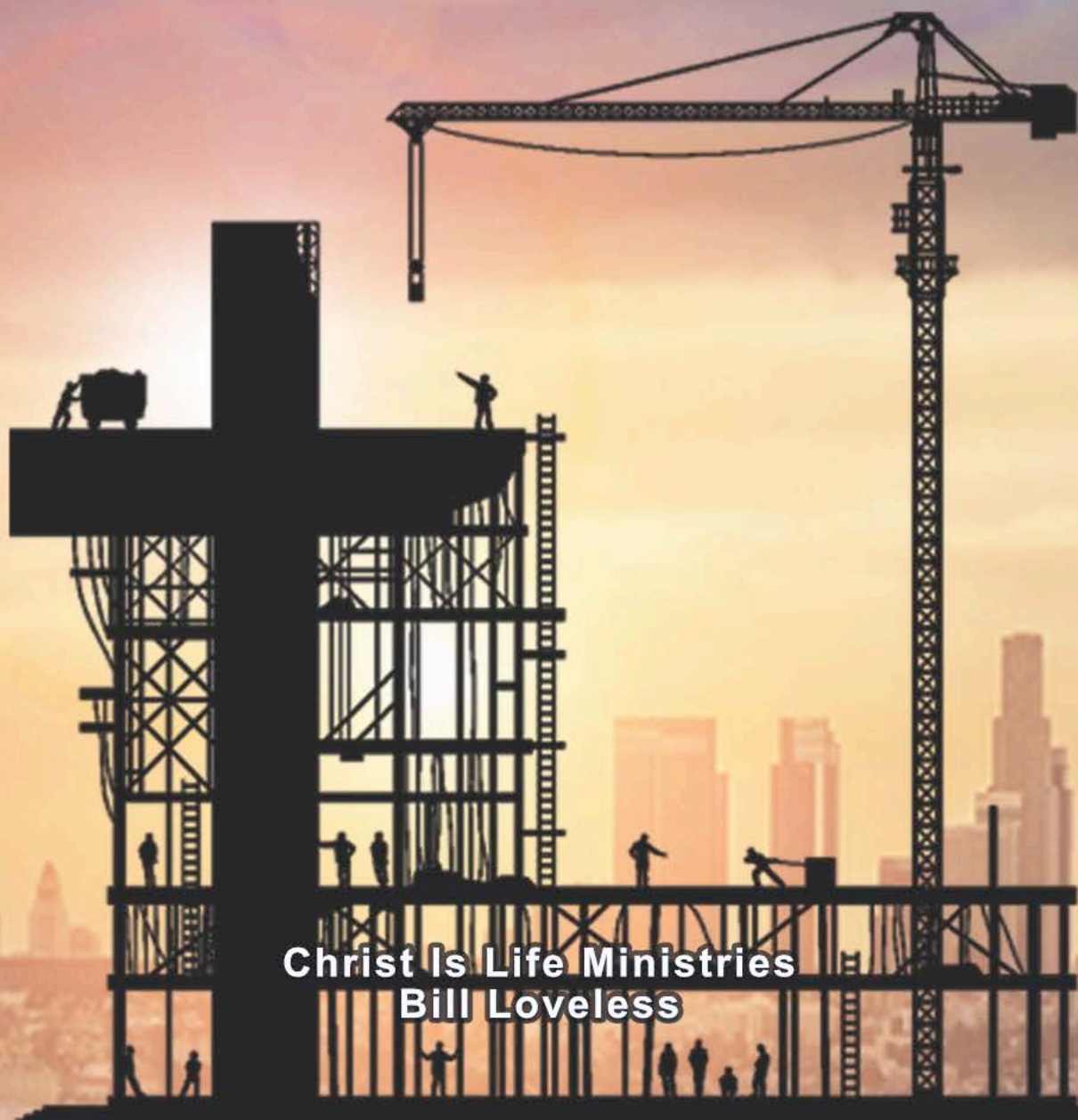


I Will Build My Church



Christ Is Life Ministries
Bill Loveless

"I Will Build MY Church"

Bill Loveless

Christ Is Life Ministries

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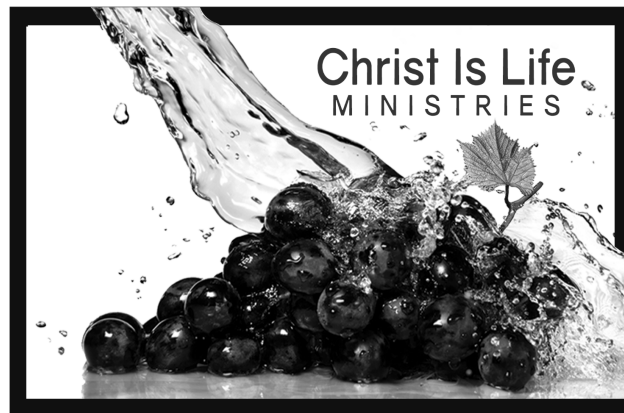
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I Will Build My Church

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INTRODUCTION

I have had the privilege over the past several years to work with over 60 churches. They are different denominational and non-denominational churches. These churches range in size from 24,000 people to less than 100 people. I have spent a great deal of time with many of the pastors and lay leaders in many of these churches.

As a result, I have observed some common problems they may have experienced. Here are some examples of the problems I have observed.

Because of these and other common problems, I would like to share in this study some key truths that I trust will help you as a pastor or lay leader gain a fuller understanding of what it means for Christ to build His church.

CHAPTER ONE

There Are Two Kinds of Churches

A. Introduction

(Note: When I use the word leader or minister in this study, I am referring to pastors and lay leaders.)

In this chapter I would like to look at the difference between a man-made church versus a Christ-built church and the results of both. Before we look at those differences, I would like to break down that part of Matthew 16:18 when Jesus says:

“I will build My church.”
Matthew 16:18

“I” means that Christ will be the source for building the church.

“WILL” means that nothing or no one will keep Christ from building His church.

“MY” means that it will be Christ’s church.

The key truth in this verse is that we, as ministers, are not the source to build Christ’s church. Christ is the Source. However, out of ignorance of this key truth, I was on a church leadership team in the past that tried to be the source to build Christ’s church. The result was that it became a man-made church as opposed to a Christ-built church. What is the difference between the two?

B. MAN-Made Church

Exercise: Before you read my comments about a man-made church, please list what you believe are some characteristics of a man-made church.

Based on Psalm 127:1 below, please write down how would you describe vain labor?

“UNLESS the Lord builds the house they labor in VAIN who build it.”
Psalm 127:1

1. What Are Some of The Characteristics of A Church That Man Builds?

1. Man, using his intellect and ability to build Christ's church **independent** of Christ.
2. The focus is on the **numerical** growth of the church instead of focusing on personal **spiritual** growth.
3. Developing **man-made** "success" markers to determine if a church is successful.
4. **Imitating** man-made success markers of other churches to be successful.
5. **Taking ownership** of God's process in building the church instead of **participating** with God for Him to build His church.
6. A church that is **conforming** to the norms and standards of our secular culture.
7. A church that **does not understand** the truth of what it means for Christ to build His church.

2. What Are The Results Of A Man-Made Church?

a. A church NOT living from the supernatural life and power of the Holy Spirit.

*"having a **form of godliness** but **denying its power**." 2 Timothy 3:5*

b. A church that is more DEAD than alive.

*"...I know your deeds; you have a **reputation of being alive**, **but you are dead**." Revelation 3:1b*

c. A church that is NOT truly Christ-centered.

*"But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your **minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ**." 2 Corinthians 11:3*

*"Nevertheless, I have this **against you**, that you have **left your first love**." Revelation 2:20*

d. Church leadership that:

1. Is PRIDEFUL because they believe they are the source to build Christ's church

*"...for those who take **pride in appearance** and not in heart." 2 Corinthians 5:12*

*"There is **no fear of God** before their eyes." Romans 3:18*

2. Is living in the FUTILITY and FOOLISHNESS of their own plans and their FINITE thinking and HUMAN wisdom.

*"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must **no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking**." Ephesians 4:17*

*"Professing to be wise they became **fools**." Romans 1:21-23*

3. Gives LIP service to God and His will and plan but are NOT truly seeking His will and plans for their church.

*"They honor me with their **lips** but **their hearts are far from me**." Matthew 15:8*

4. **IMITATES what other churches are doing rather than seeking what God specifically wants to accomplish in their church.**

*“See to it that **no one** takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the **tradition of men**, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” Colossians 2:8*

*‘For **I know** the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD.....” Jeremiah 29:11*

I think a key question that needs to be addressed at this point is how do you define a “successful” church?

B. A CHRIST-Built Church

Exercise: Before you read my comments about a Christ-built church, please list what you believe are some characteristics of a church that Christ would build.

The key question concerning a Christ-built church is this:

1. What (Or Who) Will A Christ-Built Church Look Like?

*“For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined** to become **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.” Romans 8:29*

<p style="text-align: center;">A Christ-Built Church</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Is made up of believers who are being transformed into the LIKENESS of Christ which means that they will THINK, BELIEVE, CHOOSE, BEHAVE, and LIVE like Christ.</p>
--

2. What Are Some Of The Characteristics Of A Christ-Built Church?

a. One that is living TOTALLY DEPENDENT on Christ as their SOURCE.

*“I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me** and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 14:6*

b. The church will look LIKE CHRIST.

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18*

c. One whose lives are experiencing SUPERNATURAL SPIRITUAL transformation.

*“Be not conformed to this world but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind...”
Romans 12:2*

d. One that will be SPIRITUALLY ATTRACTIVE to Christians and non-Christians alike.

*“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and **manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.**” 2 Corinthians 2:14*

*“Jesus said, ‘If I be lifted up, all men will be **drawn to Me.**’” John 12:32*

e. One that will be ministering to others from the OVERFLOW of Christ’s life and power in them.

*“But we have **this treasure in earthen vessels**, so that **the surpassing greatness of the power** will be of God and not from ourselves.” 2 Corinthians 4:6, 7*

*“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘**From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.**’” John 7:38*

f. One that UNCONDITIONALLY LOVES and will draw others through God’s LOVE.

*“So **show these men the proof of your love** and the reason we are proud of you.
Then all the churches can see it.” 2 Corinthians 8:24*

g. One that will GLORIFY God.

*“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. **To Him be the glory forever.**
Amen.” Romans 11:3*

(I will expand on these characteristics in future chapters.)

C. Conclusion

Based on what you read in this chapter, is a “successful” church a Christ-built church rather than a man-made church?

Now that we have discussed the difference between a man-made church and a Christ-built church, I would like to explore in the next chapter what it means for Christ to build His church IN you and what it looks for Christ to build His church THROUGH you.

CHAPTER TWO

Christ Building His Church IN You – Part One

A. “Grow Up”

The key to Christ building His church is that like physical children we are to “grow up” spiritually. Look at Ephesians 4:11-16 in the New American Standard version.

- 11 *“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers,*
12 *for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*
13 *until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*
14 *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;*
15 *but speaking the truth in love, we are to **grow up** in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*
16 *from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

The following are verses Ephesians 4:15 and 16 in the New Living Translation

“Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”

1. Spiritual Babies

Paul is making it very clear that as believers we must “grow up” spiritually. If we don't we will remain “spiritual” babies. What do you think might be the fallout if the congregation and/or leadership don't grow up spiritually? Please write down your answer to this question.

