

Prayer --  
A Reciprocal  
Conversation with Jesus

## PREFACE

Just as there is no royal road to learning, so there is no royal road to Divine guidance. For the Holy Spirit, as Barth says, is not truly present and newly operative until he is “sighed, cried and prayed for.” There are important principles and ways that help us discover and live God’s will. I have listed these as precisely and clearly as possible. I have included many scriptural references in order to verify points being made, so that the reader can study them for himself.

It is with earnest prayer that the reader may come to know and do God’s specific will in his or her own life. Mother Theresa of Calcutta has said, “It is not possible to engage in the direct apostolate without being the very soul of prayer.” She was reiterating the theme of Dom Chautard’s “Soul of the Apostolate.”

I see many movements of the Spirit in our lives

-from isolation to love.

-from ego-control to spirit-control.

-from things to people.

-from people to God.

My own life is best summed up in this poem:

“When I was four time three

The whole world looked good to me.

Oh, but the sky seemed vast

But then how could I know

The older that you grow

That childhood wasn’t to last.

And the Lord brushed by and said to me,

“Another door is opening soon.”

“When I was five times four

I thought I found that door

That opens wide the gates of time,

But then how could I know

The older that you grow

There’s always one more hill to climb.

## PREFACE

And the Lord came close and said to me,

“Another door is opening soon.”

When I was seven time five  
The world was so alive  
So much to do  
I could hardly survive.  
And the Lord sat down and said to me,  
“Another door is opening soon.”

Well now I’m four or five times ten  
I look at younger men  
Who seem to know what’s life about.  
But then how can they know  
The older that you grow  
The more you learn to live without.  
And the Lord came in and said to me,  
“I am that Door that’s open wide.”

PRAYER, THE GATEWAY TO THE FATHER  
THE SOURCE OF THE SPIRIT

What life is all about, is a relationship with the source of life; that is, Our Father. This is such an easy matter to understand but it is the narrow road that few people find. All life begins with prayer because it is prayer that puts us in contact with the Father. For Jesus, the fundamental issue was always the Father. Jesus was, above all, the Son of the Father. He always did what the Father wanted. His spirituality began by listening. Jesus was prayer, and prayer was saying, “Yes” to his Father. He is the total receptivity of the Father. He is the Word of God, the Mirror of God, the Refulgence of God. Just as his mother, He was totally open, totally other minded. He sought the Father’s will; He listened to the Father’s voice; He was open to the Father’s promptings. All spirituality for Jesus began with the Father, not with church, not with theology, not with the Torah, not with an ideology, not with a system, not even with prayer, but with the Person--God, Yahweh, His Father, His Abba. Listen very carefully.

As Jesus answered them in John 5:19, “I tell you most solemnly, the Son does nothing on His Own. He does only what He sees His Father doing. What the Father does the Son does, for the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing. He will show Him even greater things than this to do and you will be amazed. Even as the Father raises the dead and gives him life, the same way the Son gives life to those He wants to. Nor does the Father Himself judge anyone - He has given His Son the full right to judge so that all will honor the Son the same way as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father.”

Further on, John 5:30 says,

“I can do nothing on my own; I judge only as God tells me, so my judgment is right because I am not trying to do what I want, but only what He who sent me wants.”

In the eighth chapter of John’s gospel, we read these words:

“So Jesus said to them, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man you will know that I am who I am. Then you will know that I do nothing on my own, but say only what the Father has taught Me. And He Who sent Me is with Me--He has not left Me alone because I always do what pleases Him.’ ” John 8:28.

You see that the spirituality of Jesus is based out of the Father. He did everything out of God. God was the source; God made the decisions; God the Father was in charge; God was running the show; God was calling the shots; it was God, and Jesus; spirituality was to allow God to be God.

So much of modern spirituality begins with the church on down, with the Bible, on down, with the rules on

down. The spirituality of Jesus as we are seeing always began with the Father on down. It was the Father who spoke and Jesus listened. The reason that there was so much confusion, so many problems, so much futile effort within the churches today is, I believe, that our spirituality is not God-centered. We do not listen prayerfully to the voice of the Father. We are like a gigantic football team without a coach. You can imagine what it would be like to run a football team without a coach. And yet, that is what so many are doing within the church today. We are trying to run the show ourselves without getting the mind and the heart of the Father. Do we really believe that God has a plan for our churches, that God has a plan for our parishes, that God has a plan for each and every individual life? And if we really believe this, then are we willing to follow that plan?

