

Repentance Leads To Christ-like Character

The Sin of Failing to Live a Life That's Pleasing to Your Heavenly Father

When someone talks to you about *doing God's will*, what's your immediate emotional response? Does your heart rejoice like that of the psalmist who proclaims, "*I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart*" (Psalm 40:8)? Or, do you sigh heavily, feeling like they're reminding you of some obligatory religious duty you've neglected? Maybe your thoughts about "doing God's will" have an underlying grumbling connotation, like the times your parents made you do something that was good for you but you didn't really want to do it.

We've encountered far too many Christians who roll their eyes and groan or change the subject whenever someone tries to help them see how God is making His will clear for decisions or choices they're being called to make. These folks are often very pleasant when they're talking with you—until the subject comes up of following through in the obedience that God's will calls for. In that moment we recognize that *their talk and their walk are pointed in opposite directions*. They have a high unreliability factor, and represent so many we've met in Christendom who seldom fulfill the assurances they've given (see Psalms 78:57).

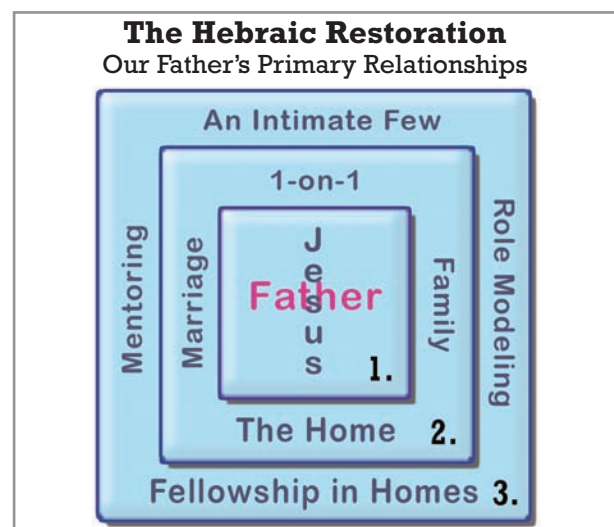
"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven"
(Matthew 7:21).

We've asked many Christians over the years why they work where they do or

why they live where they do. All too often they respond with some form of **human rationale**, supplying multiple reasons which inherently point to the personal benefit they derive from their decisions. Take employment, for example. Do the reasons they have for their particular job take into consideration God's relational priorities (see diagram below) and how *He* would use these relationships to further His will through their lives? Think about your own job, or that of your spouse if you're married, and ask yourself these key questions:

1. Have you placed the will of our Father first, collaborating with others in Christ by turning to the Spirit of our Lord Jesus in your midst that you might hear and obey what He reveals (Matthew 18:20)?
2. Have you considered the many-faceted needs of your spouse and child(ren) for your loving time and energy, if this applies to you, and how they're being shortchanged in your career choices?
3. Have you taken into account the ones who might be your fellowship family depending on where this job takes you?

Those who've deceived themselves by *idolizing* their own self-benefit at the cost of God's will and priorities have little or



no burden for the souls in their workplace or neighborhood. They didn't see their job or where they live as our Father's *field of ministry* for them.

The same sense of idolatry envelops retirees whose greed or *self*-focused goals led them to pursue pleasure-bent security during their working years. Their concern for the souls of others, even their progeny, is limited or absent. As Matthew 7:21 laments, those who *deceive themselves* that they belong to our Father will be kept out of the kingdom because they *failed to do His will*. Whatever they've done *outside God's will* is lawless, evil—even if it seemed good to them at the time. As Jesus sorrowfully warns these, *"I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"*

The Basis to Doing Our Father's Will: Your Heart Desire to Please Him

The particular Newer Testament Greek word which usually connotes our Father's will, *thelema*, describes the pleasure He has in *seeing His will accomplished*. And understood about His own pleasure is how pleased He is by those who *do His will*. When your love for Him is evidenced by wanting to please Him as a young child endeavors to please his or her parents, you'll diligently pursue each undertaking His Spirit directs you until you complete it. *Completing* what you know to be His will is an essential identifier of a person Father is pleased with.

