**Introduction**

When I pick up a new book I want to read the introduction and see why the
author wrote the book. What was the goal that he had in mind? What did he
want to achieve by writing the book?

When I wrote the book called Ministry of the 21st Century I wrote with the
Latin Church in mind. God was doing a new thing in Latin America. The
Latin Church wanted to be involved in missions, but for years they had
been on the side lines having missionaries coming to their continent. They didn’t see that they were just as capable as anyone else to send forth
missionaries to the unreached areas of the world. Over the last few years
this has been changing and the Latin Church is rising to the opportunities
that are confronting her in these last days.

In the last few years Missiologists have been talking about the 10/40
window. This is part of the world that is situated between ten degrees latitude and 40 degrees latitude. In that section there are over two billion people representing some of the world’s religions like Islam and Hinduism who are waiting to hear the “Good news.”

In the Western end of the 10/40 window there is the Mediterranean Sea that includes North Africa and Southern Europe or "Latin" Europe. Could it be that God is raising up the Latin church for a such a time as this to be the messenger to that part of the world? I believe so. Consider this:

1. The Latin and Muslim culture are very similar. Some say that there was
no such thing as a Latin culture until the Muslims came to Spain.

2. Muslims from North Africa came to Spain and stayed in the Iberian
Peninsula for over 800 years. They spread their culture, language, etc. to the people. The Spaniards and Portuguese went to South America. What was the result? They spread their culture, language, etc. This hit home to me in the early 80's when I had to make a bus trip from Buenos Aires to La Rioja near the Andes Mountains.

On the eighteen hour bus journey we would stop for a rest stop, food, etc. and watching the people, their greeting of one another, mannerisms and the way they communicated, I came away with a sense that I had been there before, but I knew that I had not. We all have had the sense of familiarity in different situations where we have gone that made us think or feel that we had been there before, but at the same time knowing that is not the case. That was my impression on that trip. Then it hit me! I had not been there before, but I had been in the Middle East. When I saw the people, what they did, how they acted, it was all so Middle Eastern that it was almost like being in the Middle East. I began to realize how the culture is so similar to the
unreached parts of the world in the Western end of the 10/40 window.

3. We see from the Book of Acts (chapters 8, 9 and 10) how the Holy Spirit not only prepares the people to hear the Gospel, but also prepares the
messengers to bring the Gospel. In Acts 8 we see God preparing Philip and
the Ethiopian and in His timing He puts the two together; the result? The
Gospel begins to spread to the upper regions of the Nile River. In chapter
9 we see Saul being prepared by God to receive the message as well as
Ananias to bring the message. God puts them together with the result of
the church getting one of her great theologians, missionary as well as
evangelist. Also in chapter 10 we see the same thing with Cornelius being
prepared to receive and Peter on the house top of Simon the Tanner being
prepared to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles; the result? The Gospel goes
to the Gentiles. Could God be preparing the Latin Church to be a vital
part in all that God is doing today in wanting to reach the Muslim world?
I believe so.

It was with these thoughts in mind that I wrote the book Ministry of The 21st Century. I saw many things in the church of Latin America that
had been exported there by the church in the West. We in the West brought
the Gospel to Latin America, but it was often accompanied by other baggage
that has a tendency to hinder and not help the spread of the Gospel.

A number of times I was asked if I was planning on publishing the book in
English. My response was that I felt that we already have too many books
in English that we are not responding to and I did not want, or have the
burden, to add another one to the list.

However, several factors have begun to change my mind on this and have
decided to work through the book to get it ready for a wider audience.
What are these factors?

1. The changes that are sweeping all over the world. It is absolutely
amazing to see the changes that have come in Eastern Europe and former
USSR as well as the open doors that we have in Central Asia and the phenomenal growth of the church in Latin America, Africa and Asia. It seemed to me that there were sweeping changes all over the world.

2. The situation in the United States today has a definite swing today towards a more conservative view. There is a stir among God's people in the USA and with all the evil that has been taking place it seems that many of God's people are saying “enough is enough.”

3. It is not only God's people but many others who are also saying
there must be a change because they realize we cannot go on like we are.
Something must give and they are looking for answers.

4. This year 2014 I wrote a series of weekly letters on the subject: ARE WE LOSING THE WEST? Also what can we do? This book, I believe also gives us some answers that we can be working towards as well in making an impact in the Western world.

This is where the church comes in. Our governments, sociologists,
political scientists are all looking for solutions, answers. Already we
see them doing things that will result in only more confusion. The
government says we need gun control and medical coverage for every person in the United States. They say we need more prisons to lock the criminals away for life. We are told that crime is costing us over 600 billion
dollars a year. Sociologists are saying we need a better welfare program and that if you raise the standard of living and you will raise the individual.

"The Wall Street Journal” reported in May of 1993 that “welfare spending went up from $53 billion in 1970 to $172 billion in 1991. To date we have spent in excess of $2.3 trillion on welfare. It seems that all we have done with this massive hand out is convincing the underclass that society is
responsible for its problems.”

Educators say the solution is better education. Raise the standard of education, so they say, and you will raise the individual. So we are educating our children in the particular issues of today, but when they graduate many cannot read or write. All of these have been tried before and they never work. Why? Because they do not know what the basic problem really is and even if they did they would not have the solution. How many government officials, sociologists or educators have understood or shared that the problem is sin, the selfishness of man.

This is where the church comes in. We know that there is an underlying
cause at the root of all the maladies affecting our society. We also know
the answer. The prophet Jeremiah looking at the ills in his society cried
out in Jeremiah 8: 22 "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician
there?"

Paul in Ephesians 2:1-4 outlines very clearly what the problem was 2000
years ago and it is the same problem today. Look at what Paul is saying about the Ephesians what they were like before they came to Christ is what the man out on the street today is like who does not know Christ. It makes no difference if he is the banker, the butcher, the government official, educator, builder, poor or rich, we are all the same. What does Paul say?

Verse 1 "We are dead in our trespasses and sins." We know that there is
more than just body and soul to man, there is a spirit, but it is dead.
Consequently man is incomplete. Something is missing, but he does not know what. He tries to fill the vacuum in his life with sex, drugs, alcohol,
material things, but all to no avail, because they do not bring satisfaction. Many, especially our young people, think that the way out is either a harder striving after the things mentioned above or suicide.

Verse 2 Paul also shows that there is something else or someone else that
governments, sociologists or political scientists do not take into account.
Paul describes this someone else as being the "ruler of the kingdom of
the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient." What
government agency has taken this into consideration when trying to come up with solutions to the problems we are faced with today? Basically the man without Christ is like a puppet with strings and Satan controlling them.
Man without Christ thinks he is free when in reality he is in bondage, in a
prison that is stronger than any prison we are faced with today.

Verse 3 Paul goes on to outline man's dilemma by saying that man's nature
is down, never up. It is down to what is depraved, never up to what is
good. It means that the general direction of man is to have a propensity
towards evil and unless he is checked by values or absolutes we will have
chaos. Could this be what is happening today when we are trying to move
away from absolutes? I believe so. Paul paints a pretty dismal picture
regarding man and his dilemma. As far as man and his humanistic philosophy is concerned there are no answers and no way out.

Verse 4 says, "But God." How we ought to praise the Lord for those two
words. There was no way for man to get out of his dilemma, 'but God' has
made a way. There is a solution, the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is where he church comes in. I believe that the Lord is opening a
tremendous open door. But are we ready? Is there the relinquishment of
the ministry into the hands of God's people? Will we have completion
instead competition in the body of Christ? Will there be sacrifice among
the people of God? Will we see our ministry as one of reconciliation?

These are some of the questions we are asking in this book. I trust that
the church of Jesus Christ will rise up like a mighty army and will take
advantage of the open doors in front of us.

**CHAPTER ONE: OUR MINISTRY - COMPETITION OR COMPLETION**

John 17:23 "I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to complete
unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as
you have loved me."

As the plane touched down at Los Angeles airport I sensed within me
excitement as well as trepidation. Excitement because I had not been back
to the States for seven years and I was coming home with my wife who was from Finland and this being her first trip to the states as well as meeting my family.

Within me was not exactly a fear at being back in the States, but a sense
of frustration, futility. It was a feeling hard to describe. It wasn't
being back with my family but it seemed to be connected more with the
evangelical scene that I knew I would be very much engaged in for the next
few months.

Now as I look back I can recognize what it was that was causing this
anxiety within when I thought of the evangelical scene here in the States.
It could be summed up in one word: competition. I was finally able to
identify what it was that was causing this sense of discouragement within
me almost every time I came back to the States for a few months.

I was sensing the tremendous competition among God's people in the
different denominations, mission societies, etc. for people and finance.
There were times when I sensed this and wanted to flee to a place where
there were not any Christians or very few.

In the early eighties the Lord was speaking to my wife and I about leaving the ship Doulos, where we had been for seven years, to make our base on land and to continue on being involved with the Latin Church, but the question in my mind was where to base ourselves. Praying about this it became apparent that the best place was the States, but because of my own discomfort in being back in my homeland I sensed a great uneasiness in my spirit. I did not want to add to the competition, but how we might have completion instead.

Being back in the States for the last few years have made me
realize some of the different dimensions of this spiritual warfare we are
in. Here in the West I was facing something new that I did not experience
to the same degree in India or some of the other countries I had been
working in over the past twenty years.

Somehow it was easy for me in India to realize the power of darkness that
was at work. There it seemed to not only be real, but very recognizable, tangible, but when I came back to the 'sophisticated west' the demonic was at work, but not so noticeable. I think this is one of the reasons why it was so hard for me to identify this feeling of frustration that I had every time I came back to the States.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and
blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers
of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly
realms." Somehow this verse is understandable in India, the Muslim world,
where the power of darkness is very real, but here in the West these
demonic beings seemed to hide behind our sophistication.

Paul goes on to warn us in 2 Corinthians 2:11 that we should not be ignorant of the devil's devices. Could it be that here in the West we have been invaded by a 'spirit' of competition? Listen to the talk when we get together with other believers. Listen to how we compare churches, missions, offerings, or out-reach. See how one member will compare their church with another church in terms of size, budget, out-reach. What is in back of all of this? I believe it's a spirit of competition.

The West is a very competitive place. We see this in our individualism; how
we make heroes out of self-made men as well as in our sports. Through this
a spirit of competition has come in which has also invaded our churches.

One of the problems of this is that we have exported this to other parts of
the world. According to Scripture, we produce what we are. When I was in India I could see the British impact upon that nation for good and bad and the same was for Indonesia with the Dutch.

Missiologists tell us that the first wave of missions started with William
Carey and was spear-headed mainly by the Europeans. The second wave came about with Hudson Taylor and was spear-headed mainly by the North
Americans. One of the things that have definitely been exported by the West
into the third world has been the spirit of competition. If it is true that
this third and perhaps the final wave of missions will be spear-headed by
the two-thirds world, then how we need to make sure that we exorcise this
demon of competition.

Jesus, praying for His disciples prayed for their oneness that they might
complete one another. Why? So that the world might know! It would seem that we have in the universal church today the resources-labors and finance-to get the job done. The problem is the spirit of competition has come
into the church and we don't see the need to complete one another. Although we don't say it but each church, mission organization seems to think that they are the sole owners of the Great Commission so consequently there is no combined effort to get the job done.

In spiritual warfare we not only must have on the full armor of God, use of
our weapons, but we must identify what we are fighting against. The best
way to fight is to manifest the opposite spirit. If we have the spirit of
competition then what we need is the spirit of completion or cooperation.
We need to be asking ourselves the question: How can I complete my brother so that together we can accomplish something for the glory of the Lord?

A good illustration of this is found in the film "Ben Hur." Ben Hur's
servant while in prison lost the use of his legs. In prison he met a man
that he became friends with who lost his tongue. At the end we see the man
with no tongue carrying in Ben Hur's servant who had no legs. Ben Hur's
servant says: "I lost my legs and my friend here lost his tongue, but the
two of us together make a considerable man." This is the spirit that I am
talking about. This is the spirit that must invade the body of Christ.
Together we make a considerable force and Satan knows this and he will try
everything that he possibly can to keep God's people in competition instead
of completion.

Along with these thoughts there are several things we should keep in mind.

1. Authority. Before sending His disciples out Jesus said: "all authority
is given to me—go." With that authority we are to go into all nations. We
are going to need authority if we are going to penetrate some of these dark
areas of the world where evil forces are holding sway and that authority is
given to the Body of Christ, but if the Body is divided the authority is dissipated. It is like the battery of a car that is leaking power until there is no power left; there is no "go.” Could this be one of the reasons why the Church is not moving today? There is no power and consequently there is no go.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:18 "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on
earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be
loosed in heaven." I think it is interesting that this statement or promise
is put between the principle of reconciliation and perpetual forgiveness
when it comes to our brother or sister in Christ. Is the Holy Spirit trying
to tell us something? Could it be that if we do not have the right
relationship one with another (which also includes completing one
another) that we do not have any authority either?

Could this be the reason the church today seems to have very little
authority against the onslaught of evil that we have in our society today?
We seem to have plenty of activity in our churches, many well thought out
programs, many seminars we can take about different aspects of the church
and her life. But where is the power? We have the noise, the rattle, but
where is the revival??

2. We need to see that this is what the enemy wants. He wants division. He
doesn't want the body of Christ to see their dependence on one another. He
knows united we stand, but divided we fall. How are we going to ever
penetrate the one billion Muslim, 600 million Hindus, 300 million
Buddhists, and the 250 million Confucionists?

To do the task will take the whole body of Christ. I am not talking about
denominations getting together. I am not suggesting we have an ecumenical
movement where different segments of so-called Christianity come together
to unite, which to me would be another tangent of the enemy.

However, when it comes to born again believers, the ones who make up the
body of Christ that is a different story. We need to see our oneness not
just in our own denomination or even nationality, but beyond. Not only must
we see our oneness but also to be asking how can we complete one another to get the task done.

This must start with the leadership. We must set the pace; we must give the
direction. It should start in our own local fellowship. We often read about
the mega-churches we have today. However we must realize that most of the churches we have in the World are not mega-churches, but small struggling churches, so how can we come together to complete one another and combine our resources. We only have so much time, energy, resource
available and we need to make the most of it?

We need to seriously ask ourselves if our ministry is one of completion or
competition, or have we fallen for the devil's lie that we can do this on our
own?

3. This brings me to the third thing that we need to consider. Our work
for the Lord is not an ego trip. So often we can be building our own empire
instead of the kingdom of God and so often personal ambition and empire building are hindering the spread of the gospel.

In the ministry of the Lord what are some of the first things we think of?
A new building, bigger budget, better programs, how to get more people, or
do we find ourselves thinking about what the Lord wants realizing that
this is His church and He is the Lord? Do we find ourselves thinking about
the bigger picture seeing the Body of Christ and her ongoing mission and of
how we are a part of that body?

I guess that is why the church of Antioch speaks to me. What do we find the
leadership doing? They are ministering to the Lord, waiting upon Him,
worshipping Him and in the midst of this waiting, worshipping, the Holy Spirit speaks and the result is that out of this little church the Gospel begins
to go to the ends of the world.