What I have seen, unfortunately, in many churches is a tendency to focus on numerical versus spiritual growth. The problem is that if the folks in these churches don't grow up spiritually then they can still be “spiritual babies” after living as a Christian for 10, 20, or 30+. They think they are mature because they have studied the Bible, gone to church, and even have been in church leadership for years. They think they are mature Christians, when in reality they are still

“spiritual babies.” (I will explain why in the next section.) I can bear witness to this because that is where I was after 30 years of my Christian life. If your congregation is not truly growing up spiritually then this will be the result:

***It will become a church where the people are more
SELF-ABSORBED than CHRIST-CENTERED.***

Here are some characteristics of spiritual babies that I have experienced and observed over the years:

- It is up to the church to meet their expectations. (i.e. worship, the sermon, the programs must meet their expectations.)
- If those expectations are not met, then they feel they have the right to be frustrated and sow seeds of discord and conflict.
- They want to manipulate or be in control in order to be happy or satisfied.
- They expect their ideas and agendas to be affirmed and implemented.
- If their plans and agendas concerning the church are not met, they become controlling, they express their frustrations, and they can become resistant and demanding.
- They are the ongoing “thorns” in the side of leadership.
- They are passive and simply go along because they don't want to get involved. (i.e. sit, soak, and sour.)

Let me sum it up this way:

With spiritual babies, it is about getting THEIR needs, desires, and expectations met so that they can be FULFILLED and HAPPY.

(The question we need to ask is this: “Will they truly be fulfilled and happy if those needs, desires, and expectations are met?”)

2. Spiritual Maturity

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18*

***Spiritual maturity results as we are being TRANSFORMED
into the LIKENESS of Christ.
(i.e. to think, feel, choose, believe, and behave like Jesus.)***

What might be some of the results of a church growing up to be like Christ?

Here are some of the results I have seen:

- They would be more other's focused (selfless) rather than self-focused (selfish).
- They would be unconditionally loving and accepting of others rather than being critical and judgmental.
- They would desire harmony and unity versus conflict and disunity.
- They would pray with the leadership about the direction of the church.
- Even if they disagree with some of the church's agendas, they would stay faithful to God's calling for them at their church. (Until the Lord may call them elsewhere.)
- If they disagreed with a policy, plan or agenda they would approach leadership with humility and love to share their views.

We will look further into the meaning of spiritual growth in the next section.

***A church CANNOT afford for their members and leaders NOT to grow up.
The result will be ongoing conflict and discord.***

Let's look at the process of growing up spiritually in the next section.

B. How Do We Grow Up?

How we grow up has everything to do with what kind of Christian life we are living. I have concluded that there are two ways to live the Christian life: "A" Christian life versus "THE" Christian life. One form of the Christian life will produce spiritual growth. The other will prevent spiritual growth. Let's begin by looking at what it looks like to live "A" Christian life.

1. "A" Christian Life

I define "A" Christian life as follows:

***"A" Christian Life
A Christian who believes they are the SOURCE (with God's help) to produce
God's promises, to keep God's commands, and to live a transformed life.***

Let me define the word "source" as it relates to living the Christian life. The source is the one who will make God's promises an experiential reality and the one who will spiritually transform

a Christian's life. In living "A" Christian life, you are the source to make God's promises experiential and to transform yourself.

Another way of defining "A" Christian life is one where you are using your own intellect, ability, willpower, self-discipline, and asking God's help, to:

1. Learn the word of God and consistently do what it says.
2. Consistently keep God's commands and rules.
3. Spiritually transform yourself.
4. Become more righteous (i.e., sin less).
5. Change your fleshly or sinful behavior to godly behavior.
6. Set yourself free from the sin(s) you are in bondage to.
7. Be like Christ by imitating Christ.
8. Achieve victory over your flesh and Satan.
9. Experience the abundant life.

The problem with "A" Christian life is that it will inevitably FAIL.

WHY?

It will NEVER produce "THE" Christian life that God promises because man was NOT designed to be the SOURCE to produce it.

"A" Christian life will fail because God never intended for man to be the SOURCE to produce "THE" Christian life. By failure, I mean that anyone living "A" Christian life will not experience the freedom, victory, healing of woundedness and transformation that God promises.

Here are some statistics that bear this out:

"52% of Christians think there is more to the Christian life than what they have experienced." - Barna Group.

"Only 13% of Christians say they are living a victorious Christian life." - Gallup survey.

"89% of Christians feel there is a disconnect between what God promises versus what they are experiencing." - Reveal Research.

For the first thirty years of my Christian life, I was living "A" Christian life. As a result, I can identify with every one of those statistics. I was not experiencing victory, freedom or transformation and I felt a disconnect between God's promises and my experience.

I would hope that you, as a minister, would be interested in knowing where your folks stand in relationship to these statistics? If so, here are some questions I use in evaluating a person's Christian walk that you might consider asking the people you minister to:

- Are you experiencing increasing victory in your Christian walk?
- Are you able to set yourself free from your sin strongholds?

- Have you been successful in transforming your sinful behavior(s) or attitude(s) into Christ-like behaviors or attitudes?
- Are you being healed from your past or present woundedness?
- Would you say that you are being transformed to think, feel, choose, believe, and behave more like Jesus?
- Would you describe your Christian life as an abundant life?

If you discover that most of the folks are answering “no” to many of these questions then most likely they are living “A” Christian life. Since “A” Christian life will not produce God’s promises or transform us, let’s look at what it means to live “THE” Christian life.

2. What Is “THE” Christian Life?

a. What Does Jesus Say About THE Christian Life?

Jesus says: *“...I AM the way, the truth, and **THE LIFE**...” John 14:6*

*“...I AM the resurrection and **THE LIFE**.” John 11:25*

What can we conclude is the meaning of “THE” Christian life from these two statements by Jesus? Is it possible that we can conclude the following.

***“THE” Christian life is a PERSON.
It is CHRIST HIMSELF.***

Paul confirms what Jesus is saying when he says in Philippians 1:21:

*“To live to me is **Christ**...”*

Interesting that Paul does not say the Christian life is about keeping God’s commands, trying harder not to sin, or doing our best for God. He says THE Christian life is Christ Himself. Doesn’t what Jesus and Paul are saying affirm 1 Corinthians 3:11?

*“For no man can lay a **foundation** other than the one which is laid, which is **Jesus Christ**.”
1 Corinthians 3:11*

As in building construction, a foundation must be laid before it can be built on. In the same way, in order for Christ to build His church, there must be a foundation to spiritually build on which is Christ Himself.

What do you think might be the consequences if your church is not built on Christ?

b. What Does It Mean To You For Christ To Be THE Life?

To answer this question let's look at 1 Corinthians 1:30:

*“**He** is the **SOURCE** of **your** life **in** Christ Jesus, ...” (RSV)*

God gives us the answer in the first part of the verse when He says that He is the SOURCE of your life in Christ. The word “source” in this context means a person from whom something originates. In this verse, that person is Jesus who is the originator of THE Life.

Look at two other verses that reveal that God is your Source for living the Christian life:

*“**In Him** we **live** and **move** and have our **being**.” Acts 17:28*

*“For **from Him** and **through Him** and **to Him** are all things....” Romans 11:36*

These are just two of many verses in the Bible that reveal to us that Christ is to be our Source for living THE Christian life. This is why Christ put His life in us. Look at Colossians 1:27:

*“to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, **which is Christ in you**, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27*

You now have Christ in you to be the Source to live THE Christian life in and through you. Paul affirms this when he says in the first part of Galatians 2:20a:

*“I am crucified with Christ, and I **NO** longer live, but Christ lives **IN** me...” Galatians 2:20*

When Paul says that “I no longer live” he is admitting that in spite of his intellect and ability that he can't live THE Christian life apart from Christ living it in him. Let me sum it up this way.

***The Christian life is a DIVINE life that can ONLY be lived by Christ HIMSELF.
That is why He put His life IN us.***

To better understand what it means for Christ to be our Source, let's look at two key words: SUPPLY and TRANSFORM.

c. Christ Being Your Source Means That He Is Your SUPPLY and Your TRANSFORMER

1. Jesus As Your SUPPLY

Look at Philippians 4:19

*“My God shall **SUPPLY** all your needs,... **IN CHRIST** Jesus.”*

Paul is telling us that everything we need is in Christ who is in us. Christ in us means that He is our need-meter. Think about this verse for a moment. Paul is telling us that Christ Himself is our need-meter because He IS everything we need. He IS our love, He IS our strength, He IS our hope, etc. Let's look at who Christ is to us in order to meet our needs.

Christ as your need-meter is your:

Unconditional love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance	Faith
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Peace	Forgiveness
Understanding	Security	Fearlessness	Wisdom	Discernment
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Humility	Boldness	Righteousness
Selflessness	Rest	Compassion	Courage	Hope
Gentleness	Control	Faithfulness	Power	Joy

[**Note:** While we know we can ascribe human meanings to these words, what we are talking about are supernatural, Christ-like characteristics that can only be supplied by Christ.]

Whatever your need is, God will supply that need in Christ. Let me give you some examples:

- Is your need unconditional love? Christ who IS unconditional love will supply/meet that need in and through you.
- Do you have a need for a strength greater than your own? Christ who IS strength will BE your strength.
- Is your need hope? Christ who IS hope will supply His hope in you.

Question: If the members of your church were getting their needs met in Christ, how might it change the culture of your church?

2. Jesus As Your TRANSFORMER (Into Christ-Likeness)

Not only will Christ be the supply to meet your needs, He will transform your life to live from Christ-likeness. We see this in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and Philippians 1:6:

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18*

*“For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work** in you **will perfect (PRODUCE)** it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:6 (Parentheses mine)*

Let’s look again at the list I shared previously.

Unconditional love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance	Faith
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Peace	Forgiveness
Understanding	Security	Fearlessness	Wisdom	Discernment
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Humility	Boldness	Righteousness
Selflessness	Rest	Compassion	Courage	Hope
Gentleness	Control	Faithfulness	Power	Joy

Christ, as the producer, will not only supply the things on this list, He will transform us to live from them.

Examples:

- Christ will not only supply to us His unconditional love, He will transform us to be unconditional lovers.
- Christ will not only supply us victory in the moment, He will transform us to live in victory.
- Christ will not only supply forgiveness, He will transform us to live from an attitude of forgiveness.

***God is also the SOURCE for transforming your life in order
that you will think, believe, choose, and behave like Christ.***

***In other words, God is the Source to fulfill your
SPIRITUAL DESTINY.***

Question: In what ways do you think it would change the nature of your church if your folks were being transformed into Christ-likeness? (i.e. attitudes, behaviors, decisions)

d. Why Can't You Be The Source To Produce THE Life?

“...for apart from Me you can do NOTHING.” John 15:5b

Could Jesus be saying in this verse that since He is THE Life that you can't be your own supplier and transformer? The word “nothing” means that you cannot produce THE Life. Another way of saying it is this.

***Jesus is saying that you can't produce Christ-likeness
INDEPENDENTLY of His life and power accomplishing it in you.***

The problem is that we struggle with this concept because we want to bring our intellect, ability, and willpower to the table. As well as that may work in everything outside of the Christian life, it will not work in living THE Christian life. However, you do have a vital part to play and we will explore that in the next section.