The related verb form *thelo* also includes that deep desire to complete what He has made known for you to do. Love undergirds your actions because it pleases and brings joy to your Father for Whom you're doing it.

Paul calls this obedience an outpouring of worship from a grateful, loving heart in Romans 12:1,2: *"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your*

*bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but **be transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."*

From this perspective of willingly and responsively doing God's will, there's an ongoing sense of laying your life down as a *living sacrifice* because it pleases your Father when you do this. Leaving behind the world's pattern of *self*-gratifying actions and goals, you're transformed by the Spirit abiding within you as your thoughts and will align with His. No longer are you willing to let your sin nature-controlled mind be your source of deciding God's will, because your old sin nature always tries to bring about what benefits you. Your old thought patterns and debilitating memories won't let you make the sacrificial choices that bring your Father pleasure. That's why you need to take those thoughts captive the moment they try to dissuade you from Father's will for you (see 2Corinthians 10:5).

Our merciful Father doesn't see Himself as a taskmaster to whom people must be blindly obedient. Rather, His good and perfect will flows from His own Fatherly heart, and is received in the hearts of those whose love for Him impels them to want to please Him and to fulfill His will at all costs—even if it means laying down worldly goals and plans (see Psalm 143:10). Pleasing your Father out of grateful love is your *first relational priority*.

Pleasing your heavenly Father is your starting point. That kind of *living-sacrifice love* needs to flow into your marriage by considering the wants and needs of your spouse BEFORE you make decisions

or take actions that would affect him or her. As Paul affirms those who are wed:

“...a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife; ...a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband” (1Corinthians 7:33,34).

Your spouse and then your family comprise your second relational priority. We hope you realize that pleasing others flows out of the level of devotion you have for them in your heart. Your devotion isn't measured by **what** you do, but **why** you do what you do. Pleasing others isn't accomplished by initially seeking **how** to do it, but **why** you do it. Love, the self-sacrificial *agape* love of Jesus in His own, is the motive your Father is seeking, and the biblical, relational priorities He has established are your sequence—from the center outward on the preceding diagram—for being a follower of Jesus who pleases our Father and our life partner by *doing His will*.

When you even think of pleasing our Father or those in your household or fellowship family out of enacted love, you need to get outside your *own* perspective of what's pleasing and consider your actions from *their* point of view (Matthew 7:12). The value you place on others is reflected by you serving as the Spirit's instrument according to what *they need*, and not limiting your response just to what you think is sufficient from your own point of view (Philippians 2:3,4).

An example of meeting a need authentically in the Spirit might be for a husband to ask Jesus, “In what ways can I manifest my love for my wife so that she will experience it as real?” And be open to explore this with your spouse so that free interchange can take place without excuses or a defensive or ration-

alizing posture!

Most often you'll find that *physical expressions of loving affection* are the number one need of people. Hugs and smiles that reveal how much someone means to you is one of the most common affirmations others seek. In other words, if your heart is ruled by the joy the Spirit works in you toward your spouse or children, intentionally let your face know it with a smile in their presence or a meaningful embrace. Hold them as often as you can!

Pleasing your spouse (and/or your children) means taking into consideration what brings them joy as well as meets their real needs. Again, don't presuppose you already know. You need to know them well enough in your spirit to discern their expressed and understood longings because this is one of the characteristics of *humility*. Too many people do acts of kindness because they find satisfaction in the doing, but the recipient doesn't find pleasure in what's been done. The giver has projected their own desire onto the recipient and expected him or her to respond with gratitude. *Self-serving* has tainted the giving; the giver wants *recognition* for the kind act and is disappointed when the expected response isn't forthcoming.

Our Father has sent us to proclaim freedom for the captives.