It would seem logical that if we are wanting to see the extension of God's
kingdom instead of building our own kingdom that we would be doing what the church of Antioch did, waiting upon God. Instead it seems that man has
pushed God aside and has taken over. We have board meetings, our planning sessions and committees. We have tried to elbow our way into the Trinity to make it a foursome. We have tried to take over the task of the Holy Spirit.

4. John 17:22 Jesus said in His prayer: "I have given them the glory that
you gave me, that they may be one as we are one." The glory referred to
here is the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation, but in particular
in the Person of Christ. His glory is also His grace and power and we see His
glory when He turned water into wine, as well when He raised Lazarus from the dead. John 2:11; John 11:40-44.

This glory, Jesus said: "I give to you," referring to His disciples. It is
interesting that what man wants and strives after God gives us in Christ
Jesus. Man wants glory and a name and how often we have seen someone who has died naming a piece of property after himself in order to perpetuate
his name.

We read in Genesis 11:4 after the flood what do we find man doing? "Come
let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that will reach to the heavens,
so that we make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of
the whole earth." This is what carnal man wants.

Yet we read in the next chapter of Genesis that God chooses Abraham, who
became the father of faith, and said: "I will make your name great." God
will give us a name and here in the Lord's Prayer of John 17 Jesus gives
His glory to us.

One of the reasons for so much competition is that man is looking for glory
as well as a name. Christ did not seek His own glory, but the glory that
came from the Father. We are told that a man who speaks from himself seeks his own glory. 1 Corinthians 1:29 we are told that no flesh can glory (or boast) in His presence. (vs.31) Our glory, or boasting, must be in the Lord.

We are to bring glory to the Father. How do we do that? John 15:8 "This is
to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my
disciple." I believe we bring much glory to the Lord when we accomplish
what He has given us to do (missions). To accomplish this task we need
completion and not competition. Psalm 133:1 says, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity." This, I believe, is what the Lord
thinks about completion.

It is very important for us to identify some of the causes of competition
that exist among us in order that we might see them and deal with them.
These are real hindrances for us in the Body of Christ, not only for our
mission, but for our growth. What are they?

1. Jealously is a major cause. We can so easily become jealous of another
brother, regarding his ministry, gifts, etc. When I first went to India I
was talking to a brother about a powerful ministry of another brother in
Calcutta. This brother's comment was: "If I had his money I too could have
the same ministry." Instead of rejoicing over how the Lord was using this
brother there was the comparison and the jealousy.

2. Lack of security in ourselves. A few years ago I was one of the speakers
in an Operation World conference in Bangalore, India. It was a wonderful
time and the lord was moving in our midst. In one of the question and
answer sessions that we had one of the pastors asked a very penetrating
question. "Do you speakers feel jealous when someone preaches, teaches, or administrates better then you do?"

It was a very frank question. One of the Indian speakers answered the
question and said this: "In the early days of my ministry when I saw or
heard someone bringing a better message then I, I did feel threaten by
it. But over the years I have come to realize what the Lord has given me
and what I am able to do and I have accepted it and rejoice in it so that when I hear someone bringing a better message I rejoice." (Romans 9:21)

This Indian speaker that I quoted above has come into a security in the
Lord. He recognized that it is more important to know who he is than what
he does. It would seem that part of the competition that we have in our evangelical churches stems from this lack of understanding of who God is and that God accepts us for who we are not for what we do. We do, or work because we have been accepted, not to be accepted because works that stem out of the latter is what the Bible calls dead works.

3. Pride is also another great cause of competition. This is what drives
our sports. This is the way the coach motivates the players, playing upon
their pride to be the best, to be number one. This is also what we have in
back of the tremendous competition in business.

We can expect this in the world, but when it is carried over into the church something is wrong, drastically wrong. Whenever there is comparing there is pride. Why do we keep tabs on how many people were in church on Sunday or Sunday School? Why do we have in some of our denominations a record of what number churches are in regards to their mission budget? This is number nine or number eight or number one as far as giving to missions
is concerned.

How come we do not hear more about how one church gave up something in
order to help complete another church to make them more effective? I know
that there are some, but they are the exception not the rule. This would
apply to missions as well, especially out on the field.

Operation Mobilization was praying and working towards their second ship
the M/V DOULOS. At times the money was coming in very slowly, although we did already have the personnel needed to launch this ship. “Youth With A
Mission,” a similar organization to OM was also beginning to move more into
the ship ministry. They had already paid the down payment for a ship, but
could not come up with the rest and lost the ship as well as the thousands
of dollars they had put down.

For YWAM to lose that ship was not easy, but when they saw how far along we were with our vision of getting a ship they took the one hundred thousand dollars they had saved to purchase their ship and gave it to us. This propelled us forward greatly in purchasing the M/V DOULOS. This was
completion not competition at work. Also later they sent some of their personnel to our ship to learn from our mistakes on how to run a ship for missions. We helped one another.

4. A lack of transparency is another cause of competition. Somehow we try
to communicate that we have it all together. The fact of the matter is we
are all struggling, but looking at the majority of God's people they try to
put on the act that they are in control.

How subtle the devil has been in this area getting us to pretend that all
is well. How we need to be more open with one another! The Bible says that
we should carry one another's burdens, but it is hard to carry one another's
burdens when we do not know what the burdens are, and we will never know unless we share.

Satan has deluded us into thinking that we do not need one another or
perhaps I should say we do not do any thinking at all. If we thought about
it we would realize that we do need all the members of the body just like I
need all the members of my physical body if I am going to function the way
the Lord has made me.

The whole religious system of the world is based on this man made
philosophy, which is the devil's lie that somehow I can do it on my own.
Much agony has come out of it because we have fallen for this lie spawned
in hell by the devil himself.

A brother who had been greatly used in the youth ministry had committed an indecent act with a 16 year old girl. Later on it came to light, he went
to court and this brother spent almost one year in jail. His ministry with
the youth came to a stand-still as well as jeopardized his family. There
was real repentance, discipline and this brother is well on his way to
recovery. I believe that in the days ahead this man's ministry will be even
more powerful. While he was in jail the Lord was able to speak to him and
show him things where he had gotten off on tangents. The nine months in
prison was hard, but a great eye opener and like he said better than any
seminary training.

In reflection he saw a number of things that he had been doing that led to
this sinful act. This did not just happen. Like all sin this sin had its
roots in many other things as well. As he looked back he could see the
process which led to his downfall. This process I want to share with you,
because we can learn from one another.

1. The first thing that he said took place was that he stopped feeding the
inner man. There were no new insights. What insights he got came from
others and the only use he had for the Word was for preparation of a message, not for feeding the inner man. Does that sound familiar?

2. Next he started to allow little improper things to come into his life.
The Bible says Ephesians 5:3 that there should not "even be a hint of
immorality." (1 Thessalonians 5:22) "Avoid every kind of evil." Soon little things allowed in his life became big things.

3. A real thought came in from the enemy at this time to make him
rationalize what he was doing. He began to reason that nobody was perfect
and besides his ministry was successful and that because of this God
would somehow overlook what he was doing. One aspect about God that he was forgetting is that God is no respecter of persons. This is where the real
deception came in.

4. He went on to say how he became a man-pleaser. This affected his
ministry greatly and he cut out meeting with God because he was too busy
pleasing man. He knew he was a hypocrite. The life he was living and the
words he was speaking and his motivation instead of being the love of Christ
became centered on man.

5. One thing leads to another and he was finding himself becoming mentally
and physically exhausted of all it took to keep up the pretense.

6. He went on to say that he had "no safe" friend. Before or even during
the sinful encounter there was no one that he felt confident in to be able
to share the struggles, etc. Not even his wife. He felt if he shared his
weakness his ministry would end. This is demonic, because the opposite is true. When we are able to be honest with our struggles we find that people are able to identify with us and our ministry actually increases. This doesn't
mean that we share with just any one. We need wisdom here, but it does mean that we have a few close friends that we are able to walk in the light
with.

7. Next he found that his relationship with his wife became a guarded
relationship. Because of what was going on he had to be careful in what he
said and did so that nothing would get out.

8. His ministry became more legalistic. It became more performance
oriented. He began to see and think it is not who you are that is
important, but what you do.

9. He also said that because he was good at what he was doing other people
became intimidated and because of that they were afraid to confront him.
Later when it all came out and he was in jail several came to him and told
him then that they saw things at the time that seemed dangerous. Might we
have more of the reality of Matthew 5:23-26 and Matthew 18:15-17.

10. What he shared next spoke to me because what he applied to his family
could also be applied to the church. Because of what he was doing and
knowing that he was a hypocrite he was reluctant to confront sin in his own
family. Consequently his family went through more turmoil.

Could this be what happened to King David when David's own family
duplicated his own sin? It seems strange that there is no real
confrontation with David regarding his family after what his son Amnon did
to his sister Tamar. Could this be the reason we do not have more
discipline in the church?

11. Lastly he never thought he would be caught. What a Satanic thought, because the Bible says be sure your sin will find you out.

There is a place in the Body of Christ for iron to sharpen iron, (Proverbs
27:17) or like we read in Hebrews 10:24 that we should consider how we can spur one another on. However, what is the motivation? Is it to sharpen one another for the work of the Lord and for His glory or to be number one?

I firmly believe that if we as the church of the Living Christ are going to
take advantage of the 'open doors' ahead of us we must exorcise this demon
of competition from our midst.

**CHAPTER TWO: OUR MINISTRY - FOCUS OR FRAGMENTATION**

Philippians 3: 12-14 "Not that I have already attained all of this, or have
already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which
Christ Jesus took hold of me. (vs.13) Brothers, I do not consider myself yet
to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and
straining toward what is ahead. (vs.14) I press on toward the goal to win
the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

A brother shared with me a survey that was taken regarding new businesses
that had been started. He went on to say that in the survey 23% of the new
businesses started had no idea of where they were going. They had started
the business, but they had no specific goals, and went on to say that in
the survey 67% had a general idea of where they were going and what they
wanted to accomplished. Still if you asked these people today they would
not be able to share with you very clearly what they wanted to accomplish.
Only 10% of the people who started the business had clear specific goals and knew what they wanted to accomplish and were moving towards those
goals. These people were in the upper economical bracket and out of this 10%, 7% met their goals 44% of the time and the remaining 3% met their goals 89% of the time. This survey went on to say that this remaining 3% operated from well-defined written goals. In other words, there was a clear focus.

What does this mean to us in the ministry? Again I would like to say that I
am not talking about those called to the ministry, but for all of us because
we are all in the ministry. If there is no focus in our life and ministry
then there will be fragmentation. If we were to ask the average person
about the focus of his or her local congregation what would we hear?

Talking with young people I find the same thing. There seems to be a real
loss of purpose among the young today. It is very rare to find young people
who have some definite goals in their life. When you do find someone who
has some definite goals in life it is most usually dealing with material
things. If I had to characterize the young today, especially in the West,
I would have to say there is fragmentation and a lack of focus. If there is no purpose in life then what is the use of living? Could this be the reason or one of the reasons why we have such a high suicide rate?

Also being involved with churches in many different parts of the world I
find the same phenomena, a lack of focus, a fragmentation which is having a profound effect upon many. Christ came to give us life and to give it to the full. John 10:10. Yet how many of God's people seem to have life to the full, but are weighted down with many cares and seems that our life is being torn apart, that our life is very fragmented?

Paul gave us the answer to a full life as believers in Christ when he said in Philippians 3:13"....one thing I do..." In this context he is talking about knowing Christ. He wanted to press on to gain that which Christ got a hold of him for. What did Christ get a hold of Paul for? First, to be conformed into His image, this is true with every believer in Christ, because it is God working in us too. Secondly, Christ got a hold of Paul and gave him a calling which was to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. (Romans 1:1 and 5; Acts 9:15)

If we want to have focus in our lives we also see the necessity of some of
the other principles in this book, one example being the principle of
relinquishment. Many things will come that will be an off-shoot of our
focus. The tendency will be to get involved with all of these things until
we are fragmented. The need is for relinquishment, being able to turn the
ministry over to others so that you can keep to your focus. However, there are some things that cannot be turned over to others, for example, Paul could not relinquish his calling to the gentiles and neither can we relinquish the calling God has given us.

Philippians 3:17 Paul says: "Join with others in following my example..." We have the same thing as Paul. First, God wants to change us into the image
of His Son and secondly, we have a calling to be saints, but we are also
called to be His witnesses.

In Mark 13 Jesus is sharing with His disciples some of the signs of the end
times and when He come to the end of His discourse He warns us to be ready. In verse 34 He says: "It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task (the one thing),
and tells the one at the door to keep watch." I believe, that this is the secret to success, "this one thing I do." What is that one thing the Lord has assigned for me? What is God's plan for my life? This, I believe, is what we must find out and then give ourselves to it.

Before we go any further with this line of thought let us look at Christ.

Mark 1:35-39. In this passage of Scripture we see Christ getting up early
in the morning to meet with His Heavenly Father. His disciples were looking
for Him and when they found Him in the solitary place they exclaimed:
"Everyone is looking for you." The answer that Christ gave, I think, is
very significant. "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so that I can preach there also. **That is why I have come."** (vs.38) Here is focus, because Christ knew what He was there for and he would not get off track.

Jesus told the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15:24 "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." At first glance this seems like a very hard answer. It
does not seem like the Jesus we know. However let me add that focus is what we see with Christ. We need to recognize that Jesus came into this world with a body that had been prepared for Him and when He was here on earth in a body like ours He also had the restrictions like we do being limited to time and space. Therefore it makes focus so much more important. We cannot do everything since we do not have unlimited time, energy, or the resources available to us.

Jesus came to the Children of Israel because from the Children of Israel He
would eventually be able to touch the world. But in order to do that He had
to focus on one thing.

Matthew 10: 5-6 "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel." Again we are seeing the same thing-focus. It doesn't mean that Christ is not concerned about the
Gentiles, because he is and we see this coming out later on in Matthew 10:18 where Jesus tells His disciples that they will be witnesses to the Gentiles. Matthew 12:17-21 tells us how He will eventually proclaim to all the people. Matthew 24:14 states to “all the nations.” Matthew 28:18-20 gives us the Great Commission the Mandate to go into every part of the world. Revelation 7:9 gives us a view of the future and what do we find? From every tribe, family, peoples, nations and language in the world we find people worshipping the Lord.

This is the goal that Jesus has in mind, but He had to focus to reach it
while here on the earth and not allow Satan to get Him off on tangents. As
a matter of fact I believe the temptations that Christ had in the wilderness were to get Him away from His focus. I believe, that ultimately the temptations that come our way are meant to side-track us from our focus or for some not to know what our focus should be. I cannot think of a
greater tragedy in the life of a child of God than not have any focus, to
go through life fragmented.

To find focus in our lives there are certain things to keep in mind. For
example, we are called to be saints, to be set apart for holy use. We are to
be the light of the world so consequently we need to let our light shine.
Also we read in Scripture that the theme is missions. This is what we see
in Luke 24:44-47. These two themes that run parallel in Scripture are about
(1) Christ, His coming, death, burial, resurrection and (2) that this
message should be preached in the entire world as a witness. This is to be
done by the Body of Christ, not just by the few who are looked upon as the
‘professionals.’