C. What Is YOUR Part In Christ Building His Church IN You?

1. RECEIVE

*“Therefore as you have **received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.**” Colossians 2:6*

Since Christ is the Provider and Producer, then our part is to receive what Christ is supplying. Colossians 2:6 tells us that we received Christ for salvation and we are to continue walking in Christ by continuing to receive what He is supplying.

2. ABIDING-DEPENDENCE

John 15:5 gives us the perfect example of what our part in living “THE” Life looks like.

*“I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me, and I in him,** he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 15:5a*

The key word in this verse is “abide.” Other meanings for the word “abide” are:

- Depend on
- Draw from
- Live from
- Participate with

As the physical branch is totally dependent on the vine as the source for its life, so too, are we totally dependent on Christ, the spiritual Vine for His life. Let me further explain:

As the physical branch depends on the physical vine for life, so too are you to live with an ATTITUDE of total DEPENDENCE on Christ as your Source to live His life IN you and build His church THROUGH you.

3. DEPENDENCE = FAITH

Another word for dependence is faith. We see this in the following verses.

*“And **without faith it is impossible to please Him,** for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6*

*“I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me;** and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God** who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Galatians 2:20*

Before we go any further, let me give you a definition of faith as it relates to living THE Christian life.

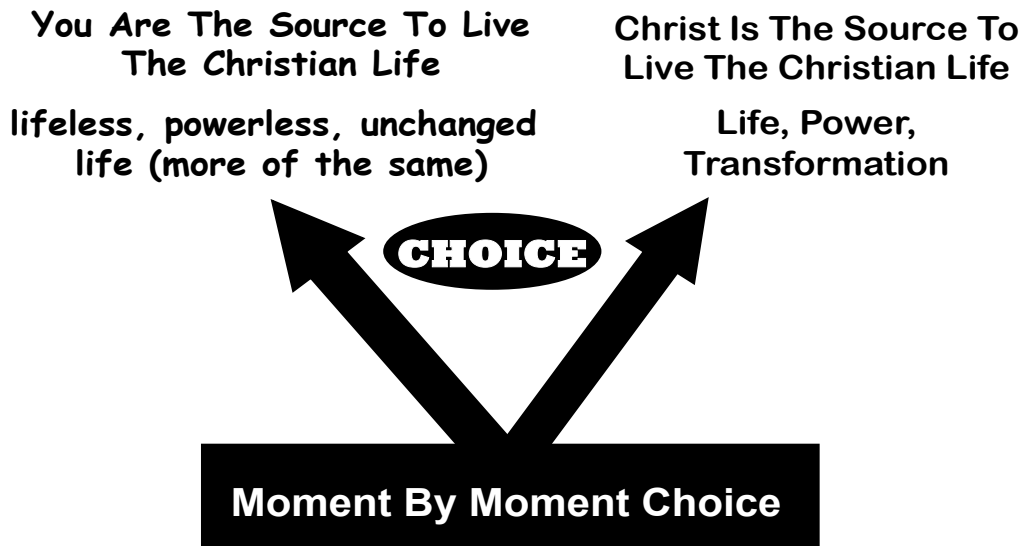
FAITH

Is a moment-by-moment dependence upon God believing that ONLY He can produce the LIFE that He promises.

If you have been a Christian very long, you know the Christian life is lived by faith. However, what I have observed over several years of ministry is that many Christians have the wrong object of their faith. The reason being is that they are not experiencing the victory, freedom, and transformation that God promises. The reason being is that while they think God is the object of their faith, the truth is they are the object of their faith. Another way of saying it is that they are trying to be the source to live THE Christian life. As we have learned, there is only one Source and that is Christ, so he must be object of our faith. We see this in the first part of Hebrews 12:2:

“fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith...”

The litmus test for determining who the object of our faith is this: Is our life being transformed? If God is the object of our faith then spiritual transformation will be taking place. Let me illustrate the two objects of faith and the consequences of you as the source versus Christ as the Source.



Summary

- Living “A” Christian life means that you are the source with God’s help to live it.
- “THE” Christian life is Christ Himself.
- Christ as THE life means that He is the source for living THE Christian life.
- Christ as our Source is the supplier and transformer for our lives.
- Through moment-by-moment dependence on Christ our lives will be transformed into the likeness of Christ.

Note: If you would like to pursue a deeper understanding of A Life versus THE Life, I have a study and videos on our website (www.christislifeministries.com) called *Living Life From A New Source* that is located on our Discipleship page.

The Difference Between “A” Life And “THE” Life

“A” LIFE
(Living From SELF As the Source)

Independent Life

Living independently of God to try to live the Christian life.

The Christian Life Is A Life Of Performance

The Christian life is a set of rules to follow or a checklist to complete

You Are The Source To Live The Christian Life

It is up to you using your own ability with God's help to live the Christian life.

Living FOR God

Trying in your own strength to please God and to earn something from God. (Love, acceptance, etc..)

Self-Transformation With God's Help

Trying by your own effort w/God's help to produce victory, freedom, healing, and transformation.

Faith In Yourself With God's Help

Faith in your intellect, ability, self-discipline, and willpower with God's help to produce the Christian life.

Results In:

More flesh, sin, frustration, defeat, woundedness. Disillusionment and walking away from the Christian life or just trying harder to make life work
No transformation
Continuing to live a self-sufficient Christian life
Ongoing turmoil and conflict

“THE” LIFE
(Living From CHRIST As The Source)

Dependent Life

Living in moment by moment dependence on God as your Source for living the Christian life. John 15:5

The Christian Life Is Christ

Christ Himself is the Christian life.
John 14:6; Philippians 1:21

God Is Source To Live The Christian Life

You live from God's life and power as the Source to live the Christian life. John 14:6; Acts 17:28

Living FROM God

Trusting Christ to live His life in and through you. Galatians 2:20

God-Produced Transformation

Depending on God as the Source to produce victory, freedom, healing of woundedness, and transformation. 1 Corinthians 1:30

Faith In God

Faith in God alone with the result that His life and power will flow in and through you to produce transformation into Christ-likeness. 1 John 5:12; Ephesians 1:19, 20; Hebrews 11:6

Results In:

Freedom, victory, healing - Galatians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Psalm 147:3
Greater dependence upon God - John 15:5
Deeper intimacy with Him - Philippians 3:8
Being transformed into Christ-likeness - 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29

CHAPTER THREE

Christ Building His Church IN You - Part Two

A. Introduction

The second most critical truth to understand as the foundation for being a Christ-centered Christian and leader is knowing your true identity in Christ. Therefore in this section I will be sharing the following:

- What makes up your old identity.
- What God did to give you a new identity
- What the consequences are if you don't understand and live from your true identity.

B. All Of Your False Beliefs Made Up Your OLD Identity

Before you were saved what you believed about yourself was your “**old identity**.” All of your positive and negative false beliefs made up your old identity. You had no choice but to live from your false beliefs and to stay in bondage to the fleshly behaviors that flowed from those false beliefs. Think about this statement:

Before you were saved, your OLD identity is who you really WERE.

What you believed about yourself before you were saved is really who you “were.” It is not who you “are” because you now have a new identity. Therefore, let’s see what God accomplished at salvation to remove your old identity and to give you a new identity.

C. What God Accomplished At Salvation To Give You A NEW Identity

1. He CRUCIFIED Your Old Identity

God knew that you needed a new identity, and in order to give you a new one, He had to deal with the old one. We see in Romans 6:6 that God crucified your old identity:

*“knowing this, that our **old self (old identity)** was **CRUCIFIED** with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” Romans 6:6 (Parenthesis and emphasis mine)*

Think about it for a moment. Every false belief you had about yourself that made up your old identity was crucified with Christ on the cross.

Note: You may be asking, “How can my old identity be crucified with Christ since the crucifixion of Jesus took place over 2000 years ago?” The answer to that is that in the eternal realm with God there is no time. Everything is present with God so that regardless of when you were saved, God sees your old identity being crucified with Christ on the cross. This is truly

beyond man's comprehension. Like the rest of scripture, this is a place where we must believe it by faith. Below is a diagram illustrating the old identity being crucified.



2. God EXCHANGED Your Old Identity For A New Identity.

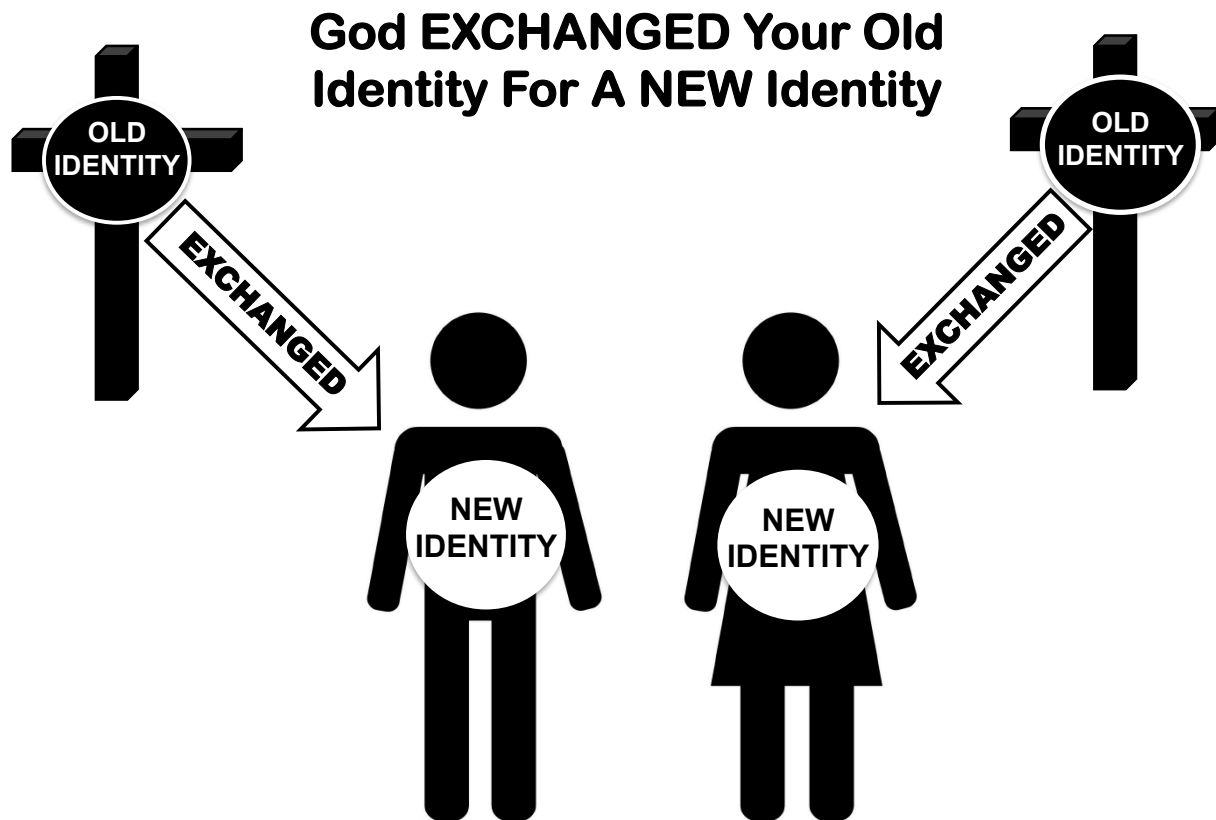
"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation (new identity); the old things (old identity) passed away; behold, new things (new identity) have come." 2 Corinthians 5:17

In addition to crucifying your old identity, He exchanged your old identity for a new one. Let's take another look at 2 Corinthians 5:17. The "old things" in 2 Corinthians 5:17 refers to your old identity which was crucified (passed away), and was exchanged for "new things" which is your new identity. As a result of this exchanged, you became a **new creation**. Becoming a new creation means that you now have a **new identity** in Christ.