You may have noticed that many of our materials focus on issues that *clog growth* in character and the fulfillment of the purposes our Lord Jesus desires for His people. From strongholds and toxic memories to misunderstanding between the genders because of differences in how we've been created, we've discussed a variety of elements that hinder Christ-like transformation and development,

both individually and collectively.

Throughout Christendom are wives (and ex-wives) who've been imprisoned in soul-draining servitude because of a misconstrued understanding of what it means for a husband to be the head of his home. Being referred to as "lord" in a marriage (1Peter 3:6) means using this God-given position of love-empowered authority to bring good to the entire household, not to enforce selfish gratification! In the pattern of Christ with His bride, His collective called-out ones, that relationship is a leadership that *serves self-sacrificially* as love in action (Ephesians 5:25-30). Our Lord Jesus is the primary role model for all men who would "husband" as He does.

Many wives have been clubbed verbally into submission by religious authorities who ignore the love parameter that impels Christ-like servant leadership in a husband. Because of distortion of the love our Father intends for husbands to exercise in marriage, "imprisoned" wives often have a hard time receiving and internalizing the love our Father has for them. Nor can they extend the loving trust toward Him that pleases Him. They feel like emotional martyrs obeying what they think is God's will as dictated by their husbands, and respond out of a grim sense of dutiful obligation. What underlying tension and sorrow permeate households in which a husband lords authority over his wife and family rather than leading them in loving service as Christ would.

Even within marriages that are sound, an unhealthy "ministry singleness" has permeated much of contemporary Christendom. Married men in particular too often minister without their wives in capacities in which both perspectives are needed, whether through their combined giftings or the necessary viewpoint differ-

ences each gender brings to the table.

Congregations and parachurch ministries offer men opportunity to teach the Bible in situations in which their wives aren't participating alongside them. While these men freely disseminate Bible knowledge to attentive listeners, the authenticity of his life being poured out (or not) for his wife and children is hidden from view. If his listeners saw suppressed pain and anger in his wife and kids, they'd begin to question whether his walk aligns with his words—a level of exposure the man who's teaching may not want to be made public!

All too many organizations, whether congregations or ministries, don't want to lose the function of these men—so they don't ask questions about their home life. Rather, they allow the man to display his Bible knowledge, but never examine whether his heart owns the humility of loving his wife as Jesus would. What he teaches become disconnected from what he lives—and that becomes the pattern for his listeners: a life in which he's not accountable to practice himself what he's preaching, especially as it pertains to his relationship with his wife and children.

All too often his wife accepts this situation because she thinks it's what a submissive wife ought to do. The kids seethe with the injustice and hypocrisy of it all and forsake any pursuit of Jesus, preferring to run after the world's ways and values (to the dismay of their parents). Think of how different all their lives would be if this husband instead was determined to please God by putting *His* relational priorities into practice. This loving choice would reflect the intimacy of love-grounded obedient trust in the Father and His Son Jesus, and the humility of being a vessel through whom this

love flows onto his wife and children.

Sadly, the gratification so many men receive from being admired for their Bible knowledge overrides the truly righteous impact they could be having in their family.

But the intentional choice to put his family before himself doesn't "just happen" in a man's life:

For a husband to change, he MUST seek out a righteous older man of wisdom, a man from whom he is willing to receive correction and also has purposed to follow through on the wisdom he receives (Proverbs 10:8; 13:14; 15:31; 25:12; 1Thessalonians 5:12).

Negligent husbands and fathers aren't alone in focusing on pleasing themselves rather than God. Throughout Christendom are contentious wives who control, manipulate, and/or dominate their husbands (Proverbs 14:1; 19:13; 21:9; 27:15,16). These women cast out *shalom* from their homes by never finding inner peace and joy in loving and serving their husbands and families in ways that please our Father as His Word calls for. They depend on their expectations to be met the way they want, and make life miserable for their husbands and children if their requirements aren't satisfied.

