THE WAY IT IS

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Category: John Fifteen

THE WAY IT IS

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----------THE AUTHOR

If I were to draw a caricature of myself as a baby christian I would draw myself with a small head and in my upper body I would place a disproportionately large heart. The small head would depict my knowledge and my large heart would reflect my relationship with Jesus.

It was in 1972 that a catholic young man discovered the Lord Jesus Christ, embraced His lordship, and was cleansed of his many sins. I was born again, yet I had never heard that term. I was an adopted son of the Father, sanctified, justified, the very *“righteousness of God”*. My name was written in the Lamb’s book of life, my body a temple of the Holy Spirit, my future home the New Jerusalem. And yet I never knew these things. My knowledge was meagre.

But did I ever feel good! My insides were bouncing with new life. Oh, the presence of the Lord in those earliest months! My life was Jesus, Jesus, and Jesus. I didn’t understand but knew something awesome had taken place. I would often tell others, “Something happened!”

Were it not for the “charismatic movement” sweeping our catholic world immediately after my conversion to Jesus my departure from catholicism would not have taken five years. At that time I entered fully into evangelicalism, a term I understand to mean denominations adhering to fundamental teachings of the Bible. My knowledge increased immensely. Do-s and don’t-s, Old Testament history, dispensations, church history, false religions - you name it, I learned it. Tons of sermons, tapes and books. Now my caricature would have an oversized head.

And a very small heart.

I had drifted from “first love”. Jesus somehow got lost in all that knowledge. My enthusiasm for christianity usurped my enthusiasm for Christ. Those around me, those above me, those in the forefront of christianity.... my attention was on them and their emphases. Certainly I sang praises to the Lord in our assemblies. And there were those times kneeling around the altar. But something

alien had captured my heart. What was it?

The Lord taught me I could determine my spiritual health by the number of times I spoke His name. This principle applies to everyone and every group. "*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."* (Mt.12:34)

And so I listened. Surprisingly, Jesus' name was rarely mentioned in conversations, even in discussions about spiritual matters. Sunday morning preaching was about deliverance and healing and sanctification and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and evangelism. It was not about the Deliverer, the Healer, the Sanctifier, the Baptizer, the Lord of the harvest. Biblical principles and keys and doctrines were emphasized more, much more, than relationship with Jesus.

I prayed more than most and was influenced by some cherished books and a special friend. These had the effect of turning me around. I began, slowly at first, returning to my first love, removing my trust in other people and things and placing that trust once again upon Jesus Christ.

I am determined not to ever distance myself from Him again. Not for gold, not for ministry, not for reputation, not for anything. This isn't to say I have arrived; there is and always will be more of Jesus to be gained, relationally speaking. I confess that if there is one I still love more than Jesus it is me. How can someone so pitifully incomplete be riveted on himself? "*O wretched man that I am!"*

But I am travelling in the right direction. I am learning obedience. Giving gets easier. I am slowly fostering a relationship with the Holy Spirit. The theme of my life is increasingly "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified".*

I am not licensed and never will be. Never been to Bible school. If I had brag in me it would be that I have learned to turn immediately to Christ when I sin. Sin, I have learned, as awful as it is, does have the advantage of making one appreciative of His grace and less judgemental of others.

Foolish is the man who would blindly place his trust in my perspective, spoken or written. I have said both wise and dumb things. I have been faithful and negligent to friends. I have set good examples and poor.... I choose the path of humility but ugly pride sometimes surfaces. The venerable song expresses my creed: "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." I understand that, as His ambassador, my responsibility is simply to point others to Christ and submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

I must never be deluded into thinking the author is somehow above the reader. Both are teachers and both are students; both are shepherds and both are sheep; both are God's anointed. "*One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren."* (Mt.23:8) I must be yoked to Christ in what I do or what I do will be fruitless.

The one qualification I have to write this book is that I have been around. For close to fifty years I have listened, observed, and considered all manner of teachings, practices, unwritten codes and human failure. Well over a thousand times, perhaps five or ten thousand, I have prayed Psalm 25:4,5:

"Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day."

As a matter of possible interest, I am a husband, a father of three, a father-in-law to two, a grandfather to eight, a great-grandfather to two, an electrician (retired) and sometimes writer.

Part One: THE WAY IT IS

----------PREFACE

"That's just the way it is!"

Mom is teaching her child how to properly set the table.

"Mommy, why do the knives and spoons go on *this* side of the plate, and the forks go on *that* side?"

Mom has no idea why the utensils are customarily arranged in this manner. "That's just the way it is!" she replies with a smattering of frustration.

Why are traffic lights red, yellow and green? Why do guys wear ties and women high heels? Why is Christmas on December 25th? Why is the hot water on the left and the cold on the right?

Some things don't have answers. *That's just the way it is!*

The way it is is sacred. Turkey at Christmas, ham on Easter. Brides in white. Red roses express love. Dad at the head of the table.

Tradition. Traditions of men. Sometimes good, sometimes bad. Always reverenced.

Traditions in the church. Though usually unreasonable, always reverenced. Traditions.... "That's just the way it is!"

Throughout church history *That's just the way it is!* has always shared lordship with the Bible. To challenge *the way it is* is to step out of the approval, and even acceptance, of most.

The way it is often positions itself above the Word and will and dictates of God. One would think such rebellion would gather few followers, but the opposite is true: the army of advocates is large and powerful.

Please note: In this book *That's just the way it is!* or simply *the way it is* are in reference to traditions *contrary* to God's word, and will be accentuated in italicized print.

The way it is can refer to a singular non-biblical tradition or a complex system of doing things. Traditions of men.... alternatives to God's Word and God's Spirit, another way. God says one thing, tradition another.

That's just the way it is! is sand and he who builds on it is a foolish man. *The way it is* brings bad stuff into our lives, hampers our usefulness, causes loss of eternal rewards. Yet christians can be territorial and will defend their ground whether that ground be rock or sand. Oh, how we love our traditions!

Jesus confronted *That's just the way it is! and* He was crucified. Paul opposed *the way it is* and the religious hounded him. Martin Luther challenged sacred traditions and he had to keep moving to stay alive. Other reformers were martyred. In our gentler age gentler weapons of exclusion and defamation and derision are used against "*all who.... live godly in Christ Jesus,"* (2Tm.3:12)those refusing to bow to another word.

"The scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem" confronted Jesus (Mk.7:1-5) demanding to know why Jesus' disciples did not do the ceremonial washing of hands before they ate. "*Why,"* they asked, "*do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?"* No, not the decree of God, but the tradition of the elders.

In the minds of these scribes and pharisees the elders, being elders, had the right to create and impose rules. Did they not know that there is *"one Lawgiver"*? (Jm.4:12) *The way it is* was being challenged and these paid protectors were coming to its defence.

Jesus is omniscient God. The pharisees hadn't yet learned you can't debate with Jesus and win, but they would learn. *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?"* (Mt.15:3) And what tradition was Jesus referring to? The pharisees taught the people that if they gave the money it would cost them to care for their aging parents as *"a gift to God"* they would be exempt from that responsibility. Undoubtedly, much of the money given as *"a gift to God"* found its way into the pockets of these defenders of *That's just the way it is!*. God said, *"Honor your father and your mother"*. Men said, "No, you don't have to. Instead give the money to us."

The basis (object, purpose) of this tradition is the same as today's many traditional (unscriptural) teachings.... money and control. Man loves money and man loves control.

This was not an infrequent case of replacing God's word with a traditional word. Jesus said, *"And many other such things you do."* (Mk.7:8) Substitution was a common practice, implanted for the benefit of the few who held the power.

The way things were was once *the way it is*, held close to man's heart. Man has always loved his traditions. Oh, the reverence men of every age have given to *the way it is*. It is familiarity and comfort. It is stability and security. It is lord.

We evangelicals would scoff at the idea of embracing some of the old, faded traditions of our forefathers or traditions of other persuasions. It is not the way it was that we adulate, nor *the way it is* to others, but *the way it is* in our camp.

Their ways are silly; our ways are sacred. It is only because our ways are true that we have embraced them. Or so we think. If things were not the way they should be we would not be doing

them. Or so we assume. Our ways are scriptural.... aren't they?

It is difficult to realize that the curious traditions of others are held in a regard equal to our own. And it is offensive to consider that our own are equally silly from their point of view.

It would be a mistake to assume all perspectives are faulty for there is a perspective that is right, true, and sacred and that, of course, is God's perspective. God's perspective is revealed to us through His Word, the Bible. "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"*. (2Tm.3:16)

Building on God's perspective is building on the rock of His Word. Unfortunately the church has always been guilty of neglecting some teachings of the Bible, replacing them with others. The perils of this folly are considerable.

Let us go back to the incident where Jesus is confronting the religious leadership of that day. Let us focus on the bystanders. For them the confrontation creates a dilemma. Who should they believe, this newcomer or their familiar elders, loyal defenders of *That's just the way it is!*?

These people are sheep, simple sheep, dependent sheep. Rarely have they had to make a decision pertaining to their religious heritage. Had their shepherds been more than hirelings, they would be healthy sheep, lovers of God. Had they been taught truth, they would have embraced truth with all its benefits. Whatever diet they were offered they would devour. Sadly, they were fed distortions that deformed their hearts.

On one side of the controversy was Jesus. They would not have listened to Jesus were it not for all those miracles, all those healings, the signs and wonders. There was something different about this Jesus, unlike anyone they had ever encountered. They didn't know He was Immanuel, *"God-With-Us"*; they just knew He was like none other. No fear. Clear eyes. Strong. Regal. "*No man ever spoke like this man!"* (Jn.7:46)

On the other side of the argument were the scribes and pharisees, the hub of the community wheel toward which the populace focused.... the decision makers, the law enforcers, authority on all matters. Articulate in dress and manner, they were the esteemed teachers and themselves merely pupils. And the pharisees had much power. One did not mess with these spiritual leaders; there were consequences.

Jesus often called them hypocrites. "*Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"* (Mk.7:6,7) Hypocrites? These esteemed defenders of esteemed traditions? Could it be?

To not believe Jesus would be difficult. Truth in itself has power to persuade; truth spoken by *the*

Truth is power magnified. Their hearts knew Jesus spoke truth but it would take courage to turn away from *the way it is* and its powerful officers.

This was much more than a dispute. Both He and they wanted them. Both the Good Shepherd and the hirelings demanded their obedience, their loyalty, their hearts. The Shepherd had come to set them free, to bring them into the Father's joy, to share His kingdom. "*He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young."* (Is.40:11) Adversely, the hirelings fleeced the sheep, making them disciples after themselves.

The real issue was *lordship.*

The heart and theme of this book is lordship. Jesus said we know we love Him if we obey *His* commandments. But is it always the precepts of God that we are obeying? Have you, those of you in evangelical affiliations, sinned the sin of presumption? Have you given loyalty to *the way it is* simply because it is *the way it is*? All must check it out with the same diligence as the men of Berea who "*searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so."* (Ac.17:11)

Let us challenge the way we do things, the habits and practices we have taken for granted, comparing them to the Bible to determine if they really are the way they should be. Each church age has its dogma distinctions and each age has the responsibility to compare them with Scripture. Yes, it takes courage but the Lord will give grace to the one insisting on truth.

Suppose we were there at the encounter between Jesus and the defenders of traditional ways. What would we do? To choose Christ would probably upset our entire world; the neighbours might not talk to us, our spouses could turn ugly, we might be kicked out of the synagogue, even jailed or stoned. Would we lack the courage to embrace truth? Would we be like many (most?) in that crowd who would one day shout, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"? Or would we lay down our life and embrace the new life Jesus came to offer? Would we willingly suffer persecution for His name's sake?

This book examines *the way it is,* the way things are done, loyalties and learned rationales in evangelical circles, and compares them to the Word. Yet that is not the heart of The Way It Is. It talks about relationships between shepherds and sheep but it is not about shepherds and it is not about sheep.

This book is about *lordship.*

It is about Jesus, "*the head of the church,"* (Eph.5:23) *"the Lord of the harvest,"* (Mt.9:38) and our relationship with Him. It is about taking our love off this and that and setting that love upon Jesus. It isn't to add to our storehouse of knowledge, it isn't fodder for the critical, it isn't understanding to be leaned upon.

It is about relationship with the King. It is a preparation for the judgement seat of Christ, that day we must each give an account to Christ the Judge. It is about Him, our first love, the One we call *"Lord,*

Lord". (Lk6:46)

Please note: I was raised a catholic and departed from catholicism many years ago. Though evangelicalism and catholicism are poles apart, there are similarities in the way people relate to their faiths. Throughout this manuscript I will use the way catholics relate to catholicism as a mirror for evangelicals relating to evangelicalism. (In this book my definition of evangelicalism includes charismatic churches, as well as non- and inter-denominational churches.)

There are similarities within the several denominations and non-denominational churches that come under the term "evangelicalism" (or "fundamentalism"). And there are also differences. I must speak in *general terms,* fully realizing that the shoe, while fitting most, does not fit every foot. Perhaps there is not one statement I make regarding evangelicalism that is true for every situation. As I write I can 'hear' some readers saying, "No, that's not the way it is in my church!" and others thinking, "Right on!" Evangelicalism is complex and varied, but there are similarities woven throughout. The generalities I use are a general reality relevant to all.

Please note: I give some references to quoted verses, but not all. Simply type in a few words on your online Bible to find chapter and verse. I identify all translations that are not NKJV.

Part One: THE WAY IT IS

chapter one
----------DOES IT REALLY MATTER?

Luke 6:46: **why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' and do not do the things which I say?"**

Let it be said again.... the heart and theme of this book is lordship.

If Jesus asked you, *"Why do you call Me, 'Lord'?"* hopefully you would be able to reply, "Lord Jesus, the reason I call You 'Lord' is because I obey Your word."

And the Lord might reply, "How do you know you obey My word?"

"Because, Lord, I have checked it out."

Lovers of God are lovers of truth. And lovers of truth are eager to "check it out". There is no reason not to.

Matthew 7:24: **whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:**

What are the sayings of Christ? They are not only His spoken words as recorded in the four gospels, but also all inspired Scripture. ("*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."* 2Tm.3:16)

You were the *"wise man who built his house on the rock"* when you heard the word of salvation and responded by receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour. There are many gospels to choose from, many alternatives to God's plan of salvation, but you were wise enough to choose the gospel of "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified."*

Now you are a believer, God's adopted. As a dutiful Father, He has supplied you with instructions on how to live as His child. Learning His ways, His perspectives and His commands is a process. Wisdom is obeying these words as the Spirit reveals them. Wisdom is examining the way you do things to make sure you are building on the rock and not on *the way it is*. It will take courage.

Jesus promises if you are obedient your house will never fall, no matter what storms life blows your way. "*A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you."* (Ps.91:7)

2 Timothy 3:12: **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

There is both a reward and a cost for loyalty to Christ. Lovers of *the way it is* will not be tender toward those choosing loyalty to the Word. There is a penalty. However, the cost, though sometimes severe, is always dwarfed by the reward. The sacrifice is temporary; the reward is eternal. (*"Neither moth nor rust destroys and ... thieves do not break in and steal."* Mt.6:20) It pays to follow Christ.

Matthew 16:15: "**But who do you say that I am?"**

Peter replied to Jesus, "*You are the Christ".* Thomas declared Him to be "*My Lord and my God!"* Paul (Saul) had to ask,*"Who are You, Lord?"* He was to learn that "*God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name."* (Ph'p.2:9) John said of Him, "*In Him was life".* Those in heaven declare Him to be the "*worthy.... Lamb who was slain".* Isaiah called Him *"Mighty God".*

"But who do you *say I am?"*

A good reply would be: "You, Lord, are the Potter; I am the clay. You are the Master; I am the servant. You are the Teacher; I am the student. You are the holy One, the mighty God, the lover of my soul, my Saviour, my King. You are my Lord, and it is You and You alone I obey and follow after."

Acts 9:6: **"Lord, what do You want me to do?"**

Jesus toppled Saul's life with His brilliant presence on the road to Damascus, Saul fell to the ground and "*trembling and astonished, said, 'Lord, what do You want me to do?'*" That is the question a christian should be continually carrying in his/her heart, "*Lord, what do You want me to do?"* Only the fervent and obedient would ask such a question, for such a question may have a challenging answer. Jesus told Saul what to do, and likewise Jesus will instruct any disciple (though probably not so dramatically).

John 14:15: "**If you love Me, keep My commandments.**

We can know our hearts by identifying whom it is we are obeying. If it is Jesus we love, it is Jesus we obey. If it is another we love, it is another we obey.

But how does one know he is obeying Christ's commandments? People of false religions and even cults think they are obeying God. How can one know it is really God's Word one is giving allegiance to?

The answer is twofold: His Word (the Bible) and His Spirit. The Spirit and the Word agree. The Holy Spirit leads into all truth. He unfolds the truths of God's Word. All that is required is commitment to truth.... *the* Truth, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If it is so simple why do so many err?

Truth sometimes costs. It can cost money, it can cost favour, and it can cost friendships. And approval and applause and opportunities. Truth can cause misunderstanding, isolation and persecution, certainly not always and perhaps not usually, but often. To embrace all truth, not picking and choosing, one must love Christ above all. Many *choose* to err (or choose not to choose truth) because the price of truth is more than they are willing to pay.

Jeremiah 17:9: "**The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;**

The deceptive heart lives in denial; the obvious cannot penetrate. Such a heart does not ask, "*Lord, what do You want me to do?"* It does not pray, *"Show me Your ways, o Lord."* (Ps.25:4) It has little faith and probably more than one idol.

You cannot corner a deceitful heart with reality; it is the greased pig always managing to slip away. It sways under peer pressure, bending to the whims and will of *That's just the way it is!*.

The deceitful heart can be comical. The plump woman consuming ice cream while explaining that her weight stays on in spite of her constant dieting. The alcoholic who drinks because he likes the taste of whiskey. The smoker puffing his last. The friend who would gladly pay for lunch if he hadn't

forgotten his wallet in the car again. The procrastinator who will gladly do that chore tomorrow. (That's me.)

The deceitful heart can be damaging, resisting the very truth that can set one free, leading others into its divided loyalties. One should pray as did the psalmist, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God. Let.... the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight.... Unite my heart to fear Your name.... Let my heart be blameless."*

Jeremiah 17:5: "**Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD.**

The way it is.... it really does matter. Trusting in traditions is trusting in man and with it comes a curse.

Jeremiah 17:7: "**Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.**

The christian life is simple: Trust in God and life will get progressively better; trust in man and life will get progressively worse.

2 Corinthians 5:10: **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,**

After life on earth there is an account to be given, rewards to be received or denied. Were you obedient? Did you walk close to Jesus? Did you heed *the way it is* or did you submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit? Because most christians do not take this matter seriously is no reason for you not to.

Expect, at the judgement seat of Christ, to see a stern judge, one more stringent than those depicted in movies. In reference to the judgement seat Paul wrote, "*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men".* (2Cor.5:11) "*The terror of the Lord"* is in reference to Jesus. Persuade men to do what? To be prepared. To get serious. To shake off distractions. To live a life that would cause you to hear the words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant".*

----------APPENDIX

It was in 1971 that the Holy Spirit invaded our catholic world; that which was tagged the "catholic charismatic movement" had reached our city. Jesus had come.

What seemed changeless was changing under this extraordinary visitation of God. Many catholics (unfortunately not most) were praising Jesus Christ after experiencing a personal and dynamic encounter with their Sin-bearer. Tears flowed, healings were common, signs followed, Spirit-inspired songs were sung, fellowship was sweet, Jesus was magnified.

On a summer evening in 1972 I was singing with dozens of charismatics in an old catholic church building, "Though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back, no turning back." The Holy Spirit deposited into me a prophetic word, making it clear that I would one day have occasion to prove that I meant the words I had just sang ("though none go with me, still I will follow"). I was rattled. God seemed to be telling me there would be a time when my loyalty to Jesus would be tested because *everybody* in my circle of acquaintances would stop following Him. How could it be?

Charismatic catholics were being tugged from two directions. Jesus and His Word were pulling from one side and *the way it is* of catholicism from the other. Both Jesus and catholicism demanded loyalty. For most it was very painful, and most chose foolishly....

I was at mass in our parish church and the people were singing a worship song to Mary. I looked around to see if the born-again charismatic leaders, my friends, were joining in or would they make a stand for Christ and His Word by being silent. All were singing to Mary! Repeat: All were singing to Mary! When I (finally) removed my family from catholicism the leadership of our charismatic community censured me for the purpose of demonstrating their loyalty to the catholic church. *The way it is* was still on the throne.

Soon the catholic charismatic movement died out in our city, and *the way it is* retrieved most of its prodigals.

Most of those born-again catholic friends undoubtedly still pray to Jesus and try to relate to Him through the sacraments and mass. But they are following (obeying, being loyal to) another. Jesus is no longer their captain. His Word is secondary to the words of traditionalists. They turned back, once more depositing their trust on *the way it is* and its keepers.

When I entered evangelicalism it was sometimes boring, but I felt safe. The churches were said to be "Bible believing," which I understood to mean they lived by Scripture. They had been around long enough to have a mountain of understanding on the Bible (the Bible is not *that* thick). Were they not "fundamentalists" who believed in the fundamental truths of Scripture? *The way it is,* the chief god of catholicism, could never have found entrance into evangelicalism. Could it?

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"i determined not to know anything

… except jesus christ and him crucified" (1Cor.2:2)

to know him
be familiar with
commune with
walk with
him
the lord jesus
to sup with
acknowledge
praise
emulate
him
the lord jesus
to lean on
trust in
abide in
obey
him
the lord jesus
salvation in him
healing in him
security in him
good enough in him
in him
the lord jesus

chapter two
----------"JUDGE, … JUDGE NOT"

Matthew 7:1: "**Judge not, that you be not judged.**

Jesus taught us not to judge.

John 7:24: **judge with righteous judgment."**

And Jesus taught us to judge.

2 Timothy 2:15: **rightly dividing the word of truth.**

On both occasions (*"judge not,"* and "*judge"*) Jesus spoke "*the word of truth."* But His words often require "*rightly dividing"*.

When Jesus said, "*judge not"* He meant do not judge the heart of another man with a sense of condemnation. Jesus went on to say, *"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye?"* That is the issue.... why?

Why does that *"speck"* in the eye of Brother Whoever bother us? Is it out of concern or out of contempt? Is it because of our insecurity? Does looking down on another elevate us?

When Jesus instructed, "*judge with righteous judgment"*, He was telling us to make an intelligent assessment of a situation to determine right or wrong.

Acts 10:42: **He who was ordained by God to be Judge**

That is our awesome Jesus. There are some judgements only He is to make. Only Jesus has the authority and ability.

2 Timothy 4:8: **there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me**

Paul will get exactly what he deserves because he will be judged by a perfect *"righteous Judge"*. The value of Paul's "*crown of righteousness"* will be precisely what his obedience has earned him, nothing more, nothing less.

Revelation 2:23: **I will give to each one of you according to your works.**

Even if our rewards are little it will be deeply satisfying that the judgement of our *"works"* was fair and exact.

Romans 14:10: **why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.**

It must be said that as we ventilate the doctrines of *the way it is* we are not to judge the hearts of those of the 'ministerial' or those of the 'laity'. Jesus will judge everyone. Nobody gets away with anything.

We are all in the same camp of guilt. I don't know a person who has not empowered *the way it is* (by direct involvement and/or endorsement) to one degree or another. And this is a definite advantage because no one is in a position to pass judgement.

Galatians 5:15: **if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!**

Flapping tongues can destroy a congregation. One makes an unkind judgement, another retaliates, people take sides, grudges are spawned, the Spirit is grieved, the life of the congregation is sapped.

Galatians 5:17 (NIV): **the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit.**

There is something in us (*"the sinful nature"*) that likes to hear and speak perversities. Another part of us hates it. What is the answer?

Galatians 5:16: **Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**

How does one *"walk in the Spirit"*? The Holy Spirit is *"the Spirit of Christ".* (1Pt.1:11) You cannot have One without the Other. When you have One you have Two. A Christ-centred believer walks "*in the Spirit"* and "*shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."*

Don't feel bad if you are not 'there'. Neither am I. Becoming Christ-centred is a process. It is possible to love Him more than we did yesterday. It is possible to love Him more tomorrow than today.

Romans 14:13: **let us not judge one another anymore,**

"Let us not" judge with a heart to condemn, nor with a holier-than-thou attitude.

Hopefully, it is clear the kind of judgement we are not to make. Now let's look at the other kind.

1 Corinthians 14:29: **Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.**

A foolish man would say, "But who am I to judge?" If we are to judge what "*prophets speak"* we are therefore to judge what everyone speaks. But do we judge someone's behaviour?

Galatians 2:11: **when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;**

One apostle judged another apostle. Peter did something really dumb, Paul judged his behaviour and "*withstood him"*. The right or wrong of Paul's heart (in making this judgement) is determined by the *why*. Why did Paul make a judgement of Peter's actions?

We are, on occasion, to judge a brother's actions, but the motive must be pure.

But what about judging someone's motives?

3 John 1:9: **Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them,**

John did judge another's motives but this is rare. Again, the issue is the *why.*

1 Corinthians 5:12: **Do you not judge those who are inside?**

That is, *"inside"* the body of Christ.

Sometimes it is necessary to make a judgement on another or on a situation for the good of all. Some would say that only leadership should make such evaluations, but these words were directed to everyone ("*to the church of God which is at Corinth"*).

2 Timothy 3:16: **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**

The standard for judgement should always be the Word.

Romans 14:10: **why do you judge your brother?**

There are always some who think they have the 'ministry of correction'. In a sense we all do, but some think they are 'full time ministers'!

There are people who direct their anger at themselves and those who direct it at others. Correction of others can be nothing more noble than venting one's frustration. Even though words of correction may be truth, motive is everything.

In most circumstances one should only speak correction to *"he who has ears to hear",* from pure motives, by the leading of the Spirit, after sufficient prayer.

1 Corinthians 10:15: **judge for yourselves what I say.**

If the Corinthians should have judged Paul's words, should they not have judged everyone's words? And ought we to do less?

We are free in Christ (and responsible) to judge everyone's statements for validity and accuracy. We are free to discuss those statements with whomever we choose.

It is right to judge *the way it is*. It is wrong not to judge *the way it is*.

----------APPENDIX

A young man from the Watchtower Society, (a jehovah's witness), came knocking on my door and soon we were in a debate. He argued that since the christian church was split into so many factions, it could not possibly be God's representative on earth. On the other hand, the jehovah's witnesses were in strong unity throughout the world, a sure sign they were God's true agent.

I knew much about their history and asked if they had ever been united in error. Listen carefully to his answer: "Yes, but it is better to be united in error than divided over truth!"

To that jehovah's witness unity was god.

Jesus said, "*Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three."*

Jesus is the ultimate divider!

Today millions worldwide curse His name; today millions worldwide worship Him. He is the most hated and most loved. It has always been so.

And Jesus brings division to the church, His own *"body".* For example, Jesus brings revival and revival brings division. He pours out His power to awaken a sleeping church, some embrace the visitation, others (most?) reject it.

Jesus also brings division to the local assembly. An excited 'layman' can't wait to tell PastorWhoever about his recent baptism in the Holy Spirit and the accompanying gift of tongues, but is deflated by his response. "We don't do that in our assembly!" This member must submit or find another church.

Every manifestation of God has its enemies, ardent protectors of *the way it is*. For every person who welcomes God's *"demonstrations of the Spirit and of power"* (1Cor.12:27), many scoff and reject. Preachers are divided. Some exhort the people to accept the manifestation, others just as passionately condemn it. An individual's entire future can be determined by which preacher gets to him first!

"If it brings division it must be bad," proponents of *the way it is* proclaim. Sometimes I can hear the young man's words in their logic, "It is better to be united in error than divided over truth!" To them, unity, not truth, is the goal.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"i determined not to know anything
… except jesus christ and him crucified." (1Cor.2:2)

jesus
jesus christ
and him crucified
nails in his hands
and feet
the scourge's stripes
the reed's bruises
the thorn's gashes
swelling from angry hands
spittle in his beard
blood all over
hanging there
alone
between earth and sky
bearing sins
and sickness
shame and guilt
washing men clean
giving life
paying a debt
he did not owe
despised

rejected of men
a man of sorrows
acquainted with grief
we hid as it were
our faces from him
we did not esteem him
him
him crucified
jesus christ
jesus

chapter three
----------EPHESIANS 4:11

Ephesians 4:11: **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

You have heard this verse quoted often and perhaps know it by memory. Let's spend some time on this verse, and also the verses prior and following.

After sitting under the ministry of evangelicalism for a number of years, I acquired what I believe to be the most commonly held perception of the above verse, Ephesians 4:11. The perception is this....

God chose a relatively *few* from the ranks of hristians to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (Some believe the day of the apostle and prophet is passed, but not so.) These *few* chosen ones are 'in the ministry' and have the responsibility of giving spiritual leadership to the majority. Is this also your assessment of Ephesians 4:11?

I learned of a different view while listening to a cassette tape (Derek Prince) about three years ago. It goes like this:

Every christian has been given at least one of the five ministry gifts. (*Every* christian has the calling of either apostle or prophet or evangelist or pastor or teacher.) That means you and me and every born-again believer. If this is so, *it changes everything.* Repeat: *It changes everything.*

In most evangelical denominations and local assemblies there are two groups of people: the very small group who are 'in the ministry' and the large group who are not. This may not be written or taught from the pulpit or even discussed in conversations, but it is an accepted concept nonetheless. This is evidenced by, if evidence is required, leadership meetings and conferences whereby one group is invited and the other is not.

More traditional denominations identify these groups as 'clergy' and 'laity'. In evangelical realms the word “layman” is used but not the word “clergy”. However, the two groups in evangelicalism are

equally distinct.

In this book I will call these factions “ministerial” and “laity” (for discussion purposes only).

The pastor is the most visual member of the ‘ministerial’. ‘Above’ him are officers of his denomination. Denominational leadership may refer to themselves as a board, or a presbytery or whatever. Their organization is arranged much like any business corporation, with a superintendent or president (or whatever) at the top. (Actually, the denomination *is* a business, a registered corporation with the province. As a registered society it receives certain tax exemptions and the legal right to marry. And there are obligations that must be honoured to avoid serious consequences.)

Is this division biblical? Are the factions of ‘ministerial’ and ‘laity’ God’s decree or man’s invention? It is a very important matter and we should check it out.

It seems Ephesians 4:11 is used more than any other verse to validate this division (‘ministerial’ and ‘laity’), the splitting of the body of Christ. I am of the opinion the latter perception of Ephesians 4:11 (the one I heard on the tape) is the true one, and I present logic, some my own and some from the tape, for your consideration.

I ask the reader to patiently consider and, if necessary, reconsider the following logic until you 'get it'; it is most important you understand because *it can be life changing*. Let’s begin at Ephesians 4:7 and go verse by verse to Ephesians 4:16.

Ephesians 4:7: **But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.**

“Each one of us” is *every* Christian. What is this grace that *“each one of us”* was given? The answer is in the following verse.

Ephesians 4:8: **Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”**

The *“grace”* mentioned in verse 7 is in the form of “*gifts”* mentioned in verse 8 (and is a fulfillment of a prophecy given in Psalms 68:16). Note the word *“therefore”* that not only links the two verses but also the words “*grace”* and “*gifts”*. *Every* christian has been given grace and, since grace is referring to gifts, *every* christian has been given a gift. What are these gifts everyone has been given?

The next two verses, 9 and 10, are in parenthesis because they are not in the flow of thought the writer is presenting. So we pick up the sequence of thought again in verse 11.

Ephesians 4:11: **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

The *“gifts unto men”* of verse 8 are the five ministries of verse 11 (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher). Since *every* believer has been given at least one of these ministry gifts, *every* christian

is equally 'in the ministry'. Not everyone, however, comes to this conclusion.

There is another line of reasoning, aside from the one I am presenting, that lends to the conjecture that only a *few* are chosen. It goes like this:

The *"gifts"* of verse Ephesians 4:11 are a relatively *few* men (and women) chosen by God (some being apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, etc.). This teaching states that the gifts to the church are not *abilities* (to establish churches, prophesy, evangelize, pastor and teach) but rather the gifts to the church are *persons* who have been given these abilities. The gifts are people! This line of reasoning is:

* Verse 7: all have been given grace.
* Verse 8: this grace is in the form of gifts.
* Verse 11: the gifts are (a relatively *few*) people.

This reasoning is the most accepted. But as we look at the ensuing verses it is so obvious this logic is *not* the glove that fits the hand, but rather a spurious justification for splitting the body of Christ into two parts. Let us continue to verse 12....

Ephesians 4:12: **for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,**

This verse gives the purpose of the ministry gifts.

Who are "*the saints"* in verse 12? Obviously they are *every* christian person. What is *"the work of ministry"* they are to be equipped to do? It is the same *"work of ministry"* in Ephesians 4:11. (What other ministry is there?) If *every* christian is to be equipped to do the ministry of verse 11, verse 11 must include (must refer to) *every* christian.

Ephesians 4:13: **till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;**

"We" in verse 13 is the body of Christ, "*the saints"* of verse 12. This verse explains why God gave the church the five ministry gifts.

Ephesians 4:14: **that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,**

This verse gives additional purposes for the five ministry gifts.