There is an excellent book called Your Work Matters to God, by Doug
Sherman and William Hendricks put out by Navpress P.O. Box 6000, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80934. It is a book based upon the fact that the ministry belongs to all the people of God and we need to get the ministry back into the hands of the lay people, because most of the people we want to reach are in the work place.

For example, there is a brother, we will call him Joe, who is a contractor.
The Lord began to work in his life and he wanted to see how the Lord could
use him to reach out to a world that is lost. He had a burden for the
Muslim world. He thought that by being in business he could be used in the
area of finance, helping to supply the resources necessary to reach these
one billion people with the Gospel of Christ.

However his business failed and although the Lord used him for a short time
in this area of finance it looked impossible for him to continue on. He
had to go out and get a job and the Lord in a very unique way led him to
get a job as a project manager in another contracting company that is owned by a Pakistani Muslim.

The Lord blessed him like He did with Joseph in the Old Testament. Joe
became the executive vice-president second in authority only to the owner.
The owner wanted to take him to Pakistan to meet other relatives and
wanted to adopt him into the family. Joe is very outspoken about his God
and recognizes that the Lord has put him into a very unique place. By his
life and wanting to give God the credit for everything speaks to these
Muslims.

What do we learn from this regarding focus in the life of the lay person?

1. Joe is a builder. This is an ability that God has given him. He is not
called to preach or teach, but he can build and he wants to focus on this
ability and become a good builder for God.

2. Joe through his ability can be a witness for the Lord, first by the
product that he turns out and his integrity in doing it and secondly, by giving
God the honor. These Muslims from Pakistan knew that Joe is a Christian and Joe credits his wisdom to the Lord above. Joe is able to reach people, like these Muslims from Pakistan whom I cannot reach. I never will have contact directly with these people, only Joe. Thirdly, Joe is still able
to be "Serving as Senders."

3. Joe recognizes that his focus must be on his life, that his life and his
talk must be in harmony, also that his work matters to God. This is where
the Lord has placed him. This realization brings tremendous focus to Joe's
life and his life and work now have a purpose. The mundane things that come into his life now take on a different perspective, because his life has
significance. He realizes afresh that he doesn't have to be a pastor,
missionary, etc. to be used of God. When he goes to work in the morning and is fighting the traffic and deals with all of the other mundane things that
come from the work world that this is all part of the spiritual warfare he
is faced with. But most important of all, I believe, is that Joe begins to
see that there is no separation between the secular and the spiritual. It
all matters to God. Joe is beginning to see what the church is all about.
It is not just being 'in church' on Sunday, but that he is part of the
church and when he goes to work on Monday morning he is engaged in
spiritual warfare, and by being in the place where the Lord wants him, he
is fulfilling the Great Commission that Christ gave to the church.

Also Joe is finding the importance of prayer, praise and the daily getting
into the Word of God in order to be all that the Lord wants him to be.

4. I would like to add, Joe has found his 'one thing.' Now that he learns
to focus on that his life will take on a whole new dimension. He will begin
to learn what Christ meant when He said in John 10:10 "..... I have come
that they may have life, and have it to the full." Nothing gives us a more
full rich life then to know that our life has significance. This is what
Christ does, He gives us significance.

One aspect of focus comes out in Paul's admonition in 1 Corinthians 7. Three times he says we should remain in the state that we were called. (vs. 17, 20 and 24) When John the Baptist started preaching he had different ones to come under conviction and they asked him what they should do. John's answer to the tax collectors was not to take any more tax than necessary; for the soldiers not to take advantage of their authority, but the significant
thing was that they remained in the same situation.

John, like Paul did not say to move out of the situation that they were in,
but they were to let their lights shine where they were. However, we do see
the Lord calling some, not all, but some out of the different vocations. He
called Matthew from being a tax collector, Peter, James and John from
fishing, etc. Like Paul himself the Lord has called some to be apostles,
prophets, evangelists, pastor teacher, etc.. However the majority are to
remain in the situation that they were in when called.

A key question that we need to ask and answer is: How do I get focus into
my life? I would like to offer several things that we can do.

1. It is important first of all for us to recognize the need for focus in
our lives. We might have a very busy schedule and much activity and many
things that we are doing. However, we need to ask do we have focus? The
definition that Webster gives for focus is: "A point at which rays of
light, heat, or the like, meet after being reflected or refracted; a point
from which diverging rays appear to proceed, or a point at which converging
rays would meet if they could be prolonged in the same direction."

Let our activity be the different rays of light or heat and ask ourselves
the question: do they converge? Do they come to a point? Is all of our
activity moving towards a common goal, or do they all seem to be running
parallel? It is possible that the different activities do come to a point,
but we fail to recognize it. We fail to recognize the goal.

Take for example the local fellowship. We have many different types of
people with spiritual gifts that can be used of the Lord. These people, if
they are walking with the Lord will be motivated by the Lord to be involved
with different things. At first the local fellowship will seem fragmented
with the entire different activity taking place and perhaps it is, but only
because the spiritual leadership has not focused the activity or has not
brought the activity to a point towards that common goal. What is our
common goal? It seems to be two-fold: 1) To move towards holiness and 2) to be witnesses for Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most
parts of the world. Most, if not all, of the activity in our local fellowships could be focused on these two things mentioned above. If we cannot focus the activity to the essential goal then perhaps we need to see about getting rid of that activity.

When I was the director of Operation Mobilization ship, the DOULOS, circumnavigating South America the goal was to see Latinos moving towards the Mediterranean Basin (Southern Europe and North Africa), because of the affinity the Latinos had with that part of the world. This goal, focus gave purpose to the ship’s body no matter what part of the ship they were involved in-from the Captain of the ship to the person washing dishes in the pantry.

2. We need prayer in having those times of being still and knowing just who God is. We desperately need these times of reflection, of quieting ourselves to hear God speaking, because there are many voices out there calling us to be involved and there is no end to what we could be doing, and many of them are good things, but they are not God's best. Since we have only so much time, energy, resources we need to concentrate on God's best. He has a plan for each one of us.

3. We need prayer to maintain our focus. This is what Jesus is doing in
Mark 1:35-38. When all were seeking Jesus asking Him to come back to the
village where remarkable things were being done, what did He say? "Let us
go somewhere else........that is why I have come..." Through prayer He was
able to maintain that focus.

4. We need obedience. When we wait upon the Lord and He will reveal to us what He wants. We then need to do what He tells us. Along with this we need to be satisfied with God's plans for us as well as with the gifts He has
given. I say this because often we are not satisfied and content with what
the Lord has given us. We have the tendency to think the grass is greener
on the other side of the fence; to think that someone else's ministry is
more important than mine. We have a tendency to covet another man's gift or His ministry.

In conclusion just as the magnifying glass focuses the rays of the sun on
one spot and releases tremendous amounts of energy on the point of
concentration so the Holy Spirit can do with the Body of Christ. When we
are led by the Holy Spirit He focuses the energy of the Son through us and
tremendous things can be accomplished. We see this in the history of the
Church down through the ages. Might God bring the church, the Body of Christ, back to the focus He has for us.

**CHAPTER THREE: OUR MINISTRY - DECLARATION OR DECEPTION?**
2 Corinthians 2:17 "Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for
profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like
men sent from God." 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 "Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

March 1968 is a time that my wife and I will not forget. That was the year
and month that we got married in the German Lutheran church in Teheran,
Iran. After a honey-moon in Persepolis the capital of the Old Persian
Empire near the very beautiful garden city of Shiraz in the south we
started making our way back to India by public bus.

Sitting towards the back of the bus bouncing over the corrugated roads we
realized that we had several days of this torture ahead of us, and the strong
tobacco smoke that came from the men traveling on the bus with us didn't
make it any better.

As we were trying to make the most of our time through talking, reading,
(it was impossible to write), the bus suddenly came to a stop in the middle
of nowhere with no living soul in sight. Not understanding Farsi, the language that they spoke, we were even more confused when we saw everybody else getting off the bus. We stayed in our seats.

After a short time it became obvious what was happening, because the people were spreading out over the country side, laying down their mats and all pointing in the same direction started their Islamic prayer ritual stating
that “Allah is God and Mohammed is his prophet.” They did this several
times a day over the next few days as we traveled through Afghanistan,
through the Khyber Pass into Pakistan (all Muslim countries) and then into India.

As I pondered this several thoughts came into my mind. Firstly, we see that
these people are religious and take their religion seriously. I thought
how strange it would be riding on a bus in the West and the driver would
stop and tell us it is time to pray. This is something I could not imagine, but in the Middle East it was a very natural thing. Secondly, I thought how a spirit of deception has captured these people (over one billion) to think that by their own efforts they can be made right with God.

It wasn't long after this that I was going over a bridge that spans the
mighty Ganges River going into a city called Varanasi in India. I noticed
that on the top of the tall bridge columns there were vultures and I thought
how strange because most usually you see these birds, not in the cities, but out in the countryside and only when there is something dead.

Soon after arriving in Varanasi I realize why the vultures were waiting patiently on the bridge, because for the 600 million Hindus the Ganges River, which has its start in the melting snows in the Himalayan Mountains, has become a holy river. According to the Hindus, the spirit of the Ganges (the spirit being what makes the water move) is recognized by many Hindus as one of the wives of Siva, a Hindu deity.

Many Hindus will make the pilgrimage to the Ganges in order to bathe in
this so called holy water hoping that their sins can be washed away. Also
many Hindus will bring their loved ones who are about to die so that they
might breathe their last on the banks of the Ganges and that they can be
cremated and the ashes strewn over the holy water.

Often the people who come to Varanasi, also known as Benares, are so poor
that they cannot afford to buy enough wood to properly cremate their loved
ones who died. This cremation, which is going on all the time, usually takes place on slabs of cement along the banks of the Ganges. Once the fire has burned down what is left is cast into the water among the bathers who have come to wash away their sins. It is not uncommon to see parts of the human body floating down stream. I realized why the vultures were there. As I looked and observed the thought that came into my mind was DECEPTION. These people are deceived.

Being in the West we see the spirit of deception here as well. It might not
be as obvious as in places like the Middle East and India, but never the
less it still is equally deadly. Often our deception seems to hide behind
our material possessions, having been deceived into thinking that
happiness lies in the things that we possess, having material security, in
pursuit of pleasure and in our personal autonomy. But looking around we see the outcome of all of this in our broken homes, broken marriages, suicide among our young people , abortions and the tremendous problem of drugs. All of this can be summed up in one word: DECEPTION.

The problem that I see is that this spirit of deception that is in the
world, and in our culture, penetrates the church also. Paul warns us in 1
Timothy 4:1 "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon
the faith and following deceiving spirits and things taught by demons."

The religious people accused the Lord in Luke 11:14-26 of casting out
demons by the Prince of Demons. In arguing His case He asked them how Satan could stand if his house is divided against itself. But what He said next, I believe, is a very profound statement; "Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then they will be your judge." (vs. 19) Jesus later on states "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters." (vs. 23)

What is Jesus saying here? First he was saying that the followers of the
Pharisees, this could be either their disciples or their children, were
casting out demons and Jesus did not deny that they were not being cast out by these followers. Secondly, if they were being cast out who was doing it?
Jesus stated emphatically if you are not with me then you are against me.

Thirdly, Jesus also mentioned of how when a demon leaves it tries to find a
place to abide, but when it cannot it comes back to the original dwelling
place and finding it swept clean will bring seven other demons with him so
that person's last state is worse than at the first. If we take all that is
being said then the answer to Jesus question to the Pharisees on whom do they (the Pharisees and their followers) cast them out would be Beelzebub, the one that Pharisees accused Jesus of using to cast them out.

But wouldn't you say that if Satan casts out Satan he would be divided against himself and he wouldn't be able to stand? True, unless the strategy was to give a little territory in order to gain even more.

What I mean is this. To have a demon leave would bring real relief to the
possessed person. It probably would not make much difference to the
relieved person how the demon left as long as he left, but what is
happening is that this person is being set-up for a greater bondage.
Eventually that person's state is far worse than what it was at the
beginning.

I have seen this many times in different countries of the world. It is not
unusual for people who are involved with spiritism in Brazil or India to invoke some spirit to help them and often they got what they wanted. I have also seen that when they have come to Christ they lost what this false spirit had given them. However, these people who have come to Christ often need extra counseling and deliverance to be completely free.

Jesus said you either gather or you scatter. There is no middle ground. A person, who is delivered by something other than the Gospel, basically has
no need for the Gospel. Eventually that person will be worse off. What also
happens is that these other things (things other than the Gospel) fail to
bring deliverance so that when the real thing (the Gospel) comes along they
don't try it, thinking that it is just like the rest. Again that person is
worse off.

This is where the real deception comes in here in the West. We have many
other voices that seem to have the ‘answer.’ They tell us to try this or
that, to take this seminar, to go to this conference, etc. I am not saying
these seminars are all bad because some of them will be helpful, but if
they are not based on the Gospel than they will be wasted effort, and
eventually lead us into a bigger bondage. We must keep in mind that Satan
often comes as an angel of light.

Part of the real deception here in the West is to get our thoughts away
from the simplicity of the Gospel, which we think that somehow deliverance can only come through Christ plus something else. When it is Christ plus something else soon it is only something else and Christ has been left on the side-lines. Soon billions of dollars are spent on medicine, (such as tranquilizers), counseling, specialized seminars in trying to find deliverance from the demon of alcohol, drugs, loneliness and a whole host of other things that plague man-kind. Soon we are doing what Paul said would take place in the last days, following teachings "taught by demons." Whatever happened to the apostles' teaching which is one of the cornerstones of the church? (Acts 2:42)

In 1 Timothy 4:16 Paul told Timothy: "Watch your life and doctrine closely.
Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your
hearers." What Paul is saying to Timothy is very important for us today.
The two areas we need to guard against deception are our life and our talk.

Looking at these two things we see they need to go together. Often there
is a dichotomy. This is what Jesus said about the Pharisees. Matthew 23:3 "So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." Does this sound familiar? How different from the Apostle Paul; who said: "Therefore I urge you to imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16) Paul was not perfect nor is he preaching sinless perfection, but his heart and life were moving in the right direction.

The degree of deception that has entered our lives and the need for it to
be dealt with is probably in direct proportion in which we cannot say to
our children, brothers and sisters in Christ: “Imitate me."

What are some of the areas of deception that have come into the church of
the Living God?

The first area that I see in the church is what I call play-acting. When
it comes to the things of God this is probably the best word that describes
what is actually taking place-play acting.

Jesus denounced these play-actors in His day by calling them hypocrites. As
a matter of fact this is what a hypocrite was, he was a play actor. He was
acting out the role of what a religious person should be like or what they
thought a religious person should be like.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus denounced these deceived people, these
play-actors in three areas. First, in their giving this was designed to receive honor by men. Often it was done with a noise to make sure that everybody knew about it. Maybe we don't have the same noisy way today, but most usually we find some way for people to find out what has been given and by whom. Usually it is a corner stone with our names inscribed, or it is written up in the bulletin.