Nothing their husbands do ever pleases these women; they always want more. This wife's ONLY HOPE is to seek out a righteous older woman who knows and loves Jesus as her Lord—a woman she's willing to hear with the intent of following through who can teach her to love her husband and children as her Father would have her (Titus 2:4,5). She needs to want to love and please her Lord *more than* she wants the dubious, fleeting satisfaction of getting her way, and only

another woman who role models His priorities and lifestyle can help her walk in His Spirit with joy and peace. Any other approach will falter and fail!

"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will"
(Romans 12:2).

Perhaps you've lived with little or no regard to please our Father out of a love that motivates you to do His will. Maybe you've embraced idolatrous priorities that suit your own preferences and will instead of His. We have some suggestions for you right out of God's Word. Keep in mind that it's not so much **what** you change, but **why** you'd want to change that's essential. This means you'll need the steadfast and determined conviction that's willing to sacrifice anything and everything until you're lovingly pleasing those who have a right to your service.

Paul is intentional when he compares serving our Lord wholeheartedly to please Him to the endurance and focused purpose needed by a military person: "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer" (2Timothy 2:3,4).

1. Commit yourself to seek the transforming work of the indwelling Spirit of Christ, and be willing to repent when He convicts you. Remember, to *repent* means having an entire 180° change in attitude and/or behavior until your motives and actions align with our Lord Jesus: "In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like Him"

(1John 4:17). We recognize that the very notion of turning to the indwelling Spirit of our Lord is an “*intangible concept*.” It’s hard to wrap yourself around Someone you can’t see or feel when you’ve been relying all your life on your five senses that feed your mind.

Turning to His Spirit in trust is something you can’t see or feel. But the reality of His Spirit in those who belong to Jesus is a truth you need to rely on even more than you do the air around you. Too many Christians purpose to change themselves, making resolutions and promises that are products of their sin-nature-disposed vulnerable mind. They plunge ahead trying to figure **what** they need to change or **how** to change it. But they discover dead ends and grow weary of the futility, finally giving up the effort.

So what *is* the solution? It won’t be your intellectual reasoning that confirms the change in your heart. Rather, it will be our Lord Who will *test your motive*—your **why** for the changes needed within you. The person who is following Jesus as Lord needs to want to please Him more than anyone else, including self. His approval is the one that counts: “...*we are not trying to please men but God, Who tests our hearts*” (1Thessalonians 2:4; see also Proverbs 16:2).

2. As we mentioned earlier, intentionally and persistently seek help from older and wiser people whose lives attest that they belong to our Lord. Look for those who live with courage and conviction in their loving trust and obedience to their Lord—they’ve been willing to pay the cost of sacrificing self-rule and personal preference in order to please their Father. As Paul, a consummate apostle and mentor, could exhort his beloved Thessalonian brothers and sisters: “*We instructed*

you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more” (1Thessalonians 4:1).

Wisdom, conviction, and genuine compassion to help others spiritually mature are intricately woven in older people who have made pleasing our heavenly Father their first priority!

“When people fear Me, you are an encouragement to them. When they don’t fear Me, they fear you.”

(Mike) These were the words I heard in my spirit from my heavenly Father many years ago concerning people’s response toward me because of the gift of prophecy He used through me. I’ve observed that when people we’ve personally known begin to tolerate sin in their lives or become lukewarm in their desire to please our Father, they avoid both Sue and me. Phone calls, email and other communication dwindle. Contact isn’t restored by them until the day they repent and restore fellowship with their heavenly Father and His Son (see Psalms 104:10-13;17,18).

In those situations we feel like the prodigal son’s parents undergoing emotional pain as we prayerfully wait for the Spirit to convict them. And when He does restore those relationships, they’re often accompanied by horror stories of the misery and hardship our Father used to finally get their attention. Many needed to come to the point of ***humble desperation***—they could no longer tolerate their self-sufficient striving and resistance of the Spirit, so in humility of heart they bowed before Him in repentance.