Ephesians 4:15: **but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head - Christ -**

Who speaks *"the truth in love"*? You can see that it is the "*we"* of verses 13 and 14 (*every* believer). Since the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers of verse 11 also speak *"the truth in love"* (what else would they speak?), they (the fivefold ministry and the "*we"* of verses 13 and 14) must

be one and the same.

Ephesians 4:16: **from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

How is *"the whole body* (the church) *joined and knit together"*? Is this done by a *few*? No, not a few, but *"by what* every *joint* (*every* christian) *supplies, according to the effective working* (proper functioning) *by which* every *part* (*every* christian) *does its* (his/her) *share."* The "*whole body"* (not part of the body!) "*causes growth of the body"*.

If Ephesians 4:11 really does refer to a *few*, it is the only one of the 16 verses that does. Verse 1 refers to *every* Christian. As do verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (remember verses 9 and 10 are in parenthesis and pertain to Jesus). Verses 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 also refer to *every* believer. It is most unreasonable to insist verse 11 is the only exception that refers to a *few.*

The book of Romans affirms that gifts refer to *abilities*, not men who have been given abilities.

Romans 12:6: **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy**

The *"gifts"* of Romans 12:6 refer to abilities (such as the ability to prophesy, etc.), and not people who have been given these abilities. This confirms that the gifts of Ephesians 4:11 are in reference to abilities and not a few select christians.

It is not unreasonable to read Ephesians 4:11 in this manner: "*And He Himself gave some* (the gifting of) *apostles, some* (the gifting of) *prophets, some* (the gifting of) *evangelists, and some* (the gifting of) *pastors and* (the gifting of) *teachers."*

We all have one of the five giftings! You can probably see this gifting in every christian you know. One has the desire to establish new works (apostle), some have words of knowledge and correction (prophet), some have a yearning to reach the lost (evangelist), others have an uncommon concern for young christians (pastor), and some love to teach (teacher).

2 Timothy 2:15: **rightly dividing the word of truth.**

Do you grasp the gravity of the controversy between *every* and *few*? If Ephesians 4:11 represents *every* christian, and not a *few*, it tears down the 'laity/ministerial' doctrine. *It expands your perception of who you are and what God expects of you.*

We have all been compartmentalized by *That's Just The Way It Is!*. The mindset of religion has been stamped on each of us: "minister", "laymen". We have been tagged by others and we have tagged ourselves. We must confront this enemy of false perception with the truth of God's Word.

If you are not yet convinced the "*work of the ministry"* is as much your work as anyone's, then dig into

the Word and check it out for yourself. You are responsible for you. Don't trust anyone to "*rightly* (divide) *the word of truth"* for you.

Matthew 7:24: **"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man**

Jesus did not say that *"a wise man"* is the one who hears *"these sayings of mine"* and agrees with them. *"A wise man"* is the one who *"does them"*. If you are convinced you have one of the giftings of Ephesians 4:11 and are 'in the ministry' as much as any person, then you must live your life accordingly. Consider yourself to be what the Bible declares you to be. Walk *that* walk. Talk *that* talk. *"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only."* (Jm.1:22)

Life is crossroads and life is choices. The value of life coincides with choices made when coming to a crossroad, when *the way it is* and God's Bible point in opposite directions. Which will you follow?

It is an issue of lordship.

----------APPENDIX

Perception is everything. A false self-perception can ruin a life. A true perception can set one free and spur trigger fruitfulness. Abundant, good fruit should be your goal. (*"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit."* Jn.15:8)

That which is in your heart will be manifested in your life. ("*As he thinks in his heart, so is he.")* The graduate of a university is usually the one expected to graduate. The expectation passed from parents and others to him, and he simply followed after what had been placed *"in his heart"*. That is why it is so important to oversee a child's heart, to protect him from crippling notions. And that's why a christian must safeguard his own heart.

In catholicism much imagery has been contrived to give credibility to misconceptions and establish *the way it is* in that religion.... the priests' cloaks, stained windows, decorated altars, golden chalices, symbolic gestures, etc.

Less glaring symbolisms are used in evangelicalism to fortify misconceptions. Some of these symbols are: the pastor's 'uniform' (suit and tie), titles of "Pastor" and "Reverend", professional posturing, teethier-than-yours smile, his constant visibility (sitting in the front facing the assembly, shaking hands as everyone leaves), his marked parking spot, the bulletin's "Message From The Pastor". Even the government sets him above other christians by giving him the right to perform marriage ceremonies.

Imageries make catholics catholic and evangelicals evangelical. The man behind the pulpit becomes increasingly bigger in people's perception while those in the pews shrink. They are imprisoned by a defective expectation of themselves and of what God wants to do through their lives. This is fortified by the low spiritual estimation and expectation others have of them.

To both your advantage and disadvantage you are a product of evangelicalism. The perception you have of yourself is, in large part, because of this influence. That self-impression is somewhat true, somewhat distorted. While truth sets free, distortions restrict.

Because of the effects of evangelicalism you have accumulated *"gold, silver, precious stones".* And because of evangelicalism you have collected "*wood, hay, straw"*. Of course your personal collection is determined by other things, mostly the choices you have made; but the effect of evangelicalism has been substantial nonetheless.

A typical evangelical gathering is a mixture of the Word of God and traditions. Both have power to forge lives, but only the Word for good. Because of *the way it is* (remember, in this book that term refers only to traditions that are *contrary* to the Bible) it is difficult to see yourself as the minister of God He called you to be. In truth, your potential is enormous. Repeat: Your potential is enormous.

False, non-biblical self-perceptions must be renounced if you want more *"gold, silver, precious stones",* and less "*wood, hay, straw".* You must see yourself as your Father sees you. In the sight of the Father you are not, never have been and never will be, a "layman". You are God's anointed, called by Him to be a preacher of His precious Word to the saved and unsaved. You are "in the ministry" ("full-time" ministry) as much as any person. You have the calling of apostle or prophet or evangelist or pastor or teacher (or a combination of two or more).

In the Father's eyes you are not second-rate or second-class. No one is above you in rank; you are under no man's authority. Your Lord is Jesus Christ; your Leader is the Holy Spirit. You have as much potential for service as any licensed 'minister'. The value of that service is equal to the richness of your relationship with Jesus.

You may not be recognized by most, but Jesus doesn't need most; He only needs your heart. Christ and you are an overwhelming majority. You will be surprised how much you will be used as you bow to His sole authority. Now, perhaps for the first time, you will be in a position whereby finishing your "*course"* (the commission God has placed on your life) is a strong possibility.

The fruit you bear will be relative to the quality of relationship with Jesus, the degree of surrender to the lordship of the Holy Spirit and the choices you make.

From this day forward will you see yourself through the Word or through the perceptions of others? Your self-image will determine your behaviour. If you behave to please man (the man behind the pulpit and the denomination he represents, the people sitting beside you in church, your family or friends, the company you keep), you are part of the problem. The power of *the way it is* is strengthened by your adherence. You will help lead others away from obedience to Christ and, therefore, Christ Himself.

If, however, you choose to disciple yourself after your Christ you must set yourself in agreement with His Word, in accord with what God says about you. All other perspectives will be your enemy. It

won't matter how others see you; your strength will not come from them.

It will not be easy. You will be swimming upstream, against the flow of established mentality. Repeatedly you will hear an adverse and stifling perspective, ambushing you from various sources, regarding your place (role, responsibility) in the body of Christ. The perspective of *the way it is* will be relentlessly conveyed, either directly or by implication. You must brace yourself to stand against public opinion.

To complicate matters, you must likewise see others as "*the head of the church"* sees them, and not as others may see them or even as they perceive themselves to be. Your Bible perception of them could turn them around.

And you cannot be silent. You have heard it said, "Practice what you preach!" Also, you should "Preach what you practice!" *The way it is* is not silent about its misconceptions; you cannot be silent about biblical truths. Jesus wouldn't like that.

Do you want more, much more, fruit in your life, more "*gold, silver, precious stones"* to one day place at the feet of Jesus? Your solution is not more evangelicalism, but more of Jesus. Giving allegiance to the Word over *the way it is* is a way of turning to Him. Drink deeply of Jesus. Abide in His Word.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"i determined not to know anything
... except jesus christ and him crucified" (1Cor.2:2)

and him despised
and him sweating blood
and him betrayed
and him arrested
and him abandoned
and him accused
and him blindfolded
and him mocked
and him spit upon
and him bruised
and him denied
and him bound
and him interrogated
and him scoffed
and him crowned
and him robed in purple
and him judged
and him whipped

and him rejected
and him condemned
and him carrying a cross
and him crucified

chapter four
----------SPIRITUAL GIFTS

2 Timothy 3:16: **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,**

I have stated in the previous chapter that the dual-status system in evangelical quarters, 'ministerial' and 'laity', is simply not God's way, but man's invention.

"All Scripture.... is profitable for doctrine." Doctrine must come forth from God's word. God does not give us freedom to embrace a doctrine until someone proves it false; we are only to accept doctrines that we have tested by Scripture and found to be true. It was wrong to accept and promote the dual-status system without the assurance that it is biblical.

Jeremiah 17:5: "**Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD.**

Most, if not all, have been guilty of presumption. We trusted *"in man"* and made *"flesh* (our) *strength"*. We went with the flow, strengthened the flow by our participation, and became part of a very serious problem. We trusted in others; others trusted in us.

What is the curse (cost) for trusting in people? This can be answered in one word.... Jesus. It damages our relationship with the "*Shepherd and Overseer"* of our souls, just like catholic charismatics who choose catholic traditions over God's Bible.

2 Corinthians 3:15: **even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart.**

Paul was referring to "*the children of Israel"*. Even though the books of Moses speak of Christ they could not (and cannot) understand because of the veil of traditionalism. Every non-christian has this veil ("*if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing"* 2Cor.4:3).

I recently read in my devotional that those who lose touch with God go back to where they came from. I fully agree. My observation is that those who give *the way it is* undue attention slowly lose sight of Jesus Christ, and now there is once more a veil, one that prevents them from seeing the treasure they lost.

There is a veil over the minds of most christians in the body of Christ. Repeat: There *is* a veil over the minds of most christians in the body of Christ. This veil had once been lifted when first born again of the Holy Spirit but returned, to varying degrees, as their gaze moved imperceptibly from Jesus to

man (good man, anointed man, bad man.... it makes no difference). *The way it is* is one of the chief felons dousing our passion for Christ, having trained us to be men-gazers instead of Christ-gazers.

Psalm 105:15 (KJV): **Touch not mine anointed**

That's just the way it is! teaches the pastor or others of the 'ministerial' are God's *"anointed"*. They have a special call of God on their lives and are responsible for the care of the flock.

Instead of being taught to receive directly from "*the good shepherd"....* direction, teaching, safety, endorsement, discernment, comfort.... the christian is subtly coerced to lean upon very fallible under-shepherds. These paid professionals have become, to varying degrees, mediators between believer and Jesus!

The enemy is before us; it must be challenged. The splitting of the body of Christ into two very unequal groups is the beloved misconception of *the way it is*. This chapter carries on the task of tearing down this very sacred cow in evangelical ranks.

1 Corinthians 12:1: **Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:**

1 Corinthians has more to say about spiritual gifts than any other section of the New Testament. Since the Lord would not have us *"be ignorant"* let us study this letter. We will search for a scriptural basis for the two-tier system so visible in *the way it is* and seek for the pastor, the local church's typification of the 'ministerial'. If we cannot find this two-tier structure c/w a local pastor let us resolve it simply doesn't exist in the Lord's perspective.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7: **there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:**

"The manifestation of the Spirit" is manifested through *"diversities of gifts.... ministries.... activities".* Is this "*manifestation of the Spirit"* through a select few? No, *"the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one"*.... to *every* Corinthian.... to *every* christian.... *"For the profit of all"*.... "*All"* ministers to "*all"....* *every* to *every*.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11: **for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**

This is a repeat of the previous verses (and the verses previously discussed from Ephesians). The Holy Spirit gives a gift to "*each one individually as He wills."*

1 Corinthians 12:25: **there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the**

same care for one another.

This is a clear rebuke against the two-tier system. There is not to be a "*schism* (division) *in the body"* of Christ, but there most certainly is. In *the way it is* the small group, the 'ministerial', cares for the large group, the 'laity'. But the Bible states, "*the members should have the same care for one another."*

1 Corinthians 14:1: **desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.**

Every believer is encouraged to prophesy, and yet *"prophets"* are one of the five ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11 that many insist are limited to a few. It is obviously not so.

1 Corinthians 14:3: **he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.**

The way it is says the pastor "*speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men."* But Paul encourages *everyone* to edify, exhort and encourage.

1 Corinthians 14:5: **I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.**

Paul says it again. He wished *every* christian would speak a word of the Lord to the entire congregation. This is plain language. One selected person (or a few) is not supposed to do it all.

1 Corinthians 14:26: **How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together,**

Paul is about to tell the Corinthians how a gathering should run its course. (The Lord, through Paul, is instructing us how a gathering should be conducted.) "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

1 Corinthians 14:26: **Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.**

Again, this is easily understood language; who cannot understand? (Those who do not want to.) How sad that Jesus has so much to say to the assembly but people are denied opportunity.

"Has anyone a *short* praise report?" the pastor asks the congregation, heavily emphasizing *short*. Not, "Does anyone have a psalm?" Not, "Does anyone want to share something the Lord has been teaching you?" Not, "Does anyone have a revelation to share with the congregation?"

In effect he is saying to the people, "Tell us the Lord healed your Aunt Martha. Share with us that your son finally got the job you believed for. Let us all know how the Lord provided the mortgage payment at the last moment. But the important stuff, like preaching and teaching, leave that to me; I am the qualified one; that's what you pay me for." So the 'laity' speaks out their collective few hundred words, and it is now time for the pastor to speak his many thousands.

Is this obedience to the Word of God? Is this building on the rock of His Bible?

1 Corinthians 14:29: **Let two or three prophets speak and let the others judge.**

The way it is says, "Let two or three give a *short* praise report and let the pastor preach/teach."

1 Corinthians 14:31: **you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.**

Jesus desires to feed His flock of sheep through *every one* of his sheep. This way, no man is elevated. No person is given undue attention. Jesus is the central focus.

The concept of *every* is equally prevalent in 1 Corinthians as it is in Ephesians. And the perception of a *few* is equally absent. What do other letters of Paul have to say on the subject?

Romans 12:4: **For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,**

Romans teaches that just as *every* part of our natural body has a function, likewise *every* member in the church has a function. There isn't a dominant member of the human body to be honoured more than other parts; likewise there isn't a special member in the local assembly to be exalted.

Romans 12:6: **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:**

If an assembly does not give everyone opportunity to use his/her gifts that assembly cannot be likened to a *"wise man who built his house on the rock",* but rather to "*a foolish man who built his house on the sand".*(Mt.7:24,26)

Romans 12:16: **Be of the same mind toward one another.**

Don't be partial. Don't give special regard to one person. Be equal in the respect you give to others. Don't be a man-gazer. Don't be political. See yourself and others through the eyes of Jesus, not through the perspective of *the way it is*. Be wise.... build on the rock of His Word.

2 Corinthians 5:18: **God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.**

"Us" is *every* christian, equally responsible to bring the "*ministry of reconciliation"*, the gospel of *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified",* to a lost and dying world.

2 Corinthians 5:20: **we are ambassadors for Christ,**

As much as anyone, *you* are an ambassador for Christ to those who have not yet bowed to His lordship. It is a lofty responsibility.

2 Corinthians 6:1: **We then, as workers together with Him**

"Workers together".... none above the other in rank, no salaried person to do the work for us.

Galatians 5:13: **through love serve one another.**

One is not to serve all. All are not to serve one. We are to "*serve one another"*.

Ephesians 5:19: **speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,**

Again and again, the *"head of the church"* exhorts us, through His Word, to minister to *"one another"*.

Philippians 2:4: **Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**

The way it is says, "Go to work, make lots of money so that together you can hire someone to look after your interests."

2 Corinthians 5:20: **we are ambassadors for Christ,**

We are *all*, equally, representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ to those who haven't bowed their knee to the King of kings.

2 Corinthians 5:15: **He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**

Living for Christ is ministry, the only ministry. We are all equally in the ministry. We are all to live for and with Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11: **comfort each other and edify one another,**

This is reciprocal. Mutual. Not give, give, give. Not take, take, take. But give and take. Feed and be fed. Speak and listen.

But what about those who say they received "a call" from God "into the ministry", referring to a specific time in their christianity? They seem convinced they have been given something most believers don't have.

There is usually a time delay from when one becomes a believer and when Jesus uses that believer in public ministry. At that time the Lord is simply commissioning the individual to be active in the ministry to which he has already been called. For most, myself included, opportunities for ministry increase gradually with maturity.

Romans 1:7: **To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints:**

The letter of Romans is addressed to *"all who are in Rome", every* believer in that city. That is significant. Paul had never been to Rome; he had never met these believers. If there was a chain of command (as there is today) Paul never acknowledged it.

Paul directed his two Corinthians letters "*To the church of God which is at Corinth".* To the Galatians it was *"To the churches of Galatia".* To the Ephesians, *"To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus".* The letters to the Colossians and the Thessalonians are similar. None were directed to a leader/pastor/elder.

Surely this is to be considered strong evidence against the two-tier system of *the way it is*.

Philippians 1:1 (NIV): **To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:**

In this salutation Paul addresses the *"saints"* before the *"overseers and deacons"*. In his thinking leadership doesn't have priority. The reverence *the way it is* has for leadership cannot be found in Paul's letters.

(In another chapter we will discuss the role of "*overseers".*)

Mark 7:13: **making the word of God of no effect through your tradition**

That's Just The Way It Is! has become so powerful that many of the words of God have become "*of no effect"* in the church, one of the main reasons it is always in need of revival. The two-tier system is taught by example (not verbally) Sunday after Sunday, prompting the people to disregard what the Bible so plainly teaches. This results in a lack of reverence for the Lord and His Word.

Because God's Word isn't adhered to (because the Holy Spirit is not given lordship) much encouragement and direction and exhortation is not proclaimed. Much wisdom is not imparted. Miracles are a rarity. People stay imprisoned to their sickness. Fruit is limited. And worse, the exaltation of Christ is diminished.

The way it is verses Christ Jesus.... it is an issue of lordship.

----------APPENDIX

Organization is the bane of life in the Spirit. Okay, maybe I should qualify that a bit. *Unnecessary* organization is the bane of life in the Spirit.

Most organization is unnecessary. It may be prudent to have a Wednesday 7:00 pm Bible study, but it's *im*prudent to follow a programmed course. To meet at seven (or whenever) could advance the purposes of the Holy Spirit; to follow a printed Bible study could stifle the Holy Spirit. The ideal is "one another" ministry whereby each ministers to every. *("Each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation.")* He doesn't want cookie-cutter christians.

Those attending Wednesday 7:00 pm Bible study should do so only at the leading of the Holy Spirit. Each should be personally convinced this is the will of God for him/her at this juncture of their life. We need the Holy Spirit. We *desperately* need the Holy Spirit. We must *know* we need the Holy Spirit.

Allegiance must not be given to the Wednesday 7:00 o'clock Bible study; you don't owe anyone your attendance. There are many possible alternatives for Wednesday 7:00 pm: your family may need you.... a friend could be in need of companionship.... the Lord wants alone time with you.... you are about to get an important long distance phone call.... this week's Bible study could lead you

away from, and not deeper into, intimacy with Christ.... it may be advantageous to attend another study at another location.... the Bible study has evolved into a social gathering rather than a desire to know *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"*.... etc., etc.

Yes, there could be many reasons the Holy Spirit would have you somewhere else on any Wednesday evening. Of course, the same is true regarding the Sunday 10:00 am service and every church function. He knows everything about everything and everybody. He is the only One who knows your need at any given time, and the needs of those you influence. He is fully aware of both entrapments and advantages and complications of every gathering in your city. Only the Holy Spirit knows what you need to learn and when it's time to learn it.

The way it is thrives on organization. Organization, the unnecessary kind, is required for its survival. They need you committed to their programs/agendas. They imply lack of commitment to its itinerary is less than Godly. Officers of *That's just the way it is!* do not want you reliant on the Holy Spirit; *they* want to be your safety, your comfort, your teacher. They want you to trust *them* to do what they cannot do and pay them for not doing it.

Organization, the unnecessary kind, is the first step to institutionalization. Pastor Whoever has been institutionalized and he lives to institutionalize others. To do so he must organize every aspect of the congregation's christianity until the guidance of Holy Spirit is no longer relevant.

Thoroughly understand that if you remove the Holy Spirit as your chief decision-maker, as most evangelicals do, you at the same time remove Jesus Christ as Lord of your life. Very not good.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"i determined not to know anything
… except jesus christ and him crucified" (1Cor.2:2)

him
gaze upon him
not he or she
we or them
but him
not me
little god
ain't i cute
not who i am
but who he is
not what i have
or hope to do
but him
what he has done

him crucified
not his
but him
not the redeemed
the redeemer
not the body
the head
not the blemished
the spotless
not worshippers
the worshipped
him
gaze upon him

chapter five
----------LEADERSHIP

1 Corinthians 11:3: **I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ,**

When a christian hears the word "leader" he/she ought not think of a man, a group of men, church staff, a pastor, an elder, or denominational officers. He ought to think of Jesus Christ.

The NIV has a slightly different translation of the above verse: *"I want you to* realize *that the head of every man is Christ."* There is a big difference between knowing and realizing. To know (to be informed) takes but an instant; to realize takes time to sink down from head to heart. I know Christ is my *"head"*, but do I *realize* it? Answer: I am growing in the realization (awareness) that Christ is my Leader.

It is a relative thing. Some fully realize Christ is Leader, some hardly at all, most of us are somewhere in between. Hopefully this chapter will reinforce the truth that Christ is not only your Leader, but your *only* Leader.

Matthew 23:10 (NAS): **do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.**

Some translations use the word *"leaders",* others *"teachers".* The Amplified reads, "*you must not be called masters (leaders), for you have one Master (Leader), the Christ."*

How many leaders (teachers, masters) do you have? You should write the answer in your Bible next to Matthew 23:10: "I have one Leader. I have one Master. I have one Teacher."

Ephesians 5:23: **Christ is head of the church;**

We are the church and Christ is our Leader. We can each declare: "As Jesus Christ is my only Saviour, as He is my only Lord, as He is my only Master, He is likewise my only Leader."

Hebrews 13:7 (NIV): **Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.**

"Your leaders". Is this verse in conflict with Ephesians 5:23 and other similar verses? One must rightly divide the word of God.

Who would argue that we have but one Master, the Lord Jesus Christ? And yet Colossians 3:22 instructs, *"Servants, obey in all things your masters."*

"The Father ... has committed all judgment to the Son" (Jn.5:22), but nonetheless Paul admonished the Corinthians to find someone "*who will be able to* judge *between his brethren."* (1Cor.6.5)

Jesus said, *"In My name they will cast out demons."* (Mk.16:17) Who is the deliverer.... "*they"* or Christ? We have to understand there are layers of truth.

Jesus sent the twelve to *"heal the sick."* In a sense they are healers. But the deeper truth is there is one Healer. There are many doctors but only one Great Physician. There are layers of truth, some more relevant than others.

Philip "*preached Jesus"* to the eunuch *"along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza"* (Ac.8:26), resulting in the salvation of the eunuch. One might say Philip saved him through his preaching. Is Philip therefore the eunuch's saviour? Of course not.

So how many leaders do we have? In a limited sense many; in a truer sense one. Again, there are layers of truth.

Colossians 3:2: **Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**

Set your mind on Christ, the one true Leader, *"not on things of the earth",* christian leaders.

Romans 8:5: **those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.**

"Those who live according to the flesh" study the Bible and conclude that certain men of the 'ministerial' are their leaders. They follow these men, obey and adulate them. But "*those who live according to the Spirit"* read the same Bible and see Christ as their one and only Leader.

Joshua 24:15: **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,**

Life is choices. Both right and wrong choices have a price tag, but only one gives rewards.

Should you choose to *"live according to the Spirit"* and serve Christ, you will come up against *the way it is* and its protectors who *"set their minds on the things of the flesh",* competing with Christ for the right and responsibility to give you leadership. You will find yourself swimming upstream. You will most certainly be *"persecuted for righteousness' sake".* (Praise the Lord!)

Matthew 6:24: "**No one can serve two masters;**

It is impossible to serve two masters; one cannot serve Christ and christian leaders. *"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve."*

Matthew 23:6,7: **They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'**

Jesus was speaking of *"The scribes and the Pharisees* (who) *sit in Moses' seat."* Man is man. Men still love to be honoured, titled, consulted. That is why many, certainly not all, are ambitious for leadership positions, whether in the secular realm or in the church.

Man loves to be called, "Reverend" and "Pastor" and "Minister". It is our fallen nature, a bad fruit of sin.

John 21:16: **He said to him, "Tend My sheep."**

Jesus was asking Peter to prove his professed love by caring for His sheep. This is the purest motive for seeking a place of leadership.... caring for Christ's simply because they are Christ's. For most, attaining this pure motive is a process, taking many years. Those having the gift of pastor, one of the five ministry gifts, have a special love for Christ's sheep.

Unfortunately, many who are called "Pastor" do not have the calling of pastor. And many who do have the calling are not recognized.

Proverbs 16:3: **Commit your works to the LORD,**

More than once I have heard an ugly sermon about commitment to the local assembly (always accompanied by some shouting "Amen!"). *That's Just The Way It Is!* only works by commitment from the group, and its salaried ambassadors have become adept at making the Word appear to say something it doesn't.

As one cannot serve two, one cannot commit oneself to two.

John 2:24,25: **But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.**

"What was in man" is still in man; it didn't leave the planet. It is in the unbeliever and the believer. It is in some more than others, but in all. *"What was in man"* is in the local assembly (it only increases with numbers). It is in the pastor, the 'layman', the church board; it is in you; it is in me.

It is often said love calls for commitment. If we love the brethren, this reasoning suggests, we will commit ourselves to the brethren. But Jesus, *"who gave Himself a ransom for all"* (1Tm.2:6), would never commit Himself to man. He loved people but was committed to the Father. We are to love the brethren but be committed to Christ.

By definition of the word "commitment", it is impossible to make a partial commitment. Just as we cannot be partly convinced or partly loyal, we cannot be partly committed.

Often the pastor controls the entire congregation, even though there is a board of elders (or whatever). When he calls for commitment to the assembly he is actually calling for commitment to himself. This is very unhealthy and very dangerous.

1 John 1:7: **if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another,**

If you walk with Jesus (*"in the light"*) and your friend walks with Jesus, you *"will have fellowship with one another".* If your friend drifts from the Lord the fellowship is broken. However, if you both made the mistake of committing yourselves to always walk together your friendship will be retained, but at the cost of Jesus.

Common sense tells us a person cannot commit himself to two; if the two should walk in opposite directions, how can both be followed?

Exodus 20:3: **"You shall have no other gods before Me.**

Commitment to anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ is idolatry. Commitment to *the way it is* is idolatry. Commitment to a local assembly or to a denomination is idolatry.

Galatians 1:10 (NIV): **Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men?**

We *"please men"* by serving *That's Just The Way It Is!*, the traditions men esteem. If Paul's heart had been *"to win the approval of men"* he could not *"win the approval.... of God"*.

Matthew 23:8: **But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.**

"Rabbi" is a title of honour. The *"head of the church",* the one who *"Himself gave some to be..... teachers"*, does not want us to bestow titles of honour to men. *"You are all brethren."* Brothers and sisters are equal. Some are smarter, some richer, but equal nonetheless. Siblings do not give each other titles.

We in the church are *"one body".* We are each an adopted child of the Father, blood-washed, sanctified, justified, anointed, temples of the Holy Spirit.... equal. There are no 'reverends', no 'clergymen'.

Matthew 23:9: **Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.**

A televangelist made it a habit to call his catholic priest guests "Father". In an effort to be hospitable and to show love to catholics he disobeyed Matthew 23:9. The Lord does not sanction this type of hospitality.

When fundamentalists reproved him he was not repentant. His reply was, "Don't we protestants call our leaders 'Pastor?'" Well, he had a point. If it is wrong for a catholic to call a leader "Father John", how can it be okay for a fundamentalist to call a leader "Pastor John"?

The argument to that logic could be that the Bible does not forbid calling a man “pastor”. But let’s look at it. Is it possible that Jesus would forbid calling a spiritual leader “teacher”, “master”, “leader”, and “father”, but allow calling one “pastor”? It is obvious Jesus did not forbid the people to call leaders “pastor” simply because it was not their custom to do so (as it was other titles).

As stated earlier, only teachings that have been proven to be biblical should be accepted. It is wrong to adopt a habit because everyone else has. There is no precedent for calling a brother (or sister) by any title. And yet in many congregations *the way it is* demands it.

(Note: We are protestants only in the eyes of *the way it is*. The Bible calls us no such thing.)

Romans 12:2: **do not be conformed to this world,**

Do not be conformed to *the way it is* simply because everyone else conforms. Every believer is occasionally challenged to choose between the Bible and tradition.

When, as a born again christian (the only kind there is) still in the catholic church, I wanted to prove my loyalty to Jesus by honouring His word, *“Do not call anyone on earth your father”*. I was trespassing against *the way it is*; everyone called the priests by the title “Father”. It really was awkward and I caved in once or twice. Blush.

When I entered evangelical confines I refused to call 'the man' “Pastor” for the same reason. *“The Lord is my shepherd”* (Ps.23:1), my only Shepherd, and I wasn’t about to call a man “shepherd” (pastor means shepherd). It was an issue of lordship.

When I stand before Christ the Judge I will be pleased knowing that I called no man “father”, no man “pastor”.

1 Corinthians 11:1: **Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.**

Paul was a leader and He said, *“Imitate me”*. Does this mean we are to imitate all leaders?

What about the occasions Paul was not imaging Christ? (*“For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.”* Rm.7:15) Should the Corinthians have imitated him? Of course not.

Paul would be thrilled if the Corinthians matured to the place of imitating Christ and forgot all about him. If Paul was able to imitate Christ directly shouldn’t the Corinthians learn to do the same?

The way it is has it all backwards. While the Bible majors on Christ the Leader and minors on flesh and blood leaders, *the way it is* majors on leadership of man and minors on leadership of Christ.

Hebrews 13:7 (NIV): **Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.**

Who are our leaders? Who are we to *“consider”* and *“imitate”*? Those *“who* (speak) *the word of God”* and whose lives are worth imitating. It is whosoever.

2 Corinthians 1:24: **Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers**

Only One has *"dominion over your faith"*. All others are simply *"fellow workers"*.

Galatians 2:6 (NIV): **As for those who seemed to be important - whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance - those men added nothing to my message.**

Who were *"those who seemed to be important"*? They were church leadership. Paul did not have a reverence for their position, though undoubtedly others esteemed them. Paul said, *"Whatever they were makes no difference to me."* In other words, "What's the big deal?"

"God does not judge by external appearance", but evangelicals do. Has he been to Bible school? Is he licensed? What denomination? Has he ever been divorced? How old is he? Etc., etc.

"Those men added nothing to my message." It is the message we honour, not the messenger. Not Paul, not 'Pastor' Whoever, not any church leader. God's word is pure and powerful; the messenger is neither.

1 Peter 5:5: **all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility,**

Many submit to leadership for political gain; humility has nothing to do with it. Anyone ambitious for a place of leadership in *the way it is* must learn the art of cooperation. Never challenge. Submit, cooperate, agree.

Who are your leaders (in a temporal sense)? If you are submissive to everyone, it really doesn't matter. "What's the big deal?"

Acts 10:34: **God shows no partiality.**

God doesn't, but evangelicals do. I stated that one of the great sins in the church is presumption. Another is partiality. We have been conditioned by *the way it is* to be biased. And we cannot see it!

The local church is split into the few and the many. The many esteem the few with childish admiration, attending to their words and wishes. The few have a special regard for their own wisdom and discernment, for they are the ones 'in the ministry'.

Matthew 21:23: **"By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"**

"The chief priests and elders of the people", defenders of *the way it is,* were convinced they alone had authority, and they challenged Jesus because He was intruding their territory. Since Moses was a great prophet of God, and they sat in his place as rulers of the people, did they not have the same authority as Moses?

The pharisees had it all wrong. They thought they had authority to add to the law of Moses what they thought appropriate. In our day leaders of *the way it is* seem to conclude likewise.

The pharisees failed to realize that the authority Moses had was limited to speaking the Word of the Lord; Moses had no right to speak his own opinions. Christians today, like the pharisees, have no authority to declare any other word but that of the Lord.

An example: *That's just the way it is!* declares that everyone must be under someone's authority, this in reference to man, not Lord Jesus. Anyone not under 'authority' is in rebellion. How twisted. In fact, one who knowingly submits to a man who preaches an erroneous word is in rebellion to God. Submission to God often demands ignoring man's decrees (*the way it is*).

Evangelicalism is burdened with many such false notions. So.... what is your defence? Simply obey the word of God as the Holy Spirit reveals it and you are safe. This word could come directly from the Lord, or from a neighbour, a friend, an elder or even a child.

James 4:12: **There is one Lawgiver,**

How can leadership presume to impose a law (everyone must come under someone's 'authority') upon fellow christians? How is it possible? And yet there is no hope of someone attaining a place of service in most churches unless they submit to human authority.

