

2018 At A Glance

January 14	Intern Dinner (6:00PM) & 10:2 Collective (7:00PM) @ FC Downtown
January 17	Midweek Activities Began
January 21	Advance CLT Parent Meetings Advance CLT Price Increased Downtown Campus to 3 Services
January 24	Advance CLT High School Deadline
January 28	Advance CLT Middle School Deadline Leadership Rally
February 4	Advance CLT Training Began
February 9	Night to Shine (@ United Methodist Church 900 Brandywine Rd. WPB, FL 33409)
February 11	Intern Dinner (6:00PM) & 10:2 Collective (7:00PM) @ FC Downtown FC Village Launched
February 25	Advance CLT Canvassing Day
March 1	SHARPER! Conference (@ Family Church Downtown)
March 11	Intern Dinner (6:00PM) & 10:2 Collective (7:00PM) @ FC Downtown
March 17-23	Advance CLT Mission Trip
March 30	Summer Internship Application Deadline
April 1	Easter
April 8	Intern Dinner (6:00PM) & 10:2 Collective (7:00PM) @ FC Downtown
May 2-6	SunFest Parking Fundraiser
May 23	Midweek Activities End
May 23-25	Summer Interns Move-In
July 4	4 th on Flagler Parking Fundraiser
July 9-13	Student Camp
July 25-27	Summer Interns Move-Out
November 2-3*	Fall Retreat

Readings

- *Discipleship Essentials: A Guide to Building Your Life in Christ.*
Chapters 3/Quiet Time, 4/Bible Study, & 5/Prayer.
Author: Greg Ogden
 - DUE: Before Sunday February 18, 2018
- *Faith Alone: The Doctrine of Justification.* Chapter 14/The Righteousness of God.
Author: Thomas Schreiner
 - DUE: Before Sunday February 25, 2018
- *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers.*
Chapter 4b/God, Religion, Whatever: On Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.
Author: Christian Smith
 - DUE: Before Sunday March 4, 2018
- *The Conviction to Lead: 25 Principles for Leadership That Matters.*
Chapter 1/The Conviction to Lead: True Leadership Starts with a Purpose, Not a Plan.
Author: Albert Mohler
 - DUE: Before Sunday March 11, 2018

Discipleship Essentials

A GUIDE TO BUILDING YOUR LIFE IN CHRIST

EXPANDED EDITION



Greg Ogden

 IVP Connect

An imprint of InterVarsity Press
Downers Grove, Illinois

3 / Quiet Time

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 1:3

BIBLE STUDY: John 15:1-11

READING: If Quiet Time Is New to You



Core Truth

How does a disciple grow in Christ on a daily basis?

Just as Jesus went to a "solitary place" to meet with his Father (Mark 1:35), so a disciple should daily pull away from the busyness of life for a quiet time, a personal rendezvous with the Lord and Savior.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.
2. Restate the core truth in your own words.
3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

Healthy fruit in our lives is the byproduct of well-nourished and cultivated roots. If we sink our inner life deep into the truth of God's Word, life will blossom in us.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read Psalm 1. In what ways are the wicked contrasted with the righteous?
 2. The memory verses are Psalm 1:1-3. Copy these verses verbatim.
 3. The blessed man is first defined by what he does, not do. What is the blessed man to avoid?
 4. What does it mean to delight in the law of the Lord?
 5. What comparison is made in verse 3?
- What does this image teach us about how fruit grows and is nurtured in our lives?
6. How would you define *prosperity* (v. 3)?
 7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?

Inductive Bible Study Guide



Jesus also selects an organic image to describe the kind of relationship that we are to have with him if we are to bear fruit. Jesus says that he is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5).

1. Read John 15:1-11. The word *remain* defines the connection between the vine and the branches (vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10). According to these verses, what does it mean to remain?

2. What do we do to remain in the vine?

3. Our purpose, according to Jesus, is to bear fruit (v. 8). What is the nature of the fruit that is to be produced through our lives?

4. Pruning is a necessary process in order to produce more fruit (v. 2). What does the Lord use to prune us of the "dead" branches in our lives?

5. Jesus issues a warning that those branches that do not remain are cut off, thrown into the fire and burned (vv. 2, 6). What does Jesus mean by this?

6. What does Jesus mean when he says, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (v. 5)?

7. Jesus states in verse 11 that the intent of these instructions is to implant his joy in us and bring it to completion. What was the joy of Jesus that he wanted us to have?

8. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: If Quiet Time Is New to You
Adapted from Lord of the Universe, Lord of My Life!

A daily quiet time is a private meeting each day between a disciple and the Lord Jesus Christ. It should not be impromptu. We can commune with the Lord on a spur-of-the-moment basis many times each day, but a quiet time is a period of time we set aside in advance for the sole purpose of a personal meeting with our Savior and Lord.

A daily quiet time consists of at least three components.

- Reading the Bible with the intent not just to study but to meet Christ through the written Word.
- Meditating on what we have read so that biblical truth begins to saturate our minds, emotions and wills. "Meditate on [the Book of the Law] day and night" (Joshua 1:8).
- Praying to (communing with) God: praising, thanking and adoring him as well as confessing our sins, asking him to supply our needs and interceding for others.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Why should we have a daily quiet time? There are at least three reasons.

It pleases the Lord. Even if there were no other consequences, this would be sufficient reason for private daily communion with God. Of all the Old Testament sacrifices there was only one that was daily—the continual burnt offering. What was its purpose? Not to atone for sin but to provide pleasure (a sweet-smelling aroma) to the Lord. The New Testament directs us to continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, "the fruit of lips that confess his name"

(Hebrews 13:15). It may astonish us to realize that God is seeking people who will do just that. "They are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks" (John 4:23). One indicator of the depth of our relationship with the Lord is our willingness to spend time alone with him not primarily for what we get out of it but for what it means to him as well.

We receive benefits. The psalmist had this in mind when he wrote, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2). We benefit from a quiet time in several ways.

- **Information.** We learn about Christ and his truths when we spend time with him and his Word. Before we can obey him we need to know what he commands. Before we can understand what life is all about we need to know what he has taught.
- **Encouragement.** At times we get discouraged. There is no better source for inspiration than the Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Power.** Even when we know what we should be and do we lack the strength to be that kind of person and do those kinds of works. Christ is the source of power, and meeting with him is essential to our receiving it.
- **Pleasure.** Being alone with the person we love is enjoyable, and as we spend time with Christ we experience a joy unavailable anywhere else.

Jesus had a quiet time. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place,

where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). If our Lord found it necessary to meet privately with his Father, surely his example gives us a good reason to do likewise.

The question is whether we will be mediocre Christians or growing Christians. A major factor in determining the answer is whether or not we develop the discipline of a daily quiet time.

HOW TO BEGIN

Once you desire to begin a daily quiet time, what can you do to start?

First, remember the principle of self-discipline: do what you should do, when you should, the way you should, where you should and for the correct reasons. In other words, self-discipline is the wise use of your personal resources (such as time and energy).

Second, set aside time in advance for your quiet time. A daily quiet time should take place each day at the time when you are most alert. For some this will be in the morning, perhaps before breakfast; for others it will be another time of the day or evening. Though it is not a hard and fast rule, the morning is a preferable time since it begins before the rush of thoughts and activities of the day. An orchestra does not tune its instruments after the concert.

How much time should you spend? This will vary from person to person, but a good plan to follow is to start with ten minutes a day and build up to approximately thirty minutes. This regularly scheduled chunk of time can be a major factor in strengthening self-discipline. Here's a suggestion: pause while reading this and make a decision—now—about when and for how long, beginning tomorrow, you will meet the Lord Jesus Christ for a daily quiet time.

Third, plan ahead. Go to bed early enough so that you can awaken in a refreshed condition to meet Christ. The battle for the daily quiet time is often lost the night before. Staying up too late hampers our alertness, making us bleary-eyed and numb as we meet the Lord, or else we oversleep and skip the quiet time altogether.

Fourth, make your quiet time truly a quiet time. Psalm 46:10 speaks to this: "Be still, and know that I am God." Turn off your radio or television. Find as quiet a place as possible and make sure your location and position are conducive to alertness. Get out of bed. Sit erect. If you are stretched out in bed or reclining in a chair that is too comfortable you might be lulled into drowsiness.

Fifth, pray as you start your time with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to control your investment of time and to guide your praising, confessing, thanking, adoring, interceding, petitioning and meditating, as well as to help you get into the Bible. Open your mind and heart to Scripture.

Sixth, keep a notebook handy. Write down ideas you want to remember and questions you can't answer. Expression deepens impression—and writing is a good mode of expression.

Last, share your plans and goals with a friend. Tell him or her you are trying to develop the discipline of a daily quiet time. Request his or her prayer that God will enable you to succeed with your objectives.

WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE

Following are some common problems that are often encountered along the way.

I know I ought to have a daily quiet time, but I don't want to. Solution: Ask the Holy Spirit to plant within you the desire to have a

Quiet Time

daily quiet time. Nobody else can do this for you. You cannot generate the desire, and no other person can produce it for you.

I don't feel like having a daily quiet time today. Solution: Have your quiet time anyway and honestly admit to Christ that you don't feel like meeting him, but that you know he nevertheless is worth the investment of your time. Ask him to improve your feelings and try to figure out why you feel this way. Then work on the factors that produce such failings.

My mind wanders. Solution: Ask the Holy Spirit to give you strength to set your mind on Christ and his Word. Use your self-discipline to direct your mind so that it wanders less and less. If you are in a quiet place, singing, praying and reading out loud will give a sense of dialogue. Your mind will wander less when you write things down, like making an outline for prayer or study notes while reading the Bible.