Secondly, Jesus denounced these deceived people in the area of their
praying which again was play-acting, done to be noticed by men. The prayers that are said in front of men are most usually long and drawn out, but where are these same people when it comes to really interceding for this
world and its lost condition? Where are these people when it comes to
special seasons of prayer, nights of prayer? Where are these people when it
comes to their own secluded place, their prayer closet, seeking the face of
God for direction, wisdom and waiting upon God until He shows the direction
that they should go? Often this does not happen because they are play-acting when it comes to the things of God. They are deceived.

Thirdly, Jesus said they were play-acting when it came to fasting, and again
they made sure everybody knew what they were doing; they did it in order to be seen by men. Pretending to be something we are not is where deception comes in. It brings in the idea of manipulation by deceit.

In our text 2 Corinthians 4:2 Paul said: "We have renounced secret and shameful ways." What was he referring to? If we go back to 2 Corinthians 3:13 Paul says: "We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away." What was Paul saying here?

Remember Moses how when he came down from the Mount where he met with God and we read that his face shone and the Children of Israel were afraid to come near. There was a real awe and wonder over Moses because of that shining face. (Exodus 34:29-35) It probably made what he said to have more authority and he would have fewer problems with those he was leading.

We read, however in 2 Corinthians 3:13, that Moses would put a veil on his face to keep the Israelites from seeing the glory fade. With the veil on his
face the Israelites would think that the glory was still there although in
reality it was fading. This was deception and Paul later on says that "we do
not use deception."

Yet are we any different? How often we pretend to one another, to our
children and we come to church all dressed up and outwardly we look real good, but yet inside we can be full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (Matthew 23:27, 28)

Another area of where we have real deception is regarding the church. What
is the church? What do we mean when we say I am going to church on Sunday morning? This is a contradiction of terms. This is also where the deception has come in.

When we say we are going to church we mean we are going to a building at a particular time, where we will have some singing, perhaps a testimony,
announcements and if it is an evangelical church a message from the Word of God that might or might not be relevant to what I am faced with in the real world. OH! I should not forget the most important thing about going to
church which is the offering or collection. We, of course, are admonished
to give at least a tenth of what we earn, but most usually it is just a
token that we put in the plate when it passes by or we drop in the box on
the way out. We call this weekly exercise “going to church.” How deceived
we have been!

The church is not something we go to, it is what we are. If we have been
born again by the Holy Spirit then we are part of the church, which is the
body of Christ, house of God, habitat of the Holy Spirit. Now granted we
as the Body of Christ need to come together to meet, fellowship, encourage
one another, breaking of bread and prayer and also for teaching. But if we
are born again we are the church. This to me is where the real deception
has come in. We have forgotten who we are. Because we have forgotten who we are and we have forgotten what we are here for. Consequently we have much activity, but little real movement.

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to speak to four or five
hundred pastors and their wives. On the way to the hotel where the
meetings were to be held I was silently praying and asking God to give me
an illustration of what the church was like today. Just as I prayed that
prayer we went over a river and I looked out the window of the car at the
flowing river beneath me and I had my illustration.

I noticed two things. First that along the banks of the river little eddies were
forming. As I looked I noticed how they went around and around and in the
process they picked up the dirt, the filth, the refuse that came into the
river. Secondly that out in the middle the river was flowing and the water was pure and clean, and the river seemed to be moving towards a destination, not like the little eddies that had plenty of motion but they were not going any place.

I thought that this is the picture of the churches today. We are like the
little eddies. We have plenty of activity in our lives and everyday there is
something taking place in the local congregation, meetings to go to,
seminars, potluck dinners, the occasional missionary meeting, etc.
However, we seem to be like the little eddies along the banks of the river
with plenty of motion, but just going around in circles. The next thing we
know is that our lives are becoming cluttered with dirt, filth, sin. How we
need to be out in mid-stream where the current is flowing. How we need to
be involved with the purpose of God.

One last area that I would like to mention where I feel we are deceived
today is that we are following an imaginary Christ. He is not the One
mentioned in the Word of God.

Some years ago I was talking with a brother in the Lord who had
back-slide and was living with a girl that he was not married to. It
seemed to be the natural thing to do because this is what everybody else
was doing. He was going on the assumption of the 51%. If the majority do it
then it must be right, even though it is going against the Word of God.

When we were talking together he was trying to justify himself for his
actions and he told me how he had told this girlfriend (that he was living
with) about Christ and how she had accepted Christ. My question to him was
what Jesus did she accept? The way they were living it couldn't have
been the Jesus of the New Testament. This thought struck home like an arrow finding its mark and both got their lives right with the Jesus of the Gospels and are now happily married and involved with the real Christ.

One Puritan had it right when he said that if we are content with an
imaginary Christ then we must be content with an imaginary salvation. Could this be what Jesus was saying in the Sermon on the Mount: "Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into heaven, but only
he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me you evil doers.'" Matthew 7:21-23

In this day of great deception might the Lord give us an army of men and
women of discernment.

**CHAPTER FOUR: OUR MINISTRY - LETTER OF THE LAW OR SPIRIT OF LIFE?**
2 Corinthians 3:1-6 "Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by
everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of
our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God,
not on tables of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence
as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in
ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from
God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant-not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

We had stopped in this little village called Hiriyur in Karnataka State of
India to get a bite of lunch and some of the fifteen Indian brothers handed
out tracts presenting the Gospel has they walked towards the restaurant.
While we were eating our rice and dahl a crowd began to gather in the
restaurant and at first I thought they were curious about my wife, blond hair
and blue eyes which is a phenomenon in India; I at first thought they wanted to see this rarity since we had only been married about two months, and in some ways we were still on our honey-moon, but almost at once the atmosphere changed in that restaurant and now looking back in
retrospect the place had become invaded by demonic spirits brought in by
fanatical Hindus. A very real sense of animosity was prevalent and we decided to leave as soon as possible since we were on our way to a place called Gulbarga, which is in the same state, where we were going to have evangelistic meetings, so we paid the bill and went outside to find several hundred Hindus surrounding the five ton truck letting the air out of our tires and it became obvious they wanted to demobilize the vehicle and burn it since we had almost four tons of Christian literature with us.

I was greatly concerned about my wife, since we had recently been married and I didn't want to lose her just yet, so I was able to get her into the cab of
the truck and the driver, an Englishman who was the only other Westerner
with us, got into the driver seat and we were able to get the truck to the
outskirts of the village. Often when we have a riot like this we try to get
the vehicle, with the literature out of harm’s way and most usually getting to
the edge of the village or town is enough. In this case the Hindus decided
to chase us with another vehicle. They started out with a truck chasing us
but when they found out that it was hard to pass us they switched to an
ambassador car where they chased us for approximately thirty miles, putting up four different road-blocks to stop us with the last road block being the most dangerous. They had gotten in front of us by the car and had come to a village where they had convinced the village people that we had kidnapped
some Hindu children, and, of course, when they saw some of our Indian
brothers in the vehicle this is what it would look like to them.

At the entrance to the village they had taken three bullock carts, the kind
with the long tongue, and staggered them across the road so that
when we approached the village we would have to slow down in order to go
around and then they had the village people lined up on both sides of the road with rocks in their hands waiting for us. By that time most of the windows in our vehicle were broken from previous rocks and to be quite honest it looked to me like the end of the road because I did not know how we were going to make it through. Not only were the windshields gone, but our tires in the back were very bad with one of the duel tires in the rear sewn together by thread and with the weight that we had and the speed we were going I thought at any time they might blow.

We made it through that gauntlet, but not without being hit by rocks and the
next day we would feel it, but the adrenaline was coursing through our
veins and seemed to make us somewhat oblivious to pain. About half of a mile on the other side of the village this bad tire in the left back exploded, but after examining the situation we decided we would drive on to the next big city, Bellary, rather than trying to fix it at that particular moment (we still had one tire on that side), also we had seen the car that had been chasing us leave the village, but for some inexplicable reason stop. We found out later that they had run out of gas.

Just as we pulled into the city limits of Bellary the remaining tire on the left side that had been carrying all of the weight finally collapsed, so here we were in the city of Bellary with a broken down vehicle, cut up by broken
glass and shaken emotionally.

We made contact with the little Methodist church that was in the city and since we did not have transportation we could not go on to Gulbarga, so we
decided to have evangelistic meetings in Bellary, where we were able to use a field from a high caste Hindu in the center of the city. We set up some tube lights and put up loud speakers and started preaching. It is very easy in India to gather a crowd.

We did not know at the time that a nominal Christian was trying to stop our
meetings by hiring a Muslim magician to hinder us. The first night when the Indian evangelist we were working with was giving the invitation this magician would go berserk, making all types of noises, etc. to hinder the invitation and when the second night the same thing happened, I was sitting on the little plat-form that we had for the speakers and when the magician again started to interrupt the invitation, I jumped off the platform and with an Indian brother who could speak his language told him that we were doing God's work and if he continued to interrupt the Lord's work then he could expect God's judgment; then we left.

The next day about three o'clock in the afternoon a strong wind began to
blow, it was very unusual in its ferocity, it tore down trees, interrupted
the power system, and it took this black magicians tent and completely
demolished it where there was nothing left of it. The next morning when we
walked by on our way to a place where we could eat breakfast this man was
cowering in the corner where his tent used to be shaking with a real fear.
He came to one of the Indian brothers and asked the question: “Who is your
God?” God was working and in that week one hundred people made a decision for the Lord.

The story doesn't end there, because hundreds of miles away in the Northern part of India the founder and director of Operation Mobilization (George Verwer) had met two Canadians who were driving around in their Land-Rover, where they were touring India with plans to drive back to Great Britain, sell the vehicle and fly back to Canada. However, while they were in India cholera broke out in Pakistan and so Iran closed the border not allowing them to drive back to England and when George met them, bought their vehicle for two air-plane tickets back to Canada.

With the vehicle in hand he wondered what to do with it and so decided
to send it down to me; he did not know what we had just gone through and that we were immobilized, but in the midst of the moving of God one morning we wake up to find two brothers driving this new vehicle into the compound where we were staying. Needless to say our hearts were filled with praise to see the timing of God and His miraculous intervention as well as provision.

This experience showed me how unpredictable the ministry can be. One minute we were fleeing for our lives and the next we see a real moving of God in our midst. In Luke 10:17 we read: "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, Lord even the demons submit to us in your Name." However we in read in Matthew 17:16: "I brought him to your disciples, but they could not heal him."

Jesus describing the moving of the Holy Spirit to Nicodemus said: "The
wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell
where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of
the Spirit." (John 3:8) The wind is unpredictable but it manifests itself
in many ways, where sometimes it comes in hurricane force tearing up everything in its path, but at other times it can be a soft gentle breeze caressing the cheek.

The Spirit filled ministry will be unpredictable. It will not be something
that man can figure out. It is a Philip leaving a fruitful ministry in
Samaria to meet one man on the road to Gaza; it's a Paul being stopped by
the Spirit from a fruitful ministry in Asia Minor and being sent to
Macedonia; it's a William Carey going against the status quo of his day and
leaving for India to start the Modern Missionary Movement; it's a Hudson
Taylor adopting the Chinese dress including the pig-tail and going into the
interior consequently starting the China Inland Mission that led to many
other missions that began to reach into the interiors of the different
continents of the world.

In a Spirit filled ministry there will be the unpredictable, the
unexpected, and the unexplainable. Simply because God is God and His
thoughts and ways are higher than our thoughts and ways.

I would venture to say from the study of Scripture and looking at different
modern movements of God that if our ministry can be logically explained
then I would question whether or not it is a ministry of the Spirit. One of
the main distinctions of whether a ministry is that of the letter of the law or of the Spirit is whether it has the element of the unexplainable, the
unpredictable or it has that sense of mystery about it, because when one looks at the ministry he must admit it has the finger of God.

It will be seen like Paul said: "Written not with ink, but with the Spirit
of the living God, not on tables of stone, but on tablets of the human
heart." Paul is saying this about the Corinthians themselves, but also when
he wrote to the church at Thessalonica: "The Gospel came to you not simply
with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep
conviction."

If we do not have the Spirit of Life upon our ministry then how does it
differ from any other ministry that we have in the world today. Isn't this
what Moses meant in Exodus 33 where he is talking to the Lord after the
Children of Israel sinned with the golden calf and he said: "How will
anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other
people on the face of the earth?" (vs. 16)

Look around at the ministry, brothers and sisters and what do we have? Do
we have a ministry of the letter that kills that brings death or do we have
a ministry of the Spirit that brings life? Do we have a ministry that
distinguishes us from all the other ministries around, because God is
there?

So often we see the ministry today and what it is built on. If we look at
the qualifications of today's pastor, preacher, missionary, etc. it would
be with a formidable list of degrees. We have doctor so-and-so today! How
different with the Apostle Paul. He doesn't mention his qualifications
except to say they are dung. Philippians 3:8 "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things, I consider them rubbish that I might gain Christ."

Paul says his qualifications are what they see; “they” referring to the
Corinthians. It isn't ink or letters (degrees), but flesh and blood. It is
a work of the Holy Spirit.

We need to be evaluating our ministry to make sure that it is on the mark,
that we are having the right ministry. How do we know?

1. What is our emphasis? What is taking our time? What do we find ourselves talking about in those free moments? Is it on buildings, or is it material things, or is it on flesh and blood- people? Are we doing the Lord’s business which is people?

2. If the Lord was to remove the Holy Spirit would it make a difference in
our living and in our ministry? We need to be honest here. Do we really need
the Spirit? Francis Schaeffer's said: "Is it not amazing though we know the power of the Holy Spirit can be ours if we still 'ape' the world's wisdom, trusts it forms of publicity, its noise, imitate its ways of manipulating men. If we try to influence the world by using its methods, we are doing the Lord's work simply in the flesh. If we put activity, even good activity at the center rather than trusting God then there might be the power of the work; but we will lack the power of God. The key question is this: As we work for God in this fallen world what are we trusting in? To trust in particular methods is to copy the world, and to remove ourselves from the tremendous promise that we have something different, the power of the Holy Spirit rather than simply the power of human techniques."

We have homiletics on how to preach and prepare a message. Do we really need the Spirit's anointing? We have seminars on just about anything that might upset our tranquility. Do we really need the Spirit? We have many things out in the world to fill the void in our life or to at least deaden it. Do we really need the Spirit?

3. Are we working with one eye on the Judgment Seat of Christ?

2 Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done in the body, whether good or bad." That is why Paul said in verse 9 that his goal is to please Him.

4. The way we please the Lord is to obey. This brings me to the next point
and that is: what place do missions have in our church? Has it been
relegated off to the corner somewhere to be resurrected once a year, or is
it the main heart-beat of our ministry which is that Christ died for our sins (the Gospel) and the communication of that Gospel to the ends of the earth as a witness? These two themes (Christ died for our sins and this must be preached into all the world beginning at Jerusalem) run throughout the Word of God, but are they manifesting themselves in our lives, our fellowship? (Luke 24:44-47)

5. Do we spend time in blowing our own trumpet, or commending ourselves, or can it be seen by the people that have been touched by our lives? This is
what Paul was saying in this text. I do not have to commend myself said
Paul you (the Corinthians) are the result of my ministry.