Revelation 22:18: **For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;**

John's warning applies to the book of Revelation, but one can deduct that God frowns upon someone messing with any part of His Bible.

It is my impression most Christians assume that *the way it is* and God's Word are compatible. Unfortunately, most do not check it out for themselves; they have been seduced to trust in leadership.

Authority is in the Bible. God's Word is authority. It was not in Moses, it was not in the pharisees, it was not in the reformers. And it is not in denominational (or non-denominational) leadership. It is in God and the word He speaks. To suggest a christian is to come under the authority of church leadership is a violation of God's Word.

This is my advice: Be submissive to every person to the degree you can. Do not be a man-gazer; be a Christ-gazer. Don't make a big deal about church leaders; make a big deal about Christ.

Do not come under the lordship of any man or any system; obey Christ alone. Try to see Jesus in every brother and sister, and listen for Him to feed you spiritual manna even from *"the least of these My brethren".* Do not be a respecter of persons. Do not judge by the flesh. Give allegiance to God's word alone. Check out everything.

It is an issue of lordship.

----------APPENDIX

"Your speech betrays you." (Mt.26:73) Peter thought he could go undetected. He didn't want to be identified with the One who had just been arrested, but his *"speech"* gave him away. The people discerned that, like Jesus, Peter was from the land of Galilee.

Like Peter, our speech identifies us. Where are we coming from, what is our creed, in what do we believe, who are we following.... *"Your speech betrays you."* Those coming *from* the Bible speak the Bible. Those coming from *That's just the way it is!* speak its jargon.

Foreign words are needed to describe and communicate foreign teachings and practices; *the way it is* has a long vocabulary. Let's look at some of these words and expressions that cannot be found in our Bible: *membership … denominational … inter/non-denominational … salary … license … reverend … doctor … liturgy … easter … protestant … ecclesiastic … independent … certificate … program … vacation … covering … evangelical … charismatic … hymnal.*

And there's more: *committee … cell group … para-church … Bible school … clerical … adherent … counsellor … Sunday school … seminary … theologian … scholar … graduate … balance … conservative … liberal … choir … senior pastor … assistant pastor … youth pastor … board.*

We're not finished yet: *opening/closing prayer … baptist, pentecostal (etc., etc.) … election … benediction … sheep stealing … plus shipping and handling … home church … seeker sensitive … ministerial … layman … umbrella … fundamentalist … full-time ministry … service … evangelically speaking … altar call.*

Also there are words and expressions found in the Bible, but used for non-biblical applications: *sanctuary … discipleship … rebellious … accountable … covering … church … preacher … ministry … ordained … pastors … unity … elder … tithing.*

Such an extensive vocabulary must extinguish all doubt that *the way it is* is not compatible to God's Bible. If straying from the Bible caused a change of vocabulary, would returning to the vocabulary of the Bible cause one to return to the truths of the Bible? *Hmmm.*

Why should we speak a 'foreign' language? Is the above list of words the vocabulary of men-pleasers? If we truly believe in the authority of the Bible should we not limit ourselves to the speech of the Bible? (Yes, there are valid exceptions.) Why would an ambassador of Christ speak anything other than words *"given by inspiration of God"?*

Leadership. What makes a true leader? When one speaks the oracles of God he/she is a true leader. Pointing to Christ is leadership. Being a good example is being a good leader.

Jesus taught, *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."* (Jn15:7) Our language reveals who or what we are abiding in. (*"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."* Mt.12:34)

At the judgement seat we will be held accountable for our speech. (*"Out of your own mouth I will judge you."* Lk.19:22) Ouch! I must be more careful what comes out of my mouth. How about you?

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"behold! the lamb of god
who takes away the sin of the world!" (Jn.1:29)

behold the lamb
the lamb of god
who takes away
the sin of the world
behold
gaze upon
esteem
sell what you have
purchase the pearl
the pearl of great price
behold the lamb
the lamb of god
who takes away
the sin of the world
behold
cry for more
trade you for him
decrease
that he might increase
run after
pursue
capture
him
the lamb of god
who takes away
the sin of the world

chapter six
----------ELDERS

Titus 1:5: **appoint elders in every city**

These were Paul's instructions to Titus: *"appoint elders"*. This verse shows another serious conflict between the Word of God and *the way it is*. Paul did not charge Titus to appoint a pastor (or pastors), but "*elders"* to oversee the local church.

Matthew 22:29: **Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures**

We assume the way something is done is done because it is the right thing to do. Were it not right we wouldn't be doing it that way. We do not question, we don't check it out with "*the Scriptures*". We sin the sin of presumption.

In the New Testament the word *"pastors"* is used but once, whereas the words *"elder"* and "*elders"* are used often. However, christians today use the word 'pastor' often and "elder" rarely.

Titus 1:6 (NIV): **An elder must be blameless,**

Elders lead by example, so the example *"must be blameless"*.

Titus 1:7 (NIV): **Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless** -

What is "*an overseer"*? The *"overseer"* in verse seven is the "*elder"* in verse six. An overseer is an elder.

What is a "bishop"? Some translations use the word "bishop" instead of the proper word, "overseer". Why? Perhaps to appease and give unwarranted credibility to *the way it is*. A supposed "bishop" is an elder, nothing more.

Does one elder/overseer oversee an entire congregation? No, Paul instructed Titus to "*appoint elders"* (plural) in every city.

James 5:14: **Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him,**

James 5:14 confirms a plurality of elders (plurality of leadership). Where is the pastor so visible in today's evangelical circles? Where is this singular authority and leader? He simply cannot be found in the New Testament!

He cannot be found in the gospels, nor in the book of Acts. He is not in the letters of Paul directed to various churches and to individuals. Peter doesn't mention him. Neither does John or James.

Acts 20:17: **From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.**

Paul didn't send for the senior pastor, the associate pastor, the assistant pastor or the youth pastor. He sent for *"elders".* Was there a chief elder who could legitimize today's lead pastor? Since Scripture doesn't speak of such a man, the answer must be an emphatic "No!" The following verse, in which Paul is speaking to the elders of Ephesus, confirms this....

Acts 20:28: **take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God**

These words are directed to *"the elders of the church"* and again confirm that an elder is an overseer.

Every elder (we don't know how many) was responsible "*to shepherd the church of God".* Although all were given the same responsibility, they did not necessarily work in unison. They were not a 'board of elders'; they were just elders. There is no reason to assume they met together for prayer or held

leadership meetings. Also, the Bible declares "*the Holy Spirit has made overseers"*, but does not say the Holy Spirit made one a senior overseer. Each elder was equally responsible "*to shepherd the church of God"* as the Holy Spirit so directed.

Many think a 'bishop' is a person overseeing several local churches, someone higher up an ecclesiastical hierarchy than the pastor. (Some would use the word 'superintendent'.) But a 'bishop' is simply an elder, an overseer. (The KJV, seemingly, uses the word "bishop" to justify the existence of bishops at the time of translation.) Ecclesiastical hierarchies are no more than inventions of *the way it is*.

This is true church order: *"Christ is head of the church"* (Eph.5:23)*, "the body"* is all believers. (There is no mediator between Christ and believer.) Elders are used to feed "*the body"* and are themselves fed by (through) the body of believers.

Acts 15:6: **So the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.**

There was a serious problem in the young church caused by "*certain men* (who) *came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'"* (Ac.15:1) Now Paul had warned the elders *"from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things."* (Ac.20:30) And so *"the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter."*

Today the role of an elder is often limited to affirming the pastor who is the chief decision maker. But that is not the role of the New Testament elder, as Acts 15:6 so strongly confirms.

Acts 20:31: **Therefore watch,**

An elder is to watch with protective alertness.

Acts 20:29: **savage wolves will come in among you,**

The *"savage wolves"* were those who preached another gospel, another word. They drew men unto themselves, away from Christ. The elders had the responsibility to protect the sheep from false teachers (i.e., the circumcisers).

"Savage wolves" did not become an extinct species with the passing centuries. They are still in the nasty business of separating the believer from his/her Christ.

1 Timothy 3:2: **able to teach;**

Elders must be "*able to teach"* because teaching is one of their responsibilities. Today, *the way it is* leaves the teaching to the pastor.

1 Peter 5:1: **The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder**

Peter was a *"fellow elder"*. One of the responsibilities of an elder is to *"exhort"* (persuade, encourage).

1 Peter 5:2: **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers,**

Again, the Word tells us that elders are overseers. Elders, not pastors, are to "*shepherd the flock*".

1 Timothy 3:2-4 (NIV): **Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well**

There are many qualifications the overseer of the church must possess. There are also some he need not have. He is not required to be 'ordained' or to have a certificate. He need not be a graduate of a Bible college. He doesn't have to wear a suit and tie. He need not be cultured, charismatic or professional.

1 Timothy 3:6 (NIV): **He must not be a recent convert,**

There is a greater risk the young in the Lord will get puffed up with spiritual pride. But pride is not a danger to young believers only. Pride is a serious enemy and believers must prayerfully watch over each other. *The way it is* endangers the one (or the few) by placing him on a pedestal of recognition.

1 Timothy 3:1 (NIV): **Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.**

The *"recent convert"* should mature to the place where he one day qualifies to be an overseer. It should be expected of him. Everyone must have equal opportunity. *The way it is* does not operate like that; only those graduated from an accredited denominational school are able to oversee a congregation. But what about those refusing to compromise, those refusing to subject themselves to denominational religion? *The way it is* has no sympathy or tolerance for anyone not in subjection to itself.

The Bible teaches that overseers themselves are to be nurtured by (through) fellow christians. They are not in a class by themselves. Everyone is a member of the body, one not more needed than another. There is to be no schism (the few and the many). Ministry is to be reciprocal.

Acts 14:23: **So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.**

"They" are Paul and Barnabas. Before leaving, *"they appointed elders in every church"* to oversee the spiritual welfare of the converted. Again, the Bible clearly tells us this task was not assigned to one man, but more than one, probably several.

The Lord insists on a plurality of leadership instead of singular. A solo authority figure promotes reverence for man while multiplicity dissipates reverence for man. Let's look at examples of hero-worship, keeping in mind this tendency is in all of us to one degree or another.

Acts 14:11: **Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the**

Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

At Lystra Paul, by the power of God, healed a man crippled from birth and this caused a great stir in the populace. Paul, and Barnabas who accompanied him, *"could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them."* (Ac.14:18)

We know that man has a tendency to make idols out of men.... sport superstars, politicians, religious leaders. Does this man-worship also occur in the church?

Acts 10:25: **As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.**

Cornelius was *"a devout man and one who feared God.... who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always."* (Ac.10:2) Yes, man-worship occurs in the church.

The church building is constructed like a theatre. All seats point toward the elevated stage at the front. A ribbon of carpet down the centre and side aisles flows dramatically toward the centre of the stage where the pulpit stands, highlighted further by powerful overhead lights. On the pulpit is a microphone with immense power to amplify the speaker's words. Whoever steps up to the pulpit instantly becomes larger than life. Rarely does the secular world match this scenario of focussing on an individual, award banquets being one exception.

The pulpit is a dangerous thing; if misused it can create little gods. Many must share it. Several should decide who position themselves behind the pulpit, not one assuming that responsibility.

John 2:24,25: **He knew all men, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.**

Jesus knows what is inside us, what motivates us, our limitations. He knows about that ugly thing in us that causes man to adulate man. We must acknowledge it and deny it opportunity to surface.

The fact that people adulate people is half the problem; the other half is that men *like* to be revered.

3 John 1:9: **Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence among them,**

Today, Diotrephes would be called "Pastor Diotrephes". He loved the attention always showered upon the one at the top. He did not become the pastor because of love for Christ or love for Christ's sheep, but rather love for Diotrephes.

If elders gave leadership to the local church, instead of one person, there would be less adulation given to man. The assembly would be minus a hero figure to gawk at and fuss over. With no individual to take the glory Jesus would rightfully *"have the pre-eminence among them"*.

1 Corinthians 3:21: **let no one glory in men.**

Evangelicals *"glory in men"....* in the pastor, in their church, in their denomination, in numbers, in

accomplishments, even in doctrines. Since it is the pastor who is in the forefront of the church it is he who receives most of the *"glory"* (applause, approval, attention, credit). With recognitioncomes power; and power corrupts.... not always, but often.

One motive for becoming a pastor is the love of Christ, but unfortunately it is not the only motive. Many pastors would make it to the top no matter what profession they were in, motivated by a competitive spirit. Some pastors are pastors because they are controllers, driven to the top by a need to control. Others simply like the attention, having a greater need than most to be heard.

Even if one's motive is lofty, excessive attention is a corruptor most cannot handle. Prominence divided among many loses most of its power and danger.

Matthew 20:16: **the last will be first, and the first last.**

I believe this will be so evident at the judgement seat of Christ. Many who are *"first"* in the local assembly will not be first in heaven. They will work harder than most, perhaps to the point of burnout, but they are receiving their reward in this life in the way of honour from men.

The honour men are receiving is honour Jesus is not. The heart honouring man over Jesus is sorrowful and needs revival.

Galatians 6:13: **they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh.**

The leaders referred to in this verse probably worked very hard, but their motive was self-glorification. Some church leaders glory in their ability to accomplish and motivate others. Shepherding the flock is a very secondary consideration. In a multitude of leaders there would be some having equally inferior motives, but others would compensate for this weakness.

Mark 9:33,34: **He asked them, "What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?" But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who would be the greatest.**

We must face the fact that there is stuff inside us that is ignoble. The apostles were discipled by Jesus, walked and ate with Him, yet there were still uglies in their hearts, bad fruit of fallen man. One would be particularly naive to think a pastor is immune from the same frailties besetting the rest of us, that his motives are purer, his struggles less severe. The main difference between the few and the many is that the few (the 'ministerial') are more practised at hiding their flaws. Transparency would threaten their paycheck.

Philippians 2:3: **Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit,**

Some pastors are driven by *"selfish ambition or conceit"*. Their ambition is to be successful in ministry, to have the biggest church in town, to gain approval, to fulfill a vision. For these, pastoring is a means to an end. The congregation is used to fulfill one man's presumed vision of what a church should be and do.

In a plurality of leadership there would be safety checks and balances to insure that the priority of the assembly would be to "*shepherd the flock of God*".

Pastors, like all of us, produce after themselves. A devotional man begets devotional men. A controller begets controllers. Both humility and pride are passed on by example. Because checks and balances are absent in a one-man ministry an entire congregation can adopt his flaws and/or his faulty perspective.

1 Thessalonians 2:6: **Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others,**

Not everyone is motivated by *"glory from men"*. Paul glorified Christ. His love for Christ is evident in his letters: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Ph'p.1:21)*.... God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ".* (Gal.6:14)

But most do not have Paul's fervour for Christ. Most of us are somewhere between Diotrephes and Paul. Most, myself included, would find excessive prominence difficult to handle.

1 Timothy 1:17: **to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever.**

Our God does not want His glory falling upon man. A multiplicity of leaders wouldn't eradicate the problem of man-gazing, but lessen it considerably.

3 John 1:9,10: **I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.**

Diotrephes was a spiritual abuser. His motives were corrupt, his methods cruel. He was a controller and he had much power. Diotrephes culled those who did not submit to him by using dirty tricks perfected through years of usage.

The way it is has within its ranks pastors (what percentage no one knows) of the complexion of Diotrephes. How much mistreatment occurs in evangelicalism? No one knows, but I would suggest it is more extensive than the optimal estimate. Abusers have the remarkable ability to abuse without detection. Many in the 'ministerial' know of serious abuse of shepherds against sheep, but they ain't telling. There is a tendency for pastors to place the welfare of fellow pastors over that of the sheep.

Even some pastors of gentle spirit and integrity will behave injuriously to protect *the way it is.* From their perspective, a perspective long ago gone afoul by compromising God's Word, it is their way of serving God.

Without power, Diotrephes could not abuse. A plurality of leadership would lessen abuse in the assembly.

1 Peter 5:4: **and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.**

Jesus is "*the Chief Shepherd*", the Chief Elder. If the heart of elders is not to serve *"the Chief Shepherd"* they will make a mess of everything. There will be infighting among themselves and jealousies. They will be a curse upon those they oversee instead of a blessing.

The calibre of the assembly will be affected by the devotion the elders have to Jesus Christ.... which will be evident, in part, in their relationship with each other.

----------APPENDIX

Faithful catholics line up to receive the eucharist at mass. To them, the eucharist is more than a wafer of bread; it is Jesus Christ. Not merely an emblem, but the "body, blood, soul and divinity" of Christ. "Body of Christ" the priest says before giving each catholic the wafer. "Amen" the recipient replies in agreement.

Catholics have been taught for centuries that when Jesus *"took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'this is My body, which is given for you'"* (Lk.24:19) the bread had been supernaturally transmuted into the fullness of Christ. And likewise the wine had not only become Jesus' actual blood, but Jesus Himself. When mass is over the leftovers of bread and wine are placed in an ornate box and locked up (so that no one will steal Jesus).

Evangelicals can see the folly of this doctrine. We can look into the book of Mark and see that after the meal Jesus referred to the drink as "*the fruit of the vine",* and not His blood. And in Paul's letter to the Corinthians Jesus is quoted as saying, *"Do this in remembrance of Me",* and not, "Do this to receive Me." But faithful catholics lining up to receive *really, really* believe they are consuming Jesus Himself, and will not be convinced otherwise.

This appendix is neither about communion, nor catholics. It is about the danger of *really, really* believing *amiss*.

As you know, something is not true because one *really, really* believes it to be true, or even if thousands, even millions, *really, really* believe. One, or many, cannot *will* truth into being.

Why do catholics blindly believe what they are taught? From childhood they are programmed to believe the catholic church is God's "one true church" on earth, and its teachings (regarding the christian faith) are infallible. Once convinced of this, their guard is down, and reason (logic, common sense) is no longer their defence.

The common thread of most cults and false religions is the devastating teaching they are God's authority. That is why a mormon *really, really* believes that one day he will become "as God is". And that is why a Jehovah's witness *really, really* believes salvation must be earned.

Evangelicals *really, really* believe with the same intensity as other faiths. They *really, really* believe

the Bible is the inerrant word of God, and there are many evidences to back this up. But evangelicals also *really, really* believe stuff that is not Bible. (Many of these are mentioned in this book.) And the reason for this acceptance of non-biblical doctrines is the same as other religions: evangelicals have been influenced to believe their denomination is God's authority. But is it true? This is a major issue you must reconcile.

One could argue evangelicals are not taught from the pulpit or from written material their denomination is God's authority, and I would agree.... in part. It's a subtle thing. While I have never heard a pastor preach from the pulpit that he, or the denomination he represents, is God's authority, I have never heard a pastor refute it, even though he knows many are of that persuasion.

When someone speaks with an aura of authority and is not challenged, one assumes he indeed has authority. Because the pastor himself believes such to be true, those convictions are passed on non-verbally and indirectly. The proof of this is that you (who have been heavily influenced by various pastors) are unsure at this moment if it is so (that pulpit-people have authority over pew-people).

The problem of illicit authority in evangelicalism is much less than in catholicism. Nonetheless it is a serious problem. When a christian is convinced his pastor, church, or denomination is God's authority his defence drops, and he will be susceptible to all manner of false teachings, the same as catholics (and whoever).

There *is* an authority we should submit to. When we go to someone's home or store or business we obey the rules as we understand them to be. If we belong to a club we obey the policies arrived at by the majority or recognized leadership. So it is in church. We sit when we are supposed to sit, stand when we are told to stand, and generally are agreeable. But outside another's home and business, or outside the church walls, *that authority ceases to exist*.

A friend was introduced into the "word-faith" movement, and he got quite excited after listening to a number of cassette tapes. He was attracted to the prosperity message. (Who doesn't want to be wealthy?) Then someone told him about the "Jesus-died-spiritually" teaching that most teachers in word-faith propagate. There are some variants, but the teaching goes something like this: When Jesus bore our sins on the cross He must have died spiritually because sin causes spiritual death. Jesus was now like the rest of us, spiritually dead. When He went to hell He had no protection, and the demons attacked Him mercilessly. After a period of time, the Father cried out in a loud voice from His throne, "Enough!" Jesus was released, and He ascended to heaven, becoming the first born-again Son of the Father! (I am not fantasizing.) According to this teaching, it was not at the cross that our salvation was attained, but in hell! It is not by the blood we are saved (or at least not fully), but by the torture Jesus experienced in hell by demons!

This friend was understandably appalled and he dropped the "word-faith" movement like a hot potato. I will never forget the words he said (in relief): "I did not give myself over to them." I knew what he meant. He had not yet become converted to, or attached to, that religion. He had not yet

become a disciple of that thought, that persuasion. He still had "*ears to hear".*

There was a time that I did give myself over to them." I was drawn into this religion of getting from God. Using truths of the Bible, they legitimized greed, and I became consumed by the possibilities of what I could get from God by faith, "the God-kind-of-faith". Jesus was crowded out as the things I was believing for began to fill my heart.

(It is, of course, God's will for every one of his children to be healthy and prosperous. However, while it is true that intimacy with Christ brings blessings, the seeking of blessings obstructs intimacy. *Things* should never be an idol. Jesus clearly warned, *"Beware of covetousness".* Lk.12:15)

I have told this story of my friend and myself to help you see the danger of *giving yourself over* to something or someone other than Jesus Christ. I have come to the conclusion that many (most?) evangelicals have *given themselves over* to *That's just the way it is!* and the officers who enforce these traditions.

It is hard to renounce the things we *really, really* believe even if those things trespass God's Word. Such is our love for *the way it is*, the status quo. When Jesus taught it was the foolish man who built his house on sand, this included the christian who builds his life, partly or fully, on *That's just the way it is!*, on things we *really, really* believe that are not Bible.

In the days of the catholic charismatic movement most born-again catholics with whom I was associated refused to exchange the things they *really, really* believed for God's Bible. Evangelicals, who have been assured the Bible is God's infallible Word, often make the same mistake when confronted with discrepancies between Bible and non-Bible.

God said of "*the house of Israel", "they are all estranged from Me by their idols"* (Ez.14:5), *"idols in his heart".* Is *the way it is* and its teachers (or any teacher, pastor, minister) an idol in your life? Have you *given yourself over* to another way? If you have lost that tenderness to Jesus you once had it is a sure sign there is an idol of some type. You must identify it and renounce it and embrace *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"* once more.

God bless you!

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

bulls and rams
oxen and goats
lambs and turtledoves
countless sacrifices
so much blood
so much blood
sprinkling the chosen
staining altars

soaking the ground
flowing through centuries
so much blood
so little power
to redeem
to appease
god
the living god

is there a man
a righteous man
to satisfy him
him
the living god
no not one
no innocent blood
none
none

from his throne he came
the living god
to shed his blood
his innocent blood
it is finished
he is appeased
the living god
the curtain is torn
the door open
thank you sir

chapter seven
----------THE HOLY SPIRIT AND YOU

Philippians 1:19: **the Spirit of Jesus Christ,**

This chapter examines the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. It is important to keep in mind that the Holy Spirit is *"the Spirit of Jesus Christ".* In the same manner Jesus and the Father are one, so Jesus and the Holy Spirit are one. The Holy Spirit loves Jesus with a love unfathomable. And that love is reciprocal.

Acts 1:2: **He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles**

As "*the head of the church",* Jesus speaks to His church *"through the Holy Spirit"*. More important to you, Jesus speaks to *you "through the Holy Spirit"*. He spoke to Peter....

Acts 11:12: **the Spirit told me to go with them,**

As the Spirit "*told"* Peter, so He communicates with every faithful disciple of Christ throughout church history. And if you are a disciple (not merely a convert) of the Lord Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit will communicate with you.

Revelation 2:7: **"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

It is of no benefit to us for *"the Spirit of Christ"* to speak if we are not one *"who has an ear…* (to) *hear what the Spirit"* is saying. It is imperative to be in communication with the Holy Spirit; this calls for a sensitivity that comes from surrender to His lordship.

Philippians 2:1: **fellowship of the Spirit,**

Because the Holy Spirit is *"the Spirit of Jesus Christ"* (Ph'p.1:9) one cannot have *"fellowship of the Spirit"* without having fellowship with Christ. How much of the Spirit do you have? This is relative to how much of Jesus you have. Well then, how much of Jesus do you have? Think about this: You have exactly as much of Jesus as you *want* to have, not more, not less.

Perhaps an analogy will best make the point....

In a typical congregation there are a few who are wealthy and a few who are poor, and the majority are somewhere in-between. If an accountant were to determine each person's financial worth we would see that everyone's is different. Many are close to average, but no two person's financial value is exactly the same. So it is with the value of relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Relationally speaking, no two people in a congregation have the same amount of Jesus. A few are wealthy in their love and enthusiasm for Christ, a few are poor, and the majority are somewhere in-between. If we could somehow determine the worth of each relationship we would see that everyone's is different. Many are close to average but no two persons are exactly the same.

Whereas circumstances often dictate financial status, desire of the heart determines the quality of our relationship with Jesus. If we wanted more of Jesus we would have more. If we wanted less we would have less. We have *exactly* as much of Jesus Christ as we want.

And we have exactly as much of "*the Spirit of Jesus Christ"* as we have of Jesus. Some want the power of the Holy Spirit but distance themselves from Jesus. This reveals they want the power for illegitimate reasons, not to glorify Christ but to elevate self or to fortify *the way it is*.

1 Corinthians 2:2: **I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

Want more of the Holy Spirit? Then let the focus of your life be 1) *"Jesus Christ and"* 2) *"Him crucified".*

"Him crucified". All that you are is because of *"Him crucified".* Your freedom is in and because of *"Him crucified".* Your right to approach the throne of God in prayer is because of "*Him crucified".* All the privileges we have as "*heirs of God"* are because of "*Him crucified".*

Galatians 6:14: **God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,**

If your boast is in anything other than Calvary's cross it is misdirected.

Ephesians 5:18: **be filled with the Spirit,**

How do you know if you are *"filled with the Spirit"*? The Spirit magnifies Jesus; to the degree you magnify Christ you have the Spirit. An enthusiasm for Christ is a sure sign of the Spirit's presence.

How does a christian get "*filled with the Spirit"*? By sincerely and fervently turning to Jesus, by embracing Him fully in one's life. It is a package deal; with Jesus Christ comes *"the Spirit of Jesus Christ"*.

2 Corinthians 5:10: **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

Life on earth should be a preparation for that day when you give an account to Jesus because on that day it will be revealed how you will live your eternity. It won't be a happy occasion if you do not lean heavily on the Holy Spirit in this life, if you do not develop an ear for hearing what the Spirit is saying.

Acts 13:25: **as John was finishing his course,**

Like John the Baptist, you have a *"course"*, a specific assignment (commission), to accomplish before you go to heaven. You will not finish your course if you live independent of the Holy Spirit, if you follow the crowd, if you submit to *the way it is*, if you live to please men.

John 8:32: "**And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

You were saved because someone preached truth to you. Now that you are a believer you need truth to be successful, victorious, fruitful. How do you get this necessary truth?

John 16:13: **when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;**

One gets truth from *"the Spirit of truth".* What friends should I have? What fellowship should I attend? What does God want me to do with my life? Which of the five ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11 is mine? For every question the Spirit of God has the answer. And not just answers to the big questions.

What does God want me to do *today*? Is what I heard from the pulpit on Sunday the rightly divided Word? Would the Lord have me pray for someone in particular? Is the book that was recommended to me edifying? Who can I trust to baby-sit my children? Where is the best place to buy running shoes?

How does the Holy Spirit communicate to us?

Romans 8:16: **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,**

The Spirit "*bears witness"* to truth, all truth.

Romans 8:15: **you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."**

As a new babe in Christ, nobody told me to call God "Father". Nobody taught me to talk over my day with Him before going to sleep at night. It just came naturally. The Spirit gave witness to my spirit that I was God's kid, and prompted me to communicate with Him.

In the same manner that he *"bears witness"* to the truth that we are His children He *"bears witness"* to all truth. But "*to hear what the Spirit says"* (Rev.2:7) you must walk close, really close, to the Lord.... because He will not shout to those who distance themselves. Your ability to hear the Spirit is relative to your love for Christ.

Romans 8:14: **as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**

Only those who are God's children can be led by the Spirit. But not all of God's children *are* led by God's Spirit. Few fully submit to His leadership, most being loyal to *the way it is*. Men pleasers, men-gazers, the lukewarm are not *"led by the Spirit of God"*. This is not to say the Holy Spirit rejects them; faithfulness is a characteristic of the Holy Spirit and His faithfulness is not dependent on ours.

Matthew 16:26: **what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?**

"What is a (christian) *profited"* if he gains the whole world and is barren of "*gold, silver, precious stones"* at the judgement seat of Christ? Christians must not be ambitious for profit. Greed for *"treasures on earth"* is a serious hindrance to hearing the Holy Spirit. Greed for gain displaces the Holy Spirit, thus impeding His sustaining grace.

Proverbs 1:19: **So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; It takes away the life of its owners.**

It takes away the life of the Spirit.

1 Peter 5:7: **casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**

Cares carried instead of cast will weaken the presence, and therefore the power, of the Holy Spirit. Worry and the Holy Spirit are simply not compatible. Only one can reign in one's heart.

1 Peter 5:5: **"God resists the proud,**

The proud will not bow to the lordship of Jesus Christ, nor the Holy Spirit.

1 Peter 5:5: **But gives grace to the humble."**

Grace comes with humility. No one becomes born again of the Holy Spirit except by humbling

oneself before God. And no one can be successful as a believer except by humility. The Holy Spirit blesses and uses the humble of heart.

1 Peter 5:6: **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,**

"In due time" could refer, in part, to the judgement seat of Christ.

John 15:4: "**Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me."**

Everyone *abides in* something or someone. Everyone is infatuated by, addicted to, converted to something. We know what or whom a believer abides in by the fruit of his life. Everyone bears fruit and by this fruit the vine can be easily identified. If the vine is Jesus the fruit is good.... the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22, the fruit of good works accomplished through Christ, the fruit of gratitude, a reverence for Jesus.

If the vine from which one draws life is *the way it is*, or business, or fellow christians (or whatever), the fruit is bad. Sadly, most christians seem to be tapped into two vines (or more), Jesus and something (or someone) else. The fruit of this divided loyalty is a mixture of both good and bad.

In ourselves we are not able to abide in Christ. We are reliant on the Holy Spirit. The acknowledgement of this dependency will cause us to bow to His lordship. Bowing to the lordship of the Holy Spirit will always lead into intimacy with Jesus.

Lordship. That word again. It really is an issue of lordship.

----------APPENDIX

Before I was saved the Holy Spirit spoke to me. I was seeking for truth and reality with a somewhat honest heart and the Holy Spirit responded.

I was at mass, another boring mass, when the Holy Spirit came upon me. I was staring transfixed at a large crucifix at the front of the church. Tears were streaming down my face as the Holy Spirit was speaking.

"Don't you get it?" the Holy Spirit said.
"No, God, I don't get it."
"Don't you *get* it?" He repeated.
"No, God, I don't get it."

I didn't have a clue what or where truth was. I just knew there had to be something valid somewhere. And here I was, staring at Truth (a symbol of Truth), tears falling down my face, and the Holy Spirit saying repeatedly, "Don't you get it?" There before me was "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified",* but I could not make a connection between that and the truth/reality I was seeking. (Who would have

guessed Truth was a person?)

I quietly laughed in exasperation as the Spirit continued to say, "Don't you *get* it?" "No, God, I just don't get it. Don't give up on me, God! Don't give up on me!"

Weeks later the Holy Spirit spoke to me again: "*That* person has the answer you have been seeking", referring to a certain nun dressed in customary black. About two weeks later this sister handed me a tract entitled "The Four Spiritual Laws" published by Campus Crusade for Christ, saying to others nearby, "The Holy Spirit told me to give this to Larry!" Wow! A catholic nun giving me a tract published by a 'protestant' ministry! Wow! "The Holy Spirit" told her to give it to me!

I read the tract a number of times, and even got my Bible out to read the verses it referred to. I became extremely angry with God!

All this tract talked about was Jesus! This was nothing new. I heard about Jesus all my life. I was literally afflicted with a need to find reality, and I thought God was about to reveal it to me. I was sure this tract was going to satisfy my deep longing, but it only spoke of Jesus Christ. Was God playing a practical joke? Was He teasing me? Did He have no regard for the ache in my heart? It was midnight, I was spilling over with acidic bitterness, I went to bed.

The next morning I woke up with the same bitterness; it had not subsided through the night. I was in the bathroom standing on the bathtub, shaking my fist at God. I couldn't hit Him with my fist so I hit Him with words. Being a construction worker, I had no shortage of expletives, and I directed them at God. I swore I would never repent. He could kill me and send me to hell, but I would never apologize. And I would never trust Him again. It was my darkest hour.

Who can understand the love of God? The Holy Spirit spoke to me again, "Give Jesus a chance! Give Jesus a chance!" Over and over again, He said those same words, "Give Jesus a chance! Give Jesus a chance!" "Okay," I thought, "I have never been in a worse condition. What have I got to lose?"

Two days later I was alone in St. Theresa catholic church, a short walk from our residence, about to give my life to Christ. I imagined putting myself in a box, wrapping the box in decorative paper, wrapping a bow around it, and presenting it to Jesus. Nothing happened.