I miss too many quiet times. Solution: Ask the Lord to strengthen your desire and to give you power to discipline your use of time. Share with another Christian friend your desire to have a daily quiet time and allow your friend to hold you accountable for it. Don't let an overactive conscience or the accusations of the devil play on your guilt. Confess that you have failed to keep your appointment with Jesus, ask his forgiveness and renew your relationship.

My daily quiet time is a drag. Solution: Pray that the joy of the Lord would be restored to your private meeting with Christ (Psalm 51:12). Put some variety into your approach. Sing a hymn for a change, or try a dil-

ferent form of Bible study.

There are two major reasons it is so difficult to develop the discipline of a daily quiet time. First is the influence of the flesh. Keep in mind that your old nature is opposed to daily quiet time (and to every other discipline that would please Christ; see Galatians 5:16-17). Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable your new nature to overcome your old nature in this battle.

The second reason is resistance by Satan. The devil opposes your every effort to please Christ. His strategy is to rob you of daily quiet time joy, to complicate your time schedule by keeping you up late at night and making it hard for you to get up in the morning, to make you drowsy during your time with the Lord, to make your mind wander, and otherwise to disrupt your meeting with Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to restrain the devil.

DO IT NOW!

Plan now for your daily quiet time tomorrow—and every tomorrow. If you miss a morning, do not quit. Deny the devil the pleasure of defeating you. Ask the Lord to forgive you for missing the meeting and to help you make it next time. You will doubtless miss several times, and it will take repeated beginnings before you succeed in developing this discipline. Indeed, it takes some people months to mature to the point where they develop the habit of a daily quiet time. For some it is a lifelong battle. In any case, don't quit when you miss. With God's help determine that you will grow to be a committed disciple who meets Christ regularly in meaningful daily quiet times.

Reading Study Guide

1. What is a quiet time, and what elements should be included?
2. Of the three reasons listed for a quiet time, which is the most compelling to you?
3. Of the practical suggestions listed, which ones give you the most difficulty? Which do you find helpful?
4. Which of the problems have you experienced? Are the suggestions helpful?
5. What questions do you have about the reading?
6. Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you?

Going Deeper

Foster, Richard. "The Spiritual Disciplines: Door to Liberation." Introduction to *Celebration of Discipline*. 20th anniversary edition. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.
 Mungert, Robert Boyd. *My Heart—Christ's Home*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1954.

4 / Bible Study

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIBLE STUDY: Psalm 119:1-16

READING: Inductive Bible Study



Core Truth

What place should the Bible have in a disciple's daily quiet time?

Because the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the uniquely inspired revelation of God and the standard of truth in all matters of faith and practice, a portion of each day should be set aside to read, study and meditate on God's Word. The Bible is to the spirit what food is to the body.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.
2. Restate the core truth in your own words.
3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

These verses are part of a classic New Testament passage that conveys both the source and the value of the Bible.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read 2 Timothy 3. How is Paul's instruction about the nature of Scripture a contrast to the nonbelieving world that Paul describes?
2. The memory verses are 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Copy the verses verbatim.
3. Paul says that "all Scripture is God-breathed," or inspired. How is the inspiration of Scripture different from an "inspired" speech or writing?
4. How is Scripture useful in these ways?
 - Teaching
 - Rebuking
 - Correcting
 - Training
5. How does Scripture equip us for every good work?
6. Studying Scripture can simply increase our information. How do we move from information to transformation?
7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Psalms 119 is the longest of the psalms and is a celebration of God's law. The value of God's law is stated succinctly: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (v. 105). By reading the first sixteen verses we will see what our attitude should be toward God's Word and its place in our lives.

1. *Read Psalm 119:1-16.* What are the different words and phrases for the law of God?
2. What are we to do regarding the law of God?
3. What will be the results in our lives if we do these things?
4. Verse 11 gives one reason for memorizing Scripture. What is the reason stated here, and what other reasons come to mind?
5. What questions do you have about this passage?
6. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.

II. Interpretation (What does it mean?)

The aim of interpretation is to bring out the meaning of the passage for the people to whom it was written and for us today.

- A. Definitions
 - 1. What do the terms, phrases and sentences mean?
 - 2. What are modern equivalents?
 - 3. List any surprising terms used, as well as figures of speech—similes, metaphors, puns, plays-on words, hyperbole.
- B. Relationships
 - 1. Why this phrase, word or idea?
 - 2. Why did the author say it here?
 - 3. What relationship does one thought have to another?
- C. Implications
 - 1. What is the full significance of the statements?
 - 2. Beware of spiritualizing or allegorizing.

III. Application (What does it mean to me?)

- A. Cultivate a voice of the Spirit.
- B. Apply the main point to your life.
 - 1. What has already been a part of my thinking? What is new to me?

- 2. What requires a change of thought? How can I make that change?
- 3. Where do I need a change in my behavior?
- 4. What can I do now?
 - Set long- and short-range goals for behavior. Have a plan. Break down your change of behavior or things you want to know into steps. For example: get counseling, get suggestions for reading, set goals in behavior change, ask someone to hold you accountable.

- C. Assert your will.
- D. What principles are relevant if the historical situation is no longer relevant?
- E. Apply your knowledge to particular areas.
 - 1. Attitude and obedience to God; attitude toward self.
 - 2. Situations and relationships in family life.
 - 3. Coworkers, employers, subordinates, fellow students.
 - 4. Teaching, practices, relationships in your home church and in other churches, missionary work.
 - 5. National, political, sociological and economic questions.

Reading: Inductive Bible Study

Inductive Bible study uses the scientific method of investigation. We start with the data in the biblical text and from that draw conclusions about meaning and application. The process of study begins with the six investigative questions that a good reporter would use in gathering information to write a story—Who? What? Where? When? How? Why? Once the truth has been found, its meaning can be explored and application to our lives is possible. The following outline provides much detail—more than you could ever follow in one study—but gives a good overview of the three-step study process. See page 44 for a sample study using this outline.

HOW TO PREPARE

First of all, pray, asking the Lord to quiet your heart and to make you receptive to the truth that you will hear.

- I. Observation (What does it say?) If we take obedience to God seriously then we must find out what God is saying. The first step is to observe exactly what is in the text before we jump to our own preconceived ideas.

A. Overview

- 1. Skim material with a view to its main themes.
- 2. Note context of passage and background if necessary.
- 3. Reread in a different translation and look for differences.
- 4. Look for main thought divisions—read the passage in paragraphs.

- B. Ask Six Investigative Questions
 - 1. *Who* are the main characters, and how are they described?

- a. Notice a description of God, Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit.
- b. Consider how (or if) the character or personality of the author relates to the passage.
- c. Notice any supernatural beings mentioned.
- d. Notice any human characters mentioned.

2. What is happening?

List key verbs, commands given by and to whom, promises, conditions implied in text or context, local customs mentioned, flow of conversation.

3. Where do the events occur?

How many miles from one place to another? Is this place significant for other events?

4. When do the events occur?

- a. How long does each event take?
- b. What can be learned from the mention of rulers, ages of characters, lapse of time, genealogies, cultural differences?
- c. Are there clues about the historical background or season of year?

5. Why do the events occur?

6. How do the events happen?

C. Summary

- 1. Write down the main thrust of the passage. This may become the main thought that you want to develop.
- 2. Make notes on unsolved problems as you go through the text. These may be solved in the process of understanding, or you may have to consult reference works such as commentaries, study Bibles, dictionaries or atlases.

Sample Bible Study

Luke 18:1-8

Observe What does it say? (who, what, when, where, why, how)	Interpret What does it mean?	Apply What does it mean to me?
<p>Who are the main characters, and how are they described?</p> <p>1. Judge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • did not fear God • did not care about people • was unjust <p>2. Widow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kept bothering the judge to render justice <p>3. God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brings about justice to his chosen ones • listens to those who cry out to him • renders justice quickly <p>What is happening?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The key words or phrases, <i>razable, pray, not lose heart, justice, faith</i> 2. Promise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God will bring justice quickly to those who cry out to him 3. Flow of conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • widow keeps coming to the judge • judge refuses to give justice • she keeps bothering him, and he finally renders justice because he is getting worn out <p>Why is this story told?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To show us that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we should always pray and not lose heart. • God is eager to grant justice to those who cry out to him 2. It makes us think: Will the Son of Man find faith when he returns? 	<p>Raise appropriate questions and draw conclusions about the meaning of the text.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why does Jesus choose an unjust judge to make a point about the justice of God? Is the unjust judge being compared to or contrasted with God? It appears that the point is that if even an unjust judge will render justice because of the persistence of the widow, how much more will a God who cares. 2. Why does Jesus choose a widow as the protagonist? Widows were powerless. All they had was the power of persistence, no other leverage. 3. What is the master parable of the parable? To pray and not lose heart. To remain in faithful prayer to the end, until Jesus returns. 4. What is the point that Jesus wants us to learn about God? God is eager to render justice and he hears the cries of his people. 	<p><i>Confession</i>—I too easily lose my focus of attention when I am praying for people to come to Christ who have been resistant for a long time.</p> <p><i>Attitude of obedience</i>—Prayerful intercession over long-term needs. Pray for my sister daily for the relief of her chronic back pain.</p>

Reading Study Guide

1. What is the inductive method?
2. Why is it considered a scientific method?
3. What is the difference between observation, interpretation and application?
4. This method can be greatly simplified for daily use. What do you notice from this study method that could be helpful in getting the most from a passage of Scripture?
5. Practice this method by creating your own three-column guide on Luke 11:5-13. Review the instructions to see the items that you will want to draw from the text. Share your findings with your partner(s). What issues did this raise for you?

