

Part IV

New Foundations

What new foundations would American Christians need if we were to move toward repentance and new levels of godliness, either now or in a situation where our opportunities and freedoms were limited? Here are several, and obviously they need to flow in harmony with each other:

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12) A New Definition of Life

American-Christians need a new definition of “life”.

We’re speaking of the life that Jesus addressed in Mark 8:34-37: *Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. 36 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? 37 Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?"*

The word “life” there is not the Greek “pneuma,” meaning breath or ongoing existence. It is “psuche,” meaning soul, heart, mind – the individual life, the natural, earthly life. Jesus is saying that we must die to our insistence that we define what makes life good for us, and instead allow God to do that. And as He says in v35, it is vain for us to try to make life good by doing things our way, anyway.

Excerpts on this text from Walvoord and Zuck’s “Bible Knowledge Commentary” include: “*Negatively*, one must deny himself decisively, saying no to selfish interests and earthly securities. Self-denial is not to deny one’s personality, to die as a martyr, or to deny ‘things.’ Rather it is the denial of ‘self,’ turning away from the idolatry of self-centeredness and every attempt to orient one’s life by the dictates of self-interest.” They continue: “*Positively*, one must take up his cross, decisively saying yes to God’s will and way.” Note their use of the word “decisively.”

Jesus is saying that **if we want to live a full life**; if we want to be all that we were created to be; we need to find it by dying to self-rule and following Him. We no longer decide for ourselves what is good for us.

In Matthew 5:6 Jesus says: *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.* The fact is, there is something about righteousness that satisfies our soul hunger in a way that unrighteousness can’t even get close to. God knows what we need; He will lead us into it; and we will be filled – *if* we hunger and thirst for righteousness instead of self-fulfillment. Come to think of it, “self-fulfillment” is a self-contradictory phrase, isn’t it!?

Why are many Christians unfulfilled – desperately trying one spiritual formula after another; running here and there to supposedly anointed preachers for a magic touch that will settle their restlessness; reading book after book after book but experiencing little change; repeating super-saint phrases and sayings which deny the reality of their inner struggle; faking spirituality; and sometimes accepting a hollow soul as their unfortunate lot for some reason? It’s because they’re looking in the wrong places for food for their soul!

In Romans 14:17-18 Paul says: *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, 18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.* Note

the sequence there: righteousness leads to peace, which leads to joy. Joy speaks of a full and satisfied soul, and it isn't based on circumstances or on having our way about things. It's simply from walking in righteousness, i.e. God's way. Isn't that neat – and wouldn't that bring radical change to the experience of most Christians and to the witness of the Church?

Seriously, wouldn't you agree that **we typically feel that we're living the good life** when we are having *our* way and getting what *we* want?

Why *do* the “blessed's” of [Matthew 5:3-12](#), and Jesus' poignant words in [6:19-34](#), [23:10-12](#) and countless other places seem almost irrelevant to our experience?

Why are there so many lonely and hurting people? Why is it so hard to love the unlovely? Why are most church fights power struggles instead of the theological or practical issues we say they are? Why is it so hard to get people to serve in the church, especially in humble or unrecognized chores? Why are there so many broken families among us? How many Christians suffer physically because of stress and anxiety? How often is depression the result of frustration and anger over not getting our way about something? Why are so many Christians overweight?

Why is James 1:19: *be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger*, an apparently unrealistic standard for many? Why is [Romans 12:16-21](#) so difficult, and why can't we forgive more often – or at least release someone into God's hand to take care of per v19? Why does the spirit of [Philippians 2:1-8](#) seem like something to be practiced on another planet – or at least by someone other than us?

In each case, isn't it because our thinking is shaped by the lie that doing things our way, and by having others give themselves to our need, will give us significance and make us whole and happy? In reality, we are responding to Satan who exercises power toward us to act selfishly and the result is the antitheses of true significance and wholeness. Can you think of a more graphic illustration of the meaning of words like ignorant, foolish or even stupid?

Christians will make major advances toward life as we daily take up our cross and die to self-rule as part of the process of increasingly finding our wholeness in God. Nothing that self-rule offers can come close to the sweetness of walking with God from the core of our inner being, as described in Psalm 1:1-3: *Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.* That's pretty appealing, isn't it?

At the very center of the issue is the question of what source we look to, to fill the God-shaped hole that each of us bears as part of our humanity. It is the Cosmic Battle brought to earth and represents a contest that we face as long as we live.

13) A New Object of Worship

Worship is the act of giving ourselves to someone or something from which we expect to receive “life.” Whatever we look to, to fill the God-shaped hole in our soul, becomes an object of worship. In America, both opportunity itself and the prospects it offered us, have become objects of worship. Getting our eyes off of them and onto God, and finding life in Him, will be an elementary expression of repentance.

These words came to me in the mid 1980’s:

The Call

My desire for worship springs from the very core of My being
 I have made you.
 I have given you life.
 Your life springs forth from My life.
 I call you to come back to Me, to find your life in My life.
 That, is worship!

To whatever or whomever you look as your source of life,
 to that you give worship.

That which becomes the object of your heart's search,
 that you worship.

That which you would embrace and cling to;
 fearing that without it you would lose the meaning of life,
 to that you offer worship.

That which most warms your heart by its presence,
 or the assurance of its coming;
 or leaves you feeling cold and lifeless in its absence,
 or the fear of its loss,
 to that you bow in worship.

You worship.
 You will worship.
 I have made you to worship.
 You cannot refuse to worship.
 But you chose the object of your worship.

I call you to worship Me!

14) The Worship of Surrender

These words came to me on June 23, 1985:

Every human worships.

Man was created with a need to worship someone (or something) beyond and greater than himself

Worship carries with it the expectation of reward,
the sense of connecting with someone (or something) that will make one whole.

In worship, man offers up his heart, his life, allegiance, and affections,
to God or to a god.

Man's highest calling, and his highest privilege,
is to commune with God in worship.

No other part of creation can commune with God.

A human is fully human only when he worships God.

God would say "When you worship Me, the life that is in Me flows to you."

Without that life, man is incomplete.

God seeks those who worship Him in Spirit and in truth, that is;
in humility and sincerity, without reservation or pretense; in all of life, whether a
"worship service" or a surrendered heart in work, play or family settings

He seeks those who will lay down their lives and yield their spirits up,
to receive LIFE through His life - - rather than through their own life

By exalting Him as their Source, and giving Him that place in their life, they worship Him;
because whatever becomes man's source, becomes his object of worship

But man has always had a problem with other gods,
those who promise life without death.

"Life to it's fullest" they shout,

"Through self-rule, self-satisfaction, self-assertion and self-fulfillment."

"Get power, security, prestige, houses, money, fame and more, by developing your
human resources and potentials."

They continue, "Find fulfillment by experiencing your senses and desires to the fullest."
In that, they confess the object of their worship.

Man was created to have dominion over the earth, and to worship God.

In refusing to worship God, and to recognize Him as the source of life;

And in looking within himself and to the world around him to find life,

man lowers himself by worshipping that which he was created to have dominion over.