6. When we have a ministry of the Spirit it will be characterized by grace
and freedom. 2 Corinthians 3:17 "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the
Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." It is said about the Lord in John
1:14 "The word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, we have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only who came from the Father full of grace and truth." We want people to listen, but they want to look. What do they see?

Is our ministry individually and collectively characterized by grace and
freedom? The letter kills our spontaneity, our joy and our creativity. A
ministry of the letter will try to bring everybody into conformity, look
alike, dress alike, act alike and talk alike.

I noticed that when I traveled in the communist countries before communism fell how uniform everything was. I was in a country where they had a regime that did not believe in God and the consequence was uniformity. With God there is variety as we see in the animal world, the plant world and in many other aspects of nature!

Whenever we find the Spirit moving we will find variety simply because of
the freedom we have in Christ. Yes, we can abuse that freedom. Paul warns
us that we should not use our freedom for the occasion to the flesh and
also warns that our freedom should not be a stumbling block to others.

However it is like Charles Swindoll says in his book Grace Awakening that
we need to make sure that the ones who claim they are stumbled are not
legalist in disguise spying out the freedom that we have in Christ.

7. I have mentioned this briefly but I would like to emphasize this more
here that where the Spirit is there will be the sense of the supernatural.
Typing this I have here before Galatians chapter four open. Paul is
describing two women, two sons and two covenants. One tends toward slavery and the flesh the other towards freedom and the Spirit.

Look what Paul is saying. Hagar was a slave, representing the flesh and
gave birth to a son naturally. Sarah was free, representing the Spirit and
gave birth to a son supernaturally.

Look what we have here. The letter of the law represents Hagar. This type
of ministry is under slavery, we do it because of do's and don'ts, under
the power of the flesh and the outcome is natural. The Spirit of life is
represented by Sarah. Here we have a ministry that is free, under the
Spirit and the outcome is supernatural.

If we look at believers today and their ministry what do we find? Is it
natural and predictable or is it supernatural and unpredictable? Even in
the way we talk we show that our lives are natural lives. When someone
asks us how we responded to so and so, what do we say? "Why naturally I did thus and thus..." We have the natural response.

We need to come with child-like faith and ask the Holy Spirit to fill us
and take control of our lives, to allow Him full freedom in directing us, to ask with the Apostle Paul, "What will you have me to do?” Acts 22:10

**CHAPTER FIVE: OUR MINISTRY - SACRIFICE OR SACRILEGE?**
2 Corinthians 6:3-10 "We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless
nights and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in
the Holy Spirit and sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of
God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;
through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet
regarded as impostors; known yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;
poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

They arrived in the small Indian village by the bus loads all dressed in
their black dhotis or for the ladies in sarees. They had come to worship
Ayeppo, one of the myriad of gods of the Hindu religion and after circling the
temple in the middle of the village until they were in a demonized trance
they would make the long journey to the top of a mountain where they would sacrifice things that cost, like gold, silver, family heirlooms or food.
The idea of it all was to sacrifice for their god something that they
treasured.

Five of us were there to share with them the gospel. They took our
literature, but when we stood up to preach and mention the Name of Jesus
they would shout us down. They came to us and said: “You have guts. There
are only five of you but there are five hundred thousand of us.”

That night a real battle of fear raged in my heart, because I had also learned that the previous year a communist group had been there handing out their
literature and they were caught and burned to death. Needless to say that did not encourage me toward staying and trying to get the gospel out to these needy people.

The Bible says that the heaven declare the glory of God. It is often
through the visible universe we realize how great God is. This is what
Isaiah was trying to communicate to the people of God who had for many
years been in captivity in Babylon. What a blessing chapter 40 of
Isaiah has been for many believers down through the ages, and for me because that night under the stars I could understand more why Jesus when He prayed (in John 17) just before the cross “looked toward heaven and prayed.” Seeing what God has done and who He really is brought me to realize that my problem was very small compared with the greatness of God. So that night a decision was made to go back into the village the following morning and continue our witness. The result was that a Muslim as well a Hindu made a decision for the Lord.

However, this experience brought me to ask a question about my ministry. Is it sacrifice or sacrilege?

Sacrifice means: the surrender or destruction of something prized for the
sake of something considered as having a higher or more pressing claim.
For example: I surrender my rights, ambitions, etc. for something that is
higher, the glory of God and for the extension of His kingdom.

Sacrilege means: The stealing of anything consecrated to the service of
God. We need to have a real look at our ministry and ask: is it sacrifice
or is it sacrilege? Are we stealing from the Lord things that have been
dedicated or sacrificed to Him? Our bodies? Our time? Our possessions? We
see examples of this in Scripture like Achan when he took the Babylonian
garment in Jericho when everything had been devoted to the Lord or the two
sons of Eli who would always take the choice meat before it was dedicated
to the Lord. They were committing sacrilege.

We say: "This is not me. I would never do anything like that.” Yet so
often we forget that we are not our own; we have been bought with a price
by the precious blood of Christ and we are to surrender our bodies as a living sacrifice. What we have belongs to the Lord and we are to be stewards of it and yet so often we use it for our own benefit and pleasure. That is sacrilege.

This was the complaint that Malachi had with the people of God.
"When you bring blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you
sacrifice crippled or diseased animals, is that not wrong.” (Malachi 1:8) They were offering sacrifices to the Lord, but they sacrificed only what they did not need or could not use because the best they kept for themselves. Or, we make a vow to God, but at the last minute we rescind it. Again, this is what the people were doing in Malachi's day. "Cursed is the cheat who has an acceptable male in his flock and vows to give it, but then sacrifices a blemished animal.” (Malachi 1:14) We also see from this same book that we rob God through withholding our tithes and offerings. (Malachi 3:8)

What is sacrilege? The stealing of anything consecrated to the service of
God. When I look at the ministry today I realize that a lot of our ministry
is sacrilege. The people in our churches belong to God, but how often we
keep them rather than let them go. The church at Antioch let go (sacrificed) Saul and Barnabas and I am sure it was a real sacrifice for the
church to give up two of their best men, but they did. I am sure it was a
real sacrifice for the church of Macedonian to give “beyond their ability,”
but they did.

We think that by sacrificing we lose or we will not benefit, but this is
far from the truth. The church of Antioch participated in the missionary
out-reaches of Saul and Barnabas and the Macedonian churches became a real testimony, not only to the Corinthian churches, but through Holy Writ to
many of us. Jesus summed it up when He said that if we try to save our life
we will lose it, but he who loses his life for the gospel sake will find
it. (Matthew 16:25)

Let us ask a question: In my own personal life and in the life of my church
is it sacrifice or sacrilege? If it is sacrifice, what have I really given
up? What has it cost me, in time or material possessions? A lot of what I am
talking about centers around attitude. How do I look at what I have? Yes, I
enjoy it, but when the Lord touches something and tells me to sacrifice it
how ready am I for that act of obedience? Do I find a real battle taking
place within me that eventually helps me rationalize why I should not do
it, consequently committing sacrilege, keeping or stealing what really
belongs to God? We say God owns everything and we are stewards, but when he touches something to be surrendered that we hold dear how difficult it is for us to give it up.

Out in the evangelical world, I find another demonic attitude of
deception. It goes something like this: we are God's children, the children
of the King. Nothing is too great for the King's children, nothing but the
best. Like all heresy we have elements of truth. We are God's children if
we have been born again and it is true that God wants the best for us. What
we forget is that God's ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts or ways.
(Isaiah 55:8-9) What we think might be the best for us God does not
necessarily think so. Often we think in terms of the material and
transient but not the spiritual and eternal whereas God knows our material
needs, but He sees them in the light of the spiritual and eternal.

God is concerned about the material aspects of our life. We see this with the Lord's Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6:25-34 where he talks about the natural causes for worry: our food, our shelter, our health and our future, but He goes right to the heart of the matter and shows us the reason for the worries is spiritual: “little faith.”

I believe that the lack of sacrifice in the evangelical church today stems
from this problem that plagued the early disciples-little faith. God is
constantly working to purify our faith, because our faith is more precious to the Lord than pure gold. (1 Peter 1:7) Our tendency is to hang on to material things thinking they supply our needs not realizing that it is the Lord who gives, and supplies.

As I quoted Francis Schaefer in chapter 4, I want to repeat it. He said regarding the ministry: "Is it not amazing though we know the power of the Holy Spirit can he ours we still 'ape' the world's wisdom, trusts it forms of publicity, its noise, imitate its ways of manipulating men. If we try to influence the world by using its methods, we are doing the Lord's work simply in the flesh. If we put activity, even good activity at the center rather than trusting God then there might be the power of the work; but we will lack the power of God. The key question is this: As we work for God in this fallen world, what are we trusting in? To trust in particular methods is to copy the world, and to remove ourselves from the tremendous promise that we have something different, the power of the Holy Spirit rather than simply the power of human techniques."

This is why 2 Corinthians 6:3-10 speaks so much to me. Paul was not following human techniques. He was not trusting in the world's wisdom or publicity. Paul followed hard after the Lord. Christ lived a life of sacrifice; Paul followed Christ and bids us to follow him. Look at the ministry from Paul's perspective and how different from what we have today.

There are several things to see before we look in more detail at this
catalog of things he mentions in our text.

First, Paul took careful pain that the ministry in no way would be
discredited. Thinking this through that though Paul had freedom he was
still very restricted by what he could and could not do simply because he
did not want to put a stumbling block in any one's path. What could have
been right for Paul could have been a stumbling block for someone else.

Secondly, Paul was a servant a bond-slave of Christ. We tend to think that
in the ministry we have rights. Remember when I talk about the ministry I
am not referring to the paid professionals, but to every believer in
Christ. We, every believer in Christ, are the ones who have the ministry.
We are to be servants. This is what Paul is saying here in 2 Corinthians 6:4 that ervant-hood calls for sacrifice.

Thirdly, Paul also brings out the importance of being an example when it
comes to the ministry. Christ is our great example, the One we are to
emulate or follow. People are to see Christ in us and we too like
Paul should be able to say: “Follow my example as I follow the example of
the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 11:1)

It is with these thoughts in mind that we can look in more detail at this
list Paul has here which describes the ministry.

**I. Paul describes things that are internal (vs. 4).**

In great endurance we see Paul referring to the ability to stick to the job
with cheerfulness. Two things come out here. First, the ability to stick at whatever the Lord has called us to. I find very people what I call stickability today. We have a tendency to flit from one church to another or one ministry to another like a butterfly flitting from one flower to the next. Today we need people who can stick to the job at hand and secondly, not only to stick, but to do it with cheerfulness.

**In troubles** Paul brings out how the believer in ministry is like a High
Priest who is able to comfort others. There is much trouble in the world
and there is a great need for people who can comfort those who are going
through troubles. One of the ways we help comfort others in troubles is
when we have experienced the comfort that comes from God.

**In hardships** Paul brings out here the inescapable needs of life. Paul said
in 2 Corinthians 12:10 that he delights in hardships because when he is weak, then he is strong. One of the problems in the ministry is that we are too strong, in our selves. We do not need God. God wants to teach us like
He did Paul that everything we have and need is in the Lord.

**In distresses** Paul uses a word meaning narrowness of room, to be cramped, to hem in closely. The idea that Paul is bringing out here is that in the ministry one wrong step can lead to distress. This is where we need to know the endurance of God in our lives. Could this be what David was referring to when he was fleeing from King Saul in I Samuel 20:3? "There is only a step between me and death." One wrong step and you are in distress.

**II. Paul talks about some of the things that come to us externally (vs. 5).**
**In beatings** Paul brings about his own testimony of the Jewish whips and
Roman rods. He could say that he bears in his body the marks of the Lord
Jesus Christ. This is part of the ministry, but it is something that is
very foreign to many of God's people today especially here in the West.

**In imprisonment** we see the sequence Paul uses, because imprisonment most usually follows the beatings. Again, for those of us in the Western Hemisphere this is foreign, but in many of the countries that I have worked in over the years, I have met brothers and sisters in Christ who were in prison because of their ministry for the Lord.

**In riots** Paul is talking about hopelessness, commotions, instability, and
confusion. Many times when I was preaching the Gospel in India the
fanatical Hindus would start a riot to stop the Gospel from going out.
During that commotion you sense the hopelessness and confusion of it all.

**III. Paul mentions some of the out workings of the ministry itself (vs. 5b).**
**In hard work** the word that Paul uses (kopos) brings out the idea of working for Christ to the point of exhaustion. It brings out the idea of toil,
trouble, weariness and pain.

**In sleepless nights** Paul brings out the sacrifice in the ministry. The thought coming out here is the idea of watching. A guard who is posted on the watch tower does not give himself any sleep so that he can watch out for the enemy. Jesus in giving to His disciples parables about the Kingdom of
Heaven said in the parable about the weeds: "But while everyone
was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went
away."(Matthew 13:25) How often because the church has been sleeping the enemy has come in and done damage. With Paul these nights were spent preaching, in prayer, counseling and moments of peril that he was in. In our nation’s capital, Washington DC., by the Archive Building stands a statue with these words inscribed at the base: "Price for freedom is eternal vigilance."

**In hunger** he was probably referring to voluntary fasting, but also perhaps
times when there was no food. I have been working in villages in India and
had to go hungry simply because there was no food. There was no such thing as a “MacDonald’s Fast Food” to go to.

**IV. In this verse Paul brings out what we are or should be (vs. 6).**
**In purity** the word used brings out the idea of cleanness, blamelessness,
sincerity, transparency. This is probably what Paul had in mind when he
wrote to Timothy that he should look for men 'above reproach' when it comes to the ministry. (1 Timothy 3:2)

**In understanding** Paul brings out here knowledge, of knowing what we should be doing. So many do not know what their goals are. It brings out the idea of sanctified common sense. It was said about the “sons of Issachar” in I Chronicles 12:32 "who understood the times and knew what Israel should do."

**In patience** Paul brings out something very important with the ministry
because it is dealing with people. How we need patience with people;
courtesy under criticism. How we need to realize that patience is giving
God time to finish what he has started, especially when it relates to
people.

**In kindness** Paul brings out the idea of goodness and gentleness, something that puts others at ease.

**In the Holy Spirit** we need to realize that all would be impossible without
the Holy Spirit. Paul said to “be filled with the Holy Spirit.” So much work
is done in the flesh using human techniques rather than the power of God.

**In sincere love** Paul is talking about something that is real. This is where
we need spiritual reality. This is not a hypocritical love where we have
the feign, play acting – love, rather, this is the type of love that gives and
forgives.

**V. We see something of what we are to do (vs. 7).**

**In truthful speech** the idea is the declaration of the truth; never any
exaggerating or twisting of the truth or to tell the truth to someone
in such a way that they believe the opposite. People will recognize that
your yes is yes and your no is no.

**In the power of God** reminds me of what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:7 that we have this “treasure in jars of clay.” How we need to be constantly reminded that the ministry is Gods. We are jars of clay to be used by the Holy Spirit and with the realization that we have some that are for noble purposes and others for common use. (Romans 9:21)

**In the weapons** that God has given us we see that in our right hand we have the offensive weapon the “sword of the Spirit” and in our left hand our defensive weapon the shield of faith. How we need to be praising the
Lord for the Word of God that He has given us and for faith that makes it
real to us.