Going Deeper

Watson, David. "The Word of God." Chap. 7 in *Called and Committed: World-Changing Discipleship*. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 2000.



Memory Verse Study Guide

There is no better place to begin to learn how to pray than to study the prayer that was a response to Jesus' disciple's request, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

1. *Putting it in context:* The Lord's Prayer is set in Matthew 6, where Jesus contrasts true and false ways of showing devotion to God. How is the Lord's Prayer an expression of true love for God?

2. The memory verses are *Matthew 6:9-13*. Copy these verses verbatim.

3. The first petition is that the Father's name be hallowed. Why does Jesus start here?

4. What scope of subjects does the Lord's Prayer cover?

5. Notice the different types of prayer in the Lord's Prayer. What seems to be missing from the types listed?

6. Why is this a helpful model for prayer?

7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?

5 / Prayer

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: Matthew 6:9-13

BIBLE STUDY: Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

READING: How Do We Pray?



Core Truth

What is prayer, and how can a disciple pray effectively?

Prayer is transparent dialogue. It is a conversation with God in which we address him and in which he addresses us. There are four types of prayer, which are summarized by the acronym ACTS.

Adoration: appreciating God for who he is apart from what he has done for us.

Confession: acknowledging to God our specific sin and seeking his pardon.

Thanks: appreciating God for his benefit to us.

Supplication: interceding for ourselves or others according to God's will.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?

Inductive Bible Study Guide

These two passages of Scripture help to interpret one another. This study weaves them together, so be ready to flip back and forth between them. We will discover how Luke 11 helps explain Jesus' unusual comparison of God to an unrighteous judge in Luke 18.

1. Read *Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8*. What is the point of Jesus' stories about prayer in 11:5-8 and 18:1-8? How do the widow and the friend illustrate this point?
2. What position do the friend and the widow have in relationship to their "benefactors"? What does this teach us about the posture of prayer?
3. What do these passages teach us about God? Is God a reluctant giver who must be cajoled? Use these passages to show that God is generous.
4. What attitude of prayer is Jesus calling us to have in 11:9 and 18:1, 8?

5. Why does God want us to ask him for things when he already knows our needs?

6. Can God's actions be influenced by our prayers? Why or why not?

7. What questions do you have about this passage?

8. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: How Do We Pray?

Prayer is transparent dialogue. It is the way we have an intimate conversation with the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of our lives, who is wild about spending time with us. Prayer represents the place of greatest safety where we can pour out our hearts in an unedited fashion, much like we would to a dear friend who accepts us as we are, warts and all. Though the following poem is about friendship, it expresses our experience of prayer as well.

Oh, the comfort—the inexpressible
comfort of feeling safe with a person,
Having neither to weigh thoughts,
Nor measure words—but pouring them
All right out—just as they are—
Chaff and grain together—
Certain that a faithful hand will
Take and sift them—
Keep what is worth keeping—
And with the breath of kindness
Blow the rest away!

Prayer is a come-as-you-are affair. It is God's welcome into his heart. Richard Foster begins his wonderful book *Prayer: Finding Your Heart's True Home* with this winsome invitation:

The Lord is inviting you—and me—to come home, to come home to where we belong, to come home to that for which we were created. His arms are stretched out wide to receive us. His heart is enlarged to take us in. For too long we have been in the far country: a country of noise and hurry and crowds, a country of climb and push and shove, a country of frustration and fear and intimidation. And he welcomes us home: home to serenity and peace and joy, home to friend-

ship and fellowship and openness, home to intimacy and acceptance and affirmation.⁷

Prayer is a relationship with the One who has already declared us his beloved children and who wants to be close to us. So what should we talk about in prayer? Just as conversations with close friends have topics, so there is a dialogue we can have with our Lord. It is the subject matter of prayer; the parts of the conversation, that we will examine here. Using the acronym ACTS introduced earlier, we'll discuss the four basic parts of prayer: adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

ADORATION

The first movement of the heart in prayer is adoration. It is helpful to distinguish adoration from thanksgiving. Adoration is appreciating who God is himself, whereas thanksgiving is appreciating God for what he has done for us. Ole Halleby captures this nuance. "When I give thanks, my thoughts circle about myself to some extent. But in praise my soul ascends to self-forgetting adoration, seeing and praising only the majesty and power of God. His grace and redemption."⁸

Adoration lifts us out of ourselves to behold the wonder and beauty of God. The psalms, the worship book of the Bible, are effusive and demonstrative in their praise.

I will exalt you, my God the King,
I will praise your name for ever and
ever.

Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
Great is the LORD and most worthy of
praise;

his greatness no one can fathom. (Psalm 145:1-3)

One way to practice adoration is to select an attribute of God and write in your journal the fruits of your imagination. For example, some ideas might include: God is sovereign—that means that not one molecule in the universe is out of God's control; God is omniscient—never will God have to slap his forehead in amazement—like *ah, God is the very breath in which we live and move and have our being*—isn't it rather egocentric of the Lord to want us to fill our minds and hearts with thoughts of him? If we see praise only as giving God compliments, then we miss the everyday nature of praise. Enjoyment spontaneously overflows in praise. We go to an enjoyable movie and speak its praises. When my wife and I take a Sunday-afternoon drive on a spectacular day, we keep saying to each other, "Look at that!" Praise not only expresses our joy, it also completes it.

Why does God want us to praise him? Not only because he deserves it, but for what we get out of it. What is the greatest thing God can give us? More of himself. "Praise is the sweet echo of his own excellence in the hearts of his people."⁴

CONFESSIO

When we fill our hearts with the glory of God and pray as Jesus taught us, "Hallowed be your name" the natural movement of our hearts is to see the darkness of our lives in light of his radiance. In our former house the walls were painted "antique" white, which to my eyes looked pretty white until pure white was placed next to it. It was only then that I could see how tainted was the antique white. When we measure our lives against God's moral per-

fection, we begin to see how contaminated our hearts are.

In Greek, *confess* means "to agree with." In confessing to God we are agreeing with God about what he sees. By making confession a regular part of our conversation with the Lord we are giving him permission to show us our lives through his eyes. Our prayer is "Lord, let me see me as you see me."

Confession is the courageous and honest admission that we have violated God's holy law and are in desperate need of forgiveness. King David ran from God for almost a year after his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and his brazen abuse of power in having her husband killed. Finally the prophet Nathan unmasked David's deceit and said, "You are the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). That is when David came clean. Psalm 51 records his penitence.

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions. . . .

For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight
(Psalm 51:1, 3-4)

The idea of confession brings to mind a confusing issue. How do we distinguish between Satan's accusations and God's conviction? We often forget that we have an enemy who is called the "accuser of the brethren" and who wants us to wallow in our guilt. This enemy has plenty of ammunition with which to work. His objective is to discourage us about the progress we are making in our relationship with Christ, perhaps through nagging messages such as "You call yourself a Christian yet you are still dealing with the same things. Come on, who are you kidding?" We begin to

Prayer

draw the conclusion that we are unworthy to be God's child. These weights of discouragement are not of God but are the enemy's ways of taking us out of the battle.

Yet God's convicting Spirit is incisive, focused and piercing. The searchlight of the Holy Spirit unmarks specific sins, and we are then led to godly sorrow and grief over how we violated our relationship with the God who claimed our heart. From there we are led to repentance, which means a change of behavior. And finally—and immediately—the Lord cleanses our spirit so that inwardly we feel fresh and renewed like the air after the first rains of spring.

Satan causes us to wallow in unmarked guilt, but God's conviction is focused and meant to lead us to restoration. Any demeaning messages and put-downs are not from the Lord but are from our overactive conscience or the one who wants us to believe lies about ourselves. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

THANKSGIVING

When we truly understand the rescue that God has performed in snatching us from the guilt and condemnation of our sin, then we will realize that the fundamental motive of Christian living is thanksgiving. One of the signs of the filling of the Holy Spirit, says Paul, is "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).

An old man walks alone on a Florida beach carrying a bucket of shrimp. He makes his way to the end of the pier, and soon a mass of dancing dots fills the sky. The evening silence gives way to screeching birds. For half an hour the man stands surrounded by the birds until the bucket is empty. But even when the food is

gone, the gulls perch on his hat and linger. This weekly offering to the sea gulls was his way of giving thanks.

The man is Eddie Rickenbacker. In October 1942 he was flying in his B-17 on a mission to deliver a message to General Douglas MacArthur when he went down in the Pacific. All eight crew members escaped into life rafts. After eight days, all their rations were gone. All means of survival had been exhausted. In a weakened state, the men shared in an afternoon devotional service and then tried to rest. As Rickenbacker was dozing with his hat over his eyes, he felt something land on his head. He knew it was a sea gull, which meant food. The crew survived. God had sent a sea gull hundreds of miles from shore to their rescue. Rickenbacker never forgot to say thanks.

We so easily lose our sense of gratitude and forget the good things the Lord has done for us. Thanksgiving is the cultivation of a memory. It is prayerfully listing the good that is in our life.

SUPPLICATION

Supplication means to ask with intensity, earnestness and perseverance, to ask and keep on asking. In the context of prayer Jesus says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Luke 11:9). Supplication can be broken down into intercession for others and petitions for ourselves.

Intercession is to stand between two parties and plead the case of one to another. In this case it is to stand between God and another and plead to God on the other's behalf. Intercession is perhaps the most unselfish act of love, because the person who is blessed by God seldom knows who has been praying for him or her. God has given us the great privilege of bringing

others into his presence through prayer, just as the four friends carried the paralytic into the presence of Jesus in Mark 2:1-12.

