A Godly Quest for Pleasure" I referred to a widely accepted scientific metaphor or theoretical construct, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which places at the foundation of human behavior the systematic satiation of tissue needs or drives: hunger, thirst, fatigue, and sex. In simple terms, then, the drive-reduction mechanism is the means by which the body strives to reduce the state of tension that such needs produce.

As human beings mature, they become oriented to higher order satisfaction, fulfilling safety needs, love and belonging needs and ultimately self-actualization, which is paradoxically the highest expression of self-less or other directed needs.

God designed the wholesome cravings such as hunger, thirst, sleep. He has also provided a proper target for every one of these drive-reduction mechanisms. As the Puritan Theologian, Increase Mather pointed out, “Wine is from the Lord, but the drunkard is from the devil.”

Pleasure is not to be disparaged or shunned unless it is the inordinate or perverted uses of pleasure.

Our Creator has also designed human beings to have the capacity to experience increasingly higher levels and intensities of satisfaction. Many commentaries have focused on the dialogue between Peter and Jesus in John 21:15-17, in which they seemed to bypass one another, using the words *phileo* (for brotherly love) and *agape* (for divine love). One such commentary by Matt Slick, titled “John 21:15-17 Who Do You Love?” points out that the three words for love in the Greek New Testament are *Eros*, generally known as physical love, *Phileo*, or brotherly love, and the epitome of love *Agape*, (for more on this subject, contact Bill Onisick) characterized as other-oriented, service or giving-oriented, and sacrificial divine love, a quality of Godly character which takes us a lifetime of sanctification to attain.

If we study closely the structure of Maslow’s scientific construct, we come to the conclusion that all needs are satisfied by maturing levels of love, moving from the tissue needs encompassed by self-love or *Eros*, belonging needs encompassed by collegial brotherly love *Phileo*, and the creative, service oriented needs, which Maslow refers to as self-actualization, which paradoxically corresponds to totally self-less *Agape*.

Paul warns Timothy that in the last days many would obsessively focus in on satisfying tissue needs—becoming “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (II Timothy 3:4), making an idol of pleasure and pleasure-seeking. A casual reading of this verse may lead us to disparage pleasure, regarding it as

an intrinsic evil. The great God of the universe, however, does not intend for us to denigrate or disparage pleasure. After all, the marvelous drive-reduction mechanism (thirst, hunger, desire) reflects an aspect of God's very mind (Romans 1:20), something He pronounced good and wholesome after He created man (Genesis 1:31).

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with the legitimate satisfying of the desire for pleasure, as long as we do not make that process our overriding obsession, and as long as we play by God's rules, engaging those spiritual laws that bring about His desired ends.

God is both the author and satisfier of pleasure. We learn about higher orders of Godly pleasure from experience prototypes on the physical level when we consider some of the ramifications of Romans 1:20.

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, people have clearly seen, understanding through what God has made, so that they have no excuse.

In Revelation 19:7, we learn that collectively the church will become the bride of Christ. What we are asked to comprehend about this event, we are able to derive from our experiences in our physical marriages. That's why Herbert W. Armstrong so often referred to marriage as a God-plane relationship. The intense pleasure that married couples receive from sexual intimacy is intended to provide an instructive analog for our future role as the collective bride of Christ.

In our current temporal lives, whatever physical pleasure we attain is merely a type or analogue that will be amplified billions of times in our new spiritual state. As the apostle Paul pointed out in I Corinthians 2:9, "But just as the scriptures stated, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

Those married couples in this room need to think back on your honeymoons. Was that event pleasurable? Well brothers and sisters, you have not seen

anything yet. You will not know the real thing until you have experienced the Marriage of the Lamb.

When pleasure is satisfied through a legitimate God-ordained channel, there will be no sorrow connected with it. Proverbs 10:22 teaches us: The blessing of the LORD makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it.

Many people mistakenly feel that to have cessation of stress, hassles, and that ugly four-letter word "work" would guarantee happiness. God Almighty explicitly tells us that joy is a product of work, and that joy invariably becomes coupled with accomplishment.

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and tell him that his labor has value. This also I have seen that it comes from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

Martin Collins, in his July 13, 2013 commentary on increasing your life span , subtitled 'Retirement', suggested that people entering into retirement often experience degrees of depression brought about by deteriorating health status and the feeling of no longer being needed. Ancient Hebrew thought does not recognize the concept of retirement. Idleness is a curse to any culture.

Victorian writer Thomas Huxley has claimed that the biggest shock the nervous system can sustain is to no longer be needed. In this vein, retirement can be potentially fatal—unless we surround ourselves with work—projects that sustain us and give us meaning. My late father ended his life at the age of 94 with a sharp focused mind, writing, teaching Bible classes, and performing music with the Salterelli Strings Orchestra right up to the last months of his life, when he finally wore out. My dad worked harder after his retirement than before; I intend to follow in his footsteps, trying to return the investment God made in me at my calling. Technically, I am retired but I have no intention whatsoever to stop working.