Based on what you just learned, think about this question for a moment.

KEY QUESTION:

Since your false beliefs are part of your old identity that was CRUCIFIED at the cross, then do you NEED to continue believing your false beliefs any longer?



D. Who Are You In Your True Identity?

***“For we are God’s MASTERPIECE....”
Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)***

We are now going to be looking at some of the godly characteristics that make up your true identity in Christ. I don’t know what your reaction will be as you read through the following list. My first response was that this is too good to be true. If you feel the same way, realize that everything listed below is the truth of who you REALLY are in Christ.

Therefore, I would like for you to read through this list slowly and let the truth of your true identity sink in. When you read through this list remember that “in Christ” refers to who you are in your true identity. For example, you might read each characteristic like this: “In my true identity in Christ, I am victorious.”

E. Some Of The Characteristics of Your TRUE Identity “IN” Christ

Romans 8:35, 38-39	In Christ, I am unconditionally loved.
1 Corinthians 15:57	In Christ, I am victorious.
Psalms 71:5	In Christ, I am confident.
Psalms 56:4	In Christ, I am fearless.
2 Corinthians 9:8	In Christ, I am sufficient.
Psalms 139:14	In Christ, I am worthy.
2 Corinthians 3:5	In Christ, I am adequate.
Romans 8:37	In Christ, I am more than a conqueror.

Ephesians 6:10	In Christ, I am strong.
Psalms 71:5	In Christ, I am confident.
Romans 15:7	In Christ, I am accepted and acceptable.
Ephesians 4:24	In Christ, I am righteous and holy.
Colossians 3:13	In Christ, I am a forgiving person.
Colossians 2:10	In Christ, I am complete in Him.
Galatians 5:1	In Christ, I am free.
Colossians 3:12	In Christ, I am compassionate, humble, kind, patient.
Psalms 139:5	In Christ, I am secure.
Ephesians 1:1	In Christ, I am a saint. (See 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2)
John 15:13	In Christ, I am sacrificial.
Philippians 2:3	In Christ, I am others-focused.
Galatians 5:22, 23	In Christ, I am joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle.
Romans 8:17	In Christ, I am a joint-heir with Christ.
John 1:12	In Christ, I am a child of God (part of His family).
1 Corinthians 2:16	In Christ, I am in possession of the mind of Christ.
Galatians 3:26, 28	In Christ, I am a son of God.
John 15:15	In Christ, I am Christ's friend.
Colossians 3:12	In Christ, I am chosen of God, holy, and dearly loved.
Hebrews 3:14	In Christ, I am a partaker of Christ.
1 Peter 2:9, 10	In Christ, I am a chosen race, a royal priesthood.

F. Some Examples Of Living From Your True Identity

To better understand our true identity let's look at three characteristics of our true identity.

1. In Christ You Are VICTORIOUS And Are More Than A CONQUEROR.

1 Corinthians 15:57 - *"but thanks be to God, Who gives us the **victory** through ... Christ."*

Romans 8:37 - *"But in all these things we overwhelmingly **conquer through Him** who loved us"*

You may see yourself as a failure, but in Christ you are victorious and a conqueror. There is no problem, conflict, or adversity that Christ cannot conquer through you. On the other hand, you may see yourself as a "self-sufficient" victor or conqueror in life apart from Christ.

Since the truth is that apart from God you can do **nothing** (John 15:5), God loves you enough that He will bring impossible circumstances (or relationships) into your life to reveal to you your inability to overcome that situation. Recognizing your weakness and inability to resolve a situation will turn you to dependence upon God and will allow Him to be victorious through you. Therefore, start living from the victory in Christ in your true identity.

Questions: If you feel like a failure, does that change the truth that in Christ you are more than a conqueror? If in Christ you are victorious, do you have to strive to be victorious?

2. In Christ You Are FREE.

Galatians 5:1 - *"It is for freedom that **Christ has set us free**. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*

Romans 8:2 - “For the power of the life-giving Spirit **has freed** you through Jesus Christ from the power of sin that leads to death.”

Take a close look at Galatians 5:1. It says that you have been set free. It is past tense! It is a completed act. Your freedom was won at the cross. As a result, in Christ you are free from the power of sin, from your fleshly behavior, from legalism, and from your defeating sin patterns.

You are also free from the grip of the world and the power of Satan. In other words, you no longer have to live as if you are still enslaved to those things because the truth is that you have been set free from them.

Question: Even though you may not be feeling freedom in some area of your life, does it change the truth that you have been set free?

3. In Christ You Are Totally ACCEPTED and Are ACCEPTABLE.

Romans 15:7 - “Accept one another, then, just as **Christ accepted** you...”

The reason why a holy God can totally accept us is because He has made us acceptable. You may feel or experience rejection coming from others, but that does not change the truth that you are accepted by God unconditionally! This means that there is no sinful behavior too great to cause God to reject you. (God does not condone sinful behavior, but He does not reject you because of your sinful behavior.)

As a result, you no longer have to earn (or perform for) God’s acceptance or the acceptance of others. You can receive God’s acceptance and be free from rejection by others. Believing that you are accepted in Christ will give you the freedom to accept others unconditionally.

Questions: Since God unconditionally accepts you, can He ever reject you? If you really believe that you are accepted in Christ, do you have to take ownership of any rejection directed toward you by others (or even by yourself)?

Question: In what ways do you think it would change the nature of your church if your folks were living from their true identity?

G. Conclusion

To sum up the last two chapters, Christ building His church in you is recognizing and believing that He alone is the Source to transform your life and that as a result of trusting in Christ for salvation, you received a new identity.

Note: If you would like to pursue a deeper understanding of your true identity in Christ, I have a study and videos on our website (www.christislifeministries.com) called *Do You Know Your True Identity?* that is located on our Discipleship page.

Some Of The Consequences Of Ministering As An “A” Life Minister

1. They will rely on their intellect, ability, and experience to build Christ’s church.
2. You will seek man-made models or be tempted to imitate other churches.
3. You will structure or program the Holy Spirit out of your church.
4. You will experience no supernatural work of the Spirit in you or through you.
5. Your focus will be more on numerical growth than spiritual growth.
6. You will develop “man-made” success markers for your church.
7. There will be no real spiritual growth in you or your congregation.
8. You will be vulnerable to Satan’s temptations to lead from your “religious” flesh and believe that God needs your leadership ability to build His church.
9. Greater potential for disunity and unresolved conflict.
10. You will live from self-commendation in your plans succeed or you will live in self-condemnation if they fail.

CHAPTER FOUR

Christ Building His Church THROUGH You

A. Introduction

As Christ is building His church in you, He wants to build His church through you. When we stop and think about the fact that the God of the universe wants to build His church through us, it should amaze and humble us. Paul confirms this when he said:

*“For I would not dare say anything except **what Christ has accomplished through me** to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed.” Romans 15:18*

Christ builds His church THROUGH you as you DEPEND upon His life and power.

B. God Knows EXACTLY What He Wants To Do To Build Your Church

Since God is omniscient, He is very clear concerning what He wants to accomplish in the hearts of the people in your church and where He wants to take it. Therefore, since we are finite creatures, we are in need of an infinite, omniscient God who has a specific plan. In fact, He brought you to the church you are a part of because He wants to complete your part of His plan through you.

Imagine a chessboard being your church. You and the other ministers in your church are pawns on that chessboard. Since you can't see the whole board so you are dependent on God to move you to the right place at the right time. Therefore, you must realize your finite abilities and recognize your need for God's omniscience in order for Him to build His church through you.

Question: What might be some of the consequences if you choose not to depend on God to build your church?

C. YOUR Part In Building Christ's Church THROUGH You

Living in moment-by-moment dependence on Christ (i.e. faith) to transform your life and transform lives through you.

*“I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me, and I in him**, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 15:5a*

*“Then they asked Him, ‘**What must we do to do the works God requires?**’ Jesus answered, ‘The work of God is this, **to BELIEVE in the One Whom He has sent.**’” John 6:28-29*

*“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Galatians 2:20*

Since you can't change or transform someone else's life, your part is to depend on, rely on, and participate with Christ to transform lives through you.

D. The Work God Does Through You Is SUPERNATURAL

I define a supernatural work as follows:

A transforming work by the Holy Spirit in our lives that CANNOT be self-produced and for which there is NO man-made explanation.

When it comes to the transforming work God accomplishes in us individually or through us as ministers, it is always supernatural. God's works are not man-produced (i.e. man is the source) and there is no human explanation for what God is doing.

However, if a minister thinks he needs to help Christ build His church, then the temptation is to produce man-made works that are done independent of God. God calls these works, “dead” works.

A DEAD work is any work produced INDEPENDENT from God as the SOURCE to produce it.

Another way to describe a supernatural work produced by God, is an “eternal” work. Let me explain the meaning of an eternal work in the next section.

If you are allowing God to do a supernatural work in building your church:

1. You will be surprised at what He accomplishes.
2. You will be amazed at much different the church will look like that He builds.
3. You will see your need to continuing to humble yourself so that He can continue building your church.

H. What Are Some Of The Things That God Wants To Do THROUGH You To Build His Church?

1. He wants to draw non-Christians to Himself through you for SALVATION.

*“But **I**, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.” John 12:32*

2. Through you, God wants to draw Christians to Himself as the SOURCE for living life.

*“**He** is the **SOURCE** of **YOUR** life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” 1 Corinthians 1:30*

3. He wants to give REVELATION, FREEDOM, VICTORY, and HEALING OF WOUNDEDNESS to other Christians through you.

“give sight to the blind, give release to the captives, And heal the brokenhearted.” Luke 4:18

4. Through you He wants to be the fragrant AROMA of Himself to those around you.

*“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and **manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.**” 2 Corinthians 2:14*

5. He wants to LOVE others and draw others to Himself by His love through you.

*“We love because **He first loved us.**” 1 John 4:19*

6. He wants to MAKE DISCIPLES through you.

*“Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 28:19*

*“He who has found his life will lose it, and **he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.**”
Matthew 10:39*

A Disciple

***Is a believer who is living in moment-by-moment DEPENDENCE upon
God to live THE LIFE in and through the believer.***

*“A **disciple** is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master.” Matthew 10:24*

CHAPTER FIVE

Key Truths Concerning Ministry

A. Are You A DISCOVERER? Or CREATOR?

I have discovered that there are two kinds of ministers when it comes to God's works: **discoverers** or **creators**. Let me explain the difference.

1. DISCOVERER

Look closely at the following verse:

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

What are three key truths associated with this verse:

1. You were **created** for good works.
2. These specific works for you were prepared in **eternity past**.
3. Your part is to **walk in** or **participate with God** in accomplishing those works.