And how should we pray intercessory prayers? As a point of comparison we can place the content of our prayers against Paul's intercession in Ephesians 1:16-19, 3:16-19, and Colossians 1:9-12. While we often focus on material needs such as healing, job problems or financial matters, Paul was concerned that God would be found sufficient, that the knowledge of God's will would fill our lives, that we would be surrounded and inundated by the love of God.

Our failure to ask is a failure to know Jesus well. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

¹John M. Muelink Cook, "Friendship."

²Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: Harper/San Francisco, 1992), p. 1.

³St. Basil, *Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), p. 141.

⁴John Piper, *Desiring God* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1986), p. 31.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 130.

Reading Study Guide

1. What is adoration?

2. What makes God worthy of worship?

3. What is confession?

Why does it follow adoration?

4. What is the connection between thanksgiving and remembering?

5. What is the biblical definition of intercessory prayer?

How does this contrast with how we often pray for one another?

6. Why is prayer so difficult?

7. What questions do you have about this reading?

8. Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Foster, Richard. "Prayer." Chap. 3 in *Celebration of Discipline*, 20th anniversary ed. San Francisco: Harper/San Francisco, 1998.

THE 5 SOLAS SERIES

Faith ALONE

THE DOCTRINE OF
JUSTIFICATION

What the Reformers Taught
... and Why It Still Matters

THOMAS SCHREINER
MATTHEW BARRETT, SERIES EDITOR

 ZONDERVAN®

The Righteousness of God

"For in it [the gospel] God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith."
—Romans 1:17

One of the most significant phrases in Pauline theology is the "righteousness of God." The phrase appears in some of the most important soteriological passages in Paul's writings. If we remember church history, we recall that Luther's understanding of justification turned on, among other things, his comprehension of "the righteousness of God" in Rom 1:17. We aren't surprised to learn, then, that the meaning of the phrase "righteousness of God" has been vigorously debated in recent years. After examining several of the key texts, I will argue here that the term includes the idea of right standing with God.

We have already seen one reason why such a conclusion is probable: when Paul uses the term "righteousness" in soteriological contexts, it denotes right standing with God. It would fit with our expectations, then, to find that Paul uses the phrase "righteousness of God" in soteriological contexts with a similar meaning. Before we investigate the phrase, let's take a look at the relevant verses. Some of these don't have the exact phrase "righteousness of God," but if the concept is present in some form (e.g., with a pronoun), they are included below.

"For in it [the gospel] God's righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith" (Rom 1:17).

"But if our unrighteousness highlights God's righteousness, what are we to say? I use a human argument: Is God unrighteous to inflict wrath?" (Rom 3:5).

"But now, apart from the law, God's righteousness has been revealed—attested by the Law and the Prophets—that is, God's

righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, since there is no distinction" (Rom 3:21–22).

"God presented Him as a propitiation through faith in His blood, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. God presented Him to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom 3:25–26).

"Because they disregarded the righteousness from God and attempted to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness" (Rom 10:3).

"But it is from Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became God-given wisdom for us—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30).

"He [God] made the One [Jesus] who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21).

"And be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith" (Phil 3:9).

God's Judging Righteousness

The phrase "God's righteousness" may refer to an attribute of God. In Rom 3:5 and 3:25–26, this is almost certainly the meaning, and the emphasis is on God's righteousness in judgment. God's righteousness will be displayed as an attribute of his character when he judges the world on the last day (Rom 3:5). God also demonstrated his righteousness (his holiness and justice) when his wrath was satisfied through Jesus' death on the cross (3:25–26).¹ We have further evidence here that righteousness includes the notion of God's judging righteousness. It can't be limited to his saving righteousness, for God's justice is satisfied in the cross of Jesus Christ. In the cross, then, the judging and saving righteousness of God meet (Rom 3:21–26): God is revealed to be both Savior and Judge, merciful and holy.

The righteousness of God is uniquely revealed in the gospel in that both the love and holiness of God are disclosed. That God's righteousness

1. The meaning of these verses is debated fiercely. For a defense of what is said here, see Scheiner, *Romans*, 191–98.

righteousness that is given to those who have faith in Christ. Our own righteousness is something we achieve if we fulfill the mandates of the law, but the righteousness of God is *from* him—it is a gift granted to those who believe. It is granted by faith alone!

The near context of Rom 3:21–22 points us in the same direction, for the noun clause speaks of a righteousness given by God through faith, and then the verbal clause in 3:24 says Christians “are justified freely by his grace.” The clause in 3:24 emphasizes that justification is a gift of God, granted freely, and this fits nicely with the idea that God’s righteousness is his gift given to believers in 3:21–22. We see something similar in 10:3, where Paul refers to the righteousness of God. In 10:4 he says righteousness belongs to those who believe and in 10:6 that “righteousness” “is by faith” (NIV). Again, it seems most likely that the expression “righteousness of God” and the use of the word “righteousness” have the same meaning, so that in both cases it denotes the gift God gives his people.

Another text supporting the notion that righteousness is a gift lacks the phrase “of God,” yet in the context there is no doubt that the righteousness comes from God. In Rom 5:17 Paul is in the midst of an extended discussion where he contrasts and compares Adam and Christ (5:12–19). He says in 5:17, “Since by the one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive the overflow of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” Of interest to us here is the phrase “the gift of righteousness” (*ἡ δὲ δόξα τῆς δικαιοσύνης*). Certainly the righteousness in view here comes from God, but what is striking is that it is explicitly designated as a gift. It is something God gives to us in Jesus Christ, and this matches with the notion that the righteousness of God denotes the gift of righteousness God grants to believers.

Paul’s reference to righteousness in 1 Cor 1:30 also indicates that righteousness is a gift of God. In Christ Jesus, Paul exclaims, believers are given wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Paul specifically says that “wisdom” is “from God” (*apo theou*), and obviously the phrase “from God” includes righteousness as well. Believers may only boast in the Lord because their righteousness is from him (1 Cor 1:31). It is his gift! Similarly, in 2 Cor 5:21 believers become “the righteousness of God” in Christ Jesus. They are given God’s righteousness by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. We see, then, significant evidence that the righteousness of God is a *gift* of God, a gift that denotes a right standing with God granted to those who put their trust in Jesus Christ.

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includes the idea of judgment is borne out by Rom 2:5, “But because of your hardness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God’s righteous judgment (*dikaiokratis*) is revealed.” That God’s righteousness includes the idea of holiness or justice is borne out by the reference to “propitiation” or the “mercy seat” (*hilasterion*; 3:25), where God both expiated and propitiated sins. This means that our sins were both wiped away and satisfied God’s wrath at the cross. If God’s wrath was appeased at the cross, then his righteousness, his holiness, is manifested. The sins of the world aren’t swept under the rug. Instead, Jesus Christ took upon himself the punishment we deserved.

Justification of the ungodly, then, is the justification or vindication of God, for it vindicates his holiness and righteousness, while at the same time it discloses his mercy and love. God’s righteousness is manifested in judgment, but the emphasis in Paul is on God’s saving righteousness when he uses the term “righteousness of God.” Even when the text denotes God’s saving righteousness, the gift that he gives to human beings, the righteousness of God is also an attribute of God. In other words, it is both a genitive of source (“righteousness from God”) and a genitive of description (“God’s righteousness”). The gift God gives human beings is his own righteousness, his own character. The righteousness of God in Jesus Christ is, as we will see, *imputed* to believers. In the cross of Jesus Christ, then, both the saving and judging righteousness of God are revealed.

A Gift of God

So does the righteousness of God really refer to the gift of God, to one’s status before God? The following arguments suggest that it should be interpreted in this way. First, several texts speak of a righteousness of God accessed by faith (Rom 1:17; 3:21–22; 10:3; Phil 3:9). We have already seen that Paul speaks of righteousness by faith. If *righteousness by faith* refers to a right standing with God by faith, which was argued previously, it is natural to think as well that the *righteousness of God* denotes the gift of righteousness from God by faith. The words “of God” in the phrase “righteousness of God” add a new thought that is compatible with “righteousness by faith,” namely, the righteousness that belongs to believers by faith is *from* God. It is his gift to them.

Philippians 3:9 removes any doubt about this meaning by using the expression “righteousness from God [*ek theou*].” Here, Paul explicitly contrasts his own righteousness, which derives from the law, to the

Parallels between Philippians 3 and Romans 10

The parallels between Philippians 3 and Romans 10 indicate that God's righteousness is the same in both instances, strengthening the idea that the righteousness of God is a gift of God. Philippians 3:2–11 recounts Paul's story and experience before and after his conversion, and we see in Rom 10:1–8 that unbelieving Israel replicated Paul's story as an unbeliever. Unbelieving Israel had a "zeal for God" (10:2), which was expressed in their devotion to the law. Similarly, Paul expressed his "zeal" in persecuting the church before he met Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road (Phil 3:6). Israel tried to "establish their own righteousness" by observing the law (Rom 10:3), and Paul attempted to secure and establish his own righteousness based on his law obedience (Phil 3:6, 9). In both texts Paul contrasts righteousness by law and righteousness by faith (Rom 10:4–8; Phil 3:9).

The remarkable similarities in subject matter that tie Romans 10 and Philippians 3 together strongly suggest that the definition of "righteousness of God" in Romans 10 is the same as the "righteousness from God" in Phil 3:9. In the latter text, righteousness clearly is a gift given to sinners—a declaration that those who have failed to keep the law but who have trusted in Jesus Christ stand in the right before God. In Philippians Paul emphasizes that righteousness is a gift *from God*. I would argue that the parallels and contextual similarities between Philippians 3 and Romans 10 suggest that "the righteousness of God" in Romans 10 shouldn't be interpreted differently from "the righteousness from God" in Phil 3:9. Paul doesn't have to use the preposition "from" (*ek*) in Romans 10 to say that righteousness is God's gift, for his syntax is full of variety and Paul doesn't write technically. This means that the righteousness of God in Rom 10:3 most likely refers to a righteousness *from God*—righteousness that is a gift of God. God's righteousness is not gained through keeping the law; it is given to those who put their faith in God.