We had been blessed to have in our lives a godly older man who periodically caused us to closely examine the intensity

level of our own devotion to our Lord. We wrote about this dear brother in Christ in our series *Going to the High Places*:

Frank Murray was born in Jerusalem in 1908. His parents had gone there with many others, and some had died of disease during their stay in Israel. They had gone to intercede that God would restore the Israelites back to their land, fulfilling our Lord's promise to bring them back one last time. Sue and I had encountered only a few people in our lives who were as dedicated to our Lord Jesus as Frank was. We looked forward to his coming, often calling his visits "Jesus checks." Even before he arrived we'd find ourselves scrutinizing our devotion to our Lord to see if there were any areas of lukewarmness lurking. And when he hugged us as he left, it was like getting a "well done" from God.

Until the point at which we ourselves became seniors some years back, we'd always had wiser, older people close to us. It's as if in their wisdom they'd scrape off any barnacles of lethargy concerning our spiritual freedom and responsibilities which our Father cites in His Word. Make sure you have someone in your life, whether a senior or a person gifted prophetically or with discernment. The Spirit will use these individuals to confront you out of love and/or tell you things you may not want to hear but need to.

We also encourage you to make it easy for them to approach you and share with you what the Spirit would have them say. When you avoid them or talk behind their back because you fear them and their message, you're putting yourself in the driver's seat of your life and displacing the Spirit. Please, don't grieve Him by running from the counsel He has so graciously offered you so that you might joyfully please our Father.

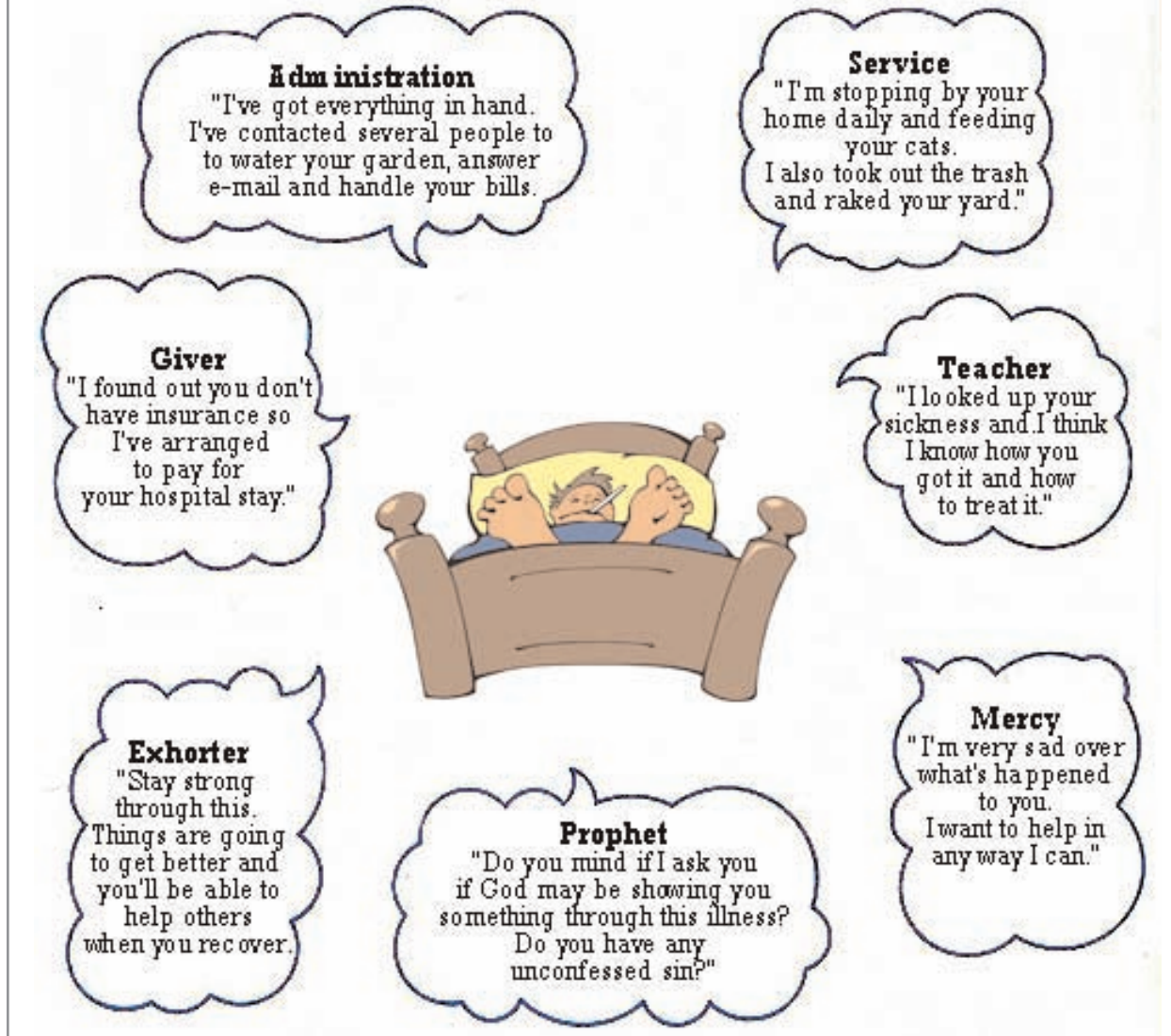
3. Another area in which your spouse and your home fellowship family can be collectively used by the Holy Spirit to please our Father is through the coordinated and collaborative use of spiritual gifts. On the next page is an illustration that reflects the varied input of various gifts concerning the same situation. None are wrong, but each is incomplete unless the individuals collaboratively consider everyone's input.