**VI. We have the paradoxes of the ministry (vs. 8-10).**
**In glory and dishonor** as someone once said that “sometimes we are flattered and sometimes we are flattened.”

**In bad report and good report** we see that there will be times when men will speak evil of you for the “Son of Man’s sake.”

**In being genuine, yet regarded as an impostor** this should not surprise us because they said that Christ was a deceiver.

**In being known, and yet regarded as unknown** Paul brings out the paradox of being ignored and yet recognized. Paul was recognized where it really counts-in hell. When the seven sons of Sceva tried to cast out demons in Jesus and Paul's name what did the demons answer? "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" (Acts 19:15) In the ministry this is where we need to be recognized; this is where it really counts. I think of the godly woman who prayed Operation Mobilization into existence of how very few people here on earth know her, but how she is well known in hell because of her prayers.

**In dying, and yet we live on** I think of the testimony of Paul when he was
stoned. They thought he was dead and yet he was alive. At the same time he said we die daily.

**In beaten and yet not killed** we have the discipline of suffering.

**In sorrowful, yet always rejoicing** Paul brings out a paradox of holy sorrow and holy joy. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane going to the cross, a time of great sorrow, says to His disciple: "….that they may have the full
measure of my joy."

**In being poor yet making many rich** we see this with Christ: "For you know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might
become rich."(2 Corinthians 8:9) We see with Peter and John going to the temple to pray and finding the crippled beggar wanting some money saying: "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ stand up and walk." One Bishop bragging said: "The church cannot say today they have no silver or gold because they have plenty and someone replied, “…but the church cannot also say to the lame 'stand up and walk.’” We have traded the power of God for material things.

**In having nothing and yet possessing all things** what a glorious paradox this is. Paul tells us that we are co-heirs with Christ. Romans 8:16-17 Paul tells us in Ephesians that we have received the Holy Spirit as a down payment to insure us of our inheritance. (Ephesians 1:13) Dr. Barnhouse said it was a like a lawyer coming to the door and announcing that our uncle just died and left us everything, but it would be several years before we would receive the inheritance. However we could have a down payment. We ask how much the down payment is. The lawyer says ten million dollars. I am sure if that was the case with us that we would be wondering if the down payment is ten million dollars what is the inheritance like? If the Holy Spirit is the down payment what must be our inheritance? No wonder Paul said:
"No eye has seen. no ear has heard, no mind conceived what God
has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Is this the ministry of sacrifice or sacrilege? I believe it is sacrifice. This is the type of ministry that will reach the world with the Gospel of Christ; the ministry that will make an impact.

**CHAPTER SIX: OUR MINISTRY - RECONCILIATION OR ALIENATION**

2 Corinthians 5: 18-21 "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation that God was
reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against
them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal
through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might
become the righteousness of God."

My wife and I arrived in Khartoum, Sudan with our two week old daughter
Amy, who had been born in England, and just a few hours after our landing in Khartoum, the Yom Kippur War of 1973 broke out in the Middle East. We had just made it through before the airports in the Middle East were closed. We had come to rejoin Operation Mobilization's first ship the M/V LOGOS after the birth of our first daughter.

It was with a sense of relief that our ship the Logos was able to come into
the port of Port Sudan, Sudan. Several tons of literature was unloaded and
shipped by train to the capitol, Khartoum, for a huge book exhibition.
Thousands of Muslims would attend the exhibition and many would walk away with the Word of God. Also a very extensive program would be held for the few pastors and Christians in that city. Out of this visit would come a
young Sudanese man who would eventually become the country leader for
Operation Mobilization in the Sudan and eventually the area leader for all of North Africa and the Middle East.

One of the high-lights of our program in these different countries is to
invite a high ranking official to come and open the book exhibition to the
public. We would put on a little program and share the Gospel with this
dignitary and those who would come with him.

For the official opening of our book exhibition in Khartoum we were able to get the second highest man in the government, the Minister of Education, who later on became the President of the country. When he came and saw all of the different nationalities that we have working with us he was very touched and he said this: "You are like a small United Nations, except you have unity."

These men in the government know the chaos in the world and are looking for answers. They know that something is wrong, and something should be done however, the solution(s) that they come up with are wrong because the premise is wrong. They do not recognize that we have tension (in the world) and with one another simply because man's relationship with his Maker is non-existent.

This is why the passage of Scripture quoted above is so powerful that God
was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. It is said that the Word
became flesh and dwelt among us so that we could behold. We want people to listen but they want to look. What do they see? When we take the text that we have quoted from 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 that, “He gave us the ministry of reconciliation,” and put flesh to it - it is very powerful. People, like the Minister of Education of the Sudan, recognized that there is something unique about Christ.

This Minister of Education made this statement about us being a small
United Nations except that we have unity was made in the Sudan which is a
Muslim country, who are some of the most difficult people to reach with the
Gospel. Yet we see the chaos and disunity that is happening today in these
Muslims countries and they are beginning to recognize that something is wrong with their own religion when they have Muslim killing Muslim.

For example, before the fall of Saddam Hussein, we have the Iraqis (Muslims) killing and driving the Kurds (again Muslims) into the mountains of Turkey. We, Operation Mobilization, have been working with these refugees in bringing in relief supplies. The Kurds are bewildered. They are being driven from their home land and killed by Muslim brothers, but the
Christians, who are supposed to be their real enemies, are actually the
ones helping them and when they see the Christians pulling together this is
taking away their defenses and arguments. There are no arguments in
the face of love when it is being demonstrated in practical terms that meet
the needs of the people. (1 John 3:16-18)

This is why the greatest hindrance to world evangelism and revival is
disunity among God's people. I am not talking about denominations getting
together. I am referring to the Body of Christ that transcends denominations, and nationalism. We need to recognize the oneness in Christ
and to maintain it.

I had mentioned the Kurds earlier on who are the largest peoples group
in the world (perhaps twenty five million strong) that have no country.
This is one of the problems in the Middle East because these people are found in Iraq, Turkey, Iran and parts of the old Soviet Union, and have their own language, dress, customs, etc., but have no country. They want
to carve out for themselves a country where they might have their own
borders to maintain their identity.

This is the way it is with the people of God, because you can find them in most countries of the world. They have their own identity, language, etc., but they have no boundaries, they have no country here on earth. Hebrews
11:13-14 describes the people of God: "All these people were still living
by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they
only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted they
were strangers and aliens on earth. People who say such things show
that they are looking for a country of their own."

We are told that we should not be ignorant of the devil's devices, because he knows that our ministry is a ministry of reconciliation, reconciling sinful man to a Holy God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He knows that if he can bring into the Body of Christ disunity it will distract from the message greatly. How can we talk about being reconciled to God when we cannot even be reconciled to one another as believers in Christ.

The goal in a relationship, whether in marriage or our relationship with
one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, is not for us to think alike,
but to think together. The goal in a relationship is unity, not uniformity.
We need the difference of opinions, but we also need the sense of
reconciliation when there are differences.

How can we maintain that balance described in the previous paragraph? I
have thought and prayed much about this over the years. My wife and I lived for ten years on Operation Mobilizations two ships LOGOS and DOULOS. Seven of those ten years were on the M/V DOULOS with 325 other people coming from 45-50 different nations and representing almost all of the major denominations, with the last five of those seven years on the DOULOS being the director.

As I look back in retrospect I am amazed at the unity the Lord did give us.
There are some principles that have come out of this that need to be in
operation if we are going to maintain the unity that we already have in
Christ. What are they?

**1. Reconciliation**: In reading Scripture God constantly wants us to be
moving towards one another. Matthew 5:23-24 says that, “If you know your
brother has something against you, go to your brother quickly and get it
right,” and we are to do this before anything else, even going to prayer or reading the Word.

Matthew 18:15-17 states that if we see our brother sin we should go to him; not to someone else, but to him. If we would only do this 90% of the broken
relationships would be healed and very seldom would we have to do what is said in the remaining verses (Matthew 18:15-17) where it brings in church discipline.

In Matthew 7:1-5 Jesus states that we are to go with the right attitude. We
are going as one sinner saved by grace to another sinner saved by grace.
Jesus says we should make sure that the log is out of our own eye before we
can take the speck out of our brother’s eye. Jesus using the analogy of
the eye is showing us that this is very delicate, because the most sensitive
part of the human body is the eye and when you move near an eye you move ahead with extreme caution.

A young lady came to me in South India sharing how the Lord seemed so distant from her; she was maintaining her quiet time, prayer and reading the Word of God, but not getting any new insights from the Lord. It soon became apparent that this young lady was not right with another member of the team. It was a simple matter of going, as the Bible tells us to do, and getting reconciled, which she did and the break-through to the Lord was very evident.

**2. Walking in the light:** 1 John 1:5-7 This is another principle that is of
utmost importance in maintaining relationships. We are told in verse 7
that "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship
with one another." What does it mean to walk in the light as He walks in
the light? To answer that question fully would require another book or at
least a few more chapters added to this one.

We are told in 1 Peter 2:9 that when we came to Christ we were taken out of darkness into the light. Wherever Christ went while here on earth He brought light, and exposed the darkness, the wrongs, the injustices in the world. Light will always make manifest things for what they really are.

Jesus, who is light, when He came into the presence of the Pharisees they
were seen for what they really were, religious hypocrites and they
wanted to kill Him. When Jesus came into the presence of the publicans, and
prostitutes the light revealed what they were and many came to Him with
tears of confession, repentance and accepted Him. It wasn't what Jesus was saying when He came into their presence, but who He was, the light of the world.

Our walk should be characterized by what we read in Ephesians 5:9: "For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth." If
our walk is characterized by that which is good, that which is right, and
that which is true, and we maintain a balance between these three, we will
find that we have fellowship with one another.

**3. Fellowship in depth:** Again we have another principle that is so lacking
in the church today. The way our churches are set up about the only thing
we have fellowship with is the back of the head of someone sitting in front
of us in the pews. Yet, we read that one of the cornerstones of the early
church was fellowship. (Acts 2:42) Fellowship is right there with the
Apostles doctrine or teaching, breaking of bread and prayer.

A great hindrance to fellowship is the mask that we all wear. The devil
has got us to think that if people really knew what we were like they would
reject us. Because acceptance is such a need in our lives we will do almost
anything to be accepted. Consequently we put on a mask thinking people will accept us, not realizing that the mask actually hinders real acceptance.

We all are carrying heavy burdens but the Lord says that we should carry
one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2) But how can we do that if we do not share what the burden is. This again brings in the idea of fellowship in depth, getting beyond the shallowness or superficiality that we have into what we are really faced with.

Some years ago my wife and I were leading a team in Spain. On the team we had a young lady by the name of Sally (that is not her real name). Sally
had a very rough back-ground stemming from neglect and child molestation.
It wasn't long until she felt not only rejected, but much unloved.

While on the team, Sally was very bubbly, enthusiastic and gave the appearance which gave the impression that she did not harbor any feeling of rejection. One day the mail arrived. This was always a very important time and the team members looked forward to receiving letters. Sally, like the rest was waiting for their names to be called out that they had received letters. The brother who had been handing out the letters went through them all. There was no letter for Sally.

Sally acted as if it did not really matter. As a matter of fact she tried
to pretend that she was glad she did not receive anything because then she
did not have to write any letters. When everybody was reading their
letters, Sally silently slipped out and went down to the river where she
cried and cried. My wife knowing what was taking place went down to her, where Sally opened up, dropped the mask and poured out her
feelings of being unloved, rejected, etc.

The next day the team gathered together and was learning to open up with
one another. The team was learning to have more of a fellowship in depth,
to really share where we were at, not what we were pretending to be, but
what we actually were. Sally, after a little encouragement did share her
feelings of rejection, being unloved. This was a real breakthrough for
Sally. Not only did she unburden herself, but by becoming real for others
she became real for herself. It also gave the team the opportunity to come
back and to love her and accept her. She saw what a liar Satan really was
in getting her to pretend.

When we left the time of fellowship that morning she shared that when she
walked in she had a heavy burden and it was weighing her down. "Now," she
said, "I only have one twelfth of that burden." At first we did not know
what she meant until we realized that there were twelve of us on that team and each had taken one twelfth of that burden. When we learn to fellowship at a deeper level we find that our burdens are lighter.

**4. We need to recognize anger:** Anger is an emotion that is felt and a
motivating force that drives us to some kind of action. Anger in and of
itself is not sin. (Ephesians 4:26; Psalms 7:11) God is angry. (John 2:17 Mark 3:5) Jesus got angry.

Mansell Pattison said: "Anger (in contrast to rage) however, is a very
necessary and useful reaction. Anger is appropriate as a communication of
feeling in reaction to another's person's behavior."

Our emotional make-up is from God and when used properly, emotions that God made us capable of, can be very constructive, but if we fail to express our emotions in harmony with Biblical limitations and guidelines they become destructive. Anger is sin: first, when it is hasty. (Proverbs 14:17; 16:32) Secondly, anger is sin when it is “without real cause.” Matthew 5:22 of the King James Version states that it is “angry without a cause.” Thirdly, anger is sin when it becomes long-lasting. (Ecclesiastes 7:9; Ephesians 4:26) “Anger resides in the bosom of a fool.”

Anger shows itself in different forms, but the most common is the one who explodes. This type of anger is easily recognizable because it is like a bomb that explodes. At least he gets everything out, but he most usually kills relationships around him.

Another type of anger is imploding, holding it in. Often an angry person
holding it in physically and emotionally harms his own body. Also it is
hard to develop a relationship because that person is not honest. This
person seems nice on the outside when he or she is with you, but often
talks behind your back. This anger shows when this person is with others
and not around you.

The third type of anger is more subtle, it is when we blame someone or something else. Perhaps we do not even recognize this as anger that is wrong. (Proverbs 29:22) It is always somebody else's fault. This is the anger that stirs up dissension among the brethren and brings about disunity.

If we are going to maintain the unity that we have in the Body of Christ
then we will have to recognize anger and the damage it can do. What an
injunction we have from the Word of God in Ephesians 4:26 "In your anger do not sin: do not let the sun go down while you are still angry."

**5. In maintaining relationships we need to watch out for escapism:** Have you ever noticed that when we come up against something that is unpleasant we try to avoid it? If we have something unpleasant in our churches we can go to another church, or in our jobs or whatever it might be. Now there are times when it might be appropriate for us to move or change churches, etc., but so often we become the 'great escape artists.' The result is shallowness in our spiritual lives as well as relationships when we try to escape from the very thing that God wants to use to work in our lives.

There are probably several reasons for this desire to escape and one of the
main reasons is guilt. At the core of most problems there are feelings of
guilt and sin. We begin to set up emotional barriers against facing facts
and people and we become restless and start looking for ways to escape. The truth of our guilt needs to be expressed and this is where fellowship in depth comes in.

Secondly, we are afraid of rejection. We have already talked about this, but
we are always afraid that we will be rejected and so we pretend. This
pretending is another way of escape.

The third reason of why man tries to escape is the unwillingness to face
reality. If the basic needs of man to love and be loved and a sense of
self-worth are not met then you will find that person slipping more and more
into unreality and this unreality becomes another way of escape.