We can go one step farther. It is unlikely that the "righteousness of God" in Rom 1:17 and 3:21–22 has a different meaning from what we have found in Romans 10. In all three texts we have similar contexts and similar subject matter. In every case the phrase occurs in a soteriological context, and thus all three passages almost certainly teach that righteousness is a gift of God given to believers.

A Response to Some Transformative Arguments

At this point, let me address a few other arguments that have been adduced to support a transformative understanding of justification. Some have asked: Doesn't the collocation "power of God," "righteousness of God," and "wrath of God" support a transformative view (Rom 1:18)? The argument here is rather imprecise, for this collocation of terms doesn't really help us define *what* righteousness is. The definition of the term must be established from the way the word is used and should be based on clear contextual indicators. Parallel phrases don't necessarily lead to the conclusion that the phrases have the same meaning or significance. The fact that "righteousness" sits next to the word "power" doesn't clearly lead to the conclusion that righteousness is a power that transforms us. It makes perfect sense to say that God's power in the gospel declares us to stand in the right before him since righteousness is a gift.

Romans 5:19 is also sometimes presented to support the transformative position: "For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." Those who defend a transformative view maintain that sinners are truly made righteous in Christ, just as they were made sinners through Adam's disobedience. Even if this is the case, it doesn't necessarily follow that the righteousness discussed here is transformative. The verb translated "made" (*katistēmi*) can be translated in a number of ways, but it especially bears the meaning "appoint" (cf. Matt 24:45; Luke 12:14; Acts 6:3; Titus 1:7; Heb 7:1, 28), which actually fits nicely with a forensic understanding of the verse.

Such a view seems to be borne out by considering the larger context in which Rom 5:18 is located. It seems fair to conclude from the contrast between Adam and Christ that pervades this passage (Rom 5:12–19), and from the insistence that sin and death come from Adam and that righteousness and life hail from Christ that the fundamental thought of the text is forensic. We can also say it this way: the forensic is the basis of the transformative. It is even possible that the future tense ("the many will be made [*katastathēsontai*] righteous") signifies that the righteousness spoken of here is eschatological. People truly become righteous by virtue of Christ's work, but that righteousness is future and won't be theirs fully until the eschaton. Thus, even if this text does say that believers are truly righteous in Christ in the present, it is likely that the forensic is the foundation of the transformative, and the verse doesn't decisively teach that God's righteousness is transformative.

God's Effective Verdict

One additional variant of this view is worth exploring before we move on.² Peter Leithart has argued that Yahweh's judgment isn't simply a legal verdict but is also effective and executive, that his justice for the poor isn't only a verdict but also involves deliverance: "He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing" (Deut 10:18; cf. Ps 68:5).³ Similarly, the righteousness of the future messianic king (Ps 72:1-2) is also effective: "May he vindicate the afflicted among the people, help the poor, and crush the oppressor" (Ps 72:4). The idea in Isa 11:4 is similar, which is also a messianic text: "He will judge the poor righteously and execute justice for the oppressed of the land. He will strike the land with discipline from His mouth, and He will kill the wicked with a command from His lips." God's judgment on the wicked is a verdict that is carried out (Joel 3:12; Mic 4:3; cf. Ezek 7:3-5, 8-9). His word isn't an idle word but creates a new reality.

The notion that God's righteousness is effective is certainly correct. God's verdicts are never empty words; they create a new reality. Yet it doesn't follow from this that righteousness is transformative. Leithart argues that justification is both a verdict and forensic. The verdict is effective so that it "includes the deliverance of those who have been reckoned righteous."⁴ Leithart points to Ps 35:22-28, where David's vindication and righteousness include his victory over his foes, his deliverance, suggesting that a forensic category, while true, is too limiting.⁵ Similarly, Isa 54:11-17 pictures Israel's justification as its rebirth and restoration, so that once again we have the notion of deliverance.⁶ The same notion of deliverance is evident in Paul, according to Leithart, for Paul draws on Psalm 143 in Rom 3:20, and in Psalm 143 righteousness includes the notion of deliverance.⁷

Leithart especially focuses on the implications of Jesus' resurrection for

2. See esp. Peter J. Leithart, "Justification as Verdict and Deliverance: A Biblical Perspective," *Protestant* 16 (2007), 56-72; cf. also Mark A. Seifrid, "Righteousness Language in the Hebrew Scriptures and Early Judaism," in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume 1: The Complexities of Second-Temple Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 415-42. I think, however, Seifrid's understanding of effectiveness is closer to mine, for he doesn't see the inherent transposition of human beings in justification.

3. For many of the examples here, see Peter J. Leithart, "Judge Me, O God!: Biblical Perspective on Justification," in *The Federal Vision* (ed. Steve Wilkins and Duane Garner, Montreux, LA: Athanasius Press, 2004), 203-35.

4. Leithart, "Justification as Verdict and Deliverance," 59.

5. *Ibid.*, 60-61.

6. *Ibid.*, 62-63.

7. *Ibid.*, 64-65.

justification (Rom. 4:25).⁸ Jesus' resurrection was his justification (1 Tim 3:16), and it can't be a mere verdict (it can't be limited to the forensic, according to Leithart), for otherwise Jesus would still be in the grave. The verdict of God actually delivered Jesus from the domain of death and sin. Leithart sees this same truth in other texts we have considered, such as Rom 5:15-19; 6:7, and 8:1-4.⁹

Leithart makes a strong case for an understanding of righteousness that harkens back to Augustine. Such an understanding differs from the Reformers, however, and ventures into Catholic territory, for righteousness now also has the meaning of *make righteous* and isn't limited to *declare righteous*. How should we respond to the evidence presented here? On the one hand, it is certainly correct to say that God's verdicts are effective. On the other hand, there is a danger of confusing terms, so that everything means everything. If a psalm speaks of righteousness, deliverance, victory, and the like, we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that righteousness means victory or deliverance. As was argued earlier, words still have distinct meanings. So while it is certainly true that all those who are justified are also delivered, it doesn't follow from this that justified means deliverance. Too often, words that are associated with righteousness are used to define righteousness and thus the distinction between the words used is completely erased.

Still, there is truth to the notion that this forensic verdict is effective. God's vindication of Jesus was displayed in his resurrection. God's words are never empty; they do create a new reality. Nevertheless, despite Leithart's protestations, his reading ventures into the Augustinian definition "make righteous." If the verdict that we are justified or righteous is, indeed, an effective one, it would follow that Leithart is saying that we are not only declared righteous, but we are actually made righteous.

The problem with this line of thinking—that the effectiveness of the verdict means that we are made righteous—is that the term itself has a forensic meaning, as we showed earlier. Understanding either the noun or the verb to mean "make righteous" doesn't accord with the many texts we have examined. No one denies, of course, that those who are declared righteous are also changed by God's grace. The issue, though, is the precise meaning of the term before us. If the term means *make righteous*, then it seems that justification is progressive, for we aren't made perfectly righteous when we first believe. In other words, the effectiveness doesn't

8. *Ibid.*, 65-67.

9. *Ibid.*, 67-72.

go that far. This isn't to deny that the verdict is effective. It does mean, however, that we need to carefully define what we mean when we speak of an *effective* verdict.

I would suggest that what we mean when we say a verdict is effective is that sinners who trust in Christ are truly righteous before God, but the righteousness doesn't lie in themselves but in Jesus Christ. They are righteous because they are united to Jesus Christ, and he is their righteousness. This verdict of righteousness isn't a legal fiction, for believers are truly righteous because all that Christ is belongs to them. They are righteous because Christ's righteousness is imputed to them, and to that subject we turn in the next chapter. The imputation of Christ's righteousness is no legal fiction, but neither should it be defined in terms of transformation or the infusion of righteousness.

Conclusion

I have argued that the term "righteousness of God" should be understood forensically, to denote right standing before God. God's righteousness is a gift he gives to those who trust in him for salvation. Hence, believers are right before God by faith alone. The term also refers to the character of God, so that the genitive refers to a gift of God and an attribute of God. God gives his righteousness to human beings. The gift character of righteousness is evident from Rom 5:17; 1 Cor 1:30; and Phil 3:9. We also saw that the parallels between Phil 3:2-9 and Rom 10:1-8 demonstrate that God's righteousness is a gift in each instance.

The fact that "from" (*ek*) isn't repeated in Romans 10 is scarcely determinative, for Paul is flexible in his use of language. Context is the most important factor for assessing the meaning. If "righteousness of God" refers to God's gift in Romans 10, it almost certainly has that meaning in Rom 1:17 and 3:21-22 as well. Furthermore, Paul glides from "righteousness" in Rom 9:30-32 to "righteousness of God" in Rom 10:3, and it is likely that the term has the same meaning. The latter simply emphasizes that it comes from God. Some have argued that the effectiveness of the verdict means that righteousness is transformative. But such arguments don't overturn the normal meaning of the word. Yes, the verdict is effective: we really are in a right relationship with God since Christ is our righteousness and we are united to Christ by faith. We are truly right in God's sight by faith alone!