I believe in the old German proverb, *die Arbeit macht das Leben Suess*—Work makes life sweet. In addition to my adjunct teaching positions, I have enough projects to sustain me at least until I am 80 years old, and when they are done I intend to find more.

Strategy number 4 is to develop and maintain a childlike wonder and curiosity.

Matthew 18:1-4 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then do we consider greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you become converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, we will call him the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

We have received many sermonettes and sermons on the qualities of a child which makes them subjects to emulate, including their innocence, their lack of pretentiousness, their lack of guile, their lack of embarrassment over social mistakes, their spontaneity, flexibility, and resiliency, their unqualified trust in their parents among other things. I would like to enlarge upon this list of characteristics, including a fathomless sense of curiosity that Richard alluded to in his sermon on the development of the brain.

Children have a keen imagination and a desire to play. When they are given chores to do, they make a game out of it. Children can take junk out in a grove and turn it into treasure. When I was a freshman in college I had a fascinating role model, Dr. Calvin Israel, who was my chief inspiration to become an English professor. Dr. Israel at that time was in his middle sixties, an age bracket that I considered old at that time. [I don't anymore incidentally.] Though he had the chronological age of a senior citizen, he did not seem like a senior citizen, either mentally or physically.

I asked him how he retained his youthfulness and his insatiable zest for life. He replied that one has to maintain the mindset of a child—maintaining the enthusiasm, the imagination, and the wonder of a ten year old, willing to play cowboys and Indians, detective, space cadet, or international spy. Personally, I have savored that piece of advice, and to this day, I consider myself a 69 year-old with a 10 year-old outlook, a perpetual companion of Gene Autry, Hopalong Cassidy, Roy Rogers, and the Cisco Kid.

When my position at Wiley College was non-renewed this spring, and I contemplated moving to what I feared to be the People's Republic of California, or the nanny state, I had no idea that God would give me the desire of my heart. We moved to a home six miles west of Corriganville, a conservancy of Simi Valley, a 1200 acre former movie ranch, the location of over 400 films, including *Fort Apache*, *The African Queen*, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Tarzan*, *Jungle Jim*, the TV shows *Robin Hood* and *Rin Tin Tin*, shows that I avidly watched as a 12 year-old.

We have enjoyed hiking the boulders and canyons, singing cowboy songs as the sun sets in the west and the crickets serenade us. We both came to the conclusion that God gave us the deed to Disneyland.

The ability to maintain the attitude of a child may have helped many of the ancient Israelites to maintain a sense of wonder and excitement. While their parents were grumbling about the heat and lack of water, the children may have excitedly wondered what was in that cave on the side of the cliff or what was over the next wadi. The mind of a child can turn any unpleasant experience into an adventure.

The sense of childlike adventure bolstered Caleb and Joshua, while the lack of the childlike adventure and can-do spirit stultified and totally intimidated the 10 evil spies. The childlike attitude and trust in God's ability to bring him the victory bolstered David as he pursued the mighty Philistine Goliath. The lack of childlike attitude in King Saul totally dispirited him and his army. David, a man after God's own heart, illustrated his childlike spontaneity and enthusiasm as he danced and probably did cartwheels before the ark.

Our process of sanctification and overcoming should be undertaken more with a sense of adventure, even bordering on childlike play, than as a burden or irksome obligation.

Our fifth and last tool is to practice spiritual scales daily-adding value to our spiritual portfolio, continually cultivating our current skills and adding new ones, striving to become a virtuoso in Godly living.

Proverbs 22:6 Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he reaches old age he will not depart from it.

One extremely important facet of this verse is the observation that mature spiritual or moral traits depends on a foundation of continuous, incremental discipline and practice. My mentor Bob Hoops, back in 1973, told me about a young man that he had known for over 10 years, who in his late 20's demonstrated unusual wisdom and people skills. This young man had made a practice of reading aloud the Proverbs every day, focusing on one chapter a day, corresponding to the day of month. Proverbs, of course, has 31 chapters; most months have 31 days, but on the months containing 30 or 28 days, this young man would read one or two extra chapters so that he would go through the book of Proverbs once a month.

This man, though daily practicing of spiritual scales, was systematically storing God's Word in his heart, equipping him to be a virtuoso in life's skills.

For those unacquainted with the concept of musical scales, I will use a helpful definition given by Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia: "In music, a scale is any set of musical notes ordered by fundamental frequency or pitch. A scale ordered by increasing pitch is an ascending scale, while descending scales are ordered by decreasing pitch." Every musician from Daniel Barenboim and Leonard Bernstein to Andre Rieu and Ray Conniff has stressed the importance of practicing scales, chords, and etudes in order to develop virtuoso status. The young man, whom Bob Hoops described, was doing his daily exercises, reading these Proverbs aloud and thinking about them.