There are many ways we can try to escape, but the purpose of this book is
not to go deep into the ways of escape, but to bring out that this is one of
the problems that we are faced with in maintaining and building
relationships.

**6. Another very important principle is to learn how to resolve conflicts:** I noticed that when I was the director of our second ship the DOULOS that the inability people had to resolve conflicts is a real problem.

A conflict is a clash between two wills. Whenever you have two people, you
have two wills and the possibility of a clash. There is nothing wrong with
a conflict. It is normal and could promote growth. Through a conflict we
can come into a deeper understanding of what others are going through and we can come into a deeper realization of the grace of God as well as
develop a more meaningful dialogue with one another. However, for this to
take place the conflict must be worked out and most problems arise when
the conflict is not worked out.

Satan is looking for the advantage and when he sees an unresolved conflict
this is where he can do damage. We can learn a lot about Satan by looking
at his names in Scripture. A name tells us something about the character of
the person and in Revelation 12:9-10 he is known as the deceiver and the
accuser.

The way he works when he sees a conflict is first of all deceive us into
not going to that person we have the conflict with. He tries, and often
successfully, to get us thinking that if we go to that person that he/she will not understand, or it will increase the problem. Often Satan tries
to convince us that we should be spiritual and just pray about it.

Once he has convinced us in not going then he comes along as the accuser
and begins to whisper in our ear about the other person. We will have the
tendency to look at that person through colored glasses and no matter what
they do will be interpreted wrongly. This drives a bigger wedge between
us and eventually we do not have a conflict, but a problem, because a problem is an unresolved conflict.

The purpose of this book is not to give an outline on how to resolve
conflicts, but to high-light one of the problems we have in maintaining our
relationships.

**7. Love:** The Bible says that love covers a multitude of sins. Often this
lack of love is the crux of the problem in trying to maintain a right
relationship. We are to love one another just as Christ loved us, but how did
He love us? Before we look at four ways that Christ loved us let me say
here that this “agape” that is mentioned in the Bible is not the wishy-washy emotional love advertised on TV and in our movies, but it has a lot
to do with our will, our obedience. Jesus said, “If you love me then you will obey me.” John 14:15

There are four things that I want to mention in this regard and they have to do with ‘my’ will. In other words, as an act of my will I put these things into operation, not because I feel like it, because the chances are I will never feel like it. This love has nothing to do with my emotions, but if the right emotions are there then praise the Lord, but I put these things into operation as an act of my will. Agape love in the Bible has these four things:

**1. Aware**. When we love someone we are aware of them. There is a spiritual sensitivity. Christ was aware of us. Look at Christ in the Gospels. He was aware of people, their needs, the fact that they were like sheep without a shepherd. When we love, we too will be more sensitive to people.

**2. Accept**. We need to accept people as they are. This is what Jesus did.
He accepted me just as I am. He did not tell me that I had to get my act
together first, clean myself up, but just like I was He accepted me. Isn't
this one of the problems that we have today? We accept people after we have tried to make them over into our own image, but not so with Jesus. We want to change not so that we might be accepted more, but because we have been accepted.

**3. Give.** John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He **gave**.” This is the
heart of God; this is the heart of love. Love will always give. Lust is the
opposite. It will take and will always want more.

**4. Forgive**. Love will always forgive. There is so much teaching in the
Scripture about forgiveness. When they were hanging Christ on the cross
what was He saying? "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are
doing."

So much of our Christian life centers around our feelings. This is
especially true when it comes to forgiveness. In Luke 17:1-10 Jesus tells
His disciples that if a brother sins against us seven times in a day and
asks for forgiveness we are to forgive.

That must have been hard for them to swallow, because the next thing they say is increase our faith, but Jesus went on to say that the way to increase faith is through obedience. God gives faith to the obedient heart. However from the parable He uses to illustrate His point He, I believe, touches the
issue of feelings. Feelings keep us from being obedient

If these principles are working in our lives and fellowship, what a
powerful testimony this will be to a world that is filled with violence,
hate, etc. What a ministry the Lord has given us in the ministry of
reconciliation.

One final thought. We read in the Beatitudes that "Blessed are the peace
makers for they shall be called the sons of God." (Matthew 5:9) The idea here is of sons (maturity) not children. Peace makers are mature people. Our problem is that in our churches we have too many children and not enough sons.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: OUR MINISTRY - RELINQUISHING OR RESISTING?**

2 Corinthians 10:13-18 "We, however, will not boast beyond proper limits, but will confine our boasting to the field God has assigned to us, a field that
reaches even to you. We are not going too far in our boasting, as would
be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with
the Gospel of Christ. Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of
work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our
area of activity among you will greatly expand, so that we can preach
the gospel in the regions beyond you. For, we do not want to boast about
work already done in another man's territory. But, let him who boasts
boast in the Lord. For it is not the one who commends himself who is
approved, but the one whom the Lord commends."

The frustration on the face of the young pastor that I was trying to
counsel was very real, while listening to him explain his situation I thought how many times I have heard the same story in so many different countries of the world.

The senior pastor was old and ready to retire, but still hanging on to the
ministry instead of relinquishing the ministry to this young man and
allowing him to take it on where the senior pastor had left off. It didn't
mean that the senior pastor would be without a ministry, but his ministry
would change and his expertise and experience gained over the years could
have been used in this younger man's life.

Eventually the younger pastor left frustrated and started another church in
a needy section of town. Praise the Lord for this because there was a need
in that area for a witness, but I could not help think what would have
happened if the senior pastor had learned the lesson of relinquishment.
Many ministries and churches have been started more out of a sense of
frustration than through the principle of relinquishment.

In this passage of Scripture I see a principle that Paul operated on that
we are missing to a great degree in our ministry today. It is the ministry
of relinquishment of turning the ministry over to others who have been
discipled, trained and called by God.

So often we have kept the ministry in the hands of the 'professionals.'
This is what we pay them for anyway, isn't it? However, like Elton Trueblood said, we need another reformation, where we get the work of God
back into the hands of God's people, and those who have the ‘office’ ministries, which are out-lined in Ephesians 4:11-13, to equip the saints for that task.

In this passage we see two things about Paul's ministry that we in the
ministry should think about as well. First of all God had assigned a field
to Paul and secondly he would not go beyond his limits. What does this
mean? Paul was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. (Acts 9:15) We also see
Paul mentioning this calling in Romans 1:5 "Through Him and for His name
sake we received grace and apostleship to call people from among the
Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." Another aspect about
Paul's ministry is that he would not build on another man's foundation.
This is not pride on the part of Paul, but rather recognizing what the Lord
wanted and this is why in his calling to the Gentiles he was always striving
to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond.

Secondly, Paul said in verse 15 of our text that he would “not go beyond our
limits.” Paul's limits were to be an Apostle to the Gentiles and not build
on another man's foundation, but preach the gospel in the regions beyond.
The only way Paul could do that is have a relinquishing ministry. We will
see this later on.

Look at the ministry today. If we were to take the average evangelical
church - what do we have? We have a paid pastor, or if the church is rather
large a paid staff, and they do the work of the ministry. They become the
performers while the rest of the Body of Christ sits and watches. Needless to
say the ministry of Christ never gets done completely. The ministry is larger than just church activities. What about the work place? Like someone said: "The meeting place (church) is the learning place for the market place (work place).” The market place is where the ministry is.

How important it is for us in the ministry to know our limits. Could it be
that one of the reasons we have so much burn-out among God's people is that they have gone beyond the limits that God has set? The average pastor has several hats that he must wear. He must prepare several messages a week and deliver them; he must be on call at any time of day or night; he must be involved in visitation; he must be involved with counseling, administration. We could go on, but you get the point. Is this Biblical? I don't believe so.

I read in 1 Timothy 5:17 "The elders who direct the affairs of the church
well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching
and teaching." Paul, when he planted a church and relinquished the ministry
did so to elders and not one elder. (Acts 14:23) Elders are to handle the
affairs of the church and one of those affairs is to preach and teach. It
would seem to imply in this passage of 1 Timothy 5:18 that these elders
could be paid in order that they and their families might survive. The
point here is that there are elders (plural) not one elder (singular), and we
always should be careful in giving too much attention to a man. With
these elders directing the affairs of the church the goal is to equip the
people of God to do the work of God, and most of the ministry is done or should be done in the work place where most of God's people spend most of their time.

The ministry that the Lord had was a relinquishing ministry. Think
about what He did in the last three years of His life. He chose twelve men
that might be with Him. (Luke 6:13, Mark3:14) He discipled trained and gave them the ministry. He relinquished to these twelve Galileans, unlearned men the task of world evangelism and one turned out to be a traitor, the
others at a time of great trial for the Lord forsook Him. What a risk. That
will be so with a relinquishing ministry. Mistakes will be made; failures
will come. This is often one of the reasons why in many cases we do not
turn the ministry over. If the pastor does the entire ministry he becomes
good at it. This will intimidate others thinking that they cannot do it and
so they remain quiet in the pews and the church becomes more irrelevant all
the time.

Relinquishment involves delegation and delegation always involves risk.
When God makes His appeal through us He takes an awful risk, yet God took
that risk. Because God lives in us what happens to us happens to Him. We
see how in the Old Testament God supplied food for the Israelites and how
Jesus in the New Testament fed the four and five thousand. We might ask why doesn't God do this today? The answer is that God does, but in the New
Testament He does it indirectly. He does it through His body, for example
when Paul led the relief effort for the saints in Jerusalem. The church is
Christ's body. Therefore, if the church did it, God did it.

What we have today is that Christ is the Head of an imperfect body. I watched my mother growing old (she died at 93). Her mind was sharp, but her body was falling apart. So many things in her mind that she wants to do, but the body was unable. I have often wondered what would be worse, to have a healthy mind, but weak body or to have a healthy body but weak mind. How horrible it would be to have a mind full of ideas, plans, etc. begging for fulfillment, but a body that cannot respond. This is the picture of the church. We have a perfect head, but the body seems to suffer from cerebral palsy. The head is sending clear signals to the body that seems unable to respond in a coordinated fashion and so the Body of Christ jerks along in spasmodic fits in the work of the Lord.

C.S Lewis said: "He seems to do nothing of Himself which He can possibly
delegate to His creatures. He commands us to do slowly and blunderingly
what He could do perfectly and in the twinkling of an eye."

In the work of the Lord so often we see man building his own empire, and we see that the bigger the empire becomes the less effective it is. Why?
Man when he builds a work becomes very good at what he does, and becomes so efficient that he winds up making most of the decisions himself. Consequently, everything must go through him and then the problem becomes what I call a bottleneck. Decisions that should be made cannot because the only one to make them is too busy or tied up, and the work is held up. What we need is a relinquishing ministry where we must train, disciple and turn over the ministry.

Thinking through this ministry of relinquishment there are several things
that we need to look at.

1. 2 Corinthians 3:4-6 Our competence in the ministry must be with the Lord. The idea that comes out here is that He has made us fit or competent for the ministry. He has promised us success within the sphere He has given us, with needed energy within that calling. I believe that when we move beyond the limits the Lord has given then we are beginning to move in the energy of the flesh and the results will always be disastrous. This is why Paul
said in 2 Corinthians 10:15 "Neither do we go beyond our limits." Paul knew what his limits were; what his calling was. He stuck to that by learning to
relinquish everything else. This would seem to be the case with the
Apostles in Acts 6:1-7. A problem had arrived in the early church that
seemed to be an administrative problem and what did the Apostles do when the people came to them for a solution? They relinquished the ministry in
order that they might stick to the calling that God gave or the limits that
God assigned. "We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of
the Word." Acts 6: 4

We have pastors or elders who are wearing many hats including the hat of
preaching and teaching. Because of all of these other hats they are wearing
the needed time, prayer and attention cannot be given to the ministry of
the Word. Needless to say the Body of Christ is hurting because of it. We
need to know our limits and stick to the parameters that God has given.

In reviewing some of these Biblical principles with a few brothers one made
the comment that he wondered if it will work in our culture today. This
showed me how far we have moved from the Biblical norm in our churches as well as the strong pull of tradition. It was hard for this brother to grasp
anything different than what he had always been exposed to even if it was
Biblical.

2. We will need to build in the lives that God gives us. Parkinson sixth
law states: "If we convince people they need help you soon convince them
they cannot help others."

I was on our second ship DOULOS when we first went around South America. One of the first things that struck me was the potential among the Latin churches for world evangelism, yet very little was being done. As a matter of fact many of the Latin churches were still waiting for help rather than seeing that they were capable of helping others. It was a classic example of Parkinson's sixth law.

The missionaries who went to South America did a tremendous job in bringing the gospel, but, as one missionary told me, did not move the church of Latin America one iota towards missions. What was lacking, among other things, was a relinquishing ministry.

To build up the people for the ministry will take prayer and discipleship.
Jesus chose twelve men that could be with Him. (Mark 3:15) When Jesus had finished the task the Father had given Him He went on to a ministry of
intercession at the Father's side, but He turned the ministry over to the
Apostles and us. (Romans 8:34)

3. Our ministry will be enlarged through relinquishment. Paul stated to
the church at Corinth that as their faith grows his area of activity will
also greatly expand.

I have had people to tell me that they are afraid to turn the ministry over
because they themselves will not have anything to do. At the moment I am
the field director for Latin America. When I have the right person or
persons for the task from Latin America I will turn my task over. People
have asked me what I will do then because I will not have a job any more.
This is far from the truth. When I relinquish the ministry and the faith of
those that I have relinquished the ministry begins to expand, so does my
own ministry.

For example, the work of Brazil is turned over to Brazilians. The faith of
these brothers is expanding and because of it I find that my own ministry
is also expanding. This is true also in other countries of Latin America
where we have offices.

In Acts 13 we see the church at Antioch having a relinquishing ministry.
The Holy Spirit told them that they should release Saul and Barnabas for
the work that He has called them to, which they did and as a result the church of Antioch took part in the ministry of Paul and Barnabas, with Antioch becoming their home base, because after a missionary trip they would come back to Antioch, gather the disciples and share with them what the Lord had done. (Acts14:27-28)

We see how Paul's ministry expanded from the appointments of elders. (Acts
14:23) Paul could say in Romans 15:23 "but now that there is no more room
for me in these regions." In the space of about ten years Paul had
planted churches in the Eastern Mediterranean area and could say he was
ready to go on, in this instance to Spain, because of a relinquishing ministry.

Acts 15:36-41 we have the famous sharp disagreement between Paul and
Barnabas and they went their separate ways. Paul took Silas and Barnabas
took John Mark. I believe we also have here a relinquishing ministry. Two
things come out: 1) The same word translated “sharp” in the NIV is
translated “spur” in Hebrews 10:24 "Lets us consider how we can spur one
another on toward love and good deeds." If we look at human nature
Barnabas, a phlegmatic, would have a tendency to take a back seat to the
choleric Paul and consequently the potential of Barnabas would not be
realized.

We see that Barnabas took his nephew with him. Later on Paul wrote: "Send
me John Mark because he is profitable for the ministry." I don't believe
that all of the sharp disagreements we have in the church where people have split off and new ministries have been formed are necessarily the work of Satan. It could very well be God working in some situations to bring about
a relinquishing ministry.