SOUL SEARCHING

The Religious and Spiritual Lives
of American Teenagers

CHRISTIAN SMITH
With Melinda Lundquist Denton

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3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

Such a *de facto* creed is particularly evident among mainline Protestant and Catholic youth, but is also visible among black and conservative Protestants, Jewish teens, other religious types of teenagers, and even many non-religious teenagers in the United States. Note that no teenager would actually use the terminology "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" to describe himself or herself. That is our summarizing term. And very few teenagers would lay out the five points of its creed as clearly and concisely as we have just done. But when one sifts through and digests hundreds of discussions with U.S. teenagers about religion, God, faith, prayer, and other spiritual practices, what seems to emerge as the dominant *de facto* religious viewpoint turns out to be some version of this faith. We could literally fill another chapter of this book with more quotes from teen interviews illustrating Moralistic Therapeutic Deism and exploring its nuances and variants. Given space limitations, however, suffice it here to examine merely a few more representative quotes depicting this religion's core components.

First, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about inculcating a moralistic approach to life. It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person. That means being nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, responsible, at work on self-improvement, taking care of one's health, and doing one's best to be successful. One 17-year-old white Mormon boy from Utah said this very clearly: "I believe in, well, my whole religion is where you try to be good and, ah, if you're not good then you should just try to get better, that's all." Being moral in this faith means being the kind of person that other people will like, fulfilling one's personal potential, and not being socially disruptive or interpersonally obnoxious. As more than one teenager summarized morality for us, including the Hindu boy quoted above, "Just don't be an asshole, that's all." Such a moral vision is inclusive of most religions, which are presumed ultimately to stand for equivalent moral views. Thus, a nonreligious white girl from Maryland said, "Morals play a large part in religion. Morals are good if they're healthy for society. Like Christianity, which is all I know, the values you get from, like, the Ten Commandments. I think every religion is important in its own respect. You know, if you're Muslim, then Islam is the way for you. If you're Jewish, well, that's great too. If you're Christian, well good for you. It's just whatever makes you feel good about you." Feeling good about oneself is thus also an essential aspect of living a moral life, according to this dominant *de facto* teenage religious faith.¹⁵ Which leads to our next point.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is, second, about providing therapeutic benefits to its adherents.¹⁶ This is not a religion of repentance from sin, of keeping the Sabbath, of living as a servant of a sovereign deity, of steadfastly saying one's prayers, of faithfully observing high holy days, of building character

A SUMMARY INTERPRETATION: MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM

The themes and analyses explored in this chapter have followed varied topical trains of thought and sometimes pursued diversions and digressions. But what does the whole look like when one puts it all together? When we get past adolescent intricacy about religion, systematically sort through the myriad stories and statements about religious faith and practice, and pull apart and piece together what seem to be the key ideas and relevant issues, what might one conclude? Here we attempt to summarize our observations by venturing a general thesis about teenage religion and spirituality in the United States. We advance our thesis somewhat tentatively as less than a conclusive fact but more than mere conjecture: we suggest that the *de facto* dominant religion among contemporary U.S. teenagers is what we might well call "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." The creed of this religion, as codified from what emerged from our interviews, sounds something like this:

1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.

through suffering, of basking in God's love and grace, of spending oneself in gratitude and love for the cause of social justice, etcetera. Rather, what appears to be the actual dominant religion among U.S. teenagers is centrally about feeling good, happy, secure, at peace. It is about attaining subjective well-being, being able to resolve problems, and getting along amiably with other people. We have already examined numerous quotes to this effect in the pages above. A few more will help to complete the picture. One 15-year-old Hispanic conservative Protestant girl from Florida expressed the therapeutic benefits of her faith in these terms: "God is like someone who is always there for you, I don't know, it's like God is God. He's just like somebody that'll always help you go through whatever you're going through. When I became a Christian I was just praying and it always made me feel better." Making a similar point, though drawing it out from a different religious tradition, this 14-year-old white Jewish girl from Washington State describes what her faith is all about in this way: "I guess for me Judaism is more about how you live your life. Part of the guidelines are like how to live and I guess be happy with who you are, 'cause if you're out there helping someone, you're gonna feel good about yourself, you know?" Thus, service to others can be one means to feeling good about oneself. Other personal religious practices can also serve that therapeutic end, as this 15-year-old Asian Buddhist girl from Alabama observed: "When I pray, it makes me feel good afterwards." Similarly, one 15-year-old white conservative Protestant girl from Illinois explained: "Religion is very important, because when you have no one else to talk to about stuff, you can just get it off your chest, you just talk [to God]. It's good." And this 14-year-old East Indian Hindu girl from California said of her religious practices, "I don't know, they just really help me feel good." It is thus no wonder that so many religious and nonreligious teenagers are so positive about religion, for the faith many of them have in mind effectively helps to achieve a primary life goal: to feel good and happy about oneself and one's life. It is also no wonder that most teens are so religiously inarticulate. As long as one is happy, why bother with being able to talk about the belief content of one's faith?

Finally, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is about belief in a particular kind of God: one who exists, created the world, and defines our general moral order, but not one who is particularly personally involved in one's affairs—especially affairs in which one would prefer not to have God involved. Most of the time, the God of this faith keeps a safe distance. He is often described by teens as "watching over everything from above" and "the creator of everything and . . . just up there now controlling everything." As one 15-year-old Arabic Muslim boy from California put it: "God is like an entity that decides when, if he wants to intervene with a lot of things. To me God is pretty much like intervention, like extreme luck. Say you're \$50 away from something and you find \$50 on the floor, then that's probably God's intervention or something like that. But other than that it just seems like he's monitoring. He just kind of stays back and watches, like he's watching a play, like he's a producer. He makes the play all possible and then he watches it, and if there's

something, he doesn't like he changes it." For many teens, as with adults, God sometimes does get involved in people's lives, but usually only when they call on him, mostly when they have some trouble or problem or bad feeling that they want resolved. In this sense, the Deism here is revised from its classical eighteenth-century version by the therapeutic qualifier, making the distant God selectively available for taking care of needs. As this 14-year-old white mainline Protestant boy from Colorado said, "I believe there's a God, so sometimes when I'm in trouble or in danger, then I'll start thinking about that." Like the deistic God of the eighteenth-century philosophers, the God of contemporary teenage Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is primarily a divine Creator and Lawgiver. He designed the universe and establishes moral law and order. But this God is not trinitarian, he did not speak through the Torah or the prophets of Israel, was never resurrected from the dead, and does not fill and transform people through his Spirit. This God is not demanding. He actually can't be, because his job is to solve our problems and make people feel good. In short, God is something like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist: he is always on call, takes care of any problems that arise, professionally helps his people to feel better about themselves, and does not become too personally involved in the process. As one 14-year-old white Catholic boy from Pennsylvania, in response to our inquiry about why religion matters, said, "Cause God made us and if you ask him for something I believe he gives it to you. Yeah, he hasn't let me down yet. [So what is God like?] God is a spirit that grants you anything you want, but not anything bad." Similarly, this 17-year-old conservative Protestant girl from Florida told us, "God's all around you, all the time. He believes in forgiving people and whatnot and he's there to guide us, for somebody to talk to and help us through our problems. Of course, he doesn't talk back." This last statement is perhaps doubly telling: God, being distant, does not directly verbally answer prayers, according to this girl, but he also does not offer any challenging comebacks to our arguments about our requests. Perhaps the worst the God of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism can do is simply fail to provide his promised therapeutic blessings, in which case those who believe in him are entitled to be grumpy. Thus, one 16-year-old white mainline Protestant boy from Texas complained with some sarcasm in his interview, "Well, God is almighty, I guess [yawns]. But I think he's on vacation right now because of all the crap that's happening in the world, 'cause it wasn't like this back when he was famous." Likewise, this 14-year-old white conservative Protestant boy from Ohio told us, "God is an overall ruler who controls everything, so like, if I'm depressed or something and things aren't going my way I blame it on him, I don't know why." But few teens we talked to end up blaming God for failing them, because Moralistic Therapeutic Deism usually seems to be effective in delivering its promised benefits to its many American teenage believers.

We want to be very clear here about our thesis. We are not saying that all U.S. teens are adherents of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Some are simply disengaged from anything religious or spiritual, and others embrace substantive religious beliefs and practices that effectively repudiate those of this re-

visionist faith. Some teens do appear to be truly very serious about their religious faith in ways that seem faithful to the orthodox claims of the faith traditions they profess. We are also not saying that anyone has founded an official religion by the name of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, nor that most U.S. teenagers have abandoned their religious denominations and congregations to practice it elsewhere or under another name. Rather, it seems that the latter is simply colonizing many established religious traditions and congregations in the United States, that it is becoming the new spirit living in the old body. Its typical embrace and practice is de facto, functional, practical, and tacit, not formal or acknowledged as a distinctive religion. Furthermore, we are not suggesting that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a religious faith limited to teenage adherents in the United States. To the contrary, it seems that it is also a widespread, popular faith among very many U.S. adults. Our religiously conventional adolescents seem to be merely absorbing and reflecting religiously what the adult world is routinely modeling for and inculcating in its youth.