As I shared at the beginning of this lesson, God knows exactly what He wants to accomplish to build the church you are a part of. Ephesians 2:10 confirms this because He has already prepared works that are specifically designed for Him to do through you and no one else. Therefore, your part is to discover what those specific works are.

***A DISCOVERER is a minister who discovers the specific works God has
ALREADY prepared beforehand for him or her.***

2. CREATOR

A “creator” is one that comes up with ideas, plan, and agendas that are not the works God has prepared in eternity past for them.

The truth is that you don't have to come up with new plans or agendas because according to Ephesians 2:10, God has created **all** the works He wants to accomplish at your church. Therefore, your part is not to create new works but **discover** the works that He has already prepared in eternity past.

One of the number one false beliefs concerning church leadership is that they believe they need to create new works. However, if every work God wants to do through you for your church has already been determined then does God need you to create new works or are you to simply discover the works that have already been prepared? I hope that your answer would be that your part is to discover, not create.

However, in many churches, I have observed leaders creating and not discovering. They have a lot of wonderful ideas and plans but they have not sought after God to discover if this is a previously determined work for them. Therefore, if we are creating ministry instead of discovering ministry could that be classified as “vain labor?” I believe so because if God is not the Source of the work and He has not prepared the work beforehand then to pursue that work is “vain labor” or dead works.

“UNLESS the Lord builds the house they labor in VAIN who build it.” Psalm 127:1

What are some practical ways that you can “discover” God’s works for you and your church?

- Determine if all plans, agendas, and ideas line up with God’s word.
- When you have a plan, agenda, or idea ask the Lord if this is a work that has already been pre-ordained or not.
- Draw on Christ’s discernment to know which plan or agenda is of Him.
- Be willing to set aside your plans if they are not of Him.
-

God has called you as a minister to be a **DISCOVERER** not a **CREATOR**.

Question: Do you believe that up to now, you have been creating or discovering the works that Lord has prepared for you to participate with Him to accomplish? If you are not sure, you might ask the Lord Him to speak into whether you are creating or discovering.

3. As A Discoverer God Is Going To Give You Spiritual GPS

“...I am **THE WAY**...” John 14:6

This is a very key question because as ministers our tendency is to want Google maps. By that I mean that we want to know the destination, the route, and the estimated time to get there. However, God is only going to give us GPS. What do I mean by GPS when it comes to ministry?

SPIRITUAL GPS means that you get **MOMENT** by **MOMENT**

Directions from God as to what to do and when to do it.

Let me give you a personal example. The Lord revealed to my wife and I in 2003 that we are to leave Dallas, come to San Antonio and form a new ministry. However, that was not enough information for me, so I asked God what we were going to be doing and how we were going to do what we are called to do. The response I got back from God was, “I am not going to give you a plan. I will tell you step by step what I want you to do.” I will be honest with you that I was a little frustrated because I wanted a spiritual Google map.

However, as we have walked in the “spiritual” GPS for these past years, we are amazed at where the Lord has taken us and what He has done through us. We learned to be comfortable with not knowing where God was taking us.

I know that sounds very uncomfortable when it comes to ministry because we believe we need to have a goal, a plan, and steps to reach that goal. However, I believe God does not, for the most part, give us plans for the following reasons:

- So we won't steal His glory.
- He doesn't trust us with a plan.
- We learn how to walk by faith trusting Him moment by moment.
- It presses us into God to listen and discern His next step.
- To learn to be okay with not knowing where we are going.

In the military, there is a phrase called "need to know." This means that if you "need to know" something they would tell you. Otherwise, you don't need to know. I believe we are on that same need to know basis with God. When he wants us to know the next step, He will reveal it. Our problem in ministry is that we feel we need to know the plans and how to achieve those plans. However, here is the temptation with this kind of attitude.

To be in CONTROL of the destiny of your church.

Since Christ said He will build His church, then our part is to listen, discern, and be willing to respond to the Lord and His spiritual GPS.

B. Unity In Ministry

1. What Is Unity?

Unity is essential in any ministry team. How do you attain unity? There are many man-made principles that produce a man-made unity. However, those principles don't work to produce spiritual unity. There have been many books written on this subject but the answer is simple.

***UNITY in ministry will NATURALLY occur as a result of the OVERFLOW
of your life being TRANSFORMED into Christ-likeness.***

2. What Is The "LEAVEN" That Can Destroy Unity?

"A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough." Galatians 5:9

Examples of Leaven

- a. Self-serving agendas.
- b. Ministry flesh.
- c. Spiritual/emotional immaturity.
- d. Harboring something against another leader.
- e. Unrepentant/unforgiving heart

3. What Are Some Of The Results of Disunity?

1. Ongoing conflict
2. Territorialism
3. Conflicted sheep
4. Divided church
5. Downfall of your church

Question: What are the areas of disunity in your ministry team?

***Spiritual UNITY is directly proportional to the DEGREE
you have been transformed into the LIKENESS of CHRIST***

C. Spiritual Vigilance

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8

One of the major weaknesses in most churches is a lack of spiritual vigilance. Like a shepherd who scans the horizon for wolves, you should be vigilant in seeking the Lord to expose or reveal where Satan is working in you and the congregation.

Here are some things to consider when it comes to spiritual vigilance:

1. Where is the enemy working?
2. Ask the Lord to be your discernment so that you will have eyes to see where the enemy is working.
3. Ask this question: Am I being deceived in some way by the enemy?
4. Be aware that any conflict in the church can be an entry way for the enemy to create more conflict.

D. Truths About Your Calling As A Minister

1. Ministry is a HOLY and FEARFUL calling.

*“who has saved us and **called us with a holy calling**, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.”*
2 Timothy 1:9

*“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.” Romans 12:2*

*'Slaves, **be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ.**' Ephesians 6:5*

If you do not see your ministry position as a holy and fearful calling from God, then you are minimizing and possibly restricting His work through you. We need to remember that since we are called to ministry there must be a holy fear in that calling. What do I mean by holy fear?

- Presenting, subordinating, and surrendering all of your gifting, abilities, intellect, experience, etc. to God for His use.
- Being fearful that you are doing ministry independent of God.
- Initiating plans and agendas that don't line up with God's will.

Question: What might be some of the consequences as a leader if you don't believe that ministry is a holy and fearful calling?

2. God is much more concerned about your HEART for Him than your ability to minister.

*"When You said, "Seek My face," **my heart** said to You, "**Your face, O LORD, I shall seek.**"*
Psalm 27:8

*"**Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart.**" Psalm 26:2*

*"**Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.**" Psalm 139:23-24*

A tendency in ministry is to rely on our ability and gifting. However, God is more concerned about the condition of our heart towards Him and towards His people. I believe one of God's ongoing questions to Christians is this: Is your heart for Me? What does this question mean? I believe it means these three things:

- Living in moment-by-moment dependence on God.
- Seeking His will, purpose, and plans above your own.
- Having a loving, caring heart towards those who you are ministering to.

God will use your ability but first and foremost He wants you to minister from His HEART.

Question: Would you consider yourself a minister who is ministering with God's heart?

3. Ministry is your POTTER'S WHEEL for personal transformation.

*"And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."*
2 Corinthians 3:18

It is important for you as a leader to understand that the first and foremost objective of God in putting you in ministry is to transform you into Christ-likeness. In other words, ministry is your potter's wheel (or sometimes your wine press) for God's transforming work in your life.

We tend to forget that ministry is MORE about how God will use it to TRANSFORM our lives than how He will work through us to transform others' lives.

Question: What could be some of the consequences if you don't see or forget that ministry is your potter's wheel for transformation?

4. Insure your EXPECTATIONS about ministry line up with God's will.

*"Saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet **not My will, but Yours be done.**" Luke 22:42*

When it comes to ministry, it is normal to have expectations of yourself, God, fellow ministers and the congregation. Expectations come in two categories: "realistic" or "unrealistic." Unrealistic expectations don't line up with God's will and purposes whereas "realistic" expectations do.

Example of a **realistic** expectation: God will build His church if I totally depend on Him to do it.

Example of an **unrealistic** expectation: God will approve of and execute my plans, agendas, and ideas if they don't line up with His will.

As ministers, if your expectations don't line up with God's will and purposes for your church then DIE to them. By dying to them, I mean to turn away from them or don't take ownership of them. Here is a key realistic expectation we can have about Christ and His church.

***Christ will be FAITHFUL to build
HIS church, in HIS timing, and in HIS way.***

Question: What might be some consequences for you and/or your church if you take ownership of your unrealistic expectations?

5. Minister From Jesus FEET

*"But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but **only ONE thing is necessary**, for Mary has chosen **the GOOD part**, which shall not be taken away from her." Luke 10:41-42*

The key truth in this passage is not that Martha was in the kitchen and Mary was at Jesus' feet. The key truth in this passage was the difference between the heart of Mary versus Martha.

Jesus said that Mary had chosen the good part. What is the good part? Martha was working FOR Jesus while Mary was living FROM Him. How does this apply to ministry?

Ministering from Jesus's feet means that you are working FROM the life and power of CHRIST as opposed to working in your OWN ability FOR God.

Question: What might be the consequences of working in your own ability for God?

6. Do Not Let Ministry Become An IDOL Or Your "OTHER" Lover.

"Little children, guard yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21

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

It is very easy to make ministry an idol or the "other lover." This principle applies more for the pastoral staff but it can also apply to lay leaders as well. I have seen many pastors replace the God with the "god" of ministry which resulted in frustration, burn-out, and eventually leaving the ministry.

Question: What might be the consequences for you if you make ministry an idol?

7. There Is No LIFE Or IDENTITY In Ministry

*"Jesus said to him, **"I am THE way, and THE truth, and THE LIFE..."** John 14:6*

One of the reasons why ministry can become an idol is because there is a strong tendency to find life and identity in ministry. Let me give you some examples:

- You can try to find value or worth in ministry.
- You can try to find acceptance in ministry.
- You can try to find your confidence in ministry.

As hard as you may try to find these things in ministry, the truth is that life and identity can only be found in Christ. The temptation will be to get our needs met through ministry but they will never truly be met outside of Christ. (Philippians 4:19) This is why He put His life in you and gave you a new identity.

Christ wants you to minister FROM His life and your true identity because you WILL NOT find life and identity IN ministry.

Question: What do you think might be some of the consequences of trying to find life and identity in ministry?

8. All You TRULY Have To Offer People Through Ministry Is: Christ IN You

*“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.” Colossians 1:27*

Why do I say this? Because it is Christ’s life (i.e. love, acceptance, forgiveness, etc.) flowing through you that will impact and transform lives. Therefore, it is crucial to continue living dependent on Christ so that His life will be formed in you (Galatians 4:19) so that more of His life will flow through you to others.

CHAPTER SIX

Shepherding The Sheep

A. God Has Called You To Be A SHEPHERD Not A RANCHER

*Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep. “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; **You know that I love You.**” Jesus said to him, “**Tend My sheep.**” John 21:17b*

*“What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the **ninety-nine** on the mountains and go and **search for the one that is straying?**”
Matthew 18:12*

What I have observed in ministry are two kinds of ministers: ranchers or shepherds. Let me explain the difference between the two.