Acts 16:1 We see a relinquishing ministry when Paul took Timothy and
trained him for the work of the ministry. He told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2
"Entrust to reliable men who will be also qualified to teach others."

In Acts 18 we see Paul demonstrating in Corinth the relinquishing principle
that he mentioned in 2 Corinthians 10. When he came to Corinth he met a Jew Aquila and his wife Priscilla. He stayed with them because they were all
tent-makers. (vs.1-3) Paul stayed for a year and a half teaching them (the
people of Corinth as well as Aquila and Priscilla) the Word of God. (vs.11)

Later Paul had to leave, but he took Aquila and Priscilla with him. They
came to Ephesus where Paul saw an open door and unbelievable need. Paul was not able to stay when requested by the Ephesians, but he could leave Aquila and Priscilla. (vs.18-19)

While Aquila and Priscilla were in Corinth Apollos came through on a
preaching tour of the Synagogues. It says that "he was a learned man, with
thorough knowledge of the Scriptures." However, we read that he only knew
up to John the Baptist and did not know the way of the Lord. Aquila
and Priscilla took him aside and expounded the Word of God more fully to
him, in other words, they took what they had learned from Paul and passed it on. The result is found in verse 28: "For he (Apollos) vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from Scripture that Jesus was the Christ." What a relinquishing ministry!

We need to ask ourselves a very important question. Deep down in our hearts what do we want to build: our own kingdom or the extension of the
kingdom of God? Man has within him a desire to build, but the question is:
Are we building for God or for ourselves? Will we fall into the trap of
Satan-pride? Will we be like Nebuchadnezzar who said in Daniel 4:30 "Is this
not the great Babylon that I have built?"

Every decision we make will have consequences. If we do not have a
relinquishing ministry there will be some dire consequences for the church
and I believe that this is what we are seeing today.

First, we will create pew sitters or just Sunday Christians and nothing
more. How often I hear the cry from pastors: “I cannot get my people to do
anything.” Yet this is the way we have trained them.

Secondly, we will see the spiritual gifts that have been given to the
different members of the Body of Christ being used for the world instead of
the extension of His kingdom. To me this is most grievous. Impression without expression= depression. When God gives us a spiritual gift He makes an impression upon us. If the people don't have the opportunity to express this gift in God's work then they will find other out-lets.

Thirdly, the open doors we have today will never be entered until the work
is turned over to the people of God. The paid professionals will never be
able to do it. Going back to Elton Trueblood's statement is so true that we
need a second reformation to put the work of God back into the hands of the
people of God.

**CHAPTER EIGHT: OUR MINISTRY - MOVEMENT OF GOD OR MONUMENT OF MAN**

2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you- unless of
course, you fail the test?"

Judges 2:7 "The people served the Lord though out the lifetime of Joshua
and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things
the Lord had done for Israel."

Galatians 1:6 "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel."

I made my way up the steps leading to the bridge of the M/V DOULOS. The
time was four in the afternoon. I enjoyed these times when I would come to
the bridge having fellowship with the Captain, looking out over the deep
blue sea as we made our way across the Atlantic on our way to the Canary
Islands.

We had just left Brazil after a time in South America where we had a very tumultuous year of ministry. Looking back over our time in Latin America I was thrilled by all that the Lord was doing, but not quite sure just what the
future held. However I was looking forward to our two week voyage across
the Atlantic, because on these long sea voyages we are able to get got up on things that are impossible when we are in port and in the midst of a busy
program. One of the things I looked forward to was my daily ritual of going
to the bridge for fellowship and gazing out over the blue expanse of the
ocean.

Being on the bridge and looking out surrounded by water gives a sense of
being suspended in time and space and as you look ahead you get a sense
that you are not moving, because there are no identifiable land-marks to gauge your movement, there is only an endless expanse of water. It is not until you go to the aft or back part of the ship and see the wake the ship is making that you realize the ship is going forward.

I thought that this is very much like the ministry. We look forward, but
when there are so many demands upon you, you sense very little progress is
being made, and a sense of frustration comes in and one wonders if
it is worth it all. However, at times like these it is important to look
back and remember what the Lord has done. I can understand why the prophets were constantly telling God's people to "remember." In remembering we look back and see the ‘wake’ of our passage and realize the distance we have come. It is so important in the Christian life to have seasons of contemplation, a being still before the Lord, having a time of
remembrance.

At four o'clock without fail the navigational officer would go out on the
wing of the bridge with his little instrument called the sextant. By
getting a fix on the sun he would then come back to the chart room in the
back of the bridge and on a map of the area where we were he would make a few calculations, and plot the course for the ship. He would then come to
the bridge and set a new course. Sometimes it would be only a half a
degree. What he was doing was making a course correction, but if he did not
do it daily over a two week period we could be way off course.

Although the sea looked perfectly calm, especially when we came around
the equator in an area known as the 'doldrums,' I realized that
unseen by me there were other forces at work taking the ship off course. (the reason it is called the doldrums is because it is perfectly calm. Sailors before the advent of the steam engine hated to go through the doldrums because they had to rely on the breeze which seldom blew in that area. Consequently they would sit there for weeks at a time. Often they would lower a row boat and with ropes attached to the ship try towing it out of the doldrums.) Underneath the ship was a current that was making it necessary for this daily course correction. It wasn't much but enough to cause damage if not corrected.

I thought this is so much like the ministry. Every day there are evil
forces at work to get us off course. Evidently the writer of the Hebrews
knew something about this because in Hebrews 2:1 he mentions this. "We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away." To drift - all we have to do is - nothing. But to keep from drifting this is a different matter. It takes a lot of work, discipline, etc., but more important a daily course correction, just as the navigational officer goes out and looks at the sun and then checks his readings on the map, so we to look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith. (Hebrews 12:2) We check our direction with the Word of God, the map we have to help chart us through this life. In so doing, we correct what is wrong.

The Bible speaks about Christians becoming ship-wrecked. (1 Timothy 1:19) I think of this not only with individuals, but with movements that started
out as a movement of God, but can become ship-wrecked or a monument of man.

Our first ship LOGOS became shipwrecked in the Beagle Channel when it hit
rocks and went aground. As far as we know this ship is still sitting on
the rocks, a monument to what once was a great ministry. Without the daily
watchfulness and course corrections when needed this is often the result-a
ship-wreck and a monument. Praise God that He has given us Logos Hope and the ministry is still being carried on.

Moving from a movement of the Holy Spirit to a monument of man does not
happen overnight. Often little things are allowed to come in and they begin to shift that local fellowship, or mission from what God has for it, and because of this it is imperative we know where we are going. The navigational officer on board the DOULOS could be making all kinds of course corrections, but it would all be useless unless he had a destination that he was aiming towards. This comes back to some of the things that I was trying to communicate in the chapter called Focus or Fragmentation. What is our focus? Once we know what the focus is then we can have the daily course corrections to maintain the focus.

Reading church history and from my own observations over the last fifty
years we seem to go through different stages as we move from a movement to a monument.

In stage one the movement is born. Like anything that is born it is small.
Zechariah says we should not “despise the day of small things.” Jesus
talking about the “kingdom of heaven” said it is like a mustard seed.
Matthew 13:32 "Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." Movements of God have very insignificant beginnings. I cannot think of any movement of God in church history or even the present that did not start small and insignificant.

Look at the beginning of the church. Jesus Christ, who was reported to be
the ring leader of this new sect by His peers in His day, crucified on a
cross; His twelve disciples were looked upon as unlearned men and one of
them turned out to be a traitor so who would have believed that this sect
would turn out to be a world religion as well as dating our calendars BC and AD. What an impact has been made.

In the early stages of a movement of God often there will be persecution,
difficulties, a lack of acceptance as well as respectability, and often the movement seems a little disorganized. In this first stage there is the hammering out of principles that will later become policies, but now they are learning by doing, a trial and error method. Things are accomplished, but not as smoothly as one might want because this is still a learning process.

In this first stage they are cast upon the Lord consequently spending much
time in prayer. There is a sense of adventure, of expectancy, of seeing the
Lord work. They are propelled into taking steps of faith because the
leaders of the movement are most usually men of faith, vision and action.

Over a period of time they begin to move into stage two. There will be, of
course, an overlapping of the different stages, but when a ministry moves
into stage two again there are certain things that high-light this stage
that makes it recognizable.

A greater acceptance and respectability comes in. They have proven
themselves in the first stage and now they begin to bathe in the glow of
success and the honor that comes their way from their peers.

The movement is better organized because people have been trained and know more of what they need to do. Often it is in this stage that the policy
manuals are written governing the workings of the movement. More of a
consolidation comes in because in the first stage it was a time of
expansion and now there is within the movement the thought of conserving
what ground has been taken.

Along with the consolidation and organization comes more thought on budget, financial matters. There will be more of a tendency to look at new
projects in the light of whether or not they are financially achievable
rather than what is on the heart of God. Consequently there will be more of
a dig in mentality and keeping what we have and not losing it than there
will be of expansion.

It also seems in the second stage the leadership becomes more
administrative rather than taking steps of faith and that is a cardinal difference between stage one and stage two, the difference between leading and administrating. A tension also begins to develop between leaders and administrators in this stage, because a leader wants to move ahead in expansion, but the administrator sees that it might not be feasible. It is a great need at this juncture to strike a balance.

Slowly the movement moves into the third stage. The tendency in this stage
is not to rock the boat. The movement has become more stream-lined and
efficient and the people in places of authority more professional. The movement by this time has taken on its own personality and become more set in its ways. The cement has begun to harden.

The people in becoming more professional and effective at what they are
doing stay in their position and there is no relinquishing of the ministry, and because we become effective at what we are doing there is less reliance on
the Lord, no trusting in the Lord, but more in our own methods and
persuasion. Consequently prayer does not have any urgency, but becomes a
matter of form until it becomes irrelevant and eventually fades from the
scene.

The next thing that happens is that tradition sets in and takes over.
Tradition becomes the guideline to what happens and the final thing that takes place is that we have a movement that is self-perpetuating and it has now become an institution. The Holy Spirit is not needed; man has set up the apparatus for perpetuation of the mission or whatever. It would seem at
this stage the movement has now turned into an institution, a monument of
man.

There are a number of good things in stage one and two. The movement has
respectability, new open doors, a greater efficiency, a clearer insight or
a sharpening of focus regarding the direction that the Lord wants, but this is where the danger lies. Often our strong points can become the weak
areas. Paul said: "For when I am weak, then I am strong," not “for when I am strong then I am not weak.”

When a movement is starting out the leaders are weak in many areas and find themselves very dependent upon the Lord, but over time they become more proficient, strong and less dependent on the Lord. I think of the early
days of the movement that I am in 'Operation Mobilization' of how there was
a strong emphasis on certain Biblical principles. However, over a period of
time these principles seemed to be less emphasized, especially as we become more organized and efficient in what we were doing. One OM leader made a very profound statement saying, "OM, referring to the cardinal Biblical principles that we held, must be born again on every team." This, I
believe, is what must take place.

I would like to suggest several steps that we can take to maintain the
cutting edge the movement had at the beginning. However, before we look at these steps it is important for us to realize that what happens in a
movement of God is also what happens in our own individual life. When we
are first saved there is the excitement, the wonder, the awe, but over a
period of time all that seems to fade and we very easily find ourselves
'drifting' away from the Lord.

Just as there are many variables, the wind, current, that tend to cause a ship to drift so we to have many forces at work hitting us as individual Christians causing us to get off course and drift.

We need to see the importance of relinquishment, of turning the
ministry over. A whole chapter has been written on that subject and we can
ask why this is so important when it comes to maintaining a movement of
God. A monument of man is just that, it is of man and it is always dangerous
when we give too much attention to a man. Learning to relinquish the
ministry has a tendency to take the focus off any one man.

Relinquishing the ministry forces us into several things which, I believe,
is very important. First, it forces us to train and disciple. This is what
the great Commission is all about, but how few there are in the Body of
Christ who take this seriously. If you are going to turn the ministry over
to a person you certainly want to make sure that he is capable of handling
what you are giving. So if we think in terms of relinquishment we will have
to think in terms of discipleship.

The person who takes the ministry that is turned over to him is also
cast upon the Lord and this is the place where he should be, cast upon the
Lord. This is what keeps it a movement of God, but when we become so good at what we do we begin to rely upon our own expertise and not the Lord; we become a monument of man.

The person who relinquishes the ministry finds himself moving into
new areas that in turn cast him on the Lord as well. He finds that when the
faith of the one he has turned the ministry over increases so does his own
ministry also. This is what Paul was referring to in 2 Corinthians 10:15.

I would like to re-iterate here that when I talk about turning over the
ministry I cannot turn over that which the Lord has called me to. Paul was
called to the Gentiles and to preach the gospel in places where the Gospel
had not gone. He did not relinquish that calling, but what he relinquished
was the ministry that came because of that calling. For example, when he
moved into a new area and churches were started he did not become the
pastor, but he appointed elders, gave them the ministry and went on. This
is what we must do. I must keep my focus on what the Lord has called me to.

Faith is the second Biblical principle that is important when we
consider a movement of God. Hebrews tells us that without faith it is
impossible to please God. There are two elements that make faith- obedience and sacrifice. The man who believes will obey. When the apostles requested Jesus to increase their faith, He told them to obey. (Luke
17:3-10.) God gives faith to the obedient heart.

Sacrifice will always follow obedience. If we look at the men and women in
the hall of faith in Hebrews 11 we see these two elements coming out. Noah,
obeyed and when he built the ark there was sacrifice. Abraham obeyed and he left his country, but there was sacrifice. Moses obeyed and we see the
sacrifice as he gave up the treasures of Egypt. The sacrifices, if we look
them in the light of eternity, are not really sacrifices, because we gain so much more. What we give up will perish anyway and we gain that which will never perish. In a movement of God there is the principle of faith.

Prayer is another principle in a movement of God. Faith shows our
dependence upon God, but prayer gives us the avenue to God. Prayer is a
real public indicator of our need of God. When there is little prayer it
shows little need for God. Most of what is being done can be done by man.
When man is in control, God is not necessary. Of course we would never say
that but by our action or lack of action, as far as prayer is concerned,
this is what we communicate. Action is the best interpreter of a man’s thought and so when there is little prayer action, to me, is indicative that it’s not in our thinking process as something needful.

Look at any movement of God. It starts out with tremendous emphasis on
prayer, but the better organized it becomes the less we depend upon prayer.
The pull of the flesh is always down; it is always away from God and the
things of God. The flesh will always move towards human techniques instead
of the power of God.

In closing this chapter I would like to say that a movement of God will
always be swimming upstream. In so doing it will be going against many
things that will try to get it to change direction or course. A monument of
man is drifting; it is going along with the current. When it comes to the
pull of the flesh it is always easier to drift than to go against the
current.

I believe that one of the greatest needs in the church today is for men of God that know the signs of the times and have knowledge of what the church should do. I Chronicles 12:32. We need men of perception who see clearly where the church is off course and are used by the Lord for the necessary corrections. Not only is this a need in every local fellowship, but in every movement of God, whether it is a local fellowship or a mission.