Few couples and fellowship families rely on using their spiritual gifts together through collaborative consideration. So many decisions are made rashly and are often incomplete or in error as to what will please our Father. Why is this? Because His children see themselves according to the flesh rather than according to the Spirit and the gifts He has apportioned to them. As a result, our Father's will, which may encompass more than any one person can fathom, is often disregarded in addressing situations and making decisions.

Consider the various gifts of the Spirit in light of this word picture of interconnectedness: "*From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work*" Ephesians 4:16; see also 1Corinthians 12:11-27).

You'll notice on our illustration that spiritual gifts vary as to their input. Some focus on correcting the *immediate situation*, such as the server, mercy, organizer, and giver. Other gifts are the Spirit's means to focus on the *broader solutions* or *biblical principles* that may need to be addressed. This is the focus of the teacher, exhorter, and prophet. Each person involved needs to understand and value the particular giftings of others if the various gifts are to cooperate together. Our book *God's Instruments For War* (a free

Below is a very simplified representation of some spiritual gifts in action regarding a particular need. The response of each gift in itself is correct, but without everyone's input the solution would be incomplete. Picture the different gifts as laying a brick wall. Which gift would you consider the first priority, the second, third, etc? Discuss your answer with people close to you in the faith. What can you learn about each other's gifting and how these can most effectively work together when used in proper sequence?



download) describes the different out-working of the gifts.

Not *knowing* and *understanding* your own gift(s) and those of others close to you in the faith can create unnecessary tension. For example, people who have the broader view giftings or focus on biblical principles can be perceived as uncaring by those with gifts which focus on immediate solutions. In the illustration

above, the prophet is concerned if repentance is needed, because God may be using the illness to chastise the person. All other forms of help or input are useless if God has brought this situation about to turn the person away from a wrongful path (see Acts 5:38,39).

On the other hand, those with gifts such as teacher, exhorter, and prophet can sometimes view the gifts that focus

only on the immediate situation as solving **a** problem but not **THE** problem. People with broader-view gifting may feel that if their input is ignored, the problem will most likely occur again. The broader view gifts are often used to mature character rather than solve immediate problems. Prophecy and exhortation, for instance, remind people of the One they are serving, or convey more specifically what their responsibilities are in doing our Father's will in a given situation.

