

Lifebyte 72

Let Each of Us Take Up Our Cross and Gather the Remnant of This Generation

*“If anyone would come after Me,
he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.
What good is it for a man to gain the whole world
but lose himself and his family in hell?”*



“All that is necessary for sin and hell to triumph
among family and friends
is for a follower of Jesus to say and do nothing.”



Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

"Everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who builds his house on the rock... it does not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" (Matthew 7:24,25)

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men..." (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

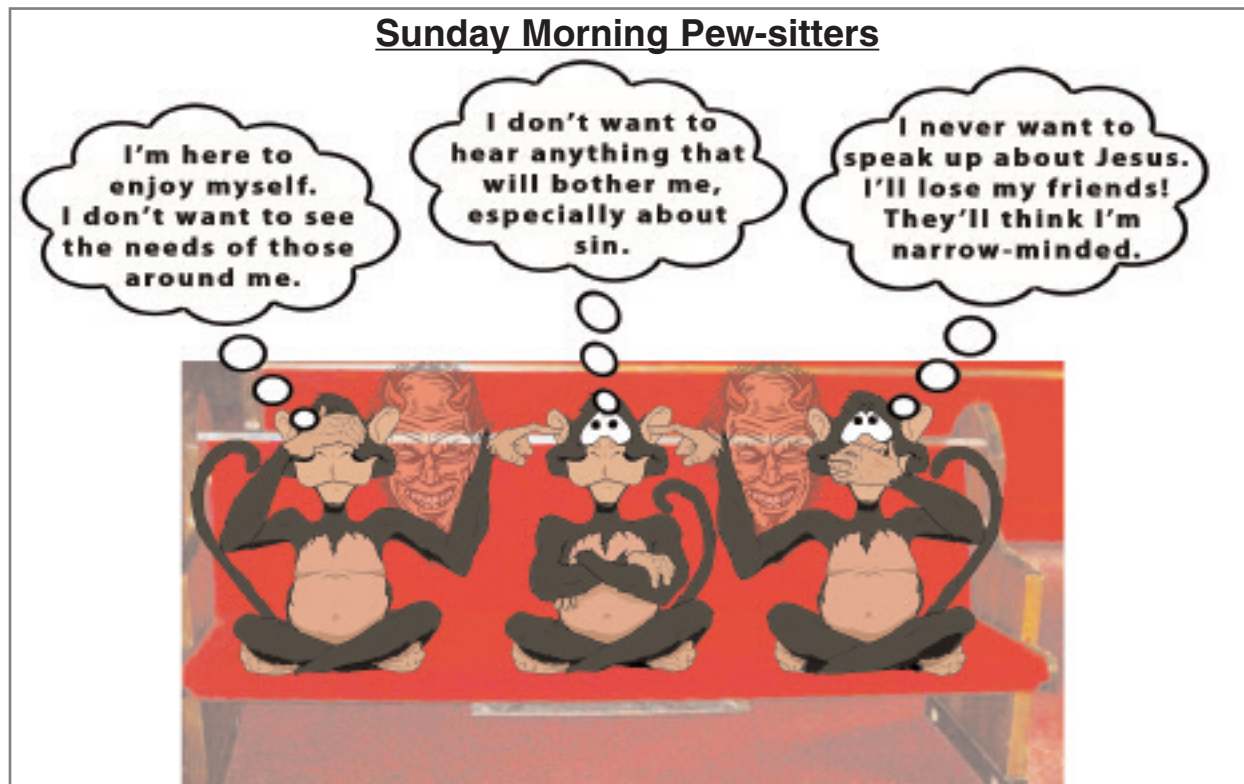
What a glorious heritage Father has given each person He has created! By His wisdom and grace He has formed us in His image, born with the reality of *eternity in our hearts*. Sadly, though, as our years advance, this awareness diminishes in importance. Our God-given insight into eternity is obscured by the goals and motives of this world, rendering us blind to the ultimate reality of God and His purposes for humanity.

Are you among the multitude of fathers and mothers who view their parenting role in terms of preparing their children for *worldly* success? By contrast, our Father's perspective of raising sons and daughters requires that one generation prepare the next to *experience eternity with Him* through an intimate relationship of loving, obedient trust in Jesus. If

your goal for your kids falls short of His goal, you're doing a huge disservice to the generations to come.

Our merciful Father is well aware of how distracted we are from a focus on living with eternity in mind. He has left no doubt, though, that life *beyond* our earthly years is a priority. Take a moment to check for yourself this scriptural sampling which testifies to that truth: Matthew 6:19-21; 25:31-46; John 5:24; Galatians 6:8; 1Thessalonians 4:17,18; Titus 1:1,2; Hebrews 5:8,9; 2Peter 1:10,11.