The Holy Spirit spoke again, telling me to receive Christ in the same manner, as a gift. Receive Christ!? I knew Christ was God. How could I receive God!? Well.... okay.

Something happened. Something deep, something real, something permanent. I was suddenly taken *"from the power of darkness and conveyed.... into the kingdom of the Son of His love."* The Holy Spirit was the evangelist who led me to God's great salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sadly, as the years passed I drifted from relationship into religion. Like most, I lived my life doing what I thought was right and practical, and not one led by the *"Spirit of Christ."* The Holy Spirit spoke to me less and less.

There are two things that amaze me: 1) the inability of the unsaved to recognize their need for Christ, and 2) the inability of christians to recognize their need for Christ.

There came a time when I made a conscious decision to submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The result was extreme frustration! I had learned I could not have good fruit without Him, I was willing to submit to His lordship, but it was so difficult discerning what He wanted me to do. I reasoned if I sincerely wanted to serve God through good works the Holy Spirit would surely cooperate. For years I prayed to hear the voice of God but rarely did. I felt rejected.

In time I began to pursue Christ, returning to my *"first love"*. With Jesus came the *"Spirit of Jesus Christ".* Before, I had wanted the Holy Spirit so I could do good works independent of Christ. This was not a conscious decision; I had a veil over my mind; a religious spirit had crept in and I could not see the poverty of my soul.

Now I am determined to have more of Christ, consistently more, and I know this desire is the fruit of the Spirit. To the degree I become a true disciple of Christ the Holy Spirit will lead me, just as He will lead every faithful disciple.

Today life is simple. My ambition is to do what God tells me to do. And I will not do anything that God does not tell me to do. I submit to the lordship of the Holy Spirit, trusting Him for direction, trusting Him to bring me ever closer to my Christ.

Now the Holy Spirit communicates with me more and more.

During a Sunday morning service, a visiting preacher was preaching Christ. "Who is this Jesus?" he cried out from a hungry heart. He knew Him, yet the cry of his heart was to *know* Him. I had many times listened to his recorded music, highly anointed, and had prayed to love Jesus as this brother loved Him. Listening to him speak Christ so passionately that Sunday, I was desperate to 'catch up' to this brother, to love Jesus Christ as he did. But how? As he was preaching the Holy Spirit gave me a plan.

As you know, the day before His crucifixion Jesus shared the Passover feast with His disciples, and then He broke custom by distributing bread and wine representing His body and blood, saying, *"Do this in remembrance of Me".* The Passover meal was a memorial of God's deliverance to the Israelites; the ensuing communion ceremonial is for the purpose of remembering *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified", "our Passover",* "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".*

Every day (that I am home) I have communion during my alone time with the Lord early in the morning. Often I cry out to Jesus as I eat the bread and drink the *"fruit of the vine",* asking Him to change me, asking to know nothing other than *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"*, to live *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"*, and to have opportunity to preach *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified".*

I will draw closer to Jesus Christ through the daily breaking of bread. The Holy Spirit, who first brought me to Jesus for salvation, is at work leading me relationally closer to Him.

I have not always obeyed the Holy Spirit.

I was about to grab a light meal at a coffee shop, and before walking through the door I passed a motorcyclist, garbed in black, having a coffee by himself. I felt an urge to ask him if I could join him, and argued with myself whether or not this was the Holy Spirit or me. I chickened out. Later, I knew I had been disobedient. (*"The fear of man brings a snare."* Pr.29:25) Help me, Jesus, to overcome!

I have deep yearnings that I believe have been imparted by God. These will never be fulfilled except by the Holy Spirit and my sensitivity to Him. I cannot boast of good discernment; I have been wrong. But in the awareness of my weakness is His strength. I do not lean on my ability to discern, but His ability to communicate to me. I trust in the promise, *"Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame".*

Your life is as valuable as mine, your potential equal. I pray this sharing will stir you to go deeper, always deeper, in Christ Jesus. If you are ahead of me please keep on going, set your "*face like a flint",* don't look back. If you think you might be behind catch up by the power of the Holy Spirit. May the good fruit of your life far surpass mine.

Be blessed, be strengthened, be made whole, *"in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth"!*

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

worthy is the lamb
who was slain
to receive
power
and riches
and wisdom
and strength
worthy is the lamb
who was slain
to receive
honor
and glory
and blessing
worthy is the lamb
who was slain
for you were slain
and have redeemed us
to god
by your blood
worthy is the lamb

who was slain

(Revelation 5:12,9)

chapter eight
----------THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE ASSEMBLY

1 Thessalonians 5:19: **Do not quench the Spirit.**

It is a paradox that the all-powerful Spirit can be quenched (stifled, suppressed). Sadly, the Spirit *is* often quenched (stifled, suppressed), not only in the individual's life but also in an assembly of believers.

2 Corinthians 3:17: **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**

Liberty from bondage. Liberty from sin. Liberty from fear of man. Freedom to express. Freedom to prophesy. Freedom to be used by the Holy Spirit. Freedom to make choices.

That's Just The Way It Is! does not cater to liberty in the gathering of the saints. A church member is allowed to choose the pew he/she sits in and that's about it. The pastor considers him his ministry. Her opinions are not asked for or desired. He/she is told when to stand, when to sit, what to sing, when to go home.

1 Corinthians 14:26: **How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.**

Paul is saying, "When you people have a gathering, this is how it is to work." And then he gives a general guideline, emphasizing everyone should have something to contribute. This theme of multiple participation is interspersed throughout his letters. Paul is not just giving suggestions ("Hey, why don't you give *this* a try?"), but an inspired declaration from the throne of God. (2Tm.3:16)

It is obvious the church of Corinth is not a mature congregation; nonetheless, Paul encourages participation from all. Paul's confidence was not in the Corinthians to keep the gathering from mayhem, but in the power of the Holy Spirit. Today there are many churches far more mature that would never permit an open pulpit; such is not the way of *the way it is*.

Psalm 12:6: **The words of the Lord are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.**

Behind Paul's teaching is the Holy Spirit. His instructions are actually *"the words of the Lord"* to be held in high esteem. However most fundamentalist congregations totally ignore Paul's inspired teaching and instead embrace the practices of *the way it is*.

The assembly not bowing to the Word is not bowing to the Holy Spirit. Slighting the Holy Spirit is slighting Lord Jesus, the One who sent Him.

Matthew 15:9: **Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**

Or, "Teaching as doctrine the commandments of" *the way it is*.

The teaching that one person (or a few), licensed and salaried, is to give leadership, control the pulpit, and give direction is taught, not so much by word (because there is no such instruction in the Bible), but by example. The tendency of us all is to assume *the way it is* is *the way it is* because that's the way things are supposed to be; so no one challenges. It is assumed that behind these customs is God (that is, God authorizing them).

John 14:26: **He will teach you all things,**

How does the Holy Spirit teach the assembly *"all things"*? He teaches "*all things"* through all. The assembly that is taught by a denominational 'minister' is limited to the understanding of that denomination.

It is assumed (we seem to be full time, professional assumers) that the one who exhorts every Sunday morning is the wisest in the congregation, the one to be most trusted. In some cases that is true, but certainly not all. Often the one controlling the pulpit is given control because of his proven loyalty to *the way it is*. In fact, he is the most religious of the entire congregation. If he were loyal to *"the words of the Lord"* he would not be preaching Sunday after Sunday after Sunday; he would make sure many share the pulpit.

1 Peter 5:1-3: **The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly: not as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;**

Elders are to *"shepherd the flock of God.... serving as overseers"*. Primarily, this is to be done by *"being examples"*, and not via the pulpit. *"Being examples"* implies being involved in people's lives, conversing, rubbing shoulders.

In the gathering of the saints elders should encourage everybody to bow to the leading of the Holy Spirit so that..... He speaks through those of His choosing.... the gifts are exercised according to His prompting.... the meeting flows as He wills. At the end of the service each elder should be able to pray, "Lord Jesus, we earnestly tried to submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Please correct us if we missed it, and help us to do better next time."

Matthew 9:9: "**Follow Me."**

Elders are to point to Christ and say, "Follow Him." He, not they, must be the One they lean on, trust in, relate to, adulate, obey. The elders are to preach/teach "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* They are never (never, never) to make *"disciples after themselves"* (Ac.20:30), exaggerate their own importance, or in any way become the focus of the assemblage.

They must encourage young believers to develop a living day-by-day relationship with Jesus, and to depend on the Holy Spirit to teach them and empower them to finish their specific *"course".* (Ac.13:25), the specific cross God has commissioned them to carry.

1 Corinthians 14:26: **Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation.**

Saturday evening finds 'Pastor' Whoever in his study sincerely entreating the Holy Spirit for guidance to prepare tomorrow morning's forty-five minute sermon. Before the pastor begins his Sunday morning discourse he publicly appeals to the Lord, asking for His anointing upon the message, requesting that the people have *"ears to hear",* and that he would speak with boldness and clarity the oracles of God.

It all has a solemn flair. Everything packaged neat and safe. But how far from 1 Corinthians 14:26! How far from many other verses. How far from the intention and instruction of the One we call *"Lord, Lord", "the head of the church"*.

'Pastor' Whoever never considered inquiring of the Holy Spirit *who* (if anyone) was to give the teaching. *The* (sacred) *way it is* has commissioned him so he does not require the permission of the Holy Spirit! He is simply doing what he is paid to do and that's that.

The Holy Spirit is not lord of this pastor or this congregation.

Romans 8:9: **the Spirit of Christ,**

I have said one cannot have the Spirit without Christ; it is a package deal. It is also true one cannot have Christ without the Spirit. Rejecting the leadership of the Holy Spirit is rejecting Christ. A congregation (or an individual) that has little of the Spirit likewise has little of Jesus.

You have heard it said, "God is as big as you make Him." It is a matter of faith and obedience. God works as powerfully as (to the degree that) the congregation obeys His Word and submits to the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30: **do not grieve the Holy Spirit**

How is the Holy Spirit grieved?

The Holy Spirit is grieved by any gathering whereby Jesus is not the focus, whereby the cross is unappreciated, whereby attention is riveted on something or someone other than God. He is grieved when He is ignored; He can give so much, do so much, more than all those present combined, but because He is who He is the Holy Spirit only gives leadership upon invitation. That invitation is rarely given and the people suffer loss.

He is grieved when leadership wants to use Him to empower projects and programs birthed from god reason and god intellect. The Holy Spirit is grieved when His inspired Word is disobeyed, made

"*of no effect"* by the traditions of men. He is grieved when the sheep of the Good Shepherd are fleeced, coerced to finance unsanctioned visions and unsanctioned paychecks.

He is grieved by our packaged (canned) christianity, our organized religiosity that denies the power of God. He is grieved by men-gazing, pastor-worship, divided loyalties, the division of Christ's church into the special and not-so-special ('ministerial' and 'laity').

And when the Holy Spirit is grieved Jesus and the Father are equally grieved.

Ephesians 4:17 (NIV): **you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.**

The local church is not to function *"as the Gentiles do"*. The Gentiles (non-christians) are limited by their minds, *"the futility of their thinking".* If the Holy Spirit does not govern the church it will likewise be governed by god reason and god intellect.

1 Peter 2:9: **you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,**

The Spirit of God desires to lead christians into truth, into total freedom, into intimacy with Him whose "*name which is above every name"* simply because we are "*chosen… royal… holy… special"*. How cherished we are.

1 Samuel 8:5: **Now make for us a king to judge us like all the nations.**

You know the story. The Israelites did not want to be ruled by the prophets of God any longer, but by a king, just *"like all the nations."* God warned them, through Samuel His prophet, that such a choice would be the cause of much anguish – "*he will take your sons…. will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest…. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers…. he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards…. he will take a tenth of your grain and vintage…. you will be his servants".* (1Sam.8:11-17) But in spite of this clear warning they insisted on having a king.

God has always wanted to govern the local assembly by His Holy Spirit, but assemblies have long ago given themselves over to *"a king"* (a pastor, a denomination). Likewise, God has always wanted to govern *each individual* by His Holy Spirit but, with rare exception, each has given himself over to *the way it is.*

As the Israelites paid a dear price for being ruled by a king, the church has likewise suffered the consequences of submerging itself in *the way it is.* What is that cost? That cost is nothing less than a vibrant relationship with the very *"King of kings"*.

1 Samuel 8:7: **And the Lord said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.**

Regarding assemblies that substitute the leadership of the Spirit with human organization, perhaps Jesus is saying to the Holy Spirit: *"They have not rejected You, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them."*

1 Samuel 8:18: **"And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day."**

Jesus could say: "*And you will cry out that day* (at the judgement seat?) *because of your king* (the way it is?.... institutionalized christianity?) *whom you have chosen for yourselves, and will not hear you* (give rewards you did not earn) *in that day."*

----------APPENDIX

There is little connection between the Holy Spirit and most Sunday services in evangelical churches. The assembly is sensitive, not to the Spirit, but to *the way it is*.

An assembly gathered under the dictates of tradition or a prearranged program is not gathered in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is religion that draws such people to church, not a yearning to be gathered in His name. And where Christ is not centralized the "*Spirit of Christ"* is most uncomfortable.

The black sheep of the family receives an invitation to a family reunion, assuring him his presence would be most appreciated. In reality, no one wants him to show up, but to exclude him would cause complications, so he gets the same invite as everyone. Relatives hope he doesn't take the invitation seriously and spoil the party.

It is customary to invite the Holy Spirit to evangelical services; that's the religious thing to do. But, in fact, He is often just as unwelcome as the black sheep, and some hope He doesn't take their invitation seriously and disturb the program of *That's Just The Way It Is!.*

You just know when the Spirit has come. There are tears.... or laughter.... or someone is saved.... or people are repenting and being transparent.... or jumping up and down.... or something! Jesus Christ is glorified.... people are happy.... there is true fellowship, spontaneity.... no one is in a hurry to leave.... there is a love flow.

Evangelical services are often a mixture of *the way it is* and the Holy Spirit, a reflection of the lives of most. Yes, the Holy Spirit shows up, just as He does in a catholic gathering, but He is certainly not revered. Those in control fear Him.

The Holy Spirit sometimes does strange things not at all acceptable to respectable pastors or respectable congregations. The Bible is full of God-induced incidents that would turn people off and conclude, "This can't be God!"

Like circumcision. Why circumcision? Why, oh why would the Lord have men alter their private parts in such a painful manner as a sign of a covenant? Why not just have them cut their hair in a certain manner? Or wear a ring on a certain finger? Why circumcision?

And what about many other strange things that God did? Like speaking through a donkey. (Num.22:28) And spitting in a blind man's eyes. (Mk.8:23) And having christians speak in foreign

languages. (Mk.16:17)

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1Cor.14:40) is interpreted to mean another boring meeting coming up. There are varying degrees of tolerance toward expressions of love toward God, but each assembly has limitations. Like dancing....

Most assemblies have an unwritten rule about dancing that goes something like this:

Clap your hands,
Even lift them up,
Yes, even over your head
If so inclined.
But please, please....
Do *not* dance in our church!
Hey, you can wave your arm,
Yes, both at once if that's your thing.
Stand, sit or kneel;
There's freedom in this place.
But please, please....
Do *not* dance in our church!
Sing loud, or sing soft,
Or just listen and be blessed.
If you really have to,
Shout, "Praise the Lord!"
But please, please....
Do *not* dance in our church!
You can stomp your feet,
But only one at a time,
Because both at once,
Might look like you're....
You know.... *dancing* in our church!
Dancing makes the pastor sweat
And pew-people fret.
What would visitors think
Of such fleshly display?
So please, please....
Do *not* dance in our church!

Sunday service is not fellowship, no more than the crowd listening to a comedian or a politician. Fellowship is sharing, it is reciprocal; it is more than listening to a man display his spiritual wares.

Thank God for the 22 minutes of song and praise at the start of the service! Were it not for those 22 minutes more than half wouldn't show up.

Some think of this time of praise as little more than spiritual fluff - the real meat is in the preaching of the Word. In fact, there is much Word in most of the songs we sing. Songs are usually Christ-centred. Simple truths are sung over and over causing them to go deep in one's spirit.

During praise time everyone participates.... and then they sit and become an audience once more. Thank God for those precious 22 minutes!

Many years ago Kathryn Khulman compared the Holy Spirit to a beautiful white stallion that cannot be tamed by man. People try to build a corral around him and limit his freedom, but she warned that one day the beautiful horse would jump the fence and be gone. He cannot be corralled.

Sometimes leadership uses the things of God to accomplish their purposes. (That's why the collection is taken after the 22 minutes.) A visitation of the Holy Spirit will attract people, people who could be used to fulfill an un-sanctioned vision, and therefore the Holy Spirit is given a limited welcome. When He comes the corral starts to go up, one board at a time, in an effort to keep things under control. But one morning the beautiful stallion is gone; He has jumped the fence. And everything has returned to *That's Just The Way It Is!*.

The way it is wants everything under its control. The use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is limited to a few. Prophecy is often despised because it is uncontrollable. Expressions of worship are limited. Few are allowed behind the pulpit. The assembly is coerced to give money to finance leadership's agendas. Individual ministries must be brought under the watchful eye of the pastor.

Independence from the assembly is frowned upon. Dependence upon the Holy Spirit is considered insufficient. Life is not just "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*", but "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified" and* submission to the church, a combination of infallible God and very fallible christians.

Where there is little of the Holy Spirit there is little of Jesus Christ. Where there is little of Jesus there is a scarcity of life and good fruit.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"all things were made through him" (Jn.1:3)

he put
green in the grass
warm in the hug
salt in the oceans
glitter in the stars
and
high in the sky

sweet in the grape
fresh in the flower
hope in the heart
and
colour in the eye
cool in the evening
speckles on the fawn
dew in the garden
and
heat in the sun
round in the moon
blood in the vein
humour in the heart
and
buzz in the bee
fierce in the lion
wisdom in the ant
cry in the suckling
and

chapter nine
----------JESUS AND YOU

2 Corinthians 5:10: **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,**

We must each (individually) stand *"before the judgment seat of Christ*". This is not communal; you stand alone before Christ the Judge while many witnesses look on.

2 Corinthians 5:10: **that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

You will be rewarded for obedience during the time you spent as a christian on earth.

2 Corinthians 4:17: **our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,**

You want this *"weight of glory"*. What is it? The Amplified Bible says, *"an everlasting weight of glory (beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations, a vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease!)"* Repeat: You want this "*weight of glory"*.

How do you get it? Paul is saying that it is "*light affliction"* that brings us this "*weight of glory"*. What did Paul mean by 'light' affliction? He wrote, *"We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed".*

(2Cor.4:8,9) This is 'light' affliction!?

Yes, compared to the "*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"* his afflictions were small indeed.

2 Corinthians 4:17: **which is but for a moment,**

Our christian life on earth, compared to eternity, is like a drop in a very large bucket, like a moment in a year of moments. The manner in which we live this one *"moment"* determines how richly or (comparatively) poorly we will live out our eternity.

If Jesus told you your entire year would be relative to the way you lived your first hour of the year, how do you think you would live it? Yes, you would most certainly live that hour passionately for Him. If you were fully aware that your moment of time on earth determines your eternity in heaven you would likewise live your entire earth-years zealously for Christ.

2 Timothy 3:12: **Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

You must understand that this is a promise, as much so as "*Give, and it will be given to you",* or *"Seek, and you will find".* You cannot "*live godly in* (obey, follow after) *Christ"* without persecution. This, too, is a package deal.

You may ask, "Why are christians around me not suffering persecution?" If they are not it is because they are not living intensely for Christ, but for someone or something else.

Matthew 5:11,12: "**Blessed are you when they revile you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

There are bad afflictions and good afflictions. Bad afflictions could be the flu or cancer or accidents or reaping a bad harvest from bad seeds sown. All of these are conditions Jesus never suffered.

Good afflictions are those that come from serving Christ which could include financial expenses, going without, leaving house and home, being misunderstood, alienation from those living for themselves, persecution from those under the lordship of *the way it is*.

The good afflictions are treasures *"working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* That is why you should "*rejoice and be exceedingly glad"*. You will be in good company; you will be joined with great men of God throughout the ages, including "*the prophets who were before you",* each of whom suffered persecution.

Matthew 6:20: **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,**

How does one "*lay up … treasures in heaven"*? There are many ways. Read on....

Psalm 119:11: **Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.**

An allegiance to the Bible will assure *"treasures in heaven"*. As a token of agreement with the Bible and a commitment to obey, sign your name at the end of Revelations 22:21 (the end of the Bible). If your signature signifies an earnest determination to obey God's Word, you will be *"a wise man who built his house on the rock"* (Mt.7:24); you will not be disappointed at the judgement seat.

Philippians 1:21: **to me, to live is Christ,**

Live for Jesus.

Because it will be you and Jesus then and there, it should be you and Jesus here and now. No friend or church leader will be there to defend or excuse you when you appear before the Judge. Do not serve Jesus *through* any man or human agency; rather serve Jesus *through* the Holy Spirit. Do not look to others to determine how deep your commitment to Christ should be. Do not lean on others to direct your life.... your giving, your good works, your time.

Galatians 1:10: **do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ.**

You must repent of any tendency to be a man-pleaser.

1 Thessalonians 5:21: **Test all things; hold fast what is good.**

Test all things you do by habit or simply because others do them. Compare them to Scripture, leaning on *"the Spirit of truth"* to guide you. Test your heart, your motives. *"Hold fast"* to that which passes the test; renounce those things that do not.

Romans 12:2: **do not be conformed to this world,**

Do not be conformed to *That's Just The Way It Is!*.

1 Corinthians 2:2: **I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

Be consumed with Jesus. Let the theme of your life be Jesus and that which He has done for you. No matter what captivates others, be captivated by the goodness of the Lord and the love He has for you. Glory only in the cross.

Galatians 2:20: **I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**

Like Paul, you can say Christ *"loved me"* and Christ "*gave Himself for* me". The life you live, *"live by faith in the Son of God"*. Not only will life on earth be meaningful, but your eternity will be so very rich.

1 John 1:3: **that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**

John and Jack have had strong ties within their fellowship, they and their families, for many years. They have always responded to each other's needs. When John's union was on strike Jack was

there to help financially. When Jack broke his leg skiing John helped maintain his yard and run errands. Over the years they worked together within their fellowship to raise money to pay for braces for crippled children and together collected canned food, distributing to needy families.

You might envy this sustained friendship and assume since they have a strong and loving relationship with each other, they each must have a wholesome relationship with Christ. But neither John nor Jack (both fictional) are christians. They don't like Jesus and they don't like those who do. They would both resent someone implying they had a need to be 'saved'. Do they not demonstrate love to one another? Are they not gracious to each other? Have they not done many good works through their secular charitable society?

Brothers and sisters in the Lord may have a quality relationship with each other, but that doesn't necessarily indicate a viable relationship with Christ. Amen?

John 15:5: **I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me,**

In a sense everyone, christian or non-, is a branch abiding in something or someone. To abide means to relate to, be sustained by, obtain satisfaction from, be in touch with, rely on.

Not all christian branches abide in *"the vine"* (the Vine). Many abide in fellow *"branches"*; others abide in themselves. Christians abiding in each other think that's *the way it should be*. But it's not.

Christians are to relate to each other, fellowship with each other, but abide in Christ. Fellowship with each other must be *in* Christ, or we are no more advantaged than John and Jack.

Most fellowships within evangelicalism ignore Jesus, not totally but mostly, and are oblivious to their own spiritual poverty. Good works, plus fellowship with and love for each other, have blinded them, just as they have blinded John and Jack of their need of Christ's salvation.

1 John 1:3: **and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**

Fellowship with each other can enhance our relationship *"with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."* Or.... *it can replace it!*

"Branches" can be so infatuated by fellow branches they can see, especially those of renown, that they forget about *"the vine"* they cannot see. This is not an infrequent tragedy. Christians' idols are most often christians, more so than business, pleasure, comfort, money. Ears are more attuned to the chatter of saved men than the voice of the Saviour.

Hebrews 13:17 (NEB): **Obey your leaders and defer to them;**

Obey those who give leadership to the degree that you can without disobeying God. Who are "*your leaders"*? I would suggest they are worthy, proven leaders (elders) who express the will of the Lord. And I further suggest they are those you choose to be your leaders.

They might exhort, for example, "Be kind to one another". And so you obey, knowing this is what

Jesus requires. Or, "Be diligent in good works". Or, "Feed the hungry, and visit the lonely". In obeying them, you are obeying Christ.

The early church did not have the New Testament as we do, and the will of the Lord often had to be communicated verbally through elders. Therefore to obey God one had to (in a limited sense) obey leadership. Now that we have the Bible we do not need to depend entirely on others to communicate the will of the Lord to us.

When leadership (or any person) is speaking the Word of God, obey; it is really Jesus, *"the head of the church"* whom you are obeying. Have an inclination to submit. When leadership says "sit" then sit, when they say "stand" then stand, when they say "sing" sing. I believe Jesus would have us submit whenever doing so is not compromising His Word.

The dilemma will one day occur (for some it will be frequent) when recognized leadership will mislead or step beyond their boundary of authority. Suppose they say something like, "We believe God wants *us* to build an addition to our church. Let's all pitch in and finance it." What then? Should you obey? Let's look at it....

Matthew 21:23: **the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"**

The Father gave Jesus authority. *("All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth".* Mt.28:18) The authority is passed on to the believer and *is limited to the Word of God*. God does not give any person authority to proclaim/preach/teach another word.

Galatians 1:8: **But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.**

Again, no person has authority to impose any commandment or statute or tradition that is not in accord with the Bible. What should your reaction be if this should happen?

Galatians 2:5: **we did not yield submission even for an hour,**

This was Paul's response to *"false brethren"* (Gal.2:4) who tried to impose unsanctioned conditions.

Colossians 2:20,21: **why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—"Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,"**

Obviously, there are times when you are not to "*subject yourselves to regulations"*.

Acts 5:29: **Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.**

The only alternative to obedience is disobedience. There may be times when obeying leadership is disobeying God. In matters of spiritual concern, obey leadership only when they obey God by speaking God's truths. In this way you are obeying God Himself.

Look for the Teacher in teachers, the Pastor in pastors, the Leader in leaders. You are not to obey teachers, pastors, leaders, but *the* Teacher, *the* Pastor, *the* Leader.

Galatians 1:10**: if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ.**

A christian cannot *"be a servant of Christ"* while having a herd mentality. And yet a herd mentality is what *the way it is* promotes. Anything done outside the permission and control of the local assembly is often frowned upon, this code, written or unwritten, enforced in the name of unity and protection of the sheep.

In controlling assemblies (assemblies that do not respect the lordship of the Holy Spirit in the individual's life) Bible studies, evangelistic outreaches, prayer meetings, etc., must be approved by leadership. And if leadership is dominated by a pastor (if he controls the board of elders/deacons or if they are advisors only) everyone in the assembly is under one man's control (or at least his immense influence). This is extremely unhealthy.

John 16:13: **when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;**

You need to submit to "*the Spirit of truth"* who alone can "*guide you into all truth"*. *"All truth"* includes the fellowship best suited to you, what friends to have, where/how to invest your life.

All of us have embraced error at one time or another, and on every occasion we got ourselves in that predicament because we did not submit to "*the Spirit of truth".* (The Spirit brings us into truth, not error.)

John 8:32: "**And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**

Truth is powerful, and so is error. Walking in truth will bring eternal rewards; walking in misconceptions will bring eternal losses. (*"If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss".* 1Cor.3:15) Some of the concepts (beliefs, doctrines) you cling to are true, others are not. The ones that are true *"shall make you free"*; the misconceptions will have the opposite effect, putting you in bondage. But how can you know which concepts are true and which are false?

It is hard to give up a pet doctrine; therefore we hesitate to check it out with the Word. However, the more we love Jesus, the more we love truth ("*I am… the truth"*); the more we love truth, the more eager we are to check it out.

Obtaining truth is a process. Deeper commitment to Christ and prayer will enhance that process.

Colossians 4:17: **And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it."**

Like Archippus, you also have a *"ministry which you have received in the Lord"*. Your eternal reward will be great if you "*take heed… that you may fulfill it"*.

You cannot fulfill your ministry except by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that power will be relative

to your commitment to Jesus Christ. That is why you must….

Psalm 37:5: **Commit your way to the Lord,**

"Commit your way to the Lord" and not to men, not even very dedicated men. Don't commit to a church. Don't commit to a building project. And certainly not to *That's Just The Way It Is!*.

Hebrews 13:15: **let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**

Obedience to this verse will assure you will not be embarrassed on that day of accountability. As you know, there is power in praise…. power to change lives, power to sanctify, power to make us effectual.

1 Thessalonians 5:17: **pray without ceasing,**

We will go no further than our prayer life. And we will go *as far as* our prayer life. Repeat: We will go *as far as* our prayer life. Prayers will not be wasted.

Pray that the Lord will help prepare you for that day of accountability.

Proverbs 4:7: **get understanding.**

Pray for understanding.

Romans 1:17: "**The just shall live by faith."**

Pray for ever-increasing faith. Since faith *"comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rm.10:17), ask Lord Jesus to increase your hunger for His Word.

1 Corinthians 13:13: **faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

Pray for love.

Revelation 4:10: **the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne,**

I believe "*their crowns"* are crowns of authority, rewards received for obedience on earth. Your obedience, too, will earn you a crown. The love you now have for Jesus is nothing like the love you will have when you see Him face to face in all His glory. Your appreciation for the vicious Roman flogging and Calvary's cross will be magnified. At that time you will be so very happy to have a crown to cast before "*Him who lives forever and ever"* as an act of worship.

Acts 5:29: "**We ought to obey God rather than men.**

Now back to the building project. ("We believe that God wants *us* to build an addition to our church. Let's all pitch in and finance it.") Yes, God could call a people to build.

Some buildings are sanctioned by God and some (most?) are not. What you support financially is between Jesus and you. The Spirit will guide you as you wait upon Him for direction. If you don't hear anything (and you probably won't) don't invest in brick and mortar.

Leadership should say, "We believe that God wants an addition built to our church. If anyone feels this is what the Lord is speaking to you please let us know. Do not finance this project unless you have a witness of the Spirit to do so." This is faith. This is true leadership.

----------APPENDIX

It was two in the morning, several years ago, and I had just made a firm decision: I want to be a worshipper of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Oh yes, I praised the Lord periodically most days. I love my praise music. And I tried to remember to thank Him for everything. But my praise life was somewhat sporadic and mechanical. I was not satisfied. I realized I had no power to make myself a worshipper, and so I prayed my two a.m. prayer:

"Father, I choose to be a worshipper of Your Son. You gave me a free will, and I hereby exercise my free will by asking You to transform me into a worshipper of Jesus. I cannot make myself a worshipper, but I know You can. I rely entirely upon You and the power of the Holy Spirit."

Change came, slowly but surely. Now, many years later, I can truthfully say I am indeed a worshipper of our Lord Jesus Christ. At times I praise Him in my dreams, and wake up in the middle of the night with praises to Jesus oozing out of me. It is not something I intentionally do, but praise and worship just happens. I rarely petition Jesus during my alone time with Him in the morning, but simply try to enter into, and remain in, a state of praise.

Now I am not saying I am content where I am. Oh no. I freely admit I am so-o-o-o easily distracted. I find myself saying, "Praise to You Lord Jesus!" out of rote while my thoughts are far from Him. Yet I think I can rightly define myself as His worshipper. He really is my number one. The Father answered my prayer and is still taking me upward.

And I do not neglect the Father. I know He seeks those who will worship Him "*in spirit and truth".* I have asked Jesus to make me a worshipper of the Father. I really love the Father. Like really, really, really. My joy is pleasing Him. (This is not to say I always do. Blush.) My prayer is that one day I will be able to say the words of Jesus, "*My food is to do the will of Him".* (Jn.4:34)

May this sharing stir you to turn to our Father, as I did and do, asking Him to make you a true worshipper of His Son. Do you remember His words, *"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*? The Father wants us to be in a constant state of hearing Jesus, the Son He sent to rescue us. The more we attune ourselves to Him, the more we will love Him. The more we love Him, the steadier the flow of praise and worship.

The Father's Son is worthy of our highest praises. Let us never forget the Roman whip, the crown of

thorns, the cross, the nails, the jeers. The more you praise Jesus, the closer you will be drawn to Him; the closer you are, the more fervently you will praise. A continual anthem of praise will gradually turn one's life upside down (or rather, right side up). In time it will look something like this....

Motives cleansed.
Perspective loftier.
Fruit plentiful.
Relationship sweetened.
Problems dwarfed.
Protection certain.
Freedom prevails.
Heaven's treasures multiplied.
Sin lost its grip.
Self-centredness gone.
Temptation lost its lure.
Discernment sharpened.
Truth flows.
Prayer life empowered.
Ministry doors opened.
Generosity overcomes stinginess.
Humility reigns.
Will of God realized.
Concern surrenders to trust.
Faith rises.
Life purposeful.
Light brighter.
The way it is loses its grip.
The Father well pleased.
Jesus well pleased.
Holy Spirit well pleased.

No one will be totally successful. I am not even close. It's improvement we seek. We rejoice in ground gained though there will always be ground to gain.

"Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord! Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its going down the Lord's name is to be praised." (Ps.113:1-3)

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

a man

a good man
but more than a man
a preacher
an anointed preacher
but more than a preacher
a teacher
a wise teacher
but more than a teacher
a prophet
a true prophet
but more than a prophet
a healer
a gentle healer
but more than a healer
a miracle worker
an amazing miracle worker
but more than a miracle worker
a saviour
a loving saviour
but more than a saviour
a warrior
a fierce warrior
but more than a warrior
a king
a regal king
but more than a king
he is god
omnipotent god
awesome god
the i am

chapter ten
----------TEACHERS

Ephesians 4:11: **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

Perhaps, just perhaps, the gift Lord Jesus has invested in you is that of teaching.

Ephesians 4:7 (NIV): **But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.**

Grace is given in varying degrees; some are given much grace, some less. Since grace is referring to gifts or abilities, it is therefore safe to conclude there are varying degrees of anointing upon a gift.

Ephesians 4:11: **He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.**

"He Himself" has determined that you will be a teacher, and "*He Himself*" has determined what degree of anointing to place upon you. Jesus is Lord and it is He who decides.

The gift of teaching is the ability and (usually) an enthusiasm to teach. You enjoy studying and like to educate others. You have an understanding of God's Word and His ways. Perhaps the Lord has anointed you to accentuate specific truths.

Ephesians 4:12: **for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,**

Although you are one of the "*teachers"* in verse 11, you are also one of "*the saints"* in verse 12 needing to be equipped, a member of "*the body of Christ"* requiring *"edifying"*. The One who "*gave gifts to men"* teaches you through others who may have the same ministry gift of teaching. You are both a teacher and a student, and always will be.

Luke 16:10: **He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much;**

You may have visions of yourself standing behind a pulpit, and in front of that pulpit a room full of christians straining to hear your every word. In fact, the word "pulpit" was probably not yet invented when Ephesians 4:11 was written. Your career as a teacher may be limited to social media, your family and circle of acquaintances. You may be led of the Lord to have home Bible studies. It really doesn't matter.... just prove yourself faithful.

It is the nature of the Lord to bless and increase. As you prove yourself faithful He will add anointing to anointing, opportunities to opportunities.

Matthew 23:10: **do not be called teachers: for One is your Teacher, the Christ.**

In a sense there are many teachers in the body of Christ. (Paul wrote to the Hebrews, *"By this time you ought* (all) *to be teachers".* Heb.5:12) Again, there are layers of truth, one more relevant than another (a more spiritual perspective). Jesus taught He is the only true Teacher in the body of Christ. As Christ heals and delivers through His church, so He teaches through His church.

Jesus is also the chief apostle ("*the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus"* Heb.3:1). And prophet ("*Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee"* Mt.21:11). And evangelist ("*the Lord of the harvest"* Mt.9:38). And pastor ("*I am the good shepherd"* Jn.10:11).

Ephesians 5:25,26: **Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,**

Who sanctifies the church? Who cleanses? Jesus. How does He sanctify and cleanse? "*By the word.*" Through whom does He do this? Through you and me and everyone who submits to His lordship. He prophesies through the prophet, teaches through the teacher, pastors through the pastor.

Matthew 16:17: **flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,**

Truth comes from God. All truth you have attained is because the Teacher has "*revealed this to you*". People should be taught to look beyond "*flesh and blood*" and listen for Jesus speaking through the preacher/teacher. Discernment is required because in many cases it is not only Jesus speaking, but also "*flesh and blood*".

Matthew 16:16: **Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**

As you know, Jesus was well pleased with this proclamation of Peter regarding Himself. Jesus said, *"Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you."* This was Holy Spirit revelation. *("No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.")* Witnesses might have concluded that everything Peter said from now on would be accurate, but not so.

Matthew 16:22: "**Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"**

This was Peter speaking again a very short time later. He didn't like to hear Jesus talking of His crucifixion and said so. Jesus replied, "*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to me.*" Ouch!

A preacher can say the right thing ten times successively but that is no guarantee the eleventh won't be a blunder. Winds of doctrine come and go via teachers (speakers and writers). Sometimes preachers admit they once taught "this" but now teach "that". Like their audience, they are learning. Generally, gullibility is a mark of christians, readily accepting both truth and error.

Christians should not be quick to shout, "Amen!" From my perspective few messages from the pulpit (or anywhere) are entirely true. The congregation naively assumes the speaker is somehow above them, more than merely a fellow student of the Word. Many times I have heard people say, "Amen!" to the most absurd statements from the pulpit. It seems as though preachers would have just as many people shouting "Amen!" if his position on the subject of his teaching was reversed.

James 4:6: **God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."**

Confess to fellow believers the times you have been in error. This reinforces that they ought not to trust in anyone but the one true Teacher, that they must judge all teachings.

And God will give you grace. *("God.... gives grace to the humble.")*

Jeremiah 17:5: **Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD.**

In my opinion, believers are regularly taught to sin the sin of trusting in man. *That's just the way it is!* teaches a subtle and damaging twist of Scripture: *One trusts in God by trusting in leadership who has*

heard from God. (So also say the cults and other religions.)

The Lord declares that the heart convinced to trust in man is the heart that has departed from the Lord. As a teacher you must be careful to point people to, and not away from, a dependency on Christ.

Ephesians 4:11: **And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

There is nothing in Ephesians 4:11 preventing you from having more than one gift. You may also be an apostle. Or a pastor. You could have a greater anointing on one gift than the other.

2 Corinthians 5:10: **we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ,**

When life on earth is over you must give an account for how you used the gift of teaching, and will be rewarded according to your faithfulness. Hopefully, your heart was to use the gift to bring honour to Jesus and not to yourself. (I confess my need to continually bring my less-than-perfect motives before the Lord Jesus. Blush.) You submitted to the lordship of the Holy Spirit rather than pry open doors of opportunity. Your focus was on "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified"* and not on the gift *"He Himself"* gave you. You did not become puffed because of your accomplishments, but did "*walk humbly with your God".* No matter how much Jesus used you, you did not allow the approval and applause of others to distract you from drawing closer, ever closer, to Christ.

Hopefully, you were careful (and prayerful) to check things out so that you only taught the rightly divided Word. You were bold to speak truth even when truth was not welcome. You were not hesitant to say, "I don't know."

John 3:30: **He must increase, but I must decrease.**

Jesus said, *"There has not risen one greater than John the Baptist".* (Mt.11:11) And John realized he "*must decrease"*.

Decrease. Don't focus on you the teacher, but Jesus the "*Lord of lords"*. Don't be concerned with "my ministry", but pray to love Him more. Don't take yourself so seriously. Let ministry flow out of relationship; it is the better, more fruitful way.

John's reward is relative to his decrease of self. Paul was an apostle, a highly anointed one, but his gift was not a badge of honour; his badge was the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ph'p.1:21) His deepest longing was to know Him.

The most effective teacher is the one who loves Christ. The more real the relationship, the greater the anointing. Preaching from the intellect ministers to the intellect; preaching from the heart affects the heart.

James 4:6: **God resists the proud,**

Some preach/teach from a need to be heard. Expounding to others, bringing correction to the less informed, hearing all those “Amens” from an adulating audience, being 'the man' with the right word.... this is the high in their lives. Truths of God are used to comfort their egos. Such have long ago drifted from Christ and feel no urgency to return.

“God resists the proud.” How terrible for a christian to be resisted by his Redeemer.

James 4:6: **But gives grace to the humble.**

Some have to be dragged to the pulpit. Their cry is to be hidden behind the cross so people would see Jesus and not them. They love Him, they are His representatives, they want their lives to glorify His precious name. Their humility turns on a tap of grace (unmerited favour and much power). Their ministry of teaching brings much fruit, lasting fruit.

1 Peter 5:6: **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,**

Jesus was exalted and given a name above all names because “*He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”* (Ph'p.2:8) God will exalt all who make the quality choice of being the servant, not demanding payment or recognition but using their giftings to bless others.

1 Corinthians 2:2: **For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**

I have said many times to whoever would listen: The lacking in the body of Christ is Christ! The church needs revival because it has drifted from its first love. Teaching facts and principles and keys and doctrines can enlarge the intellect while shrinking the heart. A teacher can pass on accurate information but still be part of the problem.

In order to teach Christ, one must know Christ. Being part of the solution calls for decrease of self, thus making more room for Jesus.

----------APPENDIX

Teaching is a privilege and a responsibility. And we are all teachers, good or bad.

Every parent is a teacher. Dad and mom make lasting impressions on their children by what they teach, verbally and by example. Parents are responsible to oversee the spiritual life of their offspring, to convey the ways of the Lord, to implant a passion for Christ. The adults their kids become will be their consequence, more than any other.

We teach each other, intentionally or inadvertently. We influence. We have the capacity to draw people closer to Jesus, or to be a hindrance. We bless and hurt with the same tongue. The mature christian is slow to speak; he measures his words; he knows he is accountable.

Some are given a special gift of teaching, one of the five ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11. To be called to preach God's truth to God's church should be humbling. No one deserves this high calling; it is truly a gift from the One so generous. And there is a reward, an eternal reward, for the faithful stewards of His truths.

For the teacher who serves Jesus everything will go right. For the one serving man, including oneself, everything will go wrong.

There are many teachers discipled in *That's Just The Way It Is!.* Traditions of men are their lord. Even truths of the Bible are used (misused) to appease and reinforce this idol. Such teachers are part of the all-encompassing problem, and not the answer.

A teacher cannot afford divided loyalties; he will harm the body of Christ he is supposed to edify. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "*Do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a servant of Christ".* (Gal.1:10)

Paul loved and served Jesus, his heart was not divided, he was part of the answer. But many in his day were proponents of *the way it is*, fearful pleasers of men. They were enemies of the cross, preaching a gospel of works. Their message was not "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified",* but something perverse.

Jesus said, "*No one can serve two masters".* How can a teacher/preacher know he is serving Jesus, and not another? The answer is oh, so simple, and is found in 2 Timothy 4:2: "*Preach the word!"* A spiritual teacher is one called by God to teach the Word of God. No adding, no subtracting, no compromising, no politics.

It was teachers who passed biblical truths from generation to generation. And it was teachers who likewise passed on traditions of men, trespassing 2 Timothy 4:2. They compromised truth so they could fit into, and not aggravate, their spiritual communities.

A televangelist once wrote an article in his periodical defending his palatial house paid for by the ministry (donations from his supporters). The media was crying, "Foul!" and this evangelist fought back, using two pages of his prominent magazine to defend his position.

I enjoyed his magazine because he "*preached the Word"*, always backing up his point of view with Scripture. But in this specific article he never quoted one verse when defending his multi-million dollar house. He used comparisons to other televangelists and much logic.... but no Word.

That televangelist is no guiltier than most teachers. Most bounce back and forth from the Word to *the way it is* with proficiency. And yes, we have all been guilty. We have all propagated *the way it is*, verbally and by example. We strayed from Paul's exhortation to Timothy, "*Preach the word!"*

May the *"teacher"* teach us to be wise and faithful teachers. Amen?

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"it is finished!" (Jn.19:30)

it is finished
my course complete
price paid
debt absolved
law fulfilled
curtain torn

death lost its sting
grave its victory
world ruler defeated
he tempted
i overcame
my blood innocent
sufficient
father well pleased

i the seed
planted and died
my father had one
now many
he has you

another will come
and be in you
be filled
follow
he knows the way

imitate me
a seed that died
birth others
finish your course
run the race
fight the good fight
abide in me

i love you

chapter eleven
----------PASTORS

Ephesians 4:11: **and some pastors**

This is the only occasion the New Testament uses the word *"pastors"*. The singular word "pastor" is never used. However, in evangelical circles the usage of the word *pastor* is quite common. This establishes (again) that the emphases of *the way it is* and the Bible is quite different.

NOTE: Instead of calling *the man* 'Pastor Whoever' - Pastor Whoever is simply the salaried pastor of any given assembly - let's call him "Pastor John" in this chapter. Okay?

Matthew 16:15: **who do you say that I am?"**

Ask an evangelical who his pastor is and he will reply, "Pastor John" (or whoever). Never Jesus. I have never heard anyone refer to Jesus as "Pastor Jesus".

Ephesians 5:23: **the husband is the head of the wife**

Ask a wife the same question and she will give the same answer. If a mortal man really were her pastor it would be her husband. (But, in fact, her only pastor is Pastor Jesus.)

Colossians 3:20: **Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord.**

There is a baby dedication at an evangelical Sunday service. Colossians 3:20 shows clearly that parents have authority over their children. Is it the father, the head of the family under Christ, who dedicates his child? Nope. *The way it is* dictates that Pastor John performs all public functions.

Most of what we learn is not by verbal communication, but by example. The ways and means of *the way it is* are conveyed mostly by example, not by pulpit ministry. Dedicating the baby before the assembly is but one of many examples of non-verbal teachings in the evangelical religion, one that conveys that a pastor has greater authority than a dad. A false impression has been imposed upon fathers, mothers, children and everyone present.

Psalm 23:1: **The LORD is my shepherd;**

If "*the Lord is my shepherd"* (my pastor) how can I call a man my shepherd? Repeat: How can I call a man, any man, my pastor? How could the church have degenerated so low that one brother calls another his pastor? A wife calling another man her pastor is nothing less than spiritual kinkiness. Children calling him "Pastor" (shepherd) must be grievous to the Bible's Author.

Hebrews 13:20: **that great Shepherd of the sheep,**

Jesus, "*that great* (Pastor) *of the sheep"*. Jesus.... my pastor, your pastor, our only pastor.

1 Peter 1:1: **Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,**

Whose apostle was Peter? He was Jesus' apostle, to be used as Jesus, "*the head of the church",* so decided. The same applies to pastors. A pastor is a pastor "*of Jesus Christ",* one instrument of many used to shepherd Christ's flock. One might call him an "under-pastor" (one under Christ).

Hebrews 3:1 (NIV): **fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.**

Who was the apostle of the Hebrews? Was it Peter or Paul? No, it was Jesus. Who is our apostle? It is Jesus. Who is our pastor? Is it John or Frank or Bill or Randy? No, by the same reasoning it is Jesus. "*Fix your thoughts on Jesus"* and not any man.

John 10:11: **I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.**

There is only one "*good shepherd." ("No one is good but One, that is, God."* Mt.19:17) He proved His love by facing a very cruel death on our behalf. The Redeemer, not a redeemed one, is pastor of His flock.

Jesus uses His sheep to assist in the shepherding of His flock. (Jesus shepherds His sheep *through* His sheep.)

Isaiah 40:11: **He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.**

Whose flock? "*His flock"*, the "*good shepherd* (who) *gives His life for the sheep."* Who "*will feed His flock"*? Jesus will feed His flock. How? He feeds His people through His people.

A christian gathering should be something like a potluck supper. The Lord supplies everyone with something and when they come together they share those provisions. Jesus nurtures the flock through the flock. There isn't a man who can properly shepherd the sheep of His pasture. There isn't a man deserving the title "Pastor".

Matthew 23:10: **do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.**

The same principle applies to the ministry of pastor: "*Do not be called* (pastors)*; for One is your* (Pastor)*, the Christ."*

Notice Jesus instructs, "*do not be called"*. One must not allow others to call him "Pastor". "Please do not call me Pastor John, but simply John."

Ephesians 4:11: **and some pastors**

In an assembly of fifty adults how many pastors are there? (How many have the calling of pastor?) No one knows, but let's consider. If you agree every christian has been given at least one of the five ministry gifts, it is possible one out of five is called to be a pastor. That would mean there would be ten pastors (in varying degrees of anointing and maturity). It could be more (that's my guess) or it could be less, but certainly it would be more than one.

The way it is suggests there is but one pastor, and he alone is authorized; the other nine are never acknowledged. This leads to a monopoly of one that is demoralizing and counter-productive.

Not only are the other nine pastors not recognized, but neither are those having the calling of

apostle, prophet, evangelist or teacher. All forty-nine look to one man for direction, teaching, consolation, exhortation. This is not God's way. The assembly is poorly nourished and Pastor John is exhausted.

Luke 10:7: **the laborer is worthy of his wages.**

This one-man ministry causes a dilemma for Pastor John: "Because I do it all, I must get paid… and because I get paid, I must do it all… and because I do it all, I must get paid… and because I…"

In fact, John is not a one-man ministry. Others are involved in the workload: ushers, Sunday school teachers, bookkeepers; some are involved in prayer ministry and healing ministry; others organize social gatherings. But all ministries are extensions of Pastor John's ministry. From this brother comes direction, encouragement, leadership. He assumes responsibility for the spiritual, financial and social welfare of the church, and more than everyone else combined influences the spiritual outcome of the assembly.

The fact that Pastor John has a salary places him far above the rest; it makes him more special, more heeded. Comparatively, the rest are but helpers, their labour not worthy of remuneration.

Romans 12:6: **Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them:**

Pastor John may not be a pastor. (Lord Jesus never gave him that particular ministry gift.) Many who are called "Pastor" are actually evangelists or teachers or apostles or prophets. Why are they called "Pastor"? Blame that on *the way it is*….

The only one on salary is the pastor, so one 'becomes' a pastor to procure a paycheck. To call a pastor "Pastor John" is wrong; to call a teacher or evangelist "Pastor John" because John wants to be financially supported is evangelical madness. And yet this is common practice.

1 Peter 5:2: **Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers,**

How can one man shepherd a flock of forty-nine? The answer is…. not very well. This man cannot hope to associate with all, so the only ones getting his attention are those in crisis. The people have been taught, by strong implication, Pastor John is the sole shepherd, and so they do not look to each other for support (as the New Testament teaches them to do).

Every one of those forty-nine have a ministry gift, but few realize it. All assume their place is limited to supporting Pastor John. After all, they haven't been to Bible college, they aren't licensed or 'ordained', and they are not recognized by the 'ministerial' (or by each other).

Acts 20:30: **from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.**

Because Pastor John makes himself so visible he unwittingly draws "*away the disciples after"* himself

and the denomination he represents. Thoughts are more centred on him than Jesus. His words, his opinions, his perspectives are much more esteemed than they should be. He isn't considered to be merely one of the guys, but God's anointed.

While John's motive may be to protect and nurture the congregation, he can, in fact, be damaging their relationship with Jesus. He can actually be a third party (an interfering, divisive person) in the relationship between Christ and believer.

1 John 3:23 (Amplified): **And this is His order (His command, His injunction): that we should believe in (put our faith and trust in and adhere to and rely on) the name of His Son Jesus Christ (the Messiah), and that we should love one another, just as He commanded us.**

The great tragedy is that evangelicals have been seduced (to varying degrees) to "*believe in (put… faith and trust in and adhere to and rely on)"* pastors and their denominations.

Many things can and do usurp the lordship of Christ.... business, love of money, self-rule, ministry, religious ambitions and.... evangelicalism, the religion represented by the pastor and the denomination that placed him. This religion is perhaps the subtlest stumbling block of all because its cloaked in (undeserved) respectability.

It is an acute problem very few recognize.

Luke 6:46: **why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?**

Many churches have added tithing to their list of requirements for membership. Pastor John could have that changed, but that's not likely. The budget long ago became a god to be served. In every congregation there are some who do not believe tithing is a New Covenant requirement. For these, this is the cause of a real dilemma.

Many christians face this very issue and others similar. Should they compromise their convictions for the sake of unity? If they do not submit to this stipulation they will lose the pastor's favour (ouch!), and perhaps never be given opportunity to serve in the church. They will be second-rate adherents. To leave the fellowship and find another would bring much stress to their families. But how can they surrender the lordship of the Holy Spirit over their finances?

And those who bow to *the way it is* over their own convictions will damage their relationship with Jesus Christ. Accepting the decrees of man over *"the head of the church"* will cause a shift of loyalty from Redeemer to redeemed. Very not good. This is just a sampling of how *the way it is* can be a third party in the relationship between Christ and christian.

Luke 17:1 (NIV): **Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come.**

Pastors (etc.) who promote illegitimate traditions cause many to sin. I suggest most believers have been seduced to sin many times in similar circumstances, compromising their understanding of the

Bible to embrace a traditional teaching for the sake of pleasing men, fitting in, going with the flow.

I suggest most pastors have been placed by men because of their readiness to compromise God's truths for men's traditions. No nonconformists allowed! I suggest Joe Average Christian who attends Average Evangelical Church is, to one degree or another, a disciple of man, and to that same degree is not following after his/her Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:24: **do this in remembrance of Me."**

We are to break bread and drink of "*the fruit of the vine"* in remembrance of Jesus. It is meant to be a solemn occasion of drawing closer to our Christ.

Because Pastor John *always* leads the ceremonial observance, because he is so visible and so 'heard', the communion service has the dual effect of remembering Jesus *and* John! The assembly is impressed by, and drawn closer to, both! False non-verbal messages are beaconed to the congregation. Pastor John's credibility as sole leader and someone special is reinforced by a service that is supposed to cement and repair relationships to Christ.

Exodus 12:3 (NIV): **Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.**

The passover feast was preliminary to our communion service. The last supper was both the passover meal and a commemoration of "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified".* The lamb slain by the Israelites was a type of Christ, "*the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world". ("Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us".* 1Cor.5:7) It is significant that: It was the *father* who was to choose a lamb "*without blemish, a male of the first year".* (Ex.12:5) It was the *father* who was to put the blood of the slain lamb on the doorframe of his house. This ritual was done in the home. There is no reason why a communion service (an antitype of the passover meal) should not be administered by the father, with his family, in his home, on a regular basis.

Also, a communion service could (and should) occasionally be with christian friends, or even by oneself. It should be used extensively to bring believers relationally closer to Jesus.

For those who would be apprehensive of having communion service in their home, that apprehension could be an indicator of bondage to *the way it is*, and lack of commitment to the Bible.

John: 21:17: **Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.**

You have heard the term "sheep stealing". This is not in reference to those who steal sheep from Jesus, but churches stealing sheep from each other! The use of this term is an admission they have indeed drawn "*the disciples after themselves".*

Jesus calls the assembly "*My sheep"* because He is the Shepherd. Peter was not to feed "his" sheep, but His sheep. Pastors are not to nurture 'their' flock (they do not possess a flock), but His flock. The assembly is not to call John 'their' pastor, because Christ alone is their Pastor.

3 John 1:10: **he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.**

John is referring to "*Diotrephes, who loves to have the pre-eminence"*. This man had attained much power, enough to put those who disagreed with him "*out of the church"*.

I surmise much about Diotrephes. Diotrephes was a controller, an unhappy man who smiled a lot in the company of others. (A smile, time has taught me, is the controller's choice lure.) He threatened, beguiled, flattered and smiled his way to top position.This man talked much and he was intelligent. And he had a capacity for cruelty, never hesitating to smear the reputation of anyone daring to stand in his way. He sowed discord regularly, leaving a trail of pain and division. The conflict he proficiently generated was not only between himself and others, but also between others and others.... brother against brother, sister against sister. To maintain power he surrounded himself with 'yes' men, weak men, 'cooperative' men.

Diotrephes should never have held such power. *One should not have power over many*. Power (influence) should be shared by many, thereby giving it less opportunity to corrupt. A one-man ministry is not the Bible way.

Hebrews 5:12: **by this time you ought to be teachers,**

Paul was speaking to the Hebrews who had *"become dull of hearing".* They should have matured by this time, students evolving into teachers. The same principle is true regarding pastors; many of the Hebrews should have evolved into pastors. Many teachers and pastors is influence shared.

Spiritually, there should be an uninterrupted maturing process. As a child matures physically, mentally, socially and emotionally to become a productive and healthy adult, so the babe in Christ should develop spiritually to become a productive and healthy shepherd (under-shepherd) of Christ's sheep. The maturing progress should be steady with no predetermined limitations. An expectation should be planted in each heart. Non-biblical burdens (license, degrees, credentials) should be outlawed.

The way it is hinders natural development and produces lifetime spiritual dependents. The pastor, so intent on fulfilling his calling, does the job he gets paid to do. He is the lone voice speaking into people's lives. Others are ignored. This induces an unhealthy mindset for pew-people: "I am not called to publicly minister the Word. My place is to support the pastor in *his* calling." This mindset is a crippler, causing most to be marginally productive.

1 Peter 4:10: **As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another,**

The way it is is often far above the word of God in evangelical quarters. *The way it is* is bowed to, the Bible ignored The pastor has been placed by traditionalists and is expected to adhere to their traditions. Opportunity for the forty-nine to "*minister.... to one another"* is suppressed.

Since the pastor is paid he must do it all. (And since he does it all he must be paid.)

1 Corinthians 3:9: **we are God's fellow workers;**

Pastor John goes on a much-needed vacation. Does he call one of the "*fellow workers"* to give the Word on Sunday? By this time many *"ought to be teachers"* within the congregation, but *the way it is* implies that someone accredited should be brought in. Upon what Scripture verse is such logic built? None. (Do you see it? *The way it is* is so powerful, so reverenced, it *does not require* a scriptural foundation.)

In fact, the assembly does not consist of "*fellow workers"*. There is one man who is 'in the ministry'; the rest are 'laymen', subservient to this one.

Ephesians 5:23 (NIV): **the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church,**

A family is holy ground. *The way it is* calls the local church a "family" but that is not scriptural. If the assembly really is a family, who are perceived as the children? That would have to be the 'laity'. And the father? That could only be the pastor. And the mother? Perhaps the pastor's wife. The notion of 'family' places the people under the father figure (the pastor), worsening an already unhealthy perspective.

The family is God's creation and no one should tinker with it by labelling something to be a family that is not. Ephesians 5:23 is a powerful statement. If any man should be called "Reverend", it should be the husband and father. For it is he who is "*the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church"*. No church leader is given such high validation.

(There is one reference to the church as "family", but this is not the local assembly but "*the whole family in heaven and earth".* Eph.3:15)

Ephesians 6:1-3: **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."**

Any system, any tradition, any suggestion that would spiritually place another man above the father and mother is corruption of God's very emphatic word. Perhaps you have heard it said, "God anoints who He appoints." God appointed dad and mom, and God anoints them with ability to raise their children in the Lord.

Unfortunately, the local assembly does not recognize dad's spiritual capacity and this causes him to look small in the eyes of his impressionable children (and in his own sight). Though attending church for many years he was never entrusted to give the message on Sunday. Should he lead a friend or neighbour to Christ, he won't be allowed to baptize him; this must be done by.... guess who?.... Pastor John. Dad doesn't even dedicate his own children. The kids probably conclude: "Hmmm… I guess God doesn't think much of Dad. All he does is pass the collection plate and help people find a seat. I

wish he were more like Pastor John." Perhaps the children are echoing what Dad thinks about himself.

1 Corinthians 1:31: "**He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."**

We can tell in whom we glory by what we say. Our speech discloses our hearts. The same is true of the local assembly. Who are the people boasting about? Who are they infatuated with? Whose approval are they seeking? To know, listen for names; it is that simple. Speech unveils the heart.

1 Corinthians 3:21: **let no one glory in men.**

Don't, even if most do. Speak the name of Jesus at least five times for every time you speak the name Pastor John. Paul sometimes spoke of men, but he spoke of Jesus more than all others combined. Because Jesus, not man, reigned in his heart.

1 Corinthians 7:23: **You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.**

Study the christians around you. Whose slaves are they? Who do they serve? Is it truly Jesus? If so, there will be a healthy relationship between them and Him. Their eyes will become wet as they speak of the One they know so well and deeply appreciate. There will be an overflowing passion that will not be quenched.

Or are they "*slaves of men"*? To Pastor John and his denomination? Or to the fellowship? Or to a movement or set of doctrines? Or to *That's Just The Way It Is!?*

Romans 8:5: **those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.**

Is your mind set on the one you can see, or the One you cannot see?

Romans 8:6: **to be carnally minded is death,**

Men-gazing, men-pleasing, adhering to *the way it is* is being "*carnally minded"*.

Romans 8:6: **to be spiritually minded is life and peace.**

Continual, or et least intermittent, awareness of the presence of Jesus Christ will bring "*life and peace".* Repent of pastor worship, denominationalism, men-gazing. "*Be spiritually minded."* Do not "*glory in men"*,but "*glory in the Lord"*. "*You were bought with a price",* nothing less than the extremely precious blood of "*the Lamb of God".*

Luke 18:8: **when the Son of Man comes,**

The King is coming. And when He comes He will find each of His redeemed ones bowing to someone or something. Many will be spiritually prostrate before money and the toys it has purchased. Almost all will be bowing before a religious system. And still others will be prostrate before Him, "*the King eternal, immortal, invisible".* (1Tm.1:17)

----------APPENDIX

Pastor John is a man of divided loyalties. He is a product of both the Holy Spirit and the Word of God which he has studied more than most, *and* the denomination that schooled, trained and certified him.

It was his proven willingness to cooperate that procured him the position of pastor, and he is determined to prove himself faithful to those above him. There is much pressure on John to conform to *That's Just The Way It Is!*, and to lead others into conformity. Like the plumber and the doctor in the congregation, he needs that paycheck to feed wife and kids. And like the plumber and doctor he has no desire to change occupation.

John has his eye on a larger congregation. Bigger the church, bigger the paycheck and better the benefits. He wants to be a good provider for his growing family. And there's retirement to think about. But the competition is heavy; he must prove himself responsible to those higher in rank or his chances of advancement will shrivel.

Pastor John is a connecting door between two spiritual spheres, one being the denomination that endorsed him, the other the assembly he serves. Whereas the 'laity' live in one world, John lives in two. From the one he is sent, to the other he has arrived. The one has trained him, the other is his ministry. The one has his loyalty, the other his energy. He listens to one, he speaks to the other. His peers and friends live in one sphere, his followers in the other. The perspective he receives from one he passes on to the other.

John's ministerial realm is exclusive to fellow 'ministers' and the denomination John serves. Most in the 'laity' don't know how the denomination operates.... its bylaws and governing process. People will never meet those who make decisions that, through Pastor John, seriously affect their christianity. There is a wide gap between the two spiritual worlds, bridged only by Pastor John.

John may be five feet, eight inches tall (about average). If, spiritually speaking, he were five foot eight, he would be much taller, about six foot six, in the mindset of the congregation. And growing.

Every time he ministers behind the pulpit, he gets bigger in their sight. He becomes wiser, more discerning, more anointed, more favoured. Bigger, increasingly bigger. Such is the power of the pulpit. To the wife he is bigger than husband; to the children Dad and Mom are comparatively spiritual midgets.

On Sunday morning Pastor John steps to the pulpit. This is his hour. He is meticulously attired in his suit-and-tie uniform, hair recently trimmed, shoes polished. He has been trained for this hour, he has had much practice, he has prayed, he is ready to go.

John breaks his sermon into three easy-to-remember points. He raises and lowers his voice and inserts a few jokes to keep monotony from setting in. He is an impressive, authoritative figure. He is practised, poised, professional. Preaching over, he has once more grown in stature in the sight of his

listeners.

And the people have imperceptibly shrunk in their own estimation. As John becomes bigger, they become smaller.... less wise, less anointed, less valued. And more subservient to this man who obviously has a special position in God.

Pastor John does not often preach "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified".* He speaks of principles and keys and responsibilities and works and being good enough. But rarely Jesus.

John has taken various courses in psychology to help obtain promotions within the ministerial sphere of *the way it is*. Since there is a mixture in John's heart, there is a mixture in his message. And since there is a blend in his preaching/teaching, there is a mixture in the hearts of the assembly. The Jesus he presents is not New Testament Jesus, not the miracle-working Jesus, not Christ the Healer. Whereas Paul's preaching was not "*with persuasive words"* or *"excellence of speech",* but "*in demonstration of the Spirit and in power"* (1Cor.2:4), John's preaching is void of power and heavily reliant on "*excellence of speech"*.

The preaching is different because the men are different because their relationship with Christ is different. Paul was a bondservant of Christ; John is a man of divided loyalties, trying to serve both Christ and *the way it is*.

John is not less spiritual than most, perhaps more so. He didn't create *the way it is*; he is its disciple. He is a victim of victims. He is in bondage to those in bondage. When he stands before Christ at the judgement seat he will have an assortment of "*gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw"* just like the rest of us.

No pastor should be idolized. Pastor-worship is sin. Though *the way it is* has made Pastor John to appear to be something he is not, the Word teaches he is simply a brother, spiritually taller than some, shorter than others. He is not "Reverend". He is not your pastor.

If this book were addressed to catholic christians, I would say they must refute man-worship.... the priest, bishop, cardinal, pope. I would tell them there is a reverence that is good in God's sight, a reverence for each other on the basis of who we are in Christ. And I would tell them there is a reverence that is un-sanctified, one that lifts one brother above another, based on position established by *the way it is*.

I would tell them we are all priests unto God (Rev.1:6), and God did not appoint someone to make sacrifices on their behalf. There is one sacrifice and one High Priest; under Him we are all equal. There is no 'clergy'; there is no 'laity'. And you, looking from the outside, can see clearly such homage to man is sin. How much easier to see the flaws of other faiths.

Do not make the same mistake. Your Bible teaches partiality is sin. (Pr.24:23) Allegiance to non-biblical traditions is disloyalty to Jesus Christ. Do not let your heart be a mixture, a blending of *the way it is* and the Word of God. Commit yourself to the Bible, God's lone authoritative Word, and to

the lordship of the "*Spirit of truth*".