This is the issue with God. "Start with Me. Get my mind, my plan, my heart, my will. Let me be out of God. Be still. I bring to naught your plans. Come to Me. Learn of Me. Listen to Me. Ask Me. Seek Me. Obey Me.

This is the key to understanding the Scripture. It permeates every page. Let God be God; no other. Let nothing or no one else be first--not job, family, money; not church, religion, Bible; not priest nor bishop--only GOD.

He alone brings us into our promised land. He rules the heavens and earth. He sets the stars in place. He sanctifies and perfects the saints. He purifies and guides the church. He heals broken hearts and sets captives free. He alone enlightens, empowers and gives life.

“A FOOTBALL TEAM WITHOUT A COACH”

So much of modern spirituality begins with the church on down, with the Bible on down, with the rules on down. The spirituality of Jesus always began with the Father. It was the Father who spoke and Jesus listened. One of the reasons for the confusion, the many problems, so much futile effort within the churches today, I believe, is that our spirituality is not God-centered. We do not listen prayerfully to the voice of the Father. We are like a gigantic football team without a coach. Imagine what it would be to try to run a football team without a coach! And yet, that is what so many are doing within the church today. We are trying to run the show ourselves, without having the mind and the heart of the Father.

Do we really believe that God has a plan for our churches? A plan for our parishes? A plan for our individual lives? If we really believe this, do we really believe that He will reveal it to us if we ask, and that we will be able to discern when it is God speaking? And do we really believe that He will give us the power of His spirit to carry it out? Are we really ready to let God run our shows?

Paul coached the believers in Ephesus, of God's care (Ephesians 1: 3-10):

“Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in heaven. God chose us in Him before the world began to be holy and blameless in His sight. He predestined us to be His adopted sons through Jesus Christ. Such was His will and pleasure that all might praise the glorious favors bestowed on all His beloved. In Him and through His glory we have been redeemed and our sins forgiven. So immeasurably generous in God's favor to us. God has given us the wisdom to understand fully the mystery, the plan He was pleased to establish in Christ. A plan to be carried out in Christ in the fullness of time to bring all things into one in Him, in heaven and on earth.”

God does have a plan. God wants us to know the plan, to discern the plan, and to follow the plan. In the fourteenth chapter of John, we find Jesus talking to His disciples about the fact that He would be leaving them. Their friend, guide, teacher, counselor, helper, protector and intercessor would be going. He knew that this would disturb them and so He said,

“I will pray to the Father and He will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever, even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14: 16-17) The Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name. He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” (John 14: 26-27)

The word paraclete can be translated many different ways: advocate, counselor, guide, intercessor, protector,

supporter. A paraclete was a person who stood by the defendant in a trial in a courtroom. He was on the defendant's side and gave him all the help and advice which the defendant needed. Jesus was saying that just as He had been a Paraclete, an Advocate, a Guide for His disciples, so the Holy Spirit would be a new Paraclete. I believe that the Lord wants each one of us to know what he wants for us at every moment. He wants us to be His people, to be without doubts, without confusion. He will tell us all that we need to know to be able to follow His will.

A COVENANTED RELATIONSHIP

## I WILL BE YOUR GOD AND YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE

In order for us to clearly understand the meaning of the covenant, it is good for us to recall that at the time of Abraham there was a custom. A very special custom by which people could enter into a blood covenant with one another. They had a very specific ritual. This is still practiced among primitive people today. The two potential blood brothers would split an animal; most likely a lamb, and then lay the two pieces one to one side and the other to the other side. They would then walk the figure eight through the two pieces. Then standing at the end, each facing one another, one would take off his coat and offer it to the other, and the other would take off his coat and offer it back to his potential brother. This symbolized “all that I have now belongs to you.” Then all that you have belongs to me. We are about to become blood brothers, covenanted brothers. These actions would best be compared to our contemporary marriage covenant, where one person says to the other, here is my bank account, here is my wallet, here are my charge accounts, here is the mortgage to my house. All these I now offer to you. Here is the key to my home. Everything I have is yours.