- The most important goal one generation passes on to the next is to do whatever is necessary according to God's Word to spend eternity with Him. Anything less leads to everlasting loss. Do you believe this?
- What are you doing to promote eternity with God as a goal of utmost importance in your family? Ask them on a scale of 0 to 10 what loving and serving our Lord for eternity means to them.



"May God Himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

"...God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water" (1Peter 3:20).

Many years ago we did some math to see how many people might have been wiped out in the flood. We came up with a minimum of 3 million. Think about it. God preserved only eight righteous people. They, along with countless animals and birds, would have had no way of escape if it hadn't been for Noah's trusting obedience to build the Ark!

The righteous justice of our God hasn't changed between the Older and Newer Testaments. He is longsuffering and takes no pleasure in destroying the wicked; rather, He longs for them to turn from their evil ways and live (Ezekiel

33:11). Yet those who refuse His amazing mercy in Jesus bearing the death our sins deserve must face that penalty themselves. History demonstrates that suffering of immense magnitude comes upon people groups and nations through sword, famine and plague (see Jeremiah 27:8, for example). God can use both military might as well as angelic intervention to bring about massive destruction (Jeremiah 51:11; Isaiah 37: 36). Yet in His kindness we often find a *remnant* surviving the devastation (2Kings 19:30,31).

After Elijah had fled the powerfully wicked Queen Jezebel (1Kings 19), the prophet was so downhearted he complained to God, "I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too" (v.10). God responded by giving Elijah, and us, a vital insight of hope: "I reserve seven



"Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked" (Proverbs 25:26)

thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (v.18, apperceived by Paul in Romans 11:4).

Centuries later, as countless numbers of Jews rejected Jesus the Messiah, God affirmed that, "So too, at the present time there is a remnant [of Jews] chosen by grace" (see Romans 11:2-5).

In *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 48, we discuss the biblical basis of "culling." You may want to look at the biblical basis in which God removes both the wicked and those who fail to bear fruit in His Kingdom (John 15:1-6).

Pause here to think about the people you know, whether relatives, neighbors, coworkers, even friends. Does it grieve your heart that so many of these may never be welcomed in heaven if you don't *show them Jesus* and His Gospel through words and actions?

Our Father seeks a remnant who've chosen by His grace to live in Covenant union with Him, loving Him and doing His will. From the mouth of Jesus comes a staggering implication that perhaps this remnant may be few indeed: "Someone asked him, 'Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?' He said to them, '**Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to**'" (Luke 13:23, 24). Again, Jesus warns, "For many are invited, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14).

- Will you and those you care about be among the few who *love* the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength—a love that is reflected in *doing Father's will*? Are you REALLY sure that you know what Jesus calls for in His Word to be among the few? It'll be too late to find out at the Judgment Throne. What changes do you need to make

in your heart and life right now so that you and those you care about will be counted among the few? Cry out to the Spirit of Christ for His perspective!

"If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all"
(Isaiah 7:9; see also John 15:18,19)

Think about Noah as he was constructing the ark according to God's command. He certainly must have faced a lot of rejection and ridicule during the process. After all, it was because of the unspeakable wickedness of the people on earth that destruction was coming!

If we're going to stay true to our Lord in this evil age, we must also be willing to experience rejection and ridicule when we confront sin in those around us—especially when it's taking place in those who call themselves "Christian" yet by their lives they're tarnishing His pure reputation.

When our Father's children *do nothing*, sin always triumphs. And where sin is allowed to go unopposed, it only gets worse. Aptly titled "soldiers" for the Lord are called to battle against the darkness of evil, first making sure that *we ourselves* are free from sin's strong hold on us. (See Ephesians 6:10-18.)

Our Father commands His children to not just to avoid evil but *actively oppose it*. We who follow Jesus are ordered by His Word to "*have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them*" (Ephesians 5:11). If you do nothing about sin and evil, then you're helping sin and evil to prevail. Make sure your own heart is clean first; then take action and speak up. A person who is silent when those around him in sin call themselves "Christian" becomes a partner with them (Ephesians 5:3-7).

"If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does not He Who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He Who guards your life know it? Will He not repay each person according to what he has done?" (Proverbs 24:12)