Moreover, we are not suggesting that Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is a religion that teenagers (and adults) either adopt and practice wholesale or not at all. Instead, the elements of its creed are normally assimilated by degrees, in parts, admixed with elements of more traditional religious faiths. Indeed, this religious creed appears to operate as a parasitic faith. It cannot sustain its own integral, independent life; rather it must attach itself like an incubus to established historical religious traditions, feeding on their doctrines and sensibilities, and expanding by mutating their theological substance to resemble its own distinctive image. This helps to explain why millions of U.S. teenagers and adults are not self-declared, card-carrying, organizationally gathered Moralistic Therapeutic Deists. This religion generally does not and cannot stand on its own, so its adherents must be Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deists, Jewish Moralistic Therapeutic Deists, Mormon Moralistic Therapeutic Deists, and even nonreligious Moralistic Therapeutic Deists. These may be either devout followers or mere nominal believers of their respective traditional faiths, but they often have some connection to an established historical faith tradition that this alternative faith feeds on and gradually co-opts if not devours. Believers in each larger tradition practice their own versions of this otherwise common parasitic religion. The Jewish version, for instance, may emphasize the ethical living aspect of the creed, while the Methodist version stresses the getting-to-heaven part. Each of the believers then can think of themselves as belonging to the specific religious tradition they name as their own—Catholic, Baptist, Jewish, Mormon, whatever—while simultaneously sharing the cross-cutting, core beliefs of their de facto common Moralistic Therapeutic Deist faith. In effect, these believers get to enjoy whatever particulars of their own faith heritages that appeal to them, while also reaping the benefits of this shared, harmonizing, interfaith religion. This helps to explain the noticeable lack of religious conflict between teenagers of apparently different faiths. For, in fact, we suggest, very many of

them actually share the same deeper religious faith: Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. What is there to have conflict about?

One way to gauge people's interest in different matters is to track their language use. What do people talk about? How often do they use different kinds of key words and phrases? The idea behind this approach is that people's discourse roughly reflects their concerns and interests. We used this method as one means of assessing U.S. teenagers' relative orientations to religious and therapeutic concerns. We systematically counted in our interview transcripts the number of teenagers who made reference to specific subjects or phrases of interest. We found, first, that relatively few U.S. teenagers made reference to a variety of historically central religious and theological ideas. The following list shows the number of teenagers who explicitly mentioned these concepts in their interviews:

- 47 personally sinning or being a sinner
- 13 obeying God or the church
- 12 religious repentance or repenting from wrongdoing
- 9 expressing love for God
- 8 righteousness, divine or human
- 7 resurrection or rising again of Jesus
- 6 giving glory to or glorifying God
- 6 salvation
- 5 resurrection of the dead on the Last Day
- 5 the kingdom of God (2 Christian, 3 Mormon)
- 5 keeping Sabbath (of 18 Jewish interviews)¹⁷
- 4 discipleship or being a religious disciple
- 4 God as Trinity
- 4 keeping kosher (of 18 Jewish interviews)
- 3 the grace of God
- 3 the Bible as holy
- 3 honoring God in life
- 3 loving one's neighbor
- 3 observing high holy days (of 18 Jewish interviews)
- 2 God as holy or reflecting holiness
- 2 the justice of God
- 0 self-discipline
- 0 working for social justice
- 0 justification or being justified
- 0 sanctification or being sanctified

When teenagers talked in their interviews about grace, they were usually talking about the television show *Will and Grace*, not about God's grace. When teenagers discussed honor, they were almost always talking about taking honors courses or making the honor role at school, very rarely about honoring God with their lives. When teens mentioned being justified, they almost al-

ways meant having a reason for doing something behaviorally questionable, not having their relationship with God made right.

For comparison with these talks on religious terms, we also counted the number of teens who made reference to the key therapeutic ideas of feeling happy, good, better, and fulfilled. What we found, as shown in the following list, is that U.S. teenagers were much more likely to talk in terms broadly related to therapeutic concerns than in the religious terms examined above:

- 11.2 personally feeling, being, getting, or being made happy
- 9.9 feeling good about oneself or life
- 9.2 feeling better about oneself or life
- 2.6 being or feeling personally satisfied or enjoying life satisfaction
- 2.1 being or feeling personally fulfilled

Note that these are not total number of times that teenagers used a word or phrase, but simply the number of teens who used them. In fact, our teenagers used the single, specific phrase to "feel happy" *twice more than 2,000 times*. In short, our teen interview transcripts reveal clearly that the language that dominates U.S. adolescent interests and thinking about life, including religious and spiritual life, is primarily about personally feeling good and being happy. That is what defines the dominant epistemological framework and evaluative standard for most contemporary U.S. teenagers—and probably for most of their baby boomer parents. This, we think, has major implications for religious faiths seriously attempting to pass on the established beliefs and practices of their historical traditions.

What we are theorizing here, in other words, is the very real existence of a shared American religion that is analogous to the American civil religion that Robert Bellah astutely described in 1967,¹⁸ yet that operates at an entirely different level than civil religion. It is not uncommon for people to think of the United States as containing a variety of diverse religions that coexist more or less harmoniously: Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Freewill Baptist, Irish Catholic, Conservative Judaism, Reformed Presbyterian, Latter Day Saint, and so on. But the reality is actually more complicated than that. "Religion" in the United States in fact separates itself out and operates at multiple levels in different ways. American religion is most obvious at the level of formal organizations, the plane on which denominations, seminars, religious congregations, publishing houses, and other religious organizations operate. But religion also often operates distinctively at a level below the organizational plane, at the level of individual belief and practice. Here religious faith is often eclectic, idiosyncratic, and syncretistic, inconsistently—from the perspective of most organized religious traditions, at least—mixing together elements as diverse as belief in infant baptism, interest in horoscope predictions, and the collection of religious kitsch. This is the dimension that some scholars have called "lived religion" or "popular religion."¹⁹ Beyond these two levels, Bellah's major contribution in 1967 was to reveal civil religion operating at yet another level, above the plane of formal religious organizations. Bellah very insightfully showed how religious symbols and discourse, appropriated

and abstracted from the Judeo-Christian tradition, are mobilized at a national civil level for purposes of national order, unity, and purpose.

What we are suggesting in our observations about Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is that, to understand the fullness of religion in the United States, we need to see yet another level or plane of religious life or practice operating in this social order, as shown in figure 2. At the bottom are the eclectic, idiosyncratic, and discretely syncretistic faiths operating at the level of individual religion. Higher up abide the more coherent, systematized faiths operating on the plane of organizational religion. Even higher exists the nationally unifying political faith of American civil religion. But situated between the individual level at the bottom and the organized religions and civil religion on planes above that, there operates yet another distinct level of religion in the United States: the widely shared, interfaith religion of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Like American civil religion, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism appropriates, abstracts, and revises doctrinal elements from mostly Christianity and Judaism for its own purpose. But it does so in a downward, apolitical direction. Its social function is not to unify and give purpose to the nation at the level of civic affairs. Rather, it functions to foster subjective well-being in its believers and to lubricate interpersonal relationships in the local public sphere. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism exists, with God's aid, to help people succeed in life, to make them feel good, and to help them get along with others—who otherwise are different—in school, at work, on the team, and in other routine areas of life.

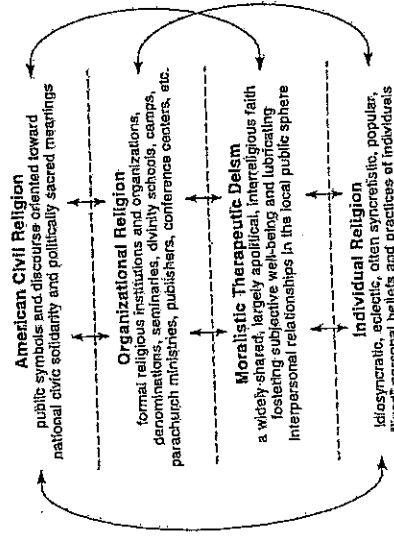


Figure 2. A Model of the Distinct Levels of Operative American Religion. Arrows indicate permeability and limited mutual influence.

Finally, to suggest that religion in the United States operates complexly and distinctly on different levels does not mean that those levels never interact or influence each other. They do, as indicated by the arrows in figure 2. Purely individual beliefs, for instance, are shaped in part by the teachings of organized religion as well as by horoscopes, advice columns, talk show hosts, and so on. And American civil religion is affected both by liberal religious activism and by the Religious Right operating at the level of formal religious organization. The same observation about interlevel interaction and influence is also true of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. It helps to organize and harmonize individual religious beliefs below it. It also both feeds on and shapes, one might say infects, the religious doctrines and practices at the organizational and institutional level above it. It also mirrors and may very well interface with American civil religion at the highest level by providing the nation's inhabitants a parallel and complementary common, unifying, functional faith that operates at a more apolitical, private, and interpersonal level of human life. The cultural influence of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism may also be nudging American civil religion in a "softer," more inclusive, ecumenical, and multireligious direction. What in American civil religion that is conservative becomes more compassionate, what is liberal becomes more inclusive, and aspects that are particularistic are increasingly universalized. All can then together hold hands and declare in unison, "Everyone decides for themselves!" And those who believe that only the born again go to heaven who are justified by the spilled blood of Jesus Christ, or that the Angel Moroni really did appear to Joseph Smith with a new and commanding revelation, or that God's chosen people really must faithfully observe his laws are suspect. The flock of sheep is diversified and expanded, but certain goats remain part of the picture nonetheless.²⁰

CONCLUSION

Adults in the United States over the past many decades have recurrently emphasized what separates teenagers from grown-ups, highlighting things that make each of them different and seemingly unable to relate to each other. But our conversations with ordinary teenagers around the country made clear to us, to the contrary, that in most cases teenage religion and spirituality in the United States are much better understood as largely reflecting the world of adult religion, especially parental religion, and are in strong continuity with it. Few teenagers today are rejecting or reacting against the adult religion into which they are being socialized. Rather, most are living out their religious lives in very conventional and accommodating ways. The religion and spirituality of most teenagers actually strike us as very powerfully reflecting the contours, priorities, expectations, and structures of the larger adult world into which adolescents are being socialized. In many ways, religion is simply happily absorbed by youth, largely, one might say, by osmosis, as one 16-year-old white Catholic boy from Pennsylvania stated so well: "Yeah, religion

affects my life a lot, but you just really don't think about it as much. It just comes natural I guess after a while."²¹

However, it appears that only a minority of U.S. teenagers are naturally absorbing by osmosis the traditional substantive content and character of the religious traditions to which they claim to belong. For, it appears to us, another popular religious faith, Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, is colonizing many historical religious traditions and, almost without anyone noticing, converting believers in the old faiths to its alternative religious vision of divinely underwritten personal happiness and interpersonal niceness. Exactly how this process is affecting American Judaism and Mormonism we refrain here from further commenting on, as these faiths and cultures are not our primary fields of expertise. Other, more accomplished scholars in those areas will have to examine and evaluate these possibilities in greater depth. But we can say here that we have come with some confidence to believe that a significant part of Christianity in the United States is actually only tenuously Christian in any sense that is seriously connected to the actual historical Christian tradition, but has rather substantially morphed into Christianity's misbegotten stepchild, Christian Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. This has happened in the minds and hearts of many individual believers and, it also appears, within the structures of at least some Christian organizations and institutions. The language and therefore experience, of Trinity, holiness, sin, grace, justification, sanctification, church, Eucharist, and heaven and hell appear, among most Christian teenagers in the United States at the very least, to be supplanted by the language of happiness, niceness, and an earned heavenly reward. It is not so much that U.S. Christianity is being secularized. Rather more subtly, Christianity is either degenerating into a pathetic version of itself or, more significantly, Christianity is actively being colonized and displaced by a quite different religious faith.