1. Characteristics of A RANCHER

Here are some characteristics of a rancher:

1. Creates “fixed” boxes of ministry that the sheep have to fit into.
2. Helps create an environment of “our way or else” mentality.
3. More concerned about the numerical growth of the church than the spiritual well-being and transformation of the sheep.
4. Always knowing what is best for the sheep.
5. Not personally being willing to minister to hurting sheep.

2. Characteristics Of A SHEPHERD

*“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd the flock of God among you**, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness.” 1 Peter 5:1-2*

Are YOU about what GOD is about in the care and feeding of His sheep?

a. How AVAILABLE are you to tend God’s sheep?

*“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the **Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God** which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20:28*

b. Do you have the HEART of a SHEPHERD?

*“Seeing the people, **He felt compassion for them**, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.” Matthew 9:36*

The heart of a shepherd:

- Caring
- Sensitive

- Compassionate
- Discerning
- Interceding
- Vigilant
- Protective

c. Are the sheep MORE IMPORTANT than the “SYSTEM?”

What I mean by “system” is a church that focuses more on church growth than spiritual growth.

*“After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, **do you love me more than these?**” “Yes, Lord,” Peter replied, “you know I love you.” “**Then feed my lambs,**” Jesus told him.” John 21:15*

*“Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and **will remove your lampstand out of its place**—unless you repent.” Revelation 2:5*

***When the SYSTEM becomes a higher priority than the sheep,
then the lampstand WILL BE removed.***

d. God is concerned about “THE ONE.”

*“If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them wanders away, what will he do? Won’t he leave the ninety-nine others on the hills and **go out to search for the one that is lost?**” Matthew 18:12*

Question: What does this verse practically mean in regards to you and ministry?

e. A Shepherd Is SELFLESS and SACRIFICIAL when it comes to the sheep’s well being

*“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd **lays down His life for the sheep.**” John 10:11*

Question: What are some practical ways you can be selfless and sacrificial?

Some of the results if you minister as a shepherd:

1. The sheep will experience Christ’s love, care and concern through you.
2. You will be “intentionally” pursuing the flock to discover their needs, struggles, etc.
3. You will put the needs of the flock above your own needs.
4. You will be personally equipping and ministering “Life” to the sheep.
5. You will exercise spiritual vigilance to protect the sheep.
6. You will allow the Spirit to produce a Christ-centered “environment” for the sheep through you.

B. Seeing The Sheep Through The Eyes of Christ

*“I pray that **the eyes of your heart may be enlightened**, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” Ephesians 1:18*

1. Introduction

We look at people in two ways as Christians. One way is through our own eyes and the other is through the eyes of Christ. I believe Paul in Ephesians 1:18 is praying that the eyes of our heart will be enlightened. The word “enlightened” means to illumine or to give understanding to. Since we have a new heart (identity) in Christ, what Christ wants us to do as part of our spiritual transformation is to see people as He sees them.

As we are being transformed, the Holy Spirit is transforming how we see people. Let’s compare some of the differences between seeing the folks in your congregation with through a self-focused lens versus a Christ-focused-lens. Before we do I wanted to share a quote from Mike Mason’s book, *“Practicing The Presence Of People.”*

“I’d like to tell the church to let people be human. I’d like them to learn to enjoy humanity, both their own and others. To enjoy and accept humanity, with all its’ warts and weaknesses, without pulling away in fear and judgment-this is the thing the church doesn’t know. Most churches, I think are frightened of human beings.”

2. A SELF-FOCUSED Lens

a. What is a SELF-FOCUSED Lens?

A SELF-focused lens is when we observe and interact with people through a SELFISH perspective.

When we look at the sheep or other ministers in our church through a self-focused lens the temptation is to be critical, judgmental, condemning, defensive or even fearful. Let me give some examples of what I mean.

b. Examples of looking at people through a self-focused lens

What are some examples of how we might look at the sheep through a self-focused lens?

- a. Focusing on their faults and weaknesses.
- b. Judging where they are (or are not) in their spiritual journey.
- c. Condemning them when they don't agree with the plans or agendas of the church.
- d. Fearful of rejection or fearful of not measuring up to the congregation’s expectations.
- e. Being defensive when confronted or challenged.
- f. Self-righteously comparing their spiritual growth with yours.
- g. Trying to manipulate or control to get their agenda across.

What would you add to the list above?

3. A CHRIST-FOCUSED Lens

a. What is a Christ-focused lens?

***A CHRIST-focused lens is when we observe and interact with people
through a CHRIST-LIKE perspective.***

When you, as a minister, look at the sheep or other ministers through a Christ-focused lens, then you will look at them with a heart of unconditional love, humility, grace, sensitivity, and compassion. Let me give you some practical examples.

b. Looking at people through a Christ-focused lens

- a. Unconditionally loving them in spite of their fleshly behavior and weaknesses.
- b. Giving grace when they disagree with your plans or agendas.
- c. Respond in love and humility when confronted or challenged.
- d. Giving time to pray and think through their concerns as opposed to giving a knee-jerk response.
- e. Recognize those who are spiritual babies and deal with them in wisdom and love.

What would you add to the list above?

4. Conclusion

As ministers, we are all continue to grow up. It is a life-long process. As we do we will be transformed to live more from a Christ-focused lens than a self-focused lens.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Jesus and Paul As Models For Ministry

A. Jesus As Your Model For Ministry

We need to look no further than Jesus to understand how God intends for you to minister. Let's look at some very key truths about Christ's ministry:

1. Jesus only did the work the FATHER planned.

*"And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for **I (Jesus) always do the things that are pleasing to Him (The Father).**" John 8:29 (Parentheses mine)*

2. Jesus was NOT the initiator of any of the Father's works.

On at least three occasions Jesus tells us that He was not the source or the initiator for His works of ministry. He lived dependent on the Father and simply received the works the Father had for Him. He reveals this in the following verses:

*"Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do **nothing of Himself**, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.'" John 5:19*

*"I can do **nothing on My own initiative**. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." John 5:30*

*"Jesus therefore said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do **nothing on My own initiative**, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.'" John 8:28*

3. Jesus was NOT the source of accomplishing the Father's works. He PARTICIPATED with the Father.

*"Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say are not My own, but **my Father who lives in Me does His work THROUGH Me.**" John 14:10*

This is a very critical truth because:

***It was the Father THROUGH Jesus who gave sight to the blind, healed,
and raised people from the dead.***

B. Paul As Your Model For Ministry

1. Paul was NOT initiating God's will and plans. Rather he was PARTICIPATING with God concerning His will and plans.

*"in view of your **participation** in the gospel from the first day until now." Philippians 1:5*

2. Paul's ministry flowed from DEPENDING on the SPIRIT'S power.

*"That's why **I work** and struggle so hard, **depending on Christ's mighty power that works within me.**" Colossians 1:28 (NLT)*

*"My message and my preaching were **not with wise and persuasive words**, but with a **demonstration of the Spirit's power**, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, of but **on God's power.**" 1 Corinthians 2:4-6*

*"But he said to me, "'My grace is sufficient for you, for **My power is made perfect in weakness.**' Therefore **I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses**, so that **Christ's power** may rest on me." 2 Corinthians 12:9*

3. It was NOT what Paul accomplished independent of Christ. Rather, it was about what CHRIST accomplished through Paul.

*"Yet I dare not boast about anything **except what Christ has done through me**, ..." Romans 15:18*

*"**I can do all things through Christ** who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13*

Paul did NOT depend on his own intellect, ability, or power to minister. Rather, Paul was depending on the capability and the supernatural power of GOD ministering THROUGH him to build Christ's church.

Note: This does not mean that God did not use Paul's intellect and ability. As Paul participated with the Lord, He worked through Paul's

CHAPTER EIGHT

Leader? Or Bondservant?

A. Are You Being Called To Be A LEADER Or A BONDSERVANT?

“Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.” Matthew 23:10

“Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.” 1 Peter 2:16

B. What Is The Definition Of A Bondservant?

1. a slave, bondman, man of servile condition.
2. metaph., one who gives himself up to another's will those whose service is used by Christ in extending and advancing his cause among men
3. devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests

The best definition here is “*devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests.*” On its basic level a bondservant is simply following your master to complete disregard of your own will, emotions, desires. To put it into context of being a bondservant of Christ, it means a complete and utter devotion to God, His word, and His will. It is disregarding your own desires and will in all things to lay your life at the Cross and follow Christ. It is not being perfect, yet it is a dedication to following God in all things.

A bondservant is to love as Christ loved; to walk as Christ walked. Being a bondservant is standing strong on the Word of God while seeking God first, above all else. Everything is secondary to your relationship with Him. It means the Word of God is your foundation with Christ Himself as the cornerstone of your life.

C. You Are NOT To Become Bondservants Of Men.

*“You were bought with a price; **do not become bondservants of men.**” 1 Corinthians 7:23*

Question: What are some ways can you become a bondservant of men? What might be the consequences if you choose to do so?

D. Jesus and Paul Were Bondservants

a. Jesus was the bondservant of His FATHER.

*“who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but **emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant**, and being made in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:6, 7*

Interestingly enough Jesus or Paul did not call themselves leaders. Jesus, as the God-man, called Himself a bondservant (Philippian 2:6,7) as did Paul as we saw in the previous verses. In addition, Jesus tells us that none of us are leaders because there is only one leader in Matthew 23:10:

*“Do not be called leaders; for **One** is your Leader, that is, Christ.” Matthew 23:10 (NASB)*

b. Paul did NOT call himself a leader. Rather, he called himself a BONDSERVANT.

*“Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,”
Romans 1:1*

*“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be **a bond-servant of Christ.**” Galatians 1:10*

E Characteristics Of A Bondservant:

*“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with **fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart**, as to Christ; ⁶ not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart**, ⁷ with goodwill **doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men**, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.” Ephesians 6:5-8.*

*“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be **a bond-servant of Christ.**” Galatians 1:10*

1. What are the characteristics of a bond-servant as it pertains to these two verses:

1. Being totally obedient to Christ with fear, trembling, and with a sincere heart.
2. Being a Christ-pleaser and not a man-pleaser.
3. Doing God’s will from a pure heart.
4. Serve the Lord versus serving men.

2. Being a bond-servant means that everything that you do is subjected to Christ.

“For God has put all things in subjection under His (Jesus’) feet....” 1 Corinthians 15:27

“All things” as it pertains to you as a minister include:

- Your plans for the church.
- Your ideas for the church.
- Your programs for the church.
- Your organization of the church.

F. Functioning As A Ministry Bondservant

*“The Lord's bond-servant must **not be quarrelsome**, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,” 2 Timothy 2:24, 25*

How are you to function as a ministry bond-servant according to 2 Timothy 2:24, 25:

1. Not create conflict
2. Kindness towards all
3. Able to teach
4. Patient when wronged.
5. With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition.

Question: Write down specific changes that you think might take place if you saw yourself and functioned like a bond-servant of Christ rather than as a leader?

Question: In what specific ways would it change the way you and your ministry team make decisions, plans, etc. if you all functioned as bond-servants?

On the following page is a list of the differences between a man-centered leader versus a Christ-centered bondservant.

**Differences Between A Man-Centered Leader Versus
A Christ-Centered Bondservant**

Man-Centered Leader

Christ-Centered Bondservant

Man As The Source

Leader who assumes they are the source to determine the church's vision, will and purpose

Christ As The Source

A bondservant who lives from Christ as their Source to determine vision, will and purpose. 1 Cor. 1:30

Dependent on Self

Leader who depends on their own intellect, ability, and capability independent of Christ.