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"i determined not to know anything
… except jesus christ and him crucified." (1Cor.2:2)

not to know
be impressed by
boast in
anything
or anyone
except
jesus christ
and him crucified
not to ponder
rely on
gaze at
anything
or anyone
except
jesus christ
and him crucified
not to fear
align with
obey
anything
or anyone
except
jesus christ
and him crucified
not react to
adhere to
be loyal to
anything
or anyone
except
jesus christ
and him crucified

chapter twelve

----------DENOMINATIONS

Matthew 21:23: "**By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"**

An assayer from the city came to our door and asked my wife if he could come in to check the addition to our house we had just built, and she obliged. After entering, he gently chastised my wife, saying she should have asked for identification before allowing him entrance. How did she know he really was the authorized person he claimed to be? It was very good advice, and my wife acknowledges that it certainly is her responsibility to check for authorization.

Likewise, it is the christian's responsibility to check for authorization from those claiming spiritual authority.

1 Corinthians 12:1: **brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant:**

The way it is thrives on ignorance. But Jesus would have us know.... He's like that. He wants us to understand authority.

Suppose you had a servant, and you told that servant to deliver instructions to the bank manager to disperse certain funds in a certain manner. You can see that you are the authority, not the servant. You can see that the servant has no authority to add to, alter or remove any of the directives. Send this servant to university, give him a degree, dress him in a suit, and he will still not have authority to change one word of your instructions. Now suppose you had a thousand servants. Would they collectively have the authority to make changes? You can see they would not.

God's authority is His Word. No individual or group has the right to alter His Word.

Acts 15:1: **certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."**

These "*certain men"* were but a few of many who firmly believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Undoubtedly they spoke with an aura of authority, and even quoted Scripture. These "*certain men"* were christians, as the following verse reveals....

Acts 15:5 (NIV): **Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."**

This verse solidly confirms that which needs no confirmation.... christian leadership sometimes teach error. Did christians actually receive these false teachings and teachers?

Galatians 1:6: **I marvel that you are turning away from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,**

Yes, many accepted this "*different gospel"* and its preachers. They made the same mistake as did my wife; they did not check for authorization.

It is easy to see that an individual does not have authority that extends beyond the Bible (to speak or impose another word), but numbers impress us. When many speak in unison we tend to let our defense down and fail to check for authorization. The immensity of a denomination causes an unhealthy confidence in its perspective. Could so many be wrong?

Psalm 91:14: **Because he has set his love upon Me,**

Love is something that can be "*set"* (placed, fixed, positioned), and so can trust. It is an act of the will. A believer can set his trust (confidence) in God and His Word, or he can set it on something or someone else. But not fully on both.

The Galatian christians at one time had set their confidence in "*the grace of Christ"*. It was an act of the will. They were then coerced to remove that trust from Jesus and "*set"* it upon the circumcisers. They exchanged the lordship of Christ for the lordship of man. Just how serious was this mistake (sin)?

Galatians 5:3,4: **I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**

"Estranged from Christ… fallen from grace." Yes, there are serious consequences for exchanging the lordship of Christ for the lordship of someone or something else. Christians can be led astray by other christians. It happens often, quite often. You must be alert to check for authorization. How do you do this?

Acts 17:11: **and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.**

If a teaching is not scriptural it is not authoritative; it does not have God *behind* it. Not only does God not require submission to such a teaching, He forbids it.

2 Timothy 2:15: **Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

"Be diligent" to check it out. When you read a book, listen to a christian TV program, or hear a message by 'Pastor' Whoever, check to see if it is scriptural. To do this you will need the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13: **when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;**

We need the Holy Spirit. Only by the "*Spirit of Christ"* can we know if the preacher/teacher is "*rightly dividing the word of truth".* He may be quoting Scripture but straying from truth nonetheless.

The christians who taught, "*It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses"* (Ac.15:5) undoubtedly quoted Scripture. Perhaps they cited Genesis 17:11: "Y*ou shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you."*

Often the Bible is quoted to give credibility to a false doctrine. We need the wisdom of God to discern, to rightly divide. How do we get this necessary wisdom?

James 1:5: **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**

"Ask, and it will be given to you", Jesus taught. Pray, every day, for wisdom and understanding, and progressively "*it will be given to you"....* according to your faith in God.

Jeremiah 17:5: **Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man**

But how about many men? The same is true, *"Cursed is the man who trusts in"* men, no matter how numerous or esteemed those men may be.

Is it really possible that thousands of christians could be in error, that a denomination, even a large denomination, could be mistaken in a doctrine? Since large denominations disagree with each other (take opposing positions on matters of doctrine), the answer must be "yes". I will give three examples where this is so.

John 10:28,29: **I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.**

From this very comforting Scripture (and others) comes the doctrine of "eternal security" which teaches "once saved, always saved." When a man is born again of the Holy Spirit, the teaching goes, that man will not, even *cannot*, lose his salvation. I would estimate approximately seventy-five percent of evangelical churches teach this doctrine.

The other twenty-five percent teach a believer certainly can lose his salvation, quoting such Scriptures as....

Hebrews 6:4-6: "**For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."**

If the 75% of evangelical denominations are right, it necessitates that 25% teach a false doctrine. Conversely, if the 25% are correct, 75% of the denominations teach error. I will give a second example....

Mark 16:17: "**And these signs will follow those who believe: In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues;**

"Tongues" have split evangelicalism in North America since the Azusa Revival in the early 1900's. In those days you could expect to be immediately kicked out of your church if you admitted you spoke

in tongues. And today there are Bible colleges that will not allow entrance if you speak, or ever have spoken, in tongues.

I would 'guesstimate' that only 35% percent believe in tongues, and that means that either 35% or 65% are in error, and pass on this error as gospel truth to their trusting congregations. Now, one more example....

Acts 1:4,5: **And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."**

This prophecy of Christ to His apostles was soon fulfilled in "*the upper room where they were staying"* in Jerusalem, and their experience is referred to as the "baptism of the Holy Spirit". Some denominations teach this experience is for any believer who will ask in faith. (Of this group, there is another division of thought, some insisting that the proof of receiving is praying in tongues as did the 120 in the upper room when they received; others teach, not necessarily so.)

And some (most?) denominations believe this was a one-time experience, believing instead the entire church received the Holy Spirit when the 120 were baptized; a convert receives the baptism of the Holy Spirit the instant he is born again.

In both camps there are thousands of 'Reverends' and even some 'Doctors'. One might think a thousand 'Reverends' could not be wrong, but it is so obvious they can be.

What is the lesson to be learned?

John 16:13: **He will guide you into all truth;**

The Holy Spirit is more reliable than all the 'Reverends' and all the 'Doctors' of all denominations. The degree of truth you receive from the Holy Spirit is relative to your commitment to Christ. "*Set"* your love and your confidence on Jesus. It is an act of the will. It is an issue of lordship.

John 8:15: "**You judge according to the flesh;**

What did Jesus mean?

Judging "*according to the flesh"* is opposite to judging by the Holy Spirit. One is coming to a conclusion through reason and logic and by what one sees; the other is spiritual discernment.

When a speaker is introduced, his credentials and experience are often itemized for the purpose of gaining the acceptance of the audience. You are asked to accept the man (or at least be impressed) by evidence "*according to the flesh"*. Accepting (trusting, seeking advice from, following after) a pastor because of a denominational credential is judging "*according to the flesh"*.

1 Corinthians 2:15: **he who is spiritual judges all things,**

Someone is preaching and "*he who is spiritual"* is making a judgement. Is there a witness of the Holy Spirit? Do I feel at peace? "Lord Jesus, my precious and only Teacher, is this true?"

1 Corinthians 2:13: **comparing spiritual things with spiritual.**

Rightly dividing. Comparing *this* verse with *that* one. Correct perspective, not majoring on minors or minoring on majors.

To the spiritual man, denominational credentials mean nothing. He is not himself a denominational person (though he may attend a denominational church). He is convinced of his sonship, and does not require endorsement.

1 Corinthians 3:4: **when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?**

When one says I am *of* this church or *of* that denomination, is he "*not carnal?"* When one says, "My pastor is 'Pastor' Whoever," is he "*not carnal?"*

John 10:25: **The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.**

"Works" (signs, fruit) authenticate. The works a christian does in Christ's name are his credentials.

1 Corinthians 2:4,5: **my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

The graduate of his denominational Bible college had been taught to preach "*with persuasive words"*, but Paul 'preached' by "*demonstration of the Spirit and of power"*. The pitiful graduate of most seminaries cannot preach by "*demonstration"*, nor can his teachers. What's missing? In a word, Jesus. Where Jesus reigns, the Spirit reigns. Where Jesus reigns there is a "*demonstration of the Spirit"*, *"signs and wonders",* healings.

Even though manifestations of the Holy Spirit are scarce in most denominations, denominations are, nonetheless, considered as possessing authority from God. *That's just the way it is!*

----------APPENDIX

I was attending another mass, one of many thousands. But this time it was different....

In catholicism there is a veil between the 'clergy' and the 'laity'. From outside looking in the 'laymen' see respectability, integrity, authority. They see God.

Like everyone, they are impressed by impressions, of which there are many - the sacraments, the priests' cloaks, burning candles, statues and pictures, stained windows, rituals, liturgical prayers, etc.

This particular day the Lord rolled back the veil and let me see into the other side (the clerical side) of catholicism. I didn't see anything with my physical eyes; it was a spiritual awareness.

I saw vacancy, a spiritual nothingness. There was nothing behind all the activity and rituals performed by the four priests that day. *God was not behind the veil.*

The priests were androids, spiritually heartless, fulfilling a religious obligation. The people were most respectful, having been taught that God is *in* all these rituals, that this was all done at His beckoning and for His pleasure, and He was present in, even lord of, the ceremony.

But He wasn't. God wasn't there. Not only was He not *in* that mass that day, He wasn't *in* any of the catholic rituals. It was men doing their thing, honouring *the way it is*. He did not author these rituals, and He certainly was not participating.

During the mass there were a few readings from the Bible, one from the epistles, one from the gospels. Was God in that? Yes, God is in His Word. That is the *only* place He can be found. He is the author. He backs up His Word. He is the keeper of Bible promises.

God is omnipresent, but in a sense He can only be *in* one place at once. He can't be *in* His Word and *in* some other word. He cannot participate in that which He has not brought forth. He cannot support two opposing realms.

Were the priests *"born again"* of the Holy Spirit? (Did they at one time have a conversion experience to the Lord Jesus Christ?) Whether none or one or all were actually in the family of God is of no substance. If they were all God's legitimate sons God would still not be behind this veil of religion. Actually, the veil is an offence to Him.

In evangelicalism there is also a veil, one separating the 'ministerial' (supposed special christians) from the 'laity' (supposed common christians). Evangelical 'laity', impressed by various impressions, see respectability and integrity and authority. They see God.

If this spiritual veil could be lifted, if we could somehow see with spiritual eyesight into the world of the 'ministerial', would we see God? Would He be sitting in a recliner, perhaps at denominational headquarters, smiling a benevolent smile, giving directives, ruling the evangelical assemblies, blessing the multitudes on the other side of the veil through evangelical 'clergy'?

Certainly God blesses through the individual lives of those in the 'ministerial', just as He does through any christian. But is God *in* the organization itself.... the denominational hierarchy, the ways and means of *That's Just The Way It Is!*? Is this His invention? And if not, does He bow to the whims of man nonetheless? Is He thinking, "No, it is not My way.... it is not in agreement with My Word.... but it's better than nothing!"?

Is God behind the 'ministry' veil?

If you really want to know ask Him.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

"i determined not to know any thing
… except jesus christ and him crucified." (1Cor.2:2)

to know him
him
the good shepherd
he sacrificed self
for the sheep
pastor jesus
pastor jesus
to know him
him
not pastor joe
pastor jim
pastor john
but him
pastor jesus
pastor jesus
to know him
him
not the elder
the prophet
the evangelist
but him
pastor jesus
pastor jesus
to know him
him
the good shepherd
who laid down his life
for the sheep
to know him
him

chapter thirteen
----------MONEY

Malachi 3:8-10: "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,

Previously, I gave examples of denominations disagreeing with each other. But there is little controversy regarding “tithes and offerings” and “the storehouse”.

Most denominations teach their assemblies are “the storehouse”. The officers of the denominations and the pastors of the assemblies are financially supported by the tithes they have taught the people to give. Tithes and offerings were once used to support the Levites fulfilling their priestly duties, but such priests are gone with the passing old covenant, and now tithes are used to support the present-day ‘ministerial’.

As you know Malachi 3:8-10 is quoted often. Now let us look at a few verses from Malachi rarely quoted:

Malachi 1:6-8: A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the Lord of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, ‘In what way have we despised Your name?’ “You offer defiled food on My altar. But you say, ‘In what way have we defiled You?’ By saying, ‘The table of the Lord is contemptible.’ And when you offer the blind as a sacrifice, Is it not evil? And when you offer the lame and sick, Is it not evil?

Malachi 3:8-10 tells us the Lord was angered when the “sons of Jacob” withheld tithes from the Lord. Malachi 1:6-8 reveals He was enraged when the Levite priests offered sick and blind animal sacrifices to Him.

The people who were “cursed with a curse” for robbing God by withholding tithes and offerings, were certainly “cursed with a curse” for allowing the Levite priests to offer “the lame and sick” on their behalf. (And the same curse was the result of every other act of disobedience.)

Using the same yardstick, if the new covenant believer is “cursed with a curse” for not tithing, why is he not cursed for not sacrificing unblemished animals to the Lord?

Yes, the thought of ‘Pastor’ Whoever sacrificing animals in the church is bizarre. But is it not equally irrational that the old requirement of tithing to the Levites somehow got transformed into tithing to the local church?

Somewhere in times past someone made a giant leap from Scripture and established a mandate that has no biblical foundation. Everyone would agree no person has authority to add to God’s Word, yet this violation has been embraced, warmly, by evangelicalism.

That God placed on the Israelites a charge to tithe to “the storehouse” is clearly written in God’s Word, but who has the right to lay upon the christian community an obligation that is most definitely not God’s Word? Like the magician pulling a rabbit from his hat, present-day evangelicalism simply pulled this financially lucrative doctrine of tithing out of the old covenant.

But, one might argue, if tithing was the will of the Lord then (under the old covenant), is that not an

indication that it is His will today? Perhaps that question is best answered by a question....

Because it was the will of the Lord to offer unblemished animal sacrifices then, is that not an indication that it is His will today? And.... if it was the will of the Lord for men of Israel to be circumcised before Calvary, is that not an indication that christian men should be circumcised today? The same question could be asked of the many other ordinances imposed upon the Israelites that the church totally (and rightfully) ignores.

The Lord was angered because Israelites were disobedient to a very direct command (tithing). He is not angered by the evangelical who does not tithe because He gave them no such command. Why would He be angry with christians who do not tithe and not be angry with christians for not sacrificing animals? Tell me, is this not sound reasoning?

Why is it that tithing is the only old covenant ordinance that was pulled out of the old covenant and imposed upon the new covenant believer? The answer is not pleasant....

The way it is must be financed, and the doctrine of tithing to the local assembly is the financial foundation upon which it is built. Take it away and evangelicalism collapses!

Matthew 6:21: where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Your heart follows your treasure. The one capturing your treasure also captures your heart. The way it is or Jesus Christ.... it is an issue of lordship.

John 16:13: when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;

“All truth” includes how much to give (very important) and where (equally important). You have paid for your giving with your time and energy. Directing your gifts is directing your life, the amount of life you spent earning it. Commit your “treasure” to Jesus as an act of obedience, and your heart will follow your treasure and be captured by Him.

The way one obeys Jesus is by submitting to the lordship of “the Spirit of truth”, “the Spirit of Christ”. One day you will give an account to Jesus for the choices you make in your here and now. (Rm.14:12)

2 Timothy 2:15: Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The direction and success of your life is affected greatly by your decision to tithe to your local church or to give as the Spirit of God leads. If you are still confused over the issue of tithing it is wisdom to prayerfully study the matter for yourself and come to your own conclusion. As you make your study, look for a precedent. Is there a biblical occasion whereby a christian tithed? Is there evidence that Paul or Peter or any other writer tithed or taught others to do so? May the Lord help you to “rightly (divide) the word of truth”.

1 Timothy 5:17,18: Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those

who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” and, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

This verse shows (again) the discrepancy between God’s Word and the way it is. Elders in the local church are not paid for their services. (Some churches define an elder as one who is unpaid.) Since he isn’t paid he will be used only sparingly to minister God’s Word, regardless of how qualified he may be.

Strangely, this verse is used to justify the pastor’s salary. Being a pastor elevates him above the elders in the church but he uses a verse in reference to elders to rationalize his salary. (“The laborer is worthy of his wages.”) Such are the ways of That’s Just The Way It Is! in evangelicalism.

1 Timothy 5:18: “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

The labourer teaching children downstairs in Sunday school is as “worthy of his (her) wages” as the pastor preaching to adults upstairs.

1 Corinthians 9:7: Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?

The pastor doesn’t, but many others do. Sunday school teachers (of children and adults), elders and deacons, many evangelists, those leading Bible studies, people working the streets talking to prostitutes and addicts, those in music ministry, etc., etc. How much more would these people be able and willing to produce if they were financially supported and didn't have to work full time in secular employment?

The above verse suggests wages should be food and drink and the expenses incurred by ministry. There is no suggestion the collection plate must fund a high standard of living. Because a few take so much, others must labour at their “own expense”.

James 2:9: if you show partiality, you commit sin,

Paying a pastor for his services while overlooking others is committing the sin of partiality.

1 Corinthians 9:9: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”

Partiality is feeding some ‘oxen’ while muzzling others.

Titus 3:13,14: Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Christians are not nearly as fruitful as they should or could be. They neglect obedience to New Testament guidelines because they have been taught (coerced?) to blindly tithe to their church, thereby depleting both their funds and their faith.

Christians have learned to ignore “Zenas the lawyer and Apollos” (unless they happen to be attending their church, and even then it is 'iffy'), the stressed widow next door living on welfare, the evangelist wanting to go but cannot.

Many starving children in third world nations would be fed, clothed and housed if less of the believers' money was used to finance buildings and salaries. More evangelists and missionaries would be sent out, more gospel tracts produced, and other “good works” maintained if only christians were encouraged to submit their donations to the lordship of the Word and the Holy Spirit.

Titus 1:11: teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.

It is so obvious God never intended the new covenant believerr to tithe. How can it be that denominations scrap over many other issues but are in harmony with a doctrine so obviously suspect?

Perhaps most in the ‘ministerial’ are not “teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain”, but do so out of ignorance, repeating what they have been taught, assuming those ‘above’ them are expert at what they teach. Perhaps, like most of us, they are simply followers of followers, victims of victims, having an inordinate loyalty to That's just the way it is!.

We have all sinned the sin of preaching as gospel truth fallacies of the way it is. And we must all give an account. (Ouch!)

1 Corinthians 11:1: Imitate me,

Most envy Paul’s accomplishment but few imitate him. Since he accomplished so much, since he has the respect of the entire christian community worldwide, since his letters were “given by inspiration of God, and (are) profitable for doctrine” (2Tm.3:16), should the church not heed his example and “imitate” him? If not, whom should we imitate? What standard should the church adopt? Whose word should be followed?

1 Corinthians 2:4: my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

“Demonstration of the Spirit and of power” is sorely absent. The church does not have the power of Paul because it does not have the commitment of Paul.

1 Corinthians 11:1: Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

Paul could “imitate Christ” because he had developed an intimacy with Christ. His letters reveal his commitment to Jesus. Jesus taught the words one speaks reveal one’s heart, and surely the same applies to written words. Paul spoke Christ and Paul wrote Christ. In this particular letter (1 Corinthians) he mentioned the name of Jesus or made reference to Him as “Lord” approximately 120 times!

It is incredible that in spite of all the teaching and preaching today, the name of Jesus is infrequently mentioned. Read a periodical, listen to a christian television program, read a 'how-to' book and usually (not always) the name of Jesus is seldom mentioned. Many (most?) pastors do not mention Jesus' name 120 times in a couple of months of Sunday-morning preaching.

Paul's power was in his commitment to Christ. Listen to his heart....

Philippians 3:7,8: what things were gain to me, these things I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Paul was committed to the Lord Jesus Christ and both his letters and his lifestyle proved it.

2 Thessalonians 3:8: nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

Paul was often supported by others for his work in the "ministry of reconciliation" and in this way he is imitated by those of the 'ministerial'. The above verse, and others, establishes that he sometimes laboured with his hands for the sake of the ministry.... but in this way he is seldom imitated.

1 Corinthians 9:14: the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.

This verse is often quoted, but there is another charge "the Lord has commanded"....

Matthew 10:8: Freely you have received, freely give.

These words of our Christ are rarely quoted and rarely heeded.

The precious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is big business. Many make their living marketing teaching tapes, CDs and videos, gospel music, testimonies, teaching books, music books, fictional books, 'how-to' books, inner healing books, how-to-reach-the-lost-for-Christ books, church growth books, Bibles, pictures of Jesus, posters of famous musicians, signatures of the famous, monthly publications, calendars, tracts, greeting cards, etc.

Many (most?) preachers sell their services. You have seen pulpits with an engraving of a cross or a dove or a Bible; some (most?) pulpits would be best depicted by a dollar sign! The people behind the pulpit wouldn't be there were they not paid.

The pastor is there because it is part of his job description; he doesn't want to share the pulpit with the unpaid because it would be hard to justify one preacher being supported and the other not. Some guest speakers demand a certain fee; others spend ten minutes or longer 'working' the congregation before taking a collection.

The evangelical pulpit, like other pulpits, is definitely not under the lordship of the Holy Spirit, but rather the lordship of the way it is.

Galatians 6:6: Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.

Yes, it is the responsibility of those who are spiritually fed through (not by, but through) the preacher/teacher to share what they have “with him who teaches”. Nonetheless, it is the responsibility of “him who teaches” to offer his services without charge to “him who is taught”.(“Freely you have received, freely give.”)

Philippians 4:17: Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Paul’s source of support was not those to whom he ministered; his source was Jesus Christ. He loved the Philippian believers and wanted them to be well rewarded at the judgement seat of Christ. His love was not ministry but people, a consequence of his love for Jesus. (Jn.21:17)

He gave to the Philippians freely. The Philippians responded by sending "aid once and again for (his) necessities”. (Not luxuries, but “necessities”.) That’s how it is supposed to work.

Titus 1:7: not greedy for money,

This is one of many criteria for the one serving as an overseer. It is quite common for the pastor’s salary to be greater than that of the average wage earner in the congregation. (It is uncommon for the people to know the amount of that salary.) The lead pastor in a large church can hope to make a lot of money, more than the combined respectable wages of a working husband and wife in the congregation. (And because he is licensed with the government he gets taxation benefits for which most don't qualify.)

There is no New Testament verse suggesting preachers of the gospel should receive a salary sufficient to support a lifestyle beyond frugal. (As a matter of fact, there is no verse substantiating a salary.)

1 Timothy 6:7-9: For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare,

The way it is has its own creed: “The minister of the gospel has every right to live as comfortably as if he applied his energies to a secular job. Is it fair that he should have to live conservatively while there are some in the assembly living affluently?”

2 Timothy 2:3: You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

Almost always soldiers are not well paid, at least not compared to civilians. Not every christian is a “soldier of Jesus Christ” though each should be; most are content to be ‘civilians’, and observe the battle from a safe distance.

And not all spiritual soldiers are good ones. Some murmur and complain and compete to have the same lifestyle as civilians. They simply refuse to “endure hardship”.

Others would do anything to “please him who enlisted him as a soldier”. Their reward at the judgement seat will far surpass the complaining soldiers and the civilians who refused to join the battle. It may not be fair that the soldier does not live as well as the civilian; nonetheless he made the choice to serve. If soldiers were equally paid there would be insufficient funds for weapons and uniforms and transportation.

In the Lord’s army the supply is limited by the faith of the church, and therefore there are always shortages. That is why a “good soldier of Jesus Christ” must “endure hardship”. A minister of the gospel who finances an expensive lifestyle by unduly withdrawing from the collection plate seriously impedes the work of God.

2 Corinthians 4:17: our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,

Paul was a good soldier. He was not well paid for his services, but now he eternally enjoys an “exceeding and eternal weight of glory”.

1 Corinthians 9:12: If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.

I heard of a father-son team of pastors who work at a secular job and do not take a wage from the sizable church they serve. They “have not used this right”. It can be done. The money not spent on salaries can be used to further “the gospel of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 7:23: You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

That “price” was nothing less than the sacrifice of Christ at the hands of the Roman government. “Do not become slaves of men.” No matter whom others are following, you will do well to follow your Master. Bring your finances under the lordship of the Bible and the Holy Spirit. Do so out of loyalty and gratitude to Jesus.

----------APPENDIX

It costs nothing to give.

Not one cent.

When we get to heaven and look back we will realize it wouldn’t have cost us anything to give. We could have given so much, brought the gospel to so many, at no cost.

It doesn’t make sense, but neither does feeding thousands of people with five loaves and a couple of fish.

It's a different economy, this economy of Christ Jesus.

It doesn't work by hoarding. Or by fear. Or by being chintzy.

It works by dispersing. And by faith. And by generosity.

Faith comes via relationship with Jesus. And so does generosity. We become like the One we walk with and gaze upon. And He is so generous.

So generous. “I lay down My life for the sheep.”

A shortage of generosity indicates a shortage of intimacy.

He gives seed to the sower. When the sower runs out of seed the Lord replenishes. He is faithful.

Jesus loves the poor. “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, And He will pay back what he has given.”

He will replenish. It costs nothing to give. “Give, and it will be given to you.”

“With the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Give little, receive little. Give much, receive much. It costs nothing to give little; it costs nothing to give much.

God “gave His only begotten Son”, and now he has many sons and many daughters. It costs nothing to give.

“Jesus had compassion.” He gave out of compassion.

Jesus "has pity on the poor." The poor of spirit. The financially poor. The fatherless. Those in need of salvation.

“Jesus, moved with compassion."

“I have compassion on the multitude.”

In evangelicalism, there is a dearth of compassion. A lack of compassion is a lack of Jesus.

We need to return. We have strayed, and we have to go back.

We could be so fruitful. There is still time to lay up treasures in heaven. It's not too late.

With Jesus comes faith and generosity and compassion and an abundance of fruit.

It's time to return.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

jesus
relevance
timelessness

glory
hope
jesus
here and there
near and far
north and south
east west
jesus
beneath and above
today and tomorrow
now
and ever after
jesus
song so pleasant
breath so fresh
drink so fine
blood so innocent
jesus
lily of the valley
bright morning star
fire of love
giver of life
jesus
salvation
redemption
deliverance
pardon
jesus

Part Two: THE WAY IT COULD BE

----------PREFACE

So glad you made it this far. Was Part One painful? Or liberating, perhaps? A touch of both? Again, I am so glad you made it this far. You hung in there while others let go; you have real spunk. You now know more than most about the devastation always accompanying religion. And now I have a favour to ask of you....

I want to speak to you directly. What I mean is, I want to talk to you as if you're the only one reading Part Two: THE WAY IT COULD BE. As if you and I were seated face to face in a cafe slurping a coffee

or whatever. Doesn't matter if you are old as dirt or young as the fledgling too nervous to leave the nest. You may be brainy or mediocre (like me), either a brother or sister-in-Christ, charismatic or mundane (like me). Doesn't matter if you are Canadian, American, Spanish, German, Asian, whatever. Your name might be John or Mary, Vladimir or Natalia, Ahmed or Vanna. You may reside in Europe, Africa, Asia, North or South America. It just doesn't matter. You are my Blood-bought brother/sister-in-Christ and I am requesting to speak to you personally, candidly, directly, sincerely. Okay?

Again, my name is Larry Jones. I am a follower of Jesus Christ and have been for many years. I consider myself to be a serious disciple of the Lord Jesus. That's not to say I'm a nice guy or anything like that. No, no no. I am only saying, after many inspections of my heart, our Lord Jesus Christ is “first love” and has been for several decades. I worship Him spontaneously. I am simple enough to believe, *sincerely* believe, that I can add good to your life.... no matter who or where or what you are, no matter your history. My heart is to point you to Jesus.... precious Jesus, loving and tender Jesus.

My wife and I have a family of seventeen, this including children and grandchildren. What I strongly desire for my seventeen I strongly desire for you. I don't care if my kids become wealthy, educated or popular. I only want each of my seventeen to love Jesus more than anything or anybody. I want that so much. And I only want you to love Jesus more than anything or anyone. I want that so much. Seems like Jesus is loving you through me. Like really. Perhaps I see more clearly than you your awesome potential, The Way It Could Be. And I know your potential can become your reality.... if only.

If only, if only, if only....

If only you would love Jesus, not only supremely, but radically. Like Paul and John and Stephen and Peter. Loving Jesus brings every good thing. Loving Jesus *supremely* magnetizes every good thing. Loving Jesus *radically* guarantees you to be an overcomer. You want to be an overcomer. I can help you be an overcomer by sharing what Christ has taught me over almost five decades of christianity. I can help you get onto the path of pursuit, the pursuit of the great “I Am”. And if you are already on this walkway my words will strengthen and quicken your steps.

And I have a second motive, even more compelling. I know by reaching you for Christ I will reach many. By blessing you I bless those you influence. I bless you by exalting Christ. Many of the people you influence will be drawn much closer to Jesus, your “first love”. That's why I write. To brighten your light. *(“You are the light of the world.”)* If you come to love Jesus *supremely* you will bring many to Christ. Should you love Jesus *radically* your collective catch will be abundant. *(“They caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.”)*

The words I bring you are not my words; they are the words of your Jesus. You have read them before. They lie silent in your Bible awaiting rediscovery. I merely accentuate the truths of Christ's precious words. I will make His words alive to you. You will see what you have yet to see. You will be

different. Changed. Bigger. That's why I humbly ask permission to speak to you personally. Sibling to sibling. Brother to brother. Brother to sister.

I want you to know Part Two is a complete rewrite. I first wrote Part Two in 2001. I titled it “The Way It Should Be”. This revision, renamed “The Way It Could Be”, is written in 2020. I have learned so much in nineteen years. In 2001 I imagined a vastly improved way of doing church. “There is a better way of gathering in the name of Jesus, and serving Him”, I wrote. “When I would see something isn't right I would muse and reason and speculate and fuss and hunt through Scripture for *the way it should be*.” But now I realize *the very premise was wrong.* You were converted to a Person, a very special Person, not a church. Evangelicals (and other religions) have switched the conversation from Christ to christianity.From Him to them. This has been so very destructive. The theme of one's life-on-earth should be none other than Jesus Christ. Christ refuses second place. Christ-plus is insulting.

Your christianity cannot be centred on church. Sure, you most certainly are part of Christ's universal church, His body. But much more relevant is the Christ-and-you relationship. Relationship, relationship, relationship. Christ saved you because He wants to relate to you. He wants to commune with you. He doesn't see you as part of a group.... He doesn't relate to groups.... He relates to individuals. You are only as fruitful and joyful as you are enamoured, captivated, devoted.

So let's get going, shall we? Just you and me.

chapter fourteen
----------JOHN FIFTEEN

John 15:1: **“I am the true vine,**

John, chapter 15 verses 1-10, should be memorized. Although there are many (what I call) supportive verses throughout the New Testament and the Old, nothing speaks of relationship so adroitly and wistfully as does Jesus' allegory of a vine and its branches.

John 15:4: **“Abide in Me, and I in you.**

This is really, really, really big. These seven words, if understood, cherished and obeyed, will add so much to who you are. These seven words will bring increase of every good thing you now have. And whatever you lack - financial security, physical or mental or emotional wellness, quality relationships, whatever - you will steadfastly gain. If you but abide in (live with, remain attached to) Christ, Christ, in turn, can/will abide in you. You must get that. Okay?

Psalm 23:1: **The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want**

Jesus is quite qualified to care for His sheep. As one of His many sheep, you must stay close to “that great Shepherd of the sheep”. Sheep who stray lose much of their protection; no longer can they say, *“I shall not want”* (“I have everything I need”). Sheep that *don't* wander are christians who are abiding.

John 15:5: **“I am the vine, you are the branches.**

You are a branch. I am a branch. Every person is a branch. Branches are attached to something. When Jesus called Himself “the true vine” He suggests there are vines not true. Religion is a vine not true. To this vine are attached billions of branches throughout humanity. The fruit religion produces through its many branches is not good fruit. Only the branch attached to “the true vine” bears good fruit. Repeat: Only the branch attached to “the true vine” bears good fruit.

The company of pharisees was a bad vine. Their people “were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” Catholicism, to which I was once attached, is a bad vine. So much sadness.... so much heaviness.... so much loneliness. Evangelicalism, to which I was once attached, is another bad vine. Every evangelical christian exchanged the Good Shepherd for another shepherd, “the true vine” for another vine; that's how he/she became an evangelical. All religions are bad vines pretending to be good vines. Though they valiantly try, they cannot produce good fruit.

John 15:5: **you are the branches.**

Most “branches” (most christians within christianity) are attached to two vines (or more), Jesus and another. They are the *“double-minded man”* of which James spoke. The 'another' vine competes with Lord Jesus for supremacy, for lordship, for devotion. *“Let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.”* (Jm.1:7) Those attached to Christ alone obey Christ alone; He is Lord in fact, not symbolically.

John 15:5: **He who abides in Me, and I in Him, bears much fruit;**

Do you get that? If you will but abide in Jesus you will bear *much* fruit. Repeat: If you will but abide in Jesus you will bear *much* fruit. Let's go over that again.... how do you get much fruit? You get much fruit by simply abiding in “the true vine”. Simple. No, not easy, but simple.