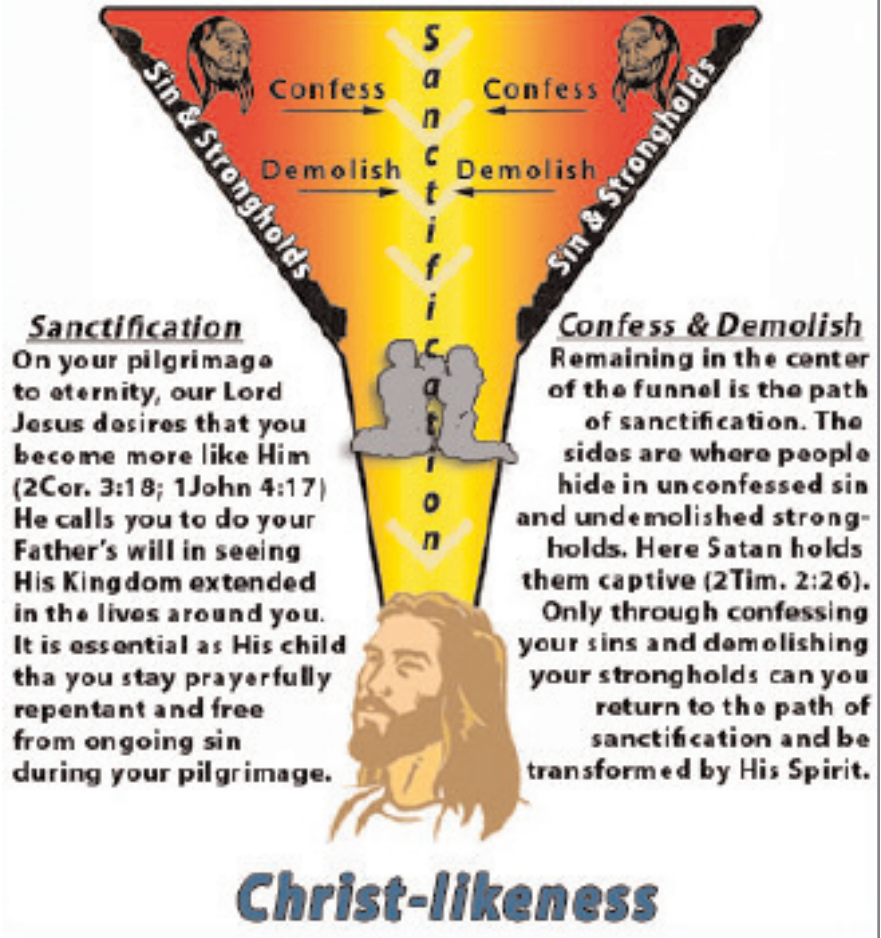
Review the pilgrimage to your salvation in the diagram on the right. As you go over each point, picture your Father lovingly observing you becoming more like His Son, Jesus, in your obedient trust and character transformation. How He rejoices when in loving obedience through His indwelling Spirit you are doing your part to extend His Kingdom into the lives of those you know!

When you're following Jesus as Lord of your life, your love for Him compels you to remain repentant and free from all stronghold influence that would compromise your trusting obedience. Purpose in your heart to stay in the middle of the funnel and prayerfully progress down into greater Christ-likeness.

If someone close to you in the faith decides to remain with unconfessed sin or hold onto their stronghold(s), your response is clear. Matthew 18:15-17 presents steps designed to bring a person to repentance. If they resist, they're refusing to "return to the center of the funnel". You need to leave them and press on in your own sanctification.

Paul offers the purpose for this command: "*Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord*" (1Corinthians 5:5; see also 1Timothy

The Gospel of the Covenant a pilgrimage of sanctification into Christ-likeness and Kingdom purpose



1:20). In their ongoing disobedience they've already chosen Satan, a hard master indeed. Leave them with him until they come to their senses and return to the center of the funnel where Jesus is.

Authentic fellowship with our Lord and with each other can only be experienced by those in the center of the funnel.

- How "strong" are you in the Lord? (Ephesians 6:10) Does your obedient trust in God enable you to speak up when those you care about sin? Does your faith give you the loving boldness to help them become completely free from demonic strongholds?

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2Timothy 3:16,17)

- Are you able to leave those who wish to hold onto their sin and darkness and press on the pilgrimage of your own salvation, even as you pray for their repentance and return to Him?

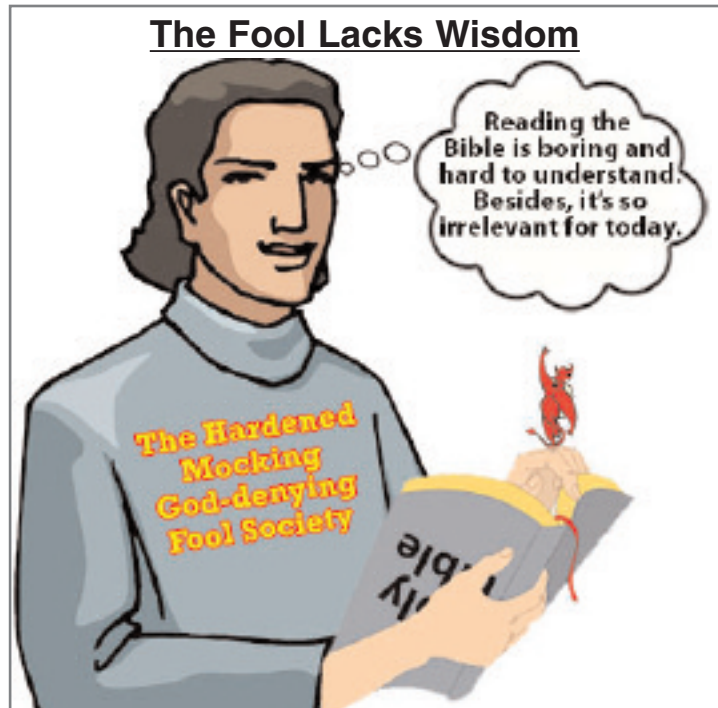
"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:25,26).