Dependent on Christ

A bondservant who depends totally on Christ.
John 15:5

Man Is The Initiator

Leader who initiates vision, plans, and goals independent of Christ.

Participation With God

A bondservant who participates with God to determine His vision, plans, and goals. Phil. 1:5

Man Is Responsible

Leader who feels they are responsible for the success or failure of the church.

Responding To Christ's Ability

A bondservant who responds to Christ's ability
In and through them. Galatians 2:20

Man's Capability

Leader who depends on their ability and capability to lead the church.

Availability

A bondservant who is simply available for God to lead the church through them. Colossians 1:28

Self-Confidence

Leader who leads from self-confidence based on their abilities.

Christ-Confidence

A bondservant who serves with confidence in Christ's ability. Philippians 1:6

Results In:

Disillusionment
Trying harder or giving up
Ongoing division and conflict.
No spiritual transformation
Dead works

Results In:

Greater spiritual oneness and unity
1 Corinthians 15:57; Psalm 147:3
Greater dependence upon God - John 15:5
A Christ-centered church – 2 Corinthians 11:3
Church being transformed into Christ-likeness -
2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 8:29

CHAPTER NINE

Contrasts In Ministry

Introduction

In this section, we will look at six contrasts between the lie and the truth when it comes to ministry.

A. OWNERSHIP Versus STEWARDSHIP

The Lie: OWNERSHIP You are the one responsible for whether or not your area of ministry is “successful.” In other words, it is “your” ministry.

The Truth: STEWARDSHIP You realize that you are only the vessel through which Christ will build His church. The ministry you are involved with is God’s ministry through you.

“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10

What are some signs of ownership?

1. You make ministry plans independently of God for Him to “rubber stamp.”
2. You, not God, determine the ministry that needs to be accomplished.
3. It is up to you using your own intellect and ability with God’s help to get the job of ministry accomplished.
4. Taking ownership means that YOU are in control.

What does a steward of Christ’s church look like?

1. Constantly presenting your plans, agendas, and ideas to God for Him to reveal whether or not they are of Him.
2. Seeking God to expose any plan, idea, or agenda that is not of Him.
3. Seeking God to reveal how He specifically wants to build His church through you.
4. Willingness to confront others in love as you are led by the Spirit if you sense their plans, agendas, etc. are not from God.

B. INITIATION Versus PARTICIPATION

The Lie: INITIATION You are the initiator and the cause and effect for ministry.

The Truth: PARTICIPATION God is the initiator and the cause and effect of ministry through you. God is calling you to participate with Him so that He can supernaturally minister through you.

“...in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:5, 6

What does initiation in ministry look like?

1. You determining what success of your ministry should look like and doing everything possible to make it look like a success.
2. It is up to you, independent of God, to determine what God has specifically called you to do.
3. It is up to you apart from God to come up with every detail that is involved in your ministry.
4. You will be trying in your limited ability to manage the outcome of your ministry.
5. You will function in your limited ability rather than ministering from His eternal ability and power.

What does participation with God in ministry look like?

1. Presenting your intellect and ability to God for Him to flow His life and power through.
2. Seeking God to reveal to you how that God wants to minister through you.
3. Trusting God moment by moment to reveal to you His direction or change of direction for the ministry.
4. Waiting on God's timing and direction before moving in a particular area in ministry.
5. Constantly drawing on God's discernment to determine if your idea is just a good idea or if it is God's idea.

What might NOT have happened if Paul had initiated ministry apart from God instead of participating with God?

C. PRESUMPTION Versus PRIVILEGE

The Lie: PRESUMPTION God needs you and your ability to build His church.

The Truth: PRIVILEGE God, in His grace, is giving you the privilege to be used by Him to minister.

“By God’s special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful privilege of serving Him by spreading this Good News.” Ephesians 3:7 (New Living Translation)

What are some examples of presumption in ministry?

1. Your “good” idea is God’s idea.
2. You presume to know God’s plan and agenda for your ministry.
3. You presume that God needs you or will use you because of your biblical knowledge, giftedness and ability.
4. You believe that you are “qualified” to minister because of your biblical knowledge, ability, and giftedness.

What is the attitude of believing that it is a privilege to serve?

1. You will not presume upon God concerning His will, purpose, and plan for His ministry through you.
2. Knowing that God may use, but does not need, your biblical knowledge, giftedness, and ability to minister through you.
3. You know that you are only qualified for ministry because of Christ Who is in you.
4. You will see ministry as a privilege rather than an obligation.
5. You will have an attitude of thanksgiving concerning the privilege to minister.
6. You will seek God to expose anything that you are doing that might presume upon His plans or His purposes.

D. CAPABILITY Versus AVAILABILITY

The Lie: CAPABILITY You being the source, apart from God, are capable, using your own intellect, ability and giftedness to minister for Him.

The Truth: AVAILABILITY: Making your intellect, ability, and giftedness available to God for Him to minister through you.

What are some of the consequences of you using your capability independently of God?

1. All that is done in your capability apart from God will be dead works.
2. No substantial spiritual transformation will take place in your life or the lives of those that you minister to.
3. Those you minister to will not experience the life and power of Christ flowing through you to them.
4. Instead of depending on God to work through you, you will imitate man-made models, methods, and techniques that you believe are successful in ministry.
5. In your capability, you will use these man-made models and methods to attain what you believe is a successful ministry.

What are some examples of you being available to God for Him to minister through you?

1. Presenting to God the gifting He gave you for Him to minister through that gifting.
2. Being available moment by moment to respond to God's direction or change of direction.
3. Willingness to die to any of your ideas, visions, plans, or agendas if they are not of God.
4. Having an attitude of dependence and spiritual awareness for ministry opportunities around you as God leads and directs you.

God will NEVER ask you if you are capable.

He will only ask if you are AVAILABLE!

E. RESPONSIBILITY Versus RESPONSE

The Lie: RESPONSIBILITY You are the one responsible for producing God's will, purpose, and direction in the ministry that you were called to.

The Truth: RESPONSE Your part is to respond to God's initiation by receiving His will, purpose, and direction.

"As you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so continue to live in Him." Colossians 2:6

"because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God." Romans 8:14

The word "responsibility" is made up of two words, "response" and "ability."

The question is: Whose ability will you respond to? Your's or God's?

If you take on the responsibility for producing God's ministry through you then:

1. You, not God, will determine what a successful ministry should look like.
2. You will become the one accountable to attain the man-made success markers you have created and will be the one who is liable if they do not succeed.
3. You will create unrealistic expectations for you and others which will eventually result in frustration, failure, burn-out, condemnation of others and/or self-condemnation.
4. If you are not "successful" according to your standards, then you are a failure.

What does response mean in ministry?

1. You will respond to God's life and power flowing through you.
2. You will not be ministering independently of God.
3. You will be receiving from God instead of achieving for God.
4. You will not taking a step unless you are led by the Holy Spirit.
5. You will not be held responsible for what God does through you.

Your RESPONSIBILITY is to RESPOND to God's ABILITY in you.

F. CONTROL Versus FAITH

The Lie: CONTROL You are in control of your area of ministry.

The Truth: FAITH Faith means that you will not need to know what God's next step is concerning your ministry and will realize that you are not in control.

"Then they asked Him, 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to BELIEVE in the One He has sent.'" John 6:28-29

If you believe that ministry is about you being in control:

1. The illusion is that you are in control of your area of ministry.
2. Control means that you are responsible for the outcome of your ministry.

3. You will think that you know Steps 2, 3, 4 of God's ministry through you. In other words, you will be "surprised" by God if He reveals His plan step by step versus having every step planned and programmed by you.
4. Being in control means that you don't need God.

If you minister by faith:

1. You will take steps of faith by trusting God to reveal to you His plan as you go and will learn to rest in not knowing every step.
2. You will never know Step 2 (or 3 or 4) of God's ministry through you. God will reveal His plan step by step versus you having every step planned and programmed.
3. Faith allows you to give up the right to be in control with the result you will be controlled by the Holy Spirit.
4. Faith means that you are resting in in a "faith rest" under His control.

G. The Results of Ministering From Ownership, Initiation, Presumption, Capability, Responsibility, and Control

1. **No supernatural transformation** will take place in you or through you to those to whom you minister.
2. **Pride and arrogance** when you feel you have met your self-determined goals for ministry.
3. **Pride and arrogance** believing that God is pleased with you even though what you have done has been done independent of Him.
4. **Self-condemnation** when you don't meet your expectations for ministry or for not meeting what you believe God's expectations are for you in ministry.
5. **Condemning others** when they don't respond to your ministry to them.
6. **Frustration** when your ministry does not meet your expectations.
7. **Futility, burn-out, giving up, or trying harder.**

ULTIMATE RESULT:

You will be ministering out of your "MINISTRY" FLESH

which will ALWAYS result in DEAD WORKS!

(I simply define "ministry" flesh is any work you do for God that is done with an attitude of independence from Him apart from His life, ability and power.)

H. The Results of Ministering From Stewardship, Participation, Privilege, Availability, Response, and Faith

1. Your **personal walk** with God will be **more important** to you than ministry success.
2. Ministry to others will be an **overflow** of what God is doing in you.
3. Lives that God ministers to through you will be **supernaturally transformed**.
4. Those whom you minister to will **experience the life, love, and power of Christ** through you.

5. You will be **humbled and in awe of God** as He transforms your life and other lives through you.
6. You will experience an **attitude of thanksgiving** for being used of the Lord to build His church through you.
7. You will **experience true joy, fulfillment, and spiritual satisfaction** in being used of the Lord to transform the hearts of His people.
8. You will experience a **greater Christ-confidence in God's ability** to build His church through you.
9. You will experience a **greater dependence upon God** and a **greater intimacy with God**.

<p><i>God will SUCCESSFULLY build His church through you.</i></p>
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CHAPTER TEN

Christ-Centered Conflict Resolution

A. Sources Of Church Conflict

1. THE FLESH

I believe the source for all church conflict is the “flesh.” Therefore, let’s look at the meaning of the flesh, the overflow of the flesh, and examples of how living from the flesh creates conflict.

a. What Is The FLESH?

Paul describes his flesh in the following ways in Romans 7:

*“For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of **flesh**, sold into bondage to sin.”
Romans 7:14*

*“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my **flesh**; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.” Romans 7:18*

The biblical meaning of the word “flesh” is man’s DESIRE to live life with HIMSELF as the source, INDEPENDENTLY or APART from God as the Source.

Another way of defining the “flesh” is that it is an **independent attitude** that says, “It is about me”:

- Being in control.
- Getting my needs, wants, and expectations met.
- Handling or overcoming all my problems. (i.e. personal, marriage, family, job, finances, etc.)
- Being successful.
- Being my own god.

b. Living From The Flesh Produces FLESHLY BEHAVIORS.

The OVERFLOW of living from the flesh is FLESHLY BEHAVIORS.

Unfortunately, living from the flesh produces a “toxic” overflow called fleshly behaviors. Galatians 5 spells out some of those behaviors.