Since you want much fruit, abiding in Jesus should be your determination. You and those you influence will be blessed, eternally so. If you are not *determined* to abide in Christ you won't. But if you are you will.

John 15:8: **“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit;**

There's that word again.... *much*. The Father will be glorified by you if/when you bear much fruit. Lots and lots of fruit. How do you get much fruit? *“He who abides in Me.... bears much fruit.”*

Are you beginning to see the wonder and beauty of John fifteen? Can you understand why I said this is really, really, really big? John 15 is central because Christ-and-you is central. Christ-and-you is the concern of the Father's heart. Within the first eight verses of John 15 Jesus said “abide in Me” five times. Do you think Jesus is trying to tell us (you) something?

John 15:4: **the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,**

As there is no power in an unattached branch, there is likewise no power in the unattached christian. For a branch to bear "much fruit" it must be attached to a healthy vine; for the christian to bear much fruit he/she must be attached to Christ. You have to get that, know that, embrace that. *"Let these words sink down into your ears."* (Lk. 9:44)

John 15:5: **without Me you can do nothing.**

Without a relationship with Jesus Christ you can do nothing good. There will be no worthwhile fruit. Don't try to *produce* fruit. You can't. You can only bear fruit that Jesus produces through you. Amen?

John 15:2 (AMPC): **Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit He cuts away (trims off, takes away);**

Thankfully Jesus didn't say "He (the Father, "the vinedresser") cuts away (trims off, takes away)" the branch that is bearing *little* fruit. Most of us would have been ousted a long time ago. Thank You, Father!

John 15:2: **Every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.**

The Father wants fruit - more fruit, much fruit - from you. Much fruit is possible. Not probable – most bear little fruit; most live far (very far) below their potential – but possible. *"He who abides in Me.... bears much fruit."*

How does the Father prune you? The answer is found in verse 3....

John 15:3 (Phillips): **you have already been pruned by my words**.

The twelve were pruned by Christ's words. More accurately, the Father pruned the twelve through Jesus. (Jesus: *"I do not speak on My own authority.")* Many (most?) have been taught that the Father prunes us by bringing adverse circumstances into our lives. Is this what you thought? Relax, the Father prunes you by Bible truths, directly or through others. (Could He be pruning you through my words?)

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NLT): **we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve**

The value of your eternal rewards will depend on how intimate (how firmly connected) you are to Lord Jesus during your here-and-now. Since so much (so-o-o-o much!) depends on your abiding relationship with Jesus, *you must know what it means to abide.* I can help you....

Matthew 19:27: **Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You.**

Following Christ is abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ is following Christ. You cannot be abiding in Christ while following another. Just can't. If you have a herd mentality – going whenever and wherever the crowd is going – you are not following Christ; you are following christians.

Christians follow christians who are following christians who are following christians. To abide in

Christ you must get off that train. You must be like Peter who "left all" to follow Christ. (That won't make you popular; the herd despises rejection.)

Luke 22:54: **Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance.**

Like Peter on that scary night, most follow Jesus "at a distance". Christians are abiding in Jesus, but just barely. Religionists are constantly fretful; too much intimacy costs too much. You can follow Jesus closely or distantly. The choice is yours.

John 21:15: **"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me**

To love is to abide. To abide is to love. There are degrees of loving. There are degrees of abiding. There are degrees of commitment. The intensity of intimacy with Lord Jesus was chosen by you, not Jesus. Please understand that wherever you are, relationally speaking, you can be closer. And when you draw closer, you can draw closer still. There is always more of Christ to gain.

Peter replied, *"Lord, you know that I love You."* I respectfully challenge you: Can you say, *"Lord, you know that I love you"*? Can you declare, "Lord Jesus, You are 'first love' . There is nothing or no one I love more than You."? If so you will be eternally wealthy.

To love is to abide. To abide is to love. The loving mother abides in her suckling. Newlyweds, still enamoured, abide in each other. Religionists abide in their religion. The rich abide in their wealth. We all abide in something or someone. We abide in the one we most love.

Paul abided in Jesus. *("To live is Christ.")* As did John. *("There was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples.")* As did Thomas. *("Let us also go, that we may die with Him.")*

Psalm 91:14: **"Because he has set his love upon Me,**

Love can be "set". Love is a choice. You can set your love upon him or her or them. Or on this or that or whatever. God gave you a free will; you can "set" your love on whomever or whatever you choose. You can *choose* to set your love upon Jesus.

John 15: 9: **abide in My love.**
Paraphrase: "Be mindful of My love for you. Live *in the awareness* that My affection encompasses you always. Acknowledge and respond to My deep love for you."

Psalm 31:1: **In you, O Lord, I put my trust;**

This is but one of many supportive verses to John 15:4 *("Abide in Me, and I in you")* that will enhance your here-and-now and your eternity.

To trust is to abide. To abide is to trust. David enjoyed an abiding relationship with God. God enjoyed an abiding relationship with David. Why was David so special? Was it because "he was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good looking"? Don't think so. Was it because He was pretty good with a sling?

("David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone.") Don't think so. David was exceptional because his relationship with God was exceptional. *("In You, O Lord, I put my trust.")*

You trust by entrusting. You trust fully by entrusting fully. It's not easy. Fretting is a sign you have a long way to go. Don't feel bad; just keep climbing, responding to God's *"upward call"*. So many times the OT admonishes, *"Trust in the Lord".* You remain in trust by continual entrusting.

There is power in trust. Much power. The more trust, the more power. Just consider David's life; his strength and success were fruit of abiding trust. Trust in your Jesus will likewise make you an overcomer.

Romans 7:25: **I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!**
To be grateful is to abide. To abide is to be grateful. To abide in gratitude is more than an occasional "Thank You, Jesus." It is an 'attitude of gratitude' that doesn't fade away, that fosters strong devotion.

Luke 18:1: **Men ought always to pray**

To relate is to abide. To abide is to relate. We talk the most to the one in whom we abide. Think about that. The way we abide more fully is to – listen carefully now – talk to Jesus, talk to Jesus, talk to Jesus. Since we can all talk to Jesus, we can all draw closer.

John 15:9,10: **abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love,**

To obey is to abide. To abide is to obey. The rebellious teen is not abiding in his/her father. The obedient teen is. Her heart is to please, never dishonour. When away from Dad she is with him still.

Evangelicals obey Christ *and* their religion. They are the *"double-minded"* of James 1:8.

Isaiah 26:3: **You will keep in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You,**

Being mindful is abiding. Abiding is being mindful. Abiding in Christ is being mindful of Christ.
There are degrees of abiding. Abiding doesn't come easy. It comes in increments. Comparatively, rock climbing is no challenge. Gaining Christ is a forever grind.

If you are like me you are easily distracted. We must persist. In six months you will notice increased ability to stay focussed, to be more mindful of His Presence. Every day can be a day of growth, even if only slightly. It's worth every investment you make, every price you pay. Christ "*will keep in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on"* Him. And you will gain much more than peace; you will gain every good thing, such as....

John 15: 7: **"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in You, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.**

This is an incredible promise. Jesus taught us there are two conditions for answered prayer: 1) You abide in Him and 2) His words abide in you. Many of your prayers have gone unanswered simply because one (or both) of the two requirements was not fully realized. If both these necessities were

satisfied fully all your prayers would be answered. Jesus guarantees it.

Having said that, however, these two conditions are *never* satisfied fully. I have never fully abided in Jesus and His words have never fully abided in me. I, and you, must be satisfied with increase. Our prayers will become increasingly powerful as we grow in intimacy and as His words reign more fully. Increase.... our goal is increase.

John 15:7: **and My words abide in you,**

What does this mean? How can you know if the words of Jesus really do abide in you?

Psalm 1:2 (AMPC): **his delight and desire are in the law of the Lord, and on His law (the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God) he habitually meditates (ponders and studies) by day and by night.**

To have Christ's words (which are the Father's words) abide in us, we must know them. This takes study, this takes prayer, this takes spiritual strength. I know, I know.... you already have Bible words in you. Some you have memorized. So now it's a matter of increase, daily increase.

2 Timothy 2:15 (AMPC): **Study and be eager and do your utmost to present yourself to God approved (tested by trial), a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analyzing and accurately dividing the Word of Truth.**

Bible study never ends. Understanding words you read doesn't come all at once. You could meditate on John fifteen and its supportive Scriptures for a year and still not 'get it' entirely. It has been said christians not only need to be taught, we need to be reminded. We forget, we're reminded, we forget again, we're reminded again.

Psalm 119:11: **Your word I have hidden in My heart, That I might not sin against You.**

I have often studied the Bible out of an inferior motive. Studying the Bible is what nice christians do; and so I did. Not to know the will of God to obey, but just to know. This can be quite detrimental because *"Knowledge puffs up"*. Some, especially pastors, study because Bible knowledge is required to climb religious hierarchies. You want to know (you want to want to know) because you want to understand what pleases and displeases Jesus. *("That I might not sin against You.")*

Truth truly received is truth applied; it is much more than head knowledge. *"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only."* We will be rewarded for what we do, not by what we have learned.

James 1:22: **deceiving yourselves.**

Christians can verbally binge all day on politics, problems, diet, church issues, etc. and somehow conclude Christ's words abide in them. They are *"deceiving selves."* Jesus taught, *"Out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."* The words we speak indicate the degree Christ's words abide in us.

Matthew 7:7: **“Ask, and it will be given to you;**

You are playing checkers with the Lord Jesus. Whose turn is it? Is it Jesus' move or yours? Are you waiting for Him or is He waiting for you? I suggest it's your move. Ask. Now it's Jesus' turn... He adds truth to your storehouse of truth. Then it's your move again; ask for more truth. Jesus will answer again, in time, adding more truth to truth. Truth may be knowledge or it may be understanding or it may be correction. Truth will come.... according to your faith. (Jesus:*“According to your faith let it be to you.”) Hmmm.* If it's that simple why don't more people simply ask?

Christians have as much truth as they want. It takes courage to embrace truth; truth, you see, often necessitates change. *The way it is* is threatened. Best to leave things as they are. Pastors dodge obvious truth regarding the religion they serve because Bible truth will capsize their lives. Truth will drive pew-people out of their cozy bondage and into challenging ministry.

John 15:4: **and I in you.**

Jesus wants to abide in you. Jesus died a horror-death to secure you. He wants you more than you want Him, much more.

Try to comprehend the enormity of His invitation, *“Abide in Me, and I in you”*. Lord Jesus - *“The Son of the Highest”*, the promised and long awaited Messiah, the Father's Sent-One, humanity's only virgin-born, *“that great Shepherd of the sheep”*, the very *“I am”*, *“the living bread”*, the One whose *“name which is above every name”*, the *“Man standing at the right hand of God”*, the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* - this Jesus is actually calling you into deeper relationship.... into meaningful friendship and fellowship.

I know you don't/can't get it because I don't/can't get it. It's too enormous. I simply can't wrap my head and heart around this kind of love. I just can't. And why can't we get it? I think I know.... spiritual denseness.

Spiritual denseness keeps the spiritually blind blind and the deaf deaf. I know you have this nasty obstruction because I have it. Everybody I know has it. What should be so easy to understand isn't. What should be learned in a day takes months and years. Perhaps this denseness was initiated by Adam's fall, densified further by multitudes over millennia and densified still further by our own awful sins. Add to this the vandalism of *“the rulers of the darkness of this age”*.

I'm not sure how it got here, but I do know spiritual denseness is a reality, a dirty cloud floating above our heads, hovering there between Jesus and us. We strain to see through it - we can somewhat - and the straining tires us. Above this gloomy mist are Jesus and the Father. Above there is purity, truth, reality, healthy perspective, knowledge, understanding. Your challenge is the same as mine, to weaken the cloud so you can more fully know, perceive, discern, understand. *(“Get wisdom! Get understanding!”)*

With Jesus comes improved sight. Every day is an opportunity to inch closer to your Lord. Your day

is interspersed with crossroads. A crossroad is a choice, a decision. This way leads to more of Jesus, that way to less. Less television is more Jesus; more television is less. (Remember, I speak relationally, not positionally.) More Bible is more Jesus, less Bible is less. One friend is more Jesus, another friend is less. Gratitude brings more, self-pity pushes Him away. And on and on. Can you see how your daily choices affect you daily?

John fifteen is worthy of your attention/study/meditation/reverence. John fifteen is fruit bearing. John fifteen will make the judgement seat of Christ a day of rejoicing.

----------APPENDIX

It was a Sunday evening service in a small evangelical church. The pastor declared, "Confusion comes when you mix the Word with something that is not the Word!" He said it again, "Confusion comes when you mix the Word with something that is not the Word!" And he said it again and again at different intervals of his message. I can be slow to learn but finally I got it! Confusion comes when you mix the Bible with *"tradition of men"*. So that's why I was so confused! I never fully discarded traditional ways.

And that, I concluded, is why everyone in my circle of acquaintances was confused! They want to blend their new experience in Christ with the traditional teachings of their religion, to give loyalty to both *the way it is* and the Bible. The result is confusion. Always.

Chances are you, too, are suffering from confusion. You have tried to consolidate the truths of the Bible with *the way it is* in evangelicalism (or whatever) and it isn't working. Trying to merge two opposing perspectives always brings spiritual disorientation.

My solution, after the pastor's sermon, was to seriously recommit my life to Christ *and* to the Bible; I would be obedient to the truths of the Bible as the Holy Spirit revealed them. This commitment caused me to take my family out of catholicism, I was soon baptized in water as the Bible so clearly instructs, and I baptized my children. Confusion could not have a grip on me as long as I stayed true to my commitment.

There are some things in Scripture I do not understand, but lack of understanding is not confusion; I simply don't know.

You will continue to be victimized by confusion until you embrace the Bible as your sole authority. You may falter in disobedience occasionally, as I do, but things will be black and white. If you have divided loyalties, if you choose the path of least resistance, if the choices you make are based on what does or does not offend others, you cannot be fully used by the One *"who Himself bore* (your) *sins in His own body on the tree",* the One you call *"Lord, Lord".*

What does the Bible mean to you? What allegiance do you give it? Is this truly the authority by which you govern your life? Will you be the wise man who built his house on the rock? (Matthew chapter 7)

Talk it over with Jesus.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

in the beginning
was the word
and the word
was with god
and the word
was god
he was in the beginning
with god
all things
were made through him
and without him
nothing was made
that was made
in him
was life
and the life
was the light of men
and the light
shines in the darkness
and the darkness
did not comprehend it
he was
in the world
and the world
was made through him
and the world
did not know him
he came
to his own
and his own
did not receive him
but as many
as received him
to them
he gave the right
to become

children of god

(John 1:1-5, 10-12)

chapter fifteen
----------WILL YOU FOLLOW?

Matthew 4:18: **"Follow Me,**

Jesus said to *"Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother", "Follow Me".* Jesus said to *"James the son of Zebedee, and his brother"* - the *"Sons of Thunder"* - *"Follow Me"*. Jesus said to Matthew, *"Follow Me"*. Jesus said to Philip, *"Follow Me"*. Jesus says of His sheep, *"they follow Me"*. Jesus says to *"anyone desires to come after"* Him, *"Follow Me"*.

And Jesus says to you, *"Follow Me."*

There are many reasons for you to follow Christ. And there are many reasons not to. Peter, it is generally understood, was martyred. As was Andrew. Herod *"killed James.... with the sword."* John was banished to *"the island that is called Patmos"*. Probably Matthew and Philip were executed as were many of His *"sheep"* throughout church history. And there was Paul: *"From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned."* And John the baptist: *"His head was brought on a platter."* And Stephen: *"They stoned Stephen."*

Those of us in North America don't have to worry about stoning and flogging and such, but one thing is certain for those responding to His call *"Follow Me"*....

2 Timothy 3:12: **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

Persecution is guaranteed to those determined *"to live godly in Christ Jesus".* That's why so many don't. The cost of Christ is greater than most are willing to pay. Choosing Christ over *the way it is* will assure unpleasant repercussions. There is a way to dodge these repercussions.... compromise. Example....

Matthew 23:10: **do not be called teacher; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.**

Had it been customary for the people to call religious leaders "Lord", Lord Jesus would have said, "Do not be called lord; for One is your Lord, the Christ." If it were customary to call religious leaders "Pastor" (pastor means shepherd) Jesus would have said, "Do not be called pastor; for One is your Pastor, the Christ." *("The Lord is my shepherd.")* You can see that. But, as you know, there is pressure on evangelical church people to do what everyone does, to call the man "Pastor". Refusing to bow to group 'correctness' will mark you. Leadership of *the way it is* will notice. But there is a solution.... compromise. Another example....

2 Corinthians 9:7 (NLT): **You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure.**

Since Jesus is your Lord you want to resist *"pressure"* and submit your giving to His lordship. So here comes that collection thingy again (plate, basket, bucket, whatever) strategically timed immediately after the twenty-two minutes of praise and worship when hearts have been softened. From the pulpit pressure has been skillfully applied to feed it. But does the One you call "Lord" want you to contribute? It has been suggested that you are part of this church family.... and this is your home church.... and we are all team players..... and the pastor's salary must be paid.... and there is the church mortgage.... and who's gonna pay for lights and repairs and maintenance? Pressure, lotsa pressure. And yet.... and yet....

Jesus never referred to a gathering of christians as one's family.... and you know there's no such thing as "home church" in the Bible.... and you are called to be Christ's disciple, not a team player.... and there is no precedent for a salary.... and this church building wasn't your idea. But, thou thinkest, if you don't feed the thingy, regularly and generously, who's gonna pay the bills?

May I be quite blunt?..... that is none of your business! Your business is to do the will of God, nothing more and nothing less. The will of God, which is your appointed cross, will consume all the time you have, none left over to do the will of confused christians.

But if you don't do what they want you to do and what you don't want to do, you will lose acceptance and approval. What to do? .... what to do? Well, you know the simple solution.... compromise. Just *"give reluctantly or in response to pressure."* And take heart.... compromise gets easier with practice. But your virtuous heart tells you compromise is betrayal to the One everyone calls Lord. (Caution: It has been well said compromise is like drinking salt water.... the more you drink, the thirstier you become.)

John 2:23-25 (AMP): **many believed in His name after seeing His signs (attesting miracles) which He was doing. But Jesus, for His part, did not entrust Himself to them, because He knew all *people* , and He did not need anyone to testify concerning man , for He Himself knew what was in man .**

Have you done what Jesus would never do? Have you entrusted yourself to men? To a church body? To a denomination? Perhaps you have not *"understood the superficiality and fickleness of human nature."* God certainly did and said so: *"Cursed is the man who trusts in man."* (Jer.17:5)

Let's be forthright (as was Jesus): Religious leaders want your money. Religion costs lotsa money and you are a likely prospect. If you are wealthy they want plenty; if you are poor a little will do. To get your money they go after your commitment. Nothing less than weekly contributions will satisfy religion's insatiable appetite. Certainly they also want to nourish you spiritually. Some are more concerned with your welfare than your financial support. And some are not.

Luke 9:23: **"If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**

Jesus' cross was the cross of Calvary. Your cross is unlike that of any other. Your cross is your assignments, just as my cross is my assignments (*The Way It Is* being but one). Jesus said to the Father, *"I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."* Will you one day be able to say to Jesus, *"I have finished the work which You have given me to do"*? Consider....

Do you really think financing a church mortgage or a non-biblical salary is your assignment? Do you think helping to cover church expenses is what Jesus meant by *"take up cross daily, and follow Me"*? And consider....

How are you to finance the assignments Lord Jesus entrusted to you if you direct your giving elsewhere? You can ask the church in which you invested so much time and capital to support you; you *are* part of the team, right? (Yes, I'm being facetious.) After they turn you down, you might consider financing your own God-given (and therefore holy) commissions. Set your faith on *that*. You can do it.

What might your *"cross"* look like? Well....

Acts 18:9: **the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;**

Followers of Christ do what followers of Christ did. They and we *"do not keep silent"*. *"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them."* Paul *"preached the Christ in the synagogues."* Paul to Timothy: *"Preach the word.... Convince, rebuke, exhort."* Barnabas *"remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord."* Stephen preached. Titus preached. Mark and Luke preached. The twelve preached. The seventy preached.

Followers of Christ preach Christ. You are His ambassador, as much as anyone. Ambassadors cannot represent silently. You must know you are appointed to preach, teach, exhort.... and perhaps rebuke. You don't need any man's or any group's permission or guidance or support. Christ is your Lord and sufficiency; the Holy Spirit is your guide.

2 Timothy 3:12: **all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**

The *"godly"* speak out against wrong, against injustice, against disobedience, against *"the tradition of men"* that *"have made the commandment of God of no effect"*. Jesus is your example. So are the eleven. So are the reformers of centuries past. They all suffered persecution.

You will be made the target of (what I call) dirty tricks. Dirty tricks? Yes, dirty tricks, such as.... a hard stare.... exclusion.... body language.... pulpit bullying.... accusations.... gossip.... public putdowns.... coded messages. I call these tactics dirty because they are done slyly and unexpectedly, like a sucker punch.

If these don't bring you into submission the man might one day say, "Perhaps you should find a church more to your liking." Ouch! Talk about rejection.

Luke 6:46: **why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?**

Evangelicalism is bloated with compromisers. It was compromisers who created this religion and it is compromisers who maintain it and it is compromisers who insist you join their rank. Resistance is rebellion. Your independence is a small fire that must be snuffed out before it spreads.

Compromisers call Jesus *"Lord, Lord"* but live contrary to His words. Leadership adds to and takes away from His Bible without blushing. You can't follow compromisers and Christ. You and I have no right to call Jesus *"Lord, Lord"* unless our intention and determination is to obey Him.

Hebrews 10:24,25: **And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another,**

This verse has often been used (misused) to corral the sheep. *"The assembling ourselves together"* is somehow interpreted as "You gotta go to church.... every Sunday.... rain or shine." I've got good news for you....

You don't have to 'go to church'!!! You can, but you don't have to. I don't. Millions of christians don't. These verses are actually one of many *"one another"* verses found throughout the New Testament, christians ministering to one another, not one christian ministering to all. We are to *"consider one another."* The NLT says it this way: *"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works."* Doesn't that sound like a small group sitting in someone's living room rather than a large gathering lined up neatly in pews, forbidden to express? Does anyone think 'going to church' is fellowship, a place of *"exhorting one another"*?

What we today consider church is not church. Church is not a building. You don't go to church.... you don't do church.... you are the church! Church is where you are. Church is where I am. Since Christ is *"head of the church"*, He is your *"head"*. Head means superintendent. Jesus Christ is your Superintendent! He is your Lord. The issue is not how you do church but how you do Christ. *"Let these words sink down into your ears."*

John 6:66: **many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.**

The title of this chapter is, "Will You Follow?" Many disciples stop following Christ (cease being His disciples); they *"walked with Him no more".* That's why you can't follow the crowd. Fully understand: A disciple of Christ is a follower of Christ; if you are not a follower you are not a disciple. Jesus asked the twelve, *"Do you also want to go away?"* Peter said to Jesus, *"We have left all and followed You."* Following Jesus will cost your *"all"*, your everything and everybody. I ask again, "Will you follow?"

----------APPENDIX

I want to convey to you the rarity of the person who follows Jesus Christ implicitly. You will not be this rare person if you follow the crowd. We think there is safety in numbers; so many can't be

wrong. As one reared in catholicism I can assure you this is fallacy. Most followers of religion and religionists assume they are followers of Christ though all evidence says otherwise. Please consider....

Consider Joshua and Caleb. They were only two of many thousands who believed God's promise to deliver to them *"a land of milk and honey"*; the rest refused to follow God's instructions and perished in the wilderness.

And consider Exodus 32:3: *"So* all the people *broke off their golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron"* for the purpose of fashioning for them a golden calf.

And consider Isaiah 53:6: "All we *like sheep have gone astray; We have turned,* every one*, to his own way."*

And consider Luke 23:18: *"And* they all *cried out at once, saying, 'Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas.' "*

And consider Galatians 3:1: *"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"*

And consider Jesus' message to *"the church of Ephesus"*: *"I have this against you, that you have left your first love."*

And consider the worlds largest evangelical denominations; isn't their sharp disagreement on many doctrinal issues proof so many can be wrong?

And finally, consider the christians you know. Do they speak Christ primarily, or do they speak christians and/or church and/or whatever? *("Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.")*

Rare indeed is the follower of Jesus Christ. A decision to follow Christ will bring you both fulfillment and loneliness, both an abundance of good fruit and an abundance of criticism. I sincerely wish you courage. I sincerely wish you well.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

surely
he has borne
our griefs
and carried
our sorrows
yet
we esteemed him
stricken
smitten by god
and afflicted

but
he was wounded
for our transgressions
he was bruised
for our iniquities
the chastisement
for our peace
was upon him
and
by his stripes
we are healed

(Isaiah 53:4,5)

chapter sixteen
----------"HE WILL GUIDE YOU"

John 16:13: **when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth**

Like John 15:4 *("Abide in Me, and I in you.")*, John 16:13 is really, really really big. Jesus is assuring you that the Holy Spirit will guide you into all that you need to know. *"He will guide"*; He will not manipulate or insist, but guide. A guide leads tourists and it's up to tourists to follow; the Spirit guides christians and it's up to christians to follow.

Because He guides doesn't mean we are guided. Evangelicals are not guided, primarily, by the Holy Spirit; I conclude this because the Holy Spirit never leads one into evangelicalism (or any other religion). The evangelical became an evangelical the moment he/she embraced evangelicalism as mentor and guide, partially or fully, thus deposing the Holy Spirit.

What percentage of christians do you think make an earnest effort to be lead solely by the Holy Spirit? Don't know? Neither do I. But I do dare make a guess-timate, based on almost five decades of observation. I suggest the christians endeavouring to be daily guided through their christianity by the *"Spirit of truth"* is less than two percent. Rare indeed is the North American believer who has given himself over to the lordship of the Spirit. That's why Christ's church is so timid.

In this chapter I want to convince you, a sent-one *("As the Father has sent Me, I also send you")* to surrender to the Sent-One *("whom I shall send to you from the Father")*.

John 16:7: **I will send Him to you.**

This is enormous. God sent God to you. Jesus, "*My Lord and my God",* has sent God (the Holy Spirit) to you. Jesus: *"He dwells with you and will be in you."* Paul: *"Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."* Repeat: This is enormous. Who can comprehend the love of God for man? The Father not only gave

us *"His only begotten Son"*, He also gave us His Spirit *("the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father")*.

John 16:13: **He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak;**

The Spirit submits to Jesus Christ. He relays to you the teachings/instructions of Lord Jesus, the *"head of the church".* (Never forget, you are the church!) So.... in obeying the Holy Spirit you are, in fact, obeying Lord Jesus. You must see that. By ignoring the Holy Spirit you are denying the lordship of Christ. Slighting the Spirit is slighting Jesus.

Do you see God's order? Jesus oversees His church.... He reveals His will to the Holy Spirit.... the Holy Spirit, in turn, communicates to christians. *("Whatever He hears He will speak.")* Jesus.... Spirit.... you. That's how it's supposed to work. Really, it's the only thing that does work. But religion's salaried officers don't respect God's order. They inject themselves as an authority. They take over, organizing the Holy Spirit out of relevance. They brought long brown benches, which they call pews, into a spacious building for the people to sit quiet and submissive while soaking in their wisdom. All these benches face a thing called a pulpit from which the controllers reinforce their supposed entitlement to rule and direct.

So now we have a new order. Instead of christians harkening to the the Holy Spirit, they submit to the directives of a denomination passed on to them by a salaried pastor (who has convinced them he is indeed *"worthy of his wages")*. This man dutifully (and fearfully) relays his denomination's *"tradition of men"*, using Sunday's pulpit to convince his tamed congregation their perspectives are indeed superior to that of other denominations. This man does not prostrate himself before King Jesus but before legislators higher up the ecclesiastical ladder. This is the way of religions, most certainly including evangelicalism.

I point you back to where you once were. When first *"born of the Spirit"* you were lead by the Spirit (though you didn't realize it). Those were the days. Your heart was filled with Jesus. I say to you, go back. Be the repenting prodigal. Bow once again to the Sent-One whom Jesus sent to you. Because *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* Liberty.... freedom. How long has it been since you lived in freedom? Jesus said (Repeat, JESUS said), *"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you."* Jesus.... Holy Spirit.... you. Get it?

John 16:13: **the Spirit of truth**,

Truth is a beautiful thing. You must see and acknowledge truth as the beautiful thing it is. Because you gotta want it to get it. You have some, perhaps much; do you want more? More is available to the one wanting more. The reality is *"the truth shall make you free".* You know that is so because Jesus said so. To get freedom you must want freedom. Freedom accompanies truth. Freedom is for those wanting it.... sufficiently. All want freedom; few want freedom sufficiently. Sufficiently? Yes, you must want freedom more than you don't want freedom. I can hear you: "I most certainly *do* want freedom! I most certainly *do* hate bondage!" But do you?....

Let's play a game, okay? You are a jw, a jehovah's witness and you have been for, say, ten years. (I know, not a nice thought.) You are convinced Jesus is not God and the Holy Spirit is merely God's "active force" and there is no such place as hell and the chances of making it to heaven are somewhere between slim and zero. Like millions of jw-s throughout the world, you are in serious bondage. One day you read Christ's words, *"The truth shall make you free"* and those words seem to come alive for the first time ever. And you pray something like this....

"God, I believe I have been taught the truth.... such as, there is no life on the other side of the grave, and.... my religion is Your appointed agency.... etcetera, etcetera. If I am wrong (though I don't think I am) I want to exchange these beliefs for the truth. God, I am sincerely asking You for truth, whatever it looks like, whatever it is. Whatever truth I need - if I don't already have it - please impart it to me. I hereby *choose* truth over my religion, my family, everything and everybody. I *choose* unknown truth even if truth will cost me dearly. God, please give me truth."

Do you think the Father will answer your cry for truth? Me too. Hang on now, our game isn't over. Now you are an evangelical and you have been for, say, ten years. You read those same words, *"The truth shall make you free"* and those words seem to come alive for the first time ever. And you pray something like this....

"Jesus, I believe I have been taught truth.... such as, my chief responsibility is to support the one everybody calls 'Pastor'.... the Holy Spirit doesn't direct me personally/individually....etcetera, etcetera. If I am wrong (though I don't think I am) I want to exchange these beliefs for the truth. Lord Jesus, I am sincerely asking You for truth, whatever it looks like, whatever it is. Whatever truth I need – if I don't already have it - please impart it to me. I hereby *choose* truth over my religion, my family, everything and everybody. I *choose* unknown truth even if truth will cost me dearly. Lord Jesus, please give me truth."

Do you think Lord Jesus will answer your cry for truth? Me too.

Matthew 7:7: **"Ask, and it will be given to you,**

Those who ask (in faith) receive. Those who don't ask don't receive. If you ask for truth you will receive truth. If you don't you won't. Those who don't ask are those not wanting.... sufficiently. The greedy don't ask for truth because wealth is *"first love"*. Likewise religionists (e.g., jw-s, evangelicals) don't ask for truth because their religion is first love. Sad.

A sobering thought: No christian can be excused for continued embracing of untruths; to abide in untruth one must steadfastly resist the *"Spirit of truth".*

Acts 11:12: **the Spirit told me to go**

The Spirit spoke to Peter because Peter had "ears to hear". The Spirit speaks to those heeding. Our words tell us who has our attention. Most say, "I think I will do this or that"; few say, "I think the Holy Spirit is saying this or that". Most are walking into regret and failure; few are walking into bountiful

fruitfulness.

1 John 5:6: **it is the Spirit who bears witness**

The Holy Spirit *bears witness* to truth. Listen to Paul: *"The Spirit Himself* bears witness *with our spirit that we are children of God."* The Bible tells us *"we are children of God"* and the Holy Spirit brings that reality from head to heart. Some call this an *inner witness* or an *inner knowing*.

This same inner witness leads us into the truth Jesus wants us to have. What to do and when to do it. Where to go and how to get there. What to buy and what not to. Where to donate and how much. What to pray and when. That inner witness, if heeded and relied on, will assure bountiful rewards at the judgement seat of Christ.

We have two short-term rentals in our house, quite busy in summer months, quite slow the rest of the year. Will I rent them monthly during winter months? I don't know. Will I advertise to attract skiers? I don't know. Will I reach out to students at the nearby university? I don't know. Will I simply let them remain vacant during the slow season, enjoying the rest? I don't know. What is the Holy Spirit saying? (What is Jesus saying to me via the Holy Spirit?) I really don't know.... yet.

And so I *"wait on the Lord"* who *"bears witness"*. Those determined to live in the Spirit must learn to *"wait on the Lord".* (Isaiah 40:31) Someone rightly said the hardest thing to do is nothing. There will be lots and lots of waiting. His timing is not our timing. We know so little; He knows everything. Everything! It takes trust, lots of trust, to wait. It takes patience, lots of patience, to wait. It takes surrender, full surrender, to wait and not do.