THE CONVICTION TO LEAD

25

PRINCIPLES
FOR LEADERSHIP
THAT MATTERS

ALBERT MOHLER



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The Conviction to Lead

True Leadership Starts With a Purpose, Not a Plan

Let me warn you right up front—my goal is to change the way you think about leadership. I do not aim merely to add one more voice to the conversation; I want to fundamentally change the way leadership is understood and practiced.

For the better part of the last three decades, leadership has been a major cultural preoccupation and a professional obsession. Walk into an airport bookstore, and you will find the front tables filled with books promising to make you a better leader. Apparently, frequent travelers have a healthy appetite for such advice. Walk into a Christian bookstore, and you will find ample evidence of the same hunger.

If you are like me, you probably have read a small library of books on leadership, have attended numerous conferences and seminars, and keep up with leadership newsletters and professional journals when you find the time. Hotel conference rooms overflow with people listening to speakers deliver talks on leadership, and colleges and universities have gotten into the business as well, offering majors, degree programs, and even entire schools devoted to leadership studies.

THE CONNECTION TO LEAD.

And yet something is missing.

I was born in 1959, right at the center of the golden age of American management. The "managerial revolution" was in full swing, and America's corporate leaders were managers of the first rank. But no one really thought of them as "leaders."

President John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, assembling a cabinet of youthful and technocratic managerial experts, largely drawn from America's leading corporations. Writer David Halberstam would later call these men "the best and the brightest." Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy's vice president, was considerably impressed by Kennedy's collection of managerial expertise. When he gushed about them to former Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn, the Speaker retorted, "Well, Lyndon, you may be right and they may be every bit as bright and intelligent as you say, but I'd feel a whole lot better about them if just one of them had run for sheriff once."

We get his point. Those managers were among the brightest of their generation, but they managed the nation right into the disasters of the 1960s, such as the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam. Evidently, management is not the same thing as leadership.

As a teenager I was already looking for examples of leadership. I read about Winston Churchill, and I recognized that he was no mere manager—he was a leader of world-changing courage. When he spoke, a nation was given the hope and determination to fight a war that simply had to be won—against odds that left even many of his own friends and family convinced that England's future was already lost.

I cut my political teeth working as a high school volunteer in Ronald Reagan's campaign for the Republican presidential nomination in 1976. Early that summer no one had to ask me twice to be part of the line welcoming Governor and Mrs. Reagan into War Memorial Auditorium in Fort Lauderdale for a major speech. I got to shake Reagan's hand and then hear him speak. He did not talk about vague policy goals or speak in political bromides. He spoke with passion about ideas and the possibility of changing the way Washington was run.

I recognized that he was a leader and that his leadership was transformational. I knew he believed what he was saying, and I could see

that he persuaded others to believe with him. Reagan did not win the nomination in 1976, but he went on to carry forty-nine states in the 1980 presidential election. By that time, regardless of partisan identification, Americans were learning again to look for a leader.

In college I studied political science before ending up as a religion and philosophy major. If my exposure to political science was any indication, those professors cared very little about leadership. Every class seemed like a statistics assignment.

In seminary I had to take classes that were then called "church administration." Trust me on this—the classes had little to do with the church and a lot to do with administration, but nothing to do with leadership.

I had to create my own leadership studies program. You will probably discover, or you may already know, that the same is true for you. I read historical biographies, observed the national and international scene, and began to read the emerging literature on political and business leadership. I took every opportunity to watch leaders up close, spending time with as many of them as I could.

The Leadership Renaissance

Fast-forward a few years to when I was editor of one of the oldest Christian newspapers in the nation. I received a call inviting me to join a small group of Christian leaders for a meeting on national drug policy at the White House. President George H. W. Bush was launching a major new initiative intended to stem the drug problem. The other leaders and I flew together up to Washington, and on the plane I noted that almost all of the pastors were talking about someone I had never heard of before. A California pastor named John Maxwell was recording sessions in which he was training his own staff in leadership.

Pastors were buying his tapes and passing them around like the old Soviet dissidents used to exchange samizdat—forbidden political literature. Before long, John Maxwell was teaching leadership all over the country, and his books were showing up in airport bookstores.

By the 1990s leaders were flocking to Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, where pastor Bill Hybels had started his

series of huge leadership conferences. I attended one of the earliest. By the end of the decade it was hard to even get a seat in Chicago, and most people would have to settle for a regional site elsewhere. What was going on?

The hunger for leadership had reached every sector of our society, including business, government, education, cultural institutions, and, of course, the church. Christians, along with everyone else, wanted to develop leadership.

It was not always so, although it is hard now to imagine a time when leadership had something of a bad name. The twentieth century was a brutal and murderous laboratory for leadership. All you have to do is think of names like Vladimir Lenin, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Josef Stalin, and Mao Zedong. In light of these horrors, many people began to wonder if leaders and leadership were themselves the problem.

Theodor Adorno and his colleagues at the University of Chicago suggested this in their 1950 book, *The Authoritarian Personality*. They seemed to claim that any ambition to lead was based on unhealthy psychological needs and would produce dangerous results.

This mentality took root in the culture of the 1960s, where counterculture groups demanded the abolition of many leadership positions, and the larger society grew increasingly nervous about the nature of leadership. Educators followed suit with classrooms in which the teacher's role was to be just a fellow learner, no longer "the sage on the stage."

Of course it didn't work. It couldn't work. The nation needed leaders. Businesses needed leaders. Even antileadership movements needed leaders. And teachers had better know more than their students.

The church desperately needs leaders as well. Congregations and Christian institutions need effective leaders who are authentically Christian—whose leadership flows out of their Christian commitment. Whenever Christian leaders serve, in the church or in the secular world, their

Wherever Christian leaders serve, in the church or in the secular world, their leadership should be driven by distinctively Christian conviction.

leadership should be driven by distinctively Christian conviction. The last three decades have seen the emergence of a renaissance in leadership, and the deep hunger for leaders has never been more evident than now.

Like me, you want to grow as a leader in order to be ready for all the leadership opportunities you may be called to accept. So what is the problem? It is not a lack of interest, a shortage of books and seminars, or a dearth of leadership development programs. Nor is the problem a lack of attention to what leaders do and how they do it. The problem is a lack of attention to what leaders *believe* and why this is central.

== The Two Cultures of Modern Christian Leadership ==

The problem is that the evangelical Christian world is increasingly divided between groups we might call the Believers and the Leaders.

The Believers are driven by deep and passionate beliefs. They are heavily invested in knowledge, and they are passionate about truth. They devote themselves to learning truth, teaching truth, and defending truth. They define themselves in terms of what they believe, and they are ready to give their lives for these beliefs.

The problem is, many of them are not ready to lead. They have never thought much about leadership and are afraid that thinking too much about it will turn them into mere pragmatists, which they know they shouldn't be. They know a great deal and believe a great deal, but they lack the basic equipment for leadership. As one proverbial deacon said of his pastor, "Oh, he knows a lot, but he can't lead a decent two-car funeral procession."⁵

The Leaders, on the other hand, are passionate about leadership. They are tired of seeing organizations and movements die or decline, and they want to change things for the better. They look around and see dead and declining churches and lukewarm organizations. They are thrilled by the experience of leading and are ardent students of leadership wherever they can find it. They talk leadership wherever they go and are masters of motivation, vision, strategy and execution.

The problem is, many of them are not sure what they believe or why it matters. They are masters of change and organizational transformation,

but they lack a center of gravity in truth. They often ride one program after another until they run out of steam. Then they wonder, *What now?*

You deserve to know exactly who I am and why I am writing this book. I want to turn the Believers into Leaders and the Leaders into

Believers. My goal is to knock the blocks out from under the current models of leadership and forge a new way. I stake my life on the priority of right beliefs and convictions, and at the same time I want to lead so that those very beliefs are perpetuated in others. If our leaders are not passionately driven by the right beliefs, we are headed for disaster. At the same time, if Believers cannot lead, we are headed nowhere.

My goal is to redefine Christian leadership so that it is inseparable from passionately held beliefs, and to motivate those who are deeply committed to truth to be ready for leadership.

I want to see a generation arise that is simultaneously leading with conviction and driven by the conviction to lead. The generation that accomplishes this will set the world on fire.

I want to see that happen, and I think you do too.