Recently, I have tried to add another twist to this method, coupling them with my daily Pimsleuer language lessons, which I have been doing continuously for the past several years. Before my "retirement" I would play language CD's for two hours, one hour going to work and one hour returning from work, listening to Spanish, Italian, German, and French lessons. Since I have retired, I listen to them every week day on my two hour walk along the Los Angeles River, systematically going through levels 1, 2, and 3 with 30

CD's on each level. With each sweep through the levels I have been able to pick up more and more patterns, and what was previously foreign sounding to me I have now embraced as something that has become a part of me. My ultimate goal is to go way beyond the 10,000 hours that Mike Ford alluded to in his sermonette on the Outliers.

In order to facilitate this process, I put together a parallel Quinto-lingo Proverbs, which I have color coded. (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/166820922/Quinto-Lingo-Proverbs-Color-Coded-English-German-Spanish-Italian-French>)

Spiritual scales and etudes may take many forms. To qualify for being a king of Israel one actually had to write out a copy of the Law. Memorizing scripture provides another set of scriptural etudes. A verse a day should not be too difficult. In Laura Engels Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie*, she describes how the Engels children would commit large portions of the Psalms to memory. I was acquainted with a man who committed large portions of the Koran to memory in order to visit a Moslem shrine in Mecca without being detected as an infidel.

Some have practiced spiritual scales by reading a portion of the scripture every day, systematically going through the entire Bible annually.

Some people may practice spiritual scales by digesting a prodigious number of memory scriptures. Dr. Don Ward had the Doctrines and Fundamentals students commit to memory a list of 70 chronological scriptural events which he termed the "thread of the Bible." All these varied practices demonstrated ways of "hiding the scriptures in the heart" described by David in Psalm 119: 11.

As we age, all of us tend to lose our mental and physical elasticity. Our ability to stretch and flex our muscles decrease and our ability to rapidly recall becomes more difficult. It is possible for anyone in this room (at some time in his or her life) to be afflicted with Alzheimer's or Dementia, but it is far less likely to happen if we continue to exercise our minds on a daily basis. If we do not become good stewards of our bodies and minds, it is

impossible to glorify God. Consequently those of us who are approaching seniority have an obligation to keep our minds and bodies supple and toned by daily continuous exercise.

There were some autopsies and longitudinal studies performed on some Catholic nuns at St. Scholastica College who had demonstrated unusual mental acuity and youthfulness way up into the age of 90s. The common denominator was that all these women were involved in learning new languages or learning to play musical instruments.

I know several members of this congregation who are following that practice right now. When we learn different languages, we open up new neural circuits in our cerebral cortex which would otherwise shut down, as Richard pointed out on his sermon on the development of the brain.

Our spirituality requires continuous exercise, and we cannot let down just because we have entered our senior years. For those of you who have reached that threshold, I recommend that all of you invest in several hours a day in moderate exercise like walking or hiking, perhaps with a Walkman containing a version of the Bible, a foreign language lesson, a book on tape, or perhaps some classical music.

An alternate possibility would be to couple this walking with prayer or meditation. Back in the 1960's we were all admonished that if we were not praying a half hour a day, we were not growing spiritually. While I am not by any means into yardstick religion, I wonder whether that half-hour suggestion was not low-balling the procedure. The apostle Paul recommended in his letter to the Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 5:16) that they pray without ceasing:

When I read this passage, the image of Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* always comes to mind, carrying on a continuous dialogue with His Maker, even to the point of having a friendly lover's quarrel, "Would it spoil some vast eternal plan/ if I were a wealthy man?"

Establishing a relationship with our Creator and our Savior requires constant communication, not just some rosary-like petitions once or twice a day. Using the courting metaphor, can you imagine a couple content with a 20

minute phone call at the beginning of the day and another 20 minute phone call at the other end of the day? One would expect each partner to use a little more resourcefulness. God does His part, but do we? Are we assiduously looking for His feedback, keeping a log of His continuous blessings, even those things which we thought were curses, but tuned out to be blessings?

One former dean of faculty, Dr. Anthony Forbes, at the University of Wisconsin, once told me earnestly and forcefully, every event, good or bad, when properly evaluated contains the foundation for greater achievement. As God's called-out ones, we are destined to make a ton of mistakes before we get it right, as we read in Proverbs 24:16, "For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity."

For our concluding Scripture please turn over to Romans 8.

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who have received a calling according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would become the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

Our ultimate objective for going through this grueling sanctification process is glorification and entering God's Kingdom as His offspring. If we practice the five strategic strategies I have suggested today: (1) capturing an enduring vision, (2) substituting a sense of victimhood with a sense of empowerment, (3) substituting a godly habit for a carnal one, (4) developing a childlike sense of wonder, and (5) practicing our spiritual scales until we become virtuosos in godly living, we will transform our overcoming and sanctifying experience into high adventure.