Controllers (many pulpit-people are controllers) don't want you to live the Spirit-controlled life. The Holy Spirit is their rival. They belittle those waiting for direction before moving. ("How can God direct a puddle?") They want a say in any ministry you are involved in. Unity is the goal. It's much easier to control a united people

2 Corinthians 5:10: **we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

Some think for most this is going to be a happy time. I don't. I suggest for most this will be a grievous experience. How can anyone bear *"much fruit"*.... *"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"*.... enlarge his/her treasury of *"gold, silver, precious stones"*.... except by obedience to the Holy Spirit? I just wrote (above): "I suggest the christians endeavouring to be guided through their christianity by the 'Spirit of truth' is less than two percent. Rare is the North American believer who has given himself over to the lordship of the Spirit." To this I add, "Amen and amen!" If my perspective is anywhere near accurate, can the majority really expect to be richly rewarded?

1 Corinthians 3:15: **If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as by fire.**

I am of the opinion many will arrive in heaven *"as by fire".* The NLT says it this way, *"like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames."* As one who doesn't believe in 'eternal security' (as most understand that term), I actually am comforted by this verse. It tells me that though christians all around me are living askew from Scripture they are nonetheless going to make it. Those active laying up *"treasures on earth"*, this in direct disobedience to Jesus, will nonetheless spend their eternity in heaven. Yes, they will *"suffer loss"*, and yes, they will be deeply regretful of opportunities squandered, but at least they will be there.

Lord Jesus wants to reward you abundantly. And you want Lord Jesus to reward you abundantly. Those rewards are eternal rewards that will never fade away. I suppose those rewards have everything to do with proximity to Jesus. You will rule and reign with Jesus to the degree you abide in Jesus in your here-and-now. And you are abiding in Jesus to the degree you *"walk in the Spirit"*.

Ephesians 4:11: **He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,**

Evangelical pulpit-people gleefully glom on to this verse, convinced it says something it doesn't. *"Some"* is interpreted to mean a special, limited class of christian whereby most are excluded. That word *"some"* suggests a ruling class, justifying the splitting of Christ's people into two groups, the 'ministerial' (or clergy) and the 'laity' (common christians). They are so wrong. The word *"some"* does not mean some are excluded from the fivefold ministry gifts!

Let me suggest another perspective of Ephesians 4:11: "He Himself gave everyone at least one of the five ministry gifts, some He Himself gave to be apostles, some He Himself gave to be prophets, some He Himself gave to be evangelists, and some He Himself gave to be pastors and some He Himself gave to be teachers." If that is a more likely perspective it means you have been given one of these five ministry gifts! Give that serious consideration; you are as much 'in the ministry' as anyone. And yet....

Don't let that be your focus; Jesus Christ must be your focus, your centre, your all. It's not necessary to identify, or give undue attention to, the gift Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, has deposited in you. Let me explain....

I could have the gift of prophet. (And maybe not. If the NT prophet is one who prophesies future events, I am definitely not a prophet. But if a NT prophet is defined as one who brings correction than I suppose that would be me.) Does that mean I busy myself fulfilling that role? Or, if I had the calling of evangelist (I do not) do I busy myself evangelizing? Or, if my calling is teaching do I use my intellect and smarts to find opportunities to teach? No, no and no.

I simply obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As I obey, *He fulfills my calling.* If, for example, He guides me to make a stand against the awful evangelical tithe (the tithe evangelicals created to finance evangelicalism) I, hopefully, obey that prompting. This is so different than me making a grab for the reins of my life in an effort to exercise my gifting. Can you see that?

2 Corinthians 11:3 (NLT): **I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent.**

Think you can outwit *"the cunning ways of the serpent"* without relinquishing yourself to the Holy Spirit? Good luck. Didn't work for Eve. Just look around.... have christians, generally speaking, maintained their *"pure and undivided devotion to Christ"*? If you say yes, you and I see the same thing differently.

I fear for you. I know the strong pull of *the way it is*. I understand herd mentality. Compromise is a subtle relief from peer pressure. I know it's tempting to trust in those you can see more than the One you cannot see. And yet....

Galatians 5:25 (AMP): **If we live by the Spirit, we must also walk by the Spirit .**

Life in the Spirit is not achieved by the indecisive. It takes grit to move from self-life to Spirit-life, more tenacity than most have. The exchange of one way of life for another can be quite frustrating. How frustrating for the self-willed to not do his/her own thing.... to patiently wait upon the Lord for direction.... to be and stay tuned to the Spirit.... to lay down his druthers.... to mind her own business.... to deny addictions.... to walk contrary to the *"way that seems right to a man"*.... to surrender his daily schedule.... to abandon her religious ambitions.... to accept God-ordained assignments with gratitude and enthusiasm.... to resist the demands of the bunch.... to stop parroting slogans.... to ban self-imposed itineraries.

Only one man, *"the one Man Jesus Christ"*, learned to walk perfectly in the Spirit. *("He learned obedience.")* The rest of us have to settle for improvement. The first step is to *want* to *"walk by the Spirit"*; this first step may take years, even decades, to achieve. The next step is to prayerfully and doggedly pursue this better way of living out your christianity.

Galatians 5:1: **Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.**

The Galatians were in bondage. And then they were not. And then they were once more. This cycle of bondage, freedom, bondage is more common than rare. Evangelicals were in bondage (to *"the god of this age")*. And then they were not *("if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed")*. And then they were once more (to religion and religionists).

The gospel of Christ Jesus set the Galatians free. Religionists stole that freedom. Loyalty shifted from Jesus to religionists. Then the ensnared Galatians developed into skilled recruiters ensnaring other christians. That's how religion works. Likewise, the gospel of Christ Jesus set evangelicals free. Religionists stole that freedom. Loyalty shifted from Jesus to religionists. Then the ensnared evangelicals became skilled recruiters ensnaring other christians. That's how religion works.

Galatians 5:1: **Stand fast**

If you don't *"stand fast"* you won't stand long. The body of Christ is infested with controllers. (Sorry, but that's just *the way it is*.) What is a controller? A controller is one who wants to control your christianity, one not satisfied to be a mere influence. A controller wants you to endorse and finance his religious ambitions. Religious ambition? A religious ambition is an outgrowth of the self-governed life, the very antithesis of a Spirit-controlled life. (Every denomination is such an offshoot.) Controllers drape themselves with a practiced posture of authority to *"draw away the disciples after themselves".* (Ac.20:30)

Controllers are after your money. This is not to say they don't want to bless you spiritually; they do. They are doubly motivated: They want to feed you spiritually *and* they have their religious ambitions that must be financed. As such, they of necessity have zero regard for Christ's command, *"Freely you have received, freely give"*. If controllers get your money they get you. Repeat: If controllers get your money they get you. If they can't get your money they can't get you. Repeat: If they can't get your money they can't get you. Jesus taught, *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* Commit *"your treasure"* to the Holy Spirit (Christ's Sent-One) and it will be Lord Jesus who gets your heart.

I say again, if you don't *"stand fast"* you won't stand long. You will be swallowed. Let's look at other translations: AMP: *"Keep standing firm"*.... ERV: *"Stand strong"*.... GW: *"Be firm"*.... Phillips: *"Plant your feet firmly"*.... MSG: *"Take your stand"*.... TPT: *"Stubbornly refuse to go back"*.... WE: *"Stay free"*. Fiercely defend the *"liberty by which Christ has made us free"*. Stand your guard. Don't bunch with a bunch of compromisers. Be alert to wield your *"sword of the Spirit which is the word of God"* against all trespassers. Okay?

John 16:14: **He will glorify Me,**

He will not glorify Himself. (The preacher glorifying the Holy Spirit isn't directed to do so by the Holy Spirit.) He will not glorify christians. (Christians glorifying christians, a common practice, are not directed by the Holy Spirit.) He will glorify Christ. (Christians glorifying Jesus do so by the prompting of the Holy Spirit.) When you are praising and worshipping and thanking and pining for Jesus, know thatthe Holy Spirit is at work, doing through you what He likes to do.

John 17:3: **that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

Relationship with Christ is not an "us" issue; it is a "me" issue. Does the quality of relationship with Christ on earth establish the quality of relationship eternally? Does proximity to Jesus on earth establishes proximity to Jesus in heaven? I think so.

You are not to have a "herd" mentality. You must learn to be individually moved by the Holy Spirit for it is impossible to finish your course without His leadership. We are to love others, *"bear one another's burdens"*, *"consider one another in order to stir up love and good works"....* but place our trust in Jesus alone. We do this by embracing the lordship of the Holy Spirit, *"the Spirit of Christ"*.

Direction, teaching, and encouragement may come through the agency of *"the brethren"*, but you are

not to place your loyalty on messengers. Your physical ears hear man, your spiritual ears are attuned to Jesus. Your loyalty is fixed on Him.

Acts 13:25: **As John was finishing his course,**

What does that mean, *"finishing his course"*? Since you, like John (the baptist), have a *"course"* assigned to you, it's a question you want answered. The EXB says it this way, *"When he was finishing his work ".* I like to say it this way: "When he was completing his assignments."

You have a course to finish, a mission to complete. Yours is different from all others. Yours fits you like John's fit John. You are one branch out of millions, but your assignment is unique. Only you can complete it. You can do it if you know you can't. If you think you can finish your mission by self-effort, self-reliance, self-whatever you will fail.

You must fully know you can't complete your *"course"* on your own. Like John *("He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit")*, you must rely on the Holy Spirit to direct you through your christianity, day by day, week by week. When you get to heaven, look me up. (I am being serious!) I would like to know how your life unfolded. Okay?

----------APPENDIX

Richard was the most influential friend in my christianity. He was a true elder though he never considered himself as such. He was honest, he was truthful, he loved Jesus.

Richard had an encounter with hell. He felt the *hopelessness* of the eternally condemned. Richard wrote....

"I was suddenly taken into the spiritual realm, into the place of the departed souls, those who had died without having received Christ as their savior. God let me feel what they felt. I experienced the agony of eternal separation from God, and it is this sense of eternal hopelessness that I am trying to convey.
"The feelings, the emotions of hopelessness I cannot describe. The despair, the agony of separation I cannot fully relate. But I felt them, tasted of them. No, I didn't feel the torment of flames – Jesus spared me that – but the total separation from the One who can save and deliver. And I was made to feel what it's like to have rejected Him and to be in the situation of never being able to accept Him. For the opportunity has slipped by. There is no Redeemer in hell.
"That life, the life in hell, has no Savior, no Redeemer. It is this life, life on earth, that has hope. This life has opportunity. This life offers a time to change. Only in this life is there redemption. In this life we set our eternal destinies.
"In hell there are no choices. The time of decisions is past. One is conscious of one's past life, conscious of what once was, but fully aware that it was now all over. All over. In that spiritual encounter I had this sense that I was taken down and I could only look back up with memories of what once was. But I couldn't go back. I no longer had choices. Before, there was always a chance. I

had a Redeemer, even if I rejected Him. At least there was hope. I could always choose Him if I wanted.
"But now! There was no Redeemer to save me. Cry as I might, no one would rescue me. I became totally aware that the Redeemer is for life on earth, not life after death. The souls here had no hope. I know that I keep saying those words. No hope. Hopelessness. Eternal, ceaseless hopelessness. Oh what grief! Oh what sorrow!"

The lost have to be reached and convinced. Because the church is playing church, "*the laborers are few".* So christians like you must be exceedingly zealous for souls. You must produce after yourself.... not dozens, not hundreds, but *thousands*. Such is possible. *"The harvest truly is great"* and the expert Harvester, the Holy Spirit, is your guide and strength.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST
i will pursue
run after
capture
you
lord of lords
the spirit helps me

i will seek
hunt
track
you
king of kings
the spirit enables

where you go
i will go
if you hide
i will find you
great i am
the spirit knows your paths

i will seek your glory
walk your path
sup at your table
work in your garden
star and lily
the spirit guides me

the spirit

fills my deep
points the way
makes me hungry
loves you so
lion and lamb

the spirit
gift of god
he opens my eyes
unstops my ears
fills my cup
with who you are
hope of the hopeless

chapter seventeen
----------JESUS COMMISSIONS YOU

John 6:63,64: **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.**

The words of Jesus are far above all other words and yet, as you know, there are many non-believers who will not trust in those precious words and be saved. As a born-again believer you can see their folly. You should not be equally foolish. You have read that the words of Jesus are *"spirit, and they are life";* it would be wise to anchor the remainder of your christianity onto these precious words. If you are like me, you have already wasted too much time pondering other words.

A serious disciple heeds the words of *"the Teacher".* Labour to esteem Christ, to set Him in a high place. Let the emphasis of your life be the emphasis of His heart; care about what He cares about. You cannot esteem Christ without esteeming His words. Just can't. Many words Jesus spoke reveal His love for the lost. Jesus, the chief evangelist, *"the Lord of the harvest",* has much to say to you about saving unbelievers from the clutches of *"the god of this world".*

John 4:35: **I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields,**

The Lord Jesus Christ, *"the Lord of the harvest"*, admonishes His people to gaze upon *"the fields"* - all the fields, all the nations - with seeing eyes and a compassionate heart. No, not an occasional glance between life's appointments or when pursuit for gain permits, but a gaze that is enduring and a heart conformed to His. Jesus would have you hear the silent mourning empty lives induce, feel their hopelessness, and never forget you once were where they now are.

Matthew 28:18,19 (AMP): **"All authority (all power of absolute rule) in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ,**

Jesus was talking to the eleven, but not only the eleven. Jesus was speaking, and is speaking, to you.

Consider: If Jesus was, by extension, speaking to His church (you are His church!) He was therefore speaking to me, to you, to all. (Mt.23:8 NLT: *"All of you are equal as brothers and sisters.")* Because most are casual, even disobedient, to this His Great Commission, it is no reason why you should be. You will come to deeply regret complacency.

I heard it said, "Christ and you are an overwhelming majority." Should you say, "Yes Lord, I will go", know that His *"grace is sufficient for you"*. Jesus partners with you. *("I will never leave you.")* If you suppose you need people to help fulfill this mandate you need to apologize to Jesus, your sufficiency. Consider Paul. And then reconsider Paul. When analyzing this apostle's christianity you are thus considering your own potential. Paul didn't need a denomination or a local church to send him out. Therefore you can safely conclude, "Neither do I." Jesus said "go", Paul went, Jesus accompanied him, together they conquered.

Matthew 28:19: **Go therefore**

Jesus didn't specify how to go. You can go by plane, by train, by car. Or you can go by mail, by internet, by radio or television. And I don't think it's a stretch that you can go by sending others. How you go is not your decision to make; Lord Jesus will guide you via the Holy Spirit. When you say, "Yes Lord, I will go", you are actually saying "I will go by Your grace *('My grace is sufficient for you')* and in Your timing."

Learn from Jesus, our chief example. As you are a sent-one, Jesus was a Sent-One. He ministered in the Father's power *("God anointed Jesus of Nazareth")* and in the Father's timing *("in due time Christ died for the ungodly")*. You minister in the power of Christ Jesus who has been given *"all authority"*. When alone, Jesus could say, *"I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."* When alone, you can likewise say, "I am not alone, because Christ is with me. *("I will never leave you.")*

Matthew 6:19: **"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth,**

Christians aren't going because christians are accumulating. Christ's Great Commission comes far behind a nice house, an impressive car, a closet of clothes, vacations, and many etceteras. Most donations pay for unsanctioned buildings and salaries. The Great Commission gets leftover change. An unsanctioned church building is one of many *"treasures on earth"*. (Are most, perhaps all, church buildings unsanctioned?) Are salaried pastors, hired to do our job, likewise "treasures on earth" ?

Matthew 6:20: **but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,**

"Treasures in heaven" are rewards for obedience. And.... *"treasures in heaven"* are people. Yes, people, those rescued from hell by christians participating in Christ's Great Commission. When you arrive how many will you bring with you? Let's use the gift of imagination....

You are strolling down one of heaven's many walkways when a white-robed saint stops you, saying, "Because of your obedience (sacrifice, boldness, investment) I received the gospel of Jesus Christ! I am eternally saved!!!!" He will hug you and thank you and always remember you (as you will those

involved in your salvation). You continue your walk. Soon another white-robed saint stops you, recognizing you as one of those responsible for her salvation. Same rejoicing, same gratitude. This scenario is repeated numerous (dozens? hundreds? thousands?) times throughout your eternity simply because you had taken Christ and His Great Commission seriously. Now let's imagine something quite contrary....

Instead of following Christ you followed christians. Instead of financing the Great Commission you financed your religion.... or your toys.... or indulgences. Instead of going you parked. Now you are in heaven, one of many *"saved, yet so as through fire"* walking the same walkways. You look in vain for people saved through you. Nobody. Now you fully realize the actual cost of all those *"treasures on earth"* you left behind. Because of your disobedience to Christ and your obedience to religionists many are suffering eternally.

As an incentive we should try to envision sowers and reapers dancing and rejoicing with our spiritual offspring in *"the New Jerusalem"*, *"the city of the living God"*. A beautiful picture, isn't it?

John 12:47: **I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.**

Jesus did not enter the human race as a son of a virgin for the purpose of bringing judgement against the world. He does not pleasure in pointing a condemning finger and declaring, “Guilty! Guilty!” And likewise today it is not His heart to judge those in rebellion.

Love compelled Jesus to come, to rescue us from darkness and the fruit of our sin. Now that He has returned to the Father He needs disciples such as yourself to love through.

John 15:4: **As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

Soul-winners love Jesus Christ much, and souls are a fruit of that wholesome relationship. Salvation of others is a good fruit of branches abiding in *"the vine"* and evidence of their abiding. Caution: Do not be the foolish branch who departs from the vine to evangelize; evangelism is something you do with Jesus. He has told us plainly, *"Without Me you can do nothing."* (Jn.15:5) As you simply abide in Christ souls will come. You are to love Him, speak of Him, consider Him, walk in the awareness of His nearness.

Luke 10:2: **the laborers are few;**

Jesus has many converts, but few disciples. Many of His children live to receive His blessings, few to pour out their lives for His concerns. Most vigilantly maintain a distance from Him. Few can say of Jesus, as He had said of His Father, *"My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."* (Jn.4:34)

It is written of Jesus, *"He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."* (Mt.7:13) Jerusalem is where He was sent, Jerusalem was His commission, the cross awaited Him in Jerusalem, and so Jerusalem is

where He went.

Will you *"steadfastly set"* your face toward your 'Jerusalem'? Will you fulfill the commission God has long ago placed on your life? Will you be one of His *"few.... laborers"*? Will you postpone pleasure for a season and get to work, knowing your work will actuate living *"treasures in heaven"*?

If Jesus had shrunk back from His assignment we would still be on *"the way that leads to destruction"*. If His disciples cower from their mission many will die in their sins.

Matthew 4:19: **"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."**

All followers of Christ are *"fishers of men"*. They became fishers of men by simply following Christ. Disciples *"go"*. Disciples beget disciples. Obedience to Christ is the key to fruitfulness. The branch firmly connected to the vine *"bears much fruit"*. This reality you can never forget. This simple truth must be grafted into your christianity.

Christ died for all but only a small part of all are saved. This puts an incredible responsibility on the minority to reach out with passion to the majority.

Romans 10:14,15: **How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?**

The Great Commission is your commission. You are as responsible for reaching the lost as anyone. If they don't hear about Christ they won't believe in Christ. If you don't hurt for the lost you won't reach out to the lost. You live in a battleground, not a playground. You have one opportunity to bless your generation. No redo's. Fun and luxury can wait until heaven.

You may be insignificant to others, but not to Christ. He knows your potential is immense. Your obedience will release latent power. Your christianity will be no more and no less successful than your faithfulness. Being a soul-winner (a people-winner) is not complicated; simply commit yourself to the lordship of Christ and His Sent-One, the Holy Spirit.

I am not suggesting obedience is easy. Not at all. Friendship with Christ is enmity with the lukewarm. Your fervour is their reproof. Expect exclusion. If you are popular something is wrong. *("Woe to you when all men speak well of you.")*

Luke 6:38: **Give, and it will be given to you:**

One way to get is to give. The more you give the more you get. *("With the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.")* However, giving to get is honourable only if your heart is to release what you get. Don't let getting be your motive for giving. Wisdom is laying up *"treasures in heaven"*; dumb is laying up *"treasures on earth"*. Dumb? Like really? Well, yeah.... momentary *"treasures on earth"* costs eternal *"treasures in heaven"*. Sounds unwise to me. On that theme, I have a suggestion that will enlarge your heavenly account vastly. Will you listen? Repeat: Will you listen? *("He who has*

ears to hear, let him hear!").....

I advise you to prayerfully consider opening a bank account for the sole purpose of directing your donations. You can, should you so choose, feed this account every day, a little or a lot. You spend from this account only by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

This could be the best advice you heard for a long time. You would be wise to talk it over with Lord Jesus. Jesus *is* your Lord, isn't He? If you haven't relinquished your finances to Jesus He is not Lord; you are. *("Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?")*

To open such an account or not open an account is (are you ready for this?) not your decision to make. It would be your decision if Christ were not seated on the throne of your life, but He is (isn't He?). Your place is to discern His will. That's it. No, I am not suggesting you will get an instant yes or no. If you are like me the will of God *slowly* grows on you.

You may find your account building because the Lord hasn't been directing you in a particular direction. But He will. He is not wasteful. He has a purpose, just not yet. Just keep feeding your account regularly.

John 4:36: **"And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life,**

We owe Jesus so much. And even though our indebtedness is more than we could ever repay, and even though at best we *"are unprofitable servants"* (Lk.17:10) simply doing *"all those things which you are commanded"*, yet He will richly reward us for obedience.

If you join His army of soul-winners (people-winners), if you lay down your life for the sake of the Father's kingdom, if you put aside your interests and adopt His burden for a lost and suffering world, if you obey His command and set your eyes and your compassion on the lost and dying, as you submit to the lordship of His Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ will surely supply your needs as He does every soldier who enlists in His army. For all eternity you will enjoy *"fruit for eternal life"*, your reward for obedience *"where neither moth nor rust destroys"*.

Luke 10:9: **heal the sick**

When we get to heaven we will wonder why we ignored this simple command, *"Heal the sick"*. How can we imitate Christ and not do what He did repeatedly?

You heal by His power resident within. You heal in His name, by His authority. Multitudes would be cured if His people would boldly and routinely say in faith, "Be made whole in the name of Jesus Christ!" Many would be delivered from strongholds of darkness if His church would rise in indignation and declare, *"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."* (Ac.16:18)

Failure to heal the sick and cast out demons is an admission of lack of faith in Jesus. *"Branches"* that abide in - take power from, live in communion with, believe in and rely upon - *"the vine"* do not back away from sickness and disease and demons. Power of believers is relative to faith, and faith is

relative to the quality and consistency of that abiding.

John 5:36: **the very works that I do - bear witness of Me,**

Oh, what a weak and impotent and uncaring Christ the church presents to the world! This Christ does not heal, He does not deliver, He does not multiply loaves, He does not raise the dead, He does not set men and women free from their addictions. But it is His church, not Jesus, that is weak and impotent! His ambassadors misrepresent Him. His people are commissioned to *"heal the sick"* in His name, and all of heaven's resources are behind their commands of faith. Yet His redeemed buckle in fear.

Do not flow in the current created by the lukewarm masses.

Mark 16:20: **And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.**

Do not leave the preaching to others. You must preach *"everywhere"* the Spirit leads, preach only *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"*, and expect *"accompanying signs".* Refuse to lower Christ's standard. Do not look to *the way it is* for an example; look to His Word written for your benefit.

Mark 16:20: **the Lord working with them**

Jesus had risen and was seated at the right hand of His Father, yet He was *"working with them"*, His eleven apostles. *Evangelism was something they did together.* Likewise, He is with His people today, and wanting to be *"working with them"*. With the eleven, He was their life. Can the same be said of you? You could have the same alliance with Jesus the eleven possessed. They benefited from His personal presence; you have Christ via the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit you can develop the same rich relationship with Jesus, and with that relationship will come His power for *"accompanying signs"* .

Luke 18:8: **when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"**

Four times the Bible says, *"The just shall live by faith".* You have been justified by faith in Christ: now you are to carry out your commission by faith in Christ. Paul is a good example, *"The life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God"*. (Gal.2:20)

Faith will come by saturating yourself in the Bible. (*"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.")* Much Bible, much faith. Much faith, much fruit. Evangelizing without faith is akin to the labourer going into the harvest field without a sickle. Without faith you cannot please the *"Lord of the harvest"*. You cannot be effective. You cannot be people-winners. And you will not be the one rejoicing on that day of accounting.

And what is faith? Faith is trust. Faith in Christ is trusting in Christ. You trust Christ as a child trusts his mother. "The just shall live by" a childlike trust in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 23:8: **you are all brethren.**

The prime obstacle to evangelism is the homage christians render to christians. *The way it is* produces the effect of *"branches"* abiding in *"branches".* Not good.Fruit will not come from such a relationship. God has commanded us to love one another, bear with one another, exhort each other, pray for one another. But He never told us to abide in each other. We abide *with* but not *in*. We are to abide in *"the vine"* and be Christ-gazers. Out of this relationship we develop a love for one another. Fellowship must be *in* Christ.

In His sight we *"are all brethren".* Some are more obedient than others, some have a deeper devotion to Jesus, some have been given more prominent gifts. Nonetheless, we *"are all brethren"*, none above the other, none more important, none loved the more.

Jesus is "the Lord of the harvest". You receive your orders directly from Him, not indirectly through fellow christians, not even leaders. You cannot allow the gifted or the charismatic to replace Him in your sight. You carry in your heart a big Jesus, not a big christian.

Matthew 28:19: **Go therefore**

Go by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Go by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." "The world" doesn't know Jesus actually, somehow, *"bore our sins in His own body on the tree."* But you and I do. Doesn't that make us responsible to share that knowledge? Paul thought so: *"I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise."*

Because others ignore Christ's command to *"go",* that can't influence you to likewise disobey. Their disobedience makes your obedience more urgent. *"The laborers are few."* I simply suggest you live as you would have wished you lived when about to pass from here to there, from temporary to eternal. Amen? Make sense?

Matthew 25:21: **'Well done, good and faithful servant;**

If you do not hear those words from Jesus you will be sorely disappointed. You will ache for another opportunity but none will be given. You will see sadness in His eyes because He cannot give you the rewards He longs to give. Wisdom is living today to hear tomorrow those words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant"*.

----------APPENDIX

Richard had another vision, this one seemed to be related to the judgement seat of Christ. It was scary.

It was not what many would think the judgement seat of Christ to be (but similar to visions others have experienced).

My friend saw a sea of people, all robed in white, all prostrate before Jesus. They were in deep

agony. They could not look into the eyes of Jesus; they were ashamed. Jesus overlooked the multitudes bowed in deep remorse before Him. He was not angry nor condemning. But He was not smiling. He spoke: "I told you not to.... I told you not to.... I told you! I told you not to lay up treasures on earth." Over and over again: "I told you.... I told you.... I told you."

Many (most?) evangelicals make a religion of doing what Jesus told them not to do, perhaps more proficiently, more intensely, than non-christians. Some think tithing gives them permission to hoard; giving a tenth to God justifies their *"treasures on earth"*.

My friend felt that what he saw was only one aspect of the judgement seat of Christ; I am sure he was right. There will be many, but relatively fewer, who will be rejoicing in ecstasy as they receive eternal rewards their obedience has earned them.

What percentage of christians will be remorseful? How many will be rejoicing? The answer is all around us. What percentage of brothers and sisters are intently laying up treasures on earth? How many are diligently laying up treasures in heaven?

More important, where are your treasures? Where is your heart? What consumes you? What, or whom, is your passion.

May the Lord Jesus Christ richly bless your life with more of Him.

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

god also
has highly exalted
him
and given him
the name
which is above
every name
that at the name of
jesus
every knee should
bow
of those in
heaven
and of those on
earth
and of those under
the earth
and that every
tongue

should confess that
jesus christ
is lord
to the glory of
god the father

chapter eighteen
----------"BEHOLD THE LAMB"

Revelation 5:11,12: **and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain**

(I again thank you for permission to speak to you directly, person-to-person, one-to-one. I desperately want to reach you. Speaking *us* and *we* and *they* instead of *you*, it seems to me, dilutes the impact. Please know that in preaching to you I am preaching to myself; I also need and want pruning.)

I share with you a sure strategy for a successful account at the judgement seat of Christ. *("We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.")* If you would praise Jesus Christ as the *"thousands of thousands"* praise Him you would be a mighty force in your community, your nation, the entire world. Such is the power of praise.

Revelation 4:8: **And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,**

If the sincere and fervent praises of heaven could somehow be transported to earth demons would flee this planet in panic, the crippled would dance, masses would turn to Christ, joy would flood the land, broken relationships would be restored. Such is the power of praise.

Revelation 5:9: **And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood**

Sing. Sing loudly. Sing with fervency. Earnestly and consistently pray an increased anointing on your worship unto Jesus. You will soon be a force that would damage darkness considerably. Such is the power of praise.

Revelation 5:13: **"Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"**

If you will simply ask the Father to make of you a worshipper of the Lord Jesus Christ, relying solely on His power to do so, you will be one who rejoices at the judgement seat of Christ; your life will be a collection of *"gold, silver, precious stones"*. Such is the power of praise.

Revelation 15:3,4: **And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvellous are your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O**

King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy.

If husbands and wives would praise the Lord in unison on two or three designated times throughout the day that marriage would be blessed and protected and enjoyed, the children would grow strong in the Lord, a multitude of problems would be brushed aside before they landed. Such is the power of praise.

Psalm 113:1: **Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord, Praise the name of the Lord!**

Praise the Lord because He is worthy. Praise the Lord because of the optimum power of praise. And praise the Lord because you are commanded to do so.

Psalm 22:3: **You are holy, Who inhabit the praises of Israel.**

Likewise He inhabits *"the praises of"* His church. That is why there is such power in praise. When Jesus comes He never leaves His power behind. He comes *"with healing in His wings"*. He comes *"to set at liberty those who are oppressed"*.

John 15:4: **As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.**

The fruit we bear is relative to the quality of our abiding. Praising Jesus causes a healthy connection to *"the vine"*, and via that connection comes fruit.

Psalm 22:23: **You who fear the Lord, praise Him!**

Praise is the antidote for every problem. It brings peace and joy and love and *"unity of the Spirit"*; it brings health and freedom and financial stability, simply because it brings Jesus to the problem.

James 5:16: **The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.**

The same is true of praise. *"The effective, fervent* (praise) *of a righteous man avails much."* We are all equally righteous (*"the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ"*). But we are not equally *"fervent"*. Your fervency is determined by none other than you.

Hebrews 13:15: **let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God,**

God was pleased with some animal sacrifices of the Israelites (i.e., unblemished), not so pleased with others (i.e., blemished). There are also calibres of *"sacrifice of praise"*. The praise of one is fervent, another dispassionate, most somewhere in-between. The resultant power is comparatively profound, feeble, or somewhere in between.

What can we give to God who has 'everything', something that will delight His heart? We can give our *"sacrifice of praise to God"*. He *"is seeking such to worship Him"*. Saints should gather for the purpose of giving praise to *"the name which is above every name"*, more than other incentives. Amen?

----------APPENDIX

So here we are, the end of part two, *The Way It Could Be* and the entire book, *The way It Is*.

Was it a rough ride? Are you okay?

You have heard things you haven't heard before. Your world has been shaken. Now you need time to consider. Jesus will help you. *("One is your teacher, the Christ.")*

Personally, I am happy to have reached the end. Like every chore, even labours of love, it's the end one aims for. Now I intend to press Jesus for more of Him. His Spirit will help me.

Many times I have prayed: "Lord Jesus, I hereby deposit all who I am into who You are. And Lord Jesus, I hereby receive all who You are into who I am." Will you say similar words to our Christ?

I have often asked the Father to be a worshipper of His Son. It took several years, but that prayer has been answered. Praise comes spontaneously, not always but often. It oozes out me when I wake up throughout the night. I appreciate Him more with every passing year. Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ! Will you, precious saint, be like Mary who *"sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word"?*

I will never write another book except at His beckoning. I will not build, I will not do, I will not presume. I have deep longings.... to be sanctified, to be used, to be involved in evangelism, to heal the sick, to cast out demons, to preach *"Jesus Christ and Him crucified"*, to lay up *"treasures in heaven"....* and these longings I submit to the lordship of the Holy Spirit. He can, I can't.

Likewise you can't but He can. What is of God will happen if you simply trust in Him. You will be amazed at your accomplishments as the life of *"the true vine"* flows unheeded through the surrendered and determined branch. Jesus may give you a few major assignments throughout your remaining earth years or many smaller ones. Whatever, the collective fruit will be bountiful.

I don't know who will read *The Way It Is*; I only know you have. I think of you. Where will you go from here? Have I (Christ in me) inched you closer to Christ? Have I salted your christianity, making you thirsty for more of Him? Have I convinced you that fervency will slowly but surely mould you into one of Christ's rare overcomers. *("He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name."* Rev.3:12)

Blessings, blessings, and more blessings be upon your life!

Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ!!

----------A TRIBUTE TO JESUS CHRIST

may the theme of your life
be
jesus christ

and him crucified
may your boast and glory
be
jesus christ
and him crucified
may your gaze
be upon
jesus Christ
and him crucified
may you preach
only
jesus christ
and him crucified
they will say
follow us
play with us
be with us
but you will say
my heart is
attached to
jesus christ
and him crucified
one day
soon
you will see him
him crucified
jesus christ