To continue the blood covenant ritual, the “brothers” would take off their swords and would offer these to one another. This symbolized that “I will be your protection. I will come to you and when you are in danger, when you are under attack I will be your shield, your sword, your protection.” Then they would slit their right wrists and put in a substance that made it possible to see when it was healed so that everyone could then know by looking at each man’s wrist that he had a blood brother. Finally, they would then exchange part of their names. For example, when Jonathan entered into a blood relationship, a blood covenant, with David, part of Jonathan’s name was now David and part of David’s name was now Jonathan. Now, comes the most astounding thing of all, God entered into a blood relationship with Abraham. We read it in the book of Genesis. Incredible enough, they were blood brothers. God was on Abraham’s side. God was Abraham’s shield and his protection. All that God had, belonged to Abraham, and all that Abraham had belonged to God. God became totally responsible for the life of Abraham at least partly submitted to Him. This is the meaning of “I will be your God and you will be My people.”

As it was written in Chapter 15 of Genesis:

“After these things, the Word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision saying ‘do not fear Abraham, I am a shield to you. Your reward shall be very great. And Abraham said, ‘Oh, Lord, God, what will Thou give me since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abraham said, ‘Since thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir. Then, behold the Word of the Lord came to him saying “This man will not be your heir, but one shall come forth from your own body. He shall be your heir.’ And he

took him outside and said, 'Now look towards the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to count them, And He said to him' so shall your descendants be.' Then he believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness. (Confere also Gal 3:6)

'And He said to him, 'I am the Lord who brought you out of Err of the Caldeans to give you this land to possess it. And he said, 'Oh, Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it?' So He said to him 'bring me a three-year-old heifer and a three-year old female goat and a three-year old ram and a turtle dove and young pigeon.' Then he brought all these to Him and cut the in two and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses and Abrahm drove them away. Now when the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abrahm and behold terrors and great darkness fell upon him. And God said to Abrahm' know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not yet theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nations whom they serve and afterwards they will come out with many possessions. And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace. You shall be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they shall return here for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. And it came about when the sun had set that it was very dark and behold there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abrahm saying, To your descendants, I've given this land.'

Here we see the elements of the covenant. There are many who believe that the firey torch that passed through the pieces was Christ Himself. (We remember how Our Lord was speaking to the disciples on the road to Emmaus and He taught them, and He opened to them many things concerning Himself in the Old Testament. This, many scholars believe, was one of them.) But you see what God had done. He had entered into a covenant with Abraham. Everything that God had now belonged to Abraham, and everything that Abraham had now belonged to God. God, of course, would be more faithful to this covenant than was Abraham. The last gesture is evident when noticing the name of Abrahm which then was changed to Abraham. The full significance of this name change comes when we realize that God's name to Abrahm was the unpronounceable "Huhhh" and so now God changes Abrahm's name to Abrahuhhm, pronounced Abraham meaning, in other words, Abrahm of God. This was not the only covenant agreement that God had made with man up to this time. We know that He had made a covenant agreement with Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, and with Noah in Gensis 9:1-17. We know that He would (make a covenant or) continue the covenant in Isaac (Gen 26: 3-5); with Jacob (Gen 28: 13-22); with Israel (Exodus 19:5) with Levi (Mal 2: 4-10); with Phinehas (No 25: 11-13); and with David (Psalms 89:3).

The old covenant, the Sinaitic, was instituted at Sinai (Ex 19:5). It was ratified by sacrifice (Ex 24: 6-8). It did not annul the Abramic covenant. (Gal 3: 16-18). Instead, it was designed to lead us to Christ (Gal 3: 17-

25). It consisted of outward sacrifice and outward rights, (Heb 9: 1-13) and was sealed by circumcision (Gen 17: 9-14). It prefigured the Gospel (Heb 9: 8-28). The new, the evangelical, covenant was promised in Eden (Gen 3:15) where God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed." It was proclaimed to Abraham (Gen 12:3). It was dated in prophesy (Daniel 9: 24-27). It was fulfilled in Christ (Luke 1: 68-79). It was ratified by His blood. (Heb. 9: 11-23). It is remembered in the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:25) and it is called everlasting life (Heb 13:30).