The combined gifting of the two of us includes apostle, prophet, exhorter and faith. When people contact us for a "quick fix" to solve a particular problem, they're sometimes offended that we first explore deeper issues like unconfessed sin or biblical principles that are being overlooked.

Not surprisingly in this culture of instant gratification, the quick fix to relieve the immediate situation is by far the most prevalent form of ministry within Christendom. We seem like odd ducks to those expecting some easy way to getting back to their own agenda.

An insight you may want to consider:

Earlier we wrote that the Greek word *thelo* means doing our Father's will with a heart's desire to complete what you started. If the broader view gifts, such as apostle, prophet and evangelist cooperating with an elder/shepherd are lacking in the midst of a faith community, *persevering until God's will is completed in a particular situation will be lacking as well.* Contemporary Christendom has become dominated by those who address situations only from a quick answer perspective. Examples of this approach include:

- giving a one-time gift to the needy rather than dealing with ongoing, long-term needs;
- the rise of short term missions trips in which

participants do a specific project and feel good about themselves but aren't willing to ask Father if He would use them somewhere indefinitely;

- serving once a month at a soup kitchen rather than extending a dignity-enhancing relationship to those you're feeding.

The **domination of immediacy** and the personal gratification it provides has eliminated the *persistence* our Father's longer term purposes require. The broader view gifts that would stretch people in their loving obedience have too often been silenced. Yet it is these giftings that would help people come to grips with our Lord's call to *weigh the cost* of belonging to Him (see Luke 14:27-33). Over the course of our journey of following our Lord, half-completed intentions have littered the landscape of Christendom.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer"
(Acts 2:42).

In Acts 6:1-6 we find a situation in Jerusalem in which the Hellenist widows among the Jesus followers weren't being cared for as were the Hebrew ones. The solution to this problem required a *longer term view* than just giving the neglected women a meal. The apostles were well aware of the particular mission Christ had given them (Acts 1:2). And waiting on tables wasn't beneath them since our Lord had demonstrated for them the humility and service underlying true leadership.

However, they needed to solve the problem by dealing with it from the Spirit's perspective. Deacons had already been part of the Jewish community. These men normally embodied a combination of mercy, giving and helping as they carried out their responsibilities among the congregation. The apostles

knew that the *selection of such men* to serve their own fellowship community needed the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and that *His presence within these men* was an essential criterion as well. Therefore they directed, “*choose seven men who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.*” In order for the deacons to do God’s will in helping the widows and others in need as scripture called for (Isaiah 11:2), these men would need Holy Spirit wisdom.

Wherever a longer term solution is required, you’ll find that those who have gifts with a *broader view* are needed to impart vision and understanding of the larger issue at hand. In 1Timothy 5:3-6 the apostle Paul not only provided long term guidance in the matter of helping widows, but also counseled against aiding widows who lived for worldly pleasure (see also 2Thessalonians 3:6). This warning connects to Titus 2:3-5 in which Paul enjoins older women to a *long term responsibility* to help younger women love their husbands and families.

Again, you’ll find that wherever actions are prompted only by the input of gifts of immediacy, they often result in short term answers. As a result, people fail to learn the faithful persistence that’s needed to complete our Father’s longer term purposes.

“An unmarried man cares for the things of the Lord—how he can please the Lord” (1Corinthians 7:32).

“An unmarried woman or virgin cares about the things of the Lord in order that she may be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit” (1Corinthians 7:34).

We want to exhort you married couples to extend emotional support to the single people in your life who are living

to please our Father. Those called to celibacy at times fight scathing demonic attacks which can leave them feeling very lonely and isolated. Throughout modern Christendom is a sad phenomenon: single people are often treated like pariahs rather than as fellow followers of Jesus who are unencumbered with having to please a spouse. Again, we’re pointing to those with the gift of celibacy who are pouring themselves out in their love of Jesus to please our Father. We’re *not* talking about single people who live for themselves, striving after the goals and pleasures the world offers. Among the first followers of Jesus, there wasn’t even a Hebrew word for bachelor; followers of Jesus like Paul remained single to freely be available to *serve their Lord’s purposes*.