“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these...” Galatians 5:19-21a

Living from the flesh can only result in “death” according to Romans 8:6

“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”

Part of this “death” as it pertains to the church is conflict and division. What are the results in this verse if you live from the Spirit?

c. SELF-RIGHTEOUS Flesh

All flesh is abhorrent to God but to me one of the most insidious flesh patterns in the church is self-righteousness. Living from self-righteousness results in pride and arrogance. I see it used as a tool of manipulation and control among leadership. It certainly was one of the tools in my religious tool belt to get my plans and agendas accomplished.

d. Ways The Flesh Creates Church CONFLICT

If you have been a minister for very long, I probably don't need to give you examples about how the flesh creates conflict. However, if you are new as a minister, the following examples might help you.

Examples

1. You insist that your plans and ideas for the church be implemented.
2. When you feel you are right about an issue, you force that on others.
3. Church members insist on things being changed to suit them or to be run a different way.
4. Overt or covert manipulation of others to get your way.
5. As a leader you believe you have the right to control leadership and the church members.

Question: What are some examples of conflict or division you have seen or experienced when leadership and/or church members were living from the flesh?

d. Conclusion

I look at living from the flesh as a cancer of the soul. Sometimes it is Stage One cancer which may not have lasting impact on a church but I have seen Stage Four fleshly cancer destroy leaders and churches.

Question: What do you think God thinks about a church living and ministering from their flesh?

2. Satan/Demons

Along with our flesh, Satan also has a strategy concerning your church.

a. The Strategy Of Satan Concerning Your Church

*“The thief comes only to **steal**, **kill** and **destroy**...” John 10:10a*

It is important that we have an understanding of Satan’s influence in the ministry God wants to accomplish through you. The last thing Satan wants is a church where truth is being taught and lived out. The greatest fear of Satan is God’s truth. Therefore, he will be constantly trying to thwart man’s efforts to depend on and participate with God for God to build His church.

Satan will accomplish His strategy of DESTROYING the church by tempting us to live from our FLESH.

If Satan can move a church from ministering from the Spirit to ministering from the flesh, then that church eventually will be in his grip.

b. Tactics Satan Will Use To Steal, Kill and Destroy Your Church:

- Tempt you to use your own IQ, ability and power, independent of God.
- Tempt leadership to control the congregation because they know what is best.
- Deceive the members into believing they have the right to create conflict if their needs, wants, and desires aren’t met.
- Persuade you that you don't really need Christ to build your church.

Satan will use ANYTHING or ANYONE (including leadership) to create conflict and division within the church.

B. Resolving Church Conflict IN CHRIST

The key to resolving church conflict is to know and apply God’s truth. Therefore, let me start this section by sharing what I believe are key Biblical truths concerning conflict.

1. God’s Truth Concerning Conflict

a. God’s ultimate purpose is UNITY in the church.

“that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.” John 17:21

“being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:3

Therefore, your heart as a leader is to always seek unity. This does not mean to compromise the truth. Rather, it means to always seek to shepherd those who are creating conflict to the truth.

b. God wants every Christian to GROW UP.

*“but speaking the truth in love, **we are to grow up in all aspects into Him** who is the head, even Christ.” Ephesians 4:15*

As we mentioned before, it is crucial that Christians grow up because if they don't they will continue to function as spiritual babies and continue to create conflict.

c. God want to TRANSFORM every Christian into the LIKENESS of Christ.

*“For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined** to become **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.” Romans 8:29*

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” 2 Corinthians 3:18*

As we grow more into Christ-likeness then the overflow of Christ-likeness will be unity.

d. Only God can change the HEART of a person.

*“and may **the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another**, and for all people, just as we also do for you.” 1 Thessalonians 3:12*

*“**He who fashions the hearts of them all**, He who understands all their works.” Psalm 33:15*

As much as we want to change someone’s heart, only God can accomplish that.

2. Two Key Truths To Resolve Church Conflict

Many books have been written on this subject so I won’t be going into great depth. However, I believe the foundation to resolving all church conflict is this:

***Look at ALL conflict through a CHRIST-CENTERED lens and
with a CHRIST-LIKE ATTITUDE.***

1. Looking At Conflict Through A Christ-Centered Lens

This means that you look at individuals and their struggles from the lens of God’s truth. Here are some examples:

- a. God’s heart is for unity. So that should be your heart as well.
- b. As a bondservant, rely on Christ’s infinite wisdom and discernment rather than your own to resolve the conflict.
- c. Remember that only the Holy Spirit can change a person’s heart. Therefore, continue to shepherd people to seek the Spirit to change their heart.

2. Dealing With Conflict With Christ-Like Attitudes

These are the Christ-like attitudes we talked about in Chapter Two.

Unconditional love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance	Faith
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Peace	Forgiveness
Understanding	Security	Fearlessness	Wisdom	Discernment
Christ-confidence	Adequacy	Humility	Boldness	Righteousness
Selflessness	Rest	Compassion	Courage	Hope
Gentleness	Control	Faithfulness	Power	Joy

Christ-like attitudes are essential in dealing with conflict. Remember that these attitudes can be produced by the Holy Spirit as we walk in a moment by moment dependence on Christ.

a. Love

1. Any truth, exhortation, or correction must be done in love.
2. An attitude of Christ-like love says, “In spite of your conflict or desire to create conflict, I still love you” or “I am not pleased by your fleshly behaviors and the conflict they are causing but I still love you.”
3. Key truth: Jesus’s love for the Pharisees was no different than for the little children. The difference is how he expressed it.

b. Humility

1. Always approach conflict with a Christ-like attitude of humility versus pride.
2. Humility says:
 - a. I value you as a fellow Christian.
 - b. I want to carefully and objectively listen to your concerns.
 - c. I care that you care so deeply about your concerns.
 - d. I want to see a Christ-centered solution to the problem.

c. Discernment

1. As we have mentioned before, our human discernment is finite. We can’t discern the heart of the one we are working with.
2. Therefore, you must draw on Christ’s discernment to truly understand not only what the heart of the person is but how God wants to deal with that person’s heart.
3. Discernment is listening to the Holy Spirit as you are listening to the person’s concerns.

d. Wisdom

1. As with discernment, it is crucial to draw on Christ’s wisdom in order to know how God wants to deal with the issue.
2. Therefore, as you are listening to the person’s concerns, be seeking the Spirit’s wisdom in what to say next or how to resolve the problem.

e. Grace

1. If you are dealing with an unreasonable person, give them grace by continuing to love them and shepherd them to Christ for the solution.
2. If they are spiritual babies, give them grace when they are functioning more out of their flesh than the Life of Christ.
3. Grace says:
 - a. My heart is to listen.
 - b. I am for your personal spiritual journey.
 - c. I want for us both to come to agreement in Christ.

f. Patience

1. People's flesh has a tendency of robbing us of our human patience.
2. However, as you learn to live from Christ's patience, no one can rob you of your patience. You will be able to be patient no matter how angry a person may become.

I hope that through the examples of these five Christ-like characteristics, it will give you a better idea of what it looks like to resolve conflict in Christ.

Exercise: Choose three of the Christ-like attitudes from the list above and write down how you would employ them in dealing with conflict.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Practical Application Of Christ-Centered Ministry Principles

The following are some practical applications of what it looks like to co-minister with your ministry team.

- Every time you come up with an idea, plan, or agenda **present** it to God for Him to reveal to you if that idea, plan or agenda is from Him.
- Minister with an attitude of **continual seeking** the Lord to insure your plans are His.
- **Ask others to pray** with you to **confirm** that your plans are of God.
- Ask God to give you a **spiritual vigilance** about where Satan may be working to foster dead works and create conflict.
- Be willing to **die** to any plan, agenda, or expectation that is not of God.
- Do everything you believe God has called you to do with an **attitude of dependence**.
- Be content with **not knowing** all the steps God might have to carry out a plan. Let God surprise you.
- Be sure you are **participating with (depending on)** God's life, ability, and power for Him to accomplish ministry through you.
- Have an **ongoing sensitivity to the Spirit's** direction and **change** of direction.
- Be **willing** to change the course of your plan as God directs.

Exercise: Based on what you have learned in this study, make application of the truths shared to the way you co-minister with your ministry team.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

What Does A Church That Christ Builds Look Like?

I wanted to end this study with what we learned in Chapter One about the characteristics of a church that Christ builds.

1. One that is living TOTALLY DEPENDENT on Christ as their SOURCE.

*“I am the vine, you are the branches; **he who abides in Me** and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 14:6*

2. The church will look LIKE CHRIST.

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18*

2. One whose lives are experiencing SUPERNATURAL TRANSFORMATION.

*“Be not conformed to this world but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind...”
Romans 12:2*

3. One that will be SPIRITUALLY ATTRACTIVE to Christians and non-Christians alike.

*“But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and **manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.**” 2 Corinthians 2:14*

*“Jesus said, ‘If I be lifted up, all men will be **drawn to Me.**’” John 12:32*

4. One that will be ministering from the OVERFLOW of Christ’s life and power in them.

*“But we have **this treasure in earthen vessels**, so that **the surpassing greatness of the power** will be of God and not from ourselves.” 2 Corinthians 4:6, 7*

*“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘**From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.**’” John 7:38*

5. One that UNCONDITIONALLY LOVES and will draw others through God’s LOVE.

*“So **show these men the proof of your love** and the reason we are proud of you. Then all the churches can see it.” 2 Corinthians 8:24*

6. One that will GLORIFY God.

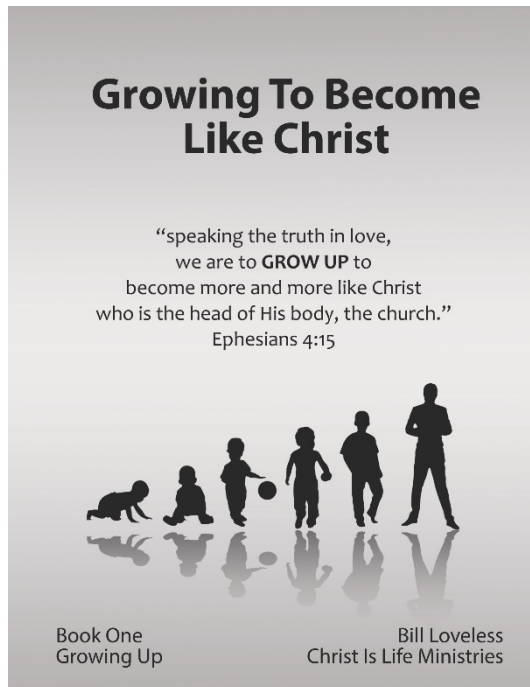
*“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. **To Him be the glory forever.**
Amen.” Romans 11:3*

Where Do I Go From Here?

At our website listed below, we encourage you to check out our four-part discipleship series called ***Growing Up – Growing Out – Growing Deep*** designed to teach Christians how to fulfill their purpose and calling. The first book in the series is called ***Growing to Become Like Christ***.

Book One covers the following topics:

- What it means to grow up spiritually to become like Christ.
- The difference between living “A” Christian life versus living “THE” Christian life.
- What it looks like practically to grow to become like Christ.
- What are some of the hindrances to spiritual growth and how we overcome them.
- How becoming like Christ transforms every area of our lives.

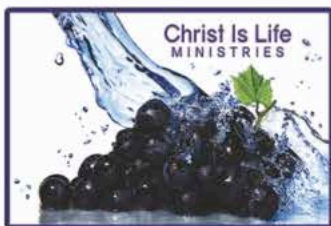


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