The statement *"cleansing her by the washing with water through the word"* indicates a vital role for a husband in his wife's spiritual development. "Word" in this passage is *rhema*, not the *logos* generally used to refer to Jesus or to the unchangeable text of the Bible. The husband is being enjoined to seek how to *apply* God's Word—the *rhema* of His revealed will—to her and his family.

Rhema may be described here as our Father imparting His wisdom to a husband/father to guide his family. Like Abraham, *"he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just"* (Genesis 18:19).

A recent news segment disclosed why so many women today are seeking divorce: *they are failing to see their need for their husband.* Without Christ and the need for her husband's spiritual guidance (*rhema*), women are easily deceived by the sin of **false expectation**. (See *Discussing How To Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 32, for extensive discussion on the sin of false expectation.)

If you're a husband, don't use your wife as an excuse for why you refuse to seek and obey the *rhema* of God. We've



heard too many say, "My wife won't go along with what He's shown me!" When you nullify God's commands by refusing His guidance because you fear your wife's response, you're placing her above Him. The frequent result of this misplaced alignment? Ongoing marital tension, and maybe even divorce. Your humble quest for God's guidance and willingness to obey His commands can keep your marriage from false expectation.

- If you have a wife, how much does she respect your convictions to obey God no matter what the cost? Does she commend you for the intensity in which you seek God's *rhema* on her behalf?

"Our Father Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9,10).

The *will of our Father* can seem as far removed from everyday life as eternity is to many of those who claim to belong to Him. To recite *The Lord's Prayer* is far eas-

"The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger" (Jeremiah 7:18)

ier for most within Christendom than to intentionally take action in doing His will. Nothing grates the sin nature more than pursuing the will of our Father.

As Jesus demonstrated, seeking to do our Father's will requires utter humility and dependence on our Father. Doing His will reflects the complete emptying of self from all earthly goals, and calls for us to have the wisdom and power of His Spirit to do it. Keep this mind: ***God's will: nothing more, nothing less, nothing else.***

The wealth of a Jesus follower is found in wisdom, not money. *"Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding"* (Proverbs 4:7). Let's examine what the wisdom of our Father looks like:

God's wisdom is the quality of being wise by the *standards of His Word*, and is accompanied by having personal experience and good judgment in applying that Word to our lives. His wisdom provides the building blocks of Christ-like character in us.

Wisdom sees life from *God's perspective* and causes us to reflect on and scrutinize our lives in light of His Word. Wisdom seeks to please our Lord and fulfill His purposes for our lives. Wisdom will always cause us to trust our Lord Jesus more and more as each year passes.

Sadly, we all too often trust in *reason* rather than wisdom. Reason views life from our own perspective, and eventually results in disillusionment, despair, and fear. That's because reason relies on *human rationalization* instead of on the unchanging truth of God's Word. Think of how many of your life problems emanate from, or are worsened by, leaning on your own reasoning rather than seeking God's ways—His wisdom.

- Is your way of life a summary of biblical applications of God's Word? Can you describe particular choices you've made, or changes you've made, based on what the Spirit revealed to you from God's perspective in the Bible? Would others say your life reflects the wisdom of God's perspective, or the "wisdom" of the world? (1Corinthians 1:19-21)

"When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other."
(Ecclesiastes 7:14)

We all face times when things aren't panning out as we'd hoped. Sometimes we might even wonder if it's God bringing the trouble to test and refine us, or Satan afflicting us to bring doubt and despair. But how important it is that we not come to wrong conclusions concerning our circumstances. This is why we need God's *rhema*, that is, His wisdom for our particular situation—and all the more so if the cause of our problem is God chastising us for unconfessed sin.

When it comes to forming wrong conclusions we can learn a lesson from the Israelites of old. In Jeremiah 44 we're told that the Israelites who'd fled to Egypt in disobedience to God after the fall of Jerusalem worshiped a demonic entity known as the *Queen of Heaven*. God had banished them from His land because of their many sins, their spiritual adultery with demonic gods, and their stubborn refusal to repent.

But listen to what the people believed had caused their current distress:

*We will certainly do everything we said we would: We will **burn incense to the Queen of Heaven** and will pour out drink offerings to her just as we and our fathers, our kings and our officials did in*