“We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2Thessalonians 1:12).

This diagram presents a partial list of gifts we’ve cited in our book, *God’s Instruments for War*.

In **column B** check off which gift(s) you have.

In **column C** indicate with an X which gifts the Holy Spirit would use to solve the *immediate situation*. Use an O for the gifts He’d use to focus on *longer term concerns* or *biblical principles*.

In **column D** use a T to indicate

Spiritual Gifts	B	C	D
Administration			
Apostleship			
Celibacy			
Discerning Spirits			
Evangelism			
Exhortation			
Faith			
Giving			
Healing			
Helping			
Knowledge			
Leadership			
Mercy			
Prophecy			
Teaching			
Wisdom			

gifts which meet a need in a *tangible* way; in other words, responses and actions which are specific and readily apparent. Place an I for the gifts that are *intangible* because they don't provide an immediate solution.

Now discuss the diagram with those close to you in the faith. See what understanding of each other the Holy Spirit gives you.

Our Lord Jesus assures His own of a truth that's more important than your next breath: "...*where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them*" (Matthew 18:20). When His followers come together to discern the will of our Father, the Spirit of our Lord Jesus is there in our midst guiding us. Too many Christians find themselves not to-tally relying on the veracity of our Lord's words. To them His promise is too *intangible* to put full confidence in it. Instead, they rely on the intellectual reasoning and rationale of their minds, ignoring what the Holy Spirit would make clear to them.

Few earnestly ask, "What is His Spirit telling us?" Instead, they weigh the pros and cons of the issue from a worldly perspective. Their ultimate decisions benefit themselves in some way, decisions that *seem* right but aren't Father's will (Proverbs 14:12).

If you're purposing to *collectively* please your Father, it's essential that you, your spouse and your fellowship family know His giftings to each of you and that you collaborate together in their use. In order to get a complete picture of His will for you as a couple and/or a faith family, you must fervently seek the input that the gifts of each person is empowered to provide. Remember, your *heart motives* are key. You won't please your Father if you lack the humility to collaborate. Your

self-sufficient resistance to others will only quench and grieve His Spirit. And the end result will be a man-contrived outcome, not a Spirit-given response that pleases your Father.

If you've read Hannah Hurnard's, *Hinds Feet On High Places*, and/or gone through our study guide, *Going to the High Places*, there's a vital insight we'd like to share. When the main character, Much Afraid, reaches the High Places, she is transformed into Grace and Glory. One of the first concerns on her heart is to return to the Valley of the Fearings so she can help her captive relatives belong to the Shepherd.

When people with broader view gifts consider her response, they zero in on the depth of suffering she'll likely endure at the hands of those who have despised her. But her transformed, unbegrudging love for her relatives and her willingness to suffer at their hands inspires and encourages those with *a broader view* to persistently press on themselves in completing God's will among their own relatives and people they care about.

Those with *gifts of immediacy*, however, somehow get hung up on the fact that Much-Afraid is now Grace and Glory—"isn't that nice!"—and slide past her loving determination to return to the valley. Her heart and actions inspire *no persistent follow through* in those with a shorter view unless they're willing to accept input from those with a broader view.

A caveat: "*Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins*" (James 4:17). If Lord Jesus promises to be with you when two or three come together to discern Father's will, that's not *intangible*. Your highest "good" is to do your Father's will! If you ignore His will, our Lord Jesus will tell you with sorrow, "*I never knew you; depart from Me, you who*

practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23). The Spirit of our Lord *is* real, and His guidance is the most tangible thing you need—because with His guidance comes His grace and empowerment to do our Father's will.