There are God's very special blessings upon all covenant keepers. (Ex 19:5). So you and I are in a blood covenant with God through Christ Jesus. God is on our side. God gives us His wisdom, His love, His power, and He pours them into us as we surrender our lives to God. The more surrendered our life is, the more we have God's covenanted grace. So let us pray:

"Oh God, you have made a covenant  
with Man and Woman.  
A covenant that you would walk with them.  
And lead them and guide them step by step.  
You ratified this covenant for our forefathers  
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob  
And finally, in your son Jesus  
Who is our Lord and our Savior.  
We now come before you  
And we surrender all to you.  
We take off all that we have  
And we hand it to you.  
We open up our arms to receive  
All that you have from yourself.  
Lord, we put our poor, shallow selves  
into your hands.  
And we receive your all.  
From the depths of our nothingness  
We reach out to the fullness and depths  
of your everything.  
We thank you for entering into covenant  
with us.  
We thank you for saying to us  
'I want to be your God  
And I want you to be My people.'  
Help us, Oh Lord, to be covenanted brothers

Blood brothers of Christ Jesus

Your son and Our Lord, today and forever.

Amen

DISCERNMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son. (Heb 1:1)

What is tantamount in the Old Testament is the claim of an intervention on the part of God into history, an intervention due solely to grace, God’s free choosing. This intervention is a personal one—an encounter between two people; one person speaking and the other person listening and answering. He speaks. Man or woman hears and obeys. This is the very essence of revelation. Taken in its fullness as a complex phenomenon including a multiform of mediums, this revelation is presented primarily as the experience of the action of God incorporated in words signs and in dialogue. He first chooses people; then of these people he selects intermediaries who will transmit His word to others, who demand an answer in His name.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was not an absent presence. God broke out of silence, He came out of His mystery, He addressed Himself to man and unveiled for him the secrets of His personal life; To man He communicated His unheard-of plan for a covenant with man, offering him a share in life. God, the living God, has spoken, is speaking and will continue to speak..

This is the tremendous fact that dominates both the Old and New Testaments. God’s speaking of His word, though seemingly distant at times, or intermittent, has reechoed through the prophets and is delivered in its fullness in Jesus, the Word of the Father.

From Genesis to Revelation, men and women of God have had a “beyond and back experience” of God breaking into their lives. God reveals and they in turn know psychologically that it is God who is present, who speaks, who commands, who enables, who accomplishes and who protects.

Perhaps a brief history of some of the more simple of God’s actions will help to demonstrate the frequency of break-ins and God’s anointing of only those actions that are truly from Him.

Adam walked with God in the cool of the evening; so did Enoch. Noah heard God’s voice and sometimes followed it; so did Abraham. The whole of the Abramic covenant is based on God’s revelation. The whole story of the Old Testament is the history of men and women who sometimes heard from heaven and sometimes obeyed. The author of Hebrews in that magnificent eleventh chapter gives an overview of this, mentioning Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sara, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephtha, and David. The following are some of the words God spoke to men and women like you and me.

My aim is to show:

That the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is exactly that

That the God of revelation is exactly that

That the God who speaks is exactly that

To Adam, He said:

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden.” Gen 2:16

To Eve, He questioned:

“What is this you have done?” Gen 3:13

To Noah, He directed:

“So make yourself an ark of cypress wood.” Gen 6:14

To Abram, He instructed:

“Leave your country, your people and go to the land I will show you.” Gen 12:1

To Jacob, He promised:

“Go back to your country and your relatives and I will make you prosper.” Gen 32:9

To Moses, He prepared:

“Now you will see what I will do.” Ex 6:1

To Aaron and Miriam, He informed:

“Were there a prophet among you, I would speak to him with visions and revelations.

But not so with my servant Moses. His name is known throughout my house. With him I talk face to face.” Num 12: 6-8

To Joshua, He comforted:

“Do not be afraid, do not be discouraged.” Jos 8:1

To Gideon, He encouraged:

“Get up and go down....because I am going to give it into your lands.” Jg 7:9

To the Israelites, He swore:

“Judah shall go first.” Jg 20:18

To Samuel, He excited:

“See I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears of it tingle.”

1 Sam 3:11

To David, He demanded:

“Go up.....to Hebron.” 2 Sam 2:1

To Solomon, He also promised:

“As for you, if you walk before me in integrity of heart.....I will establish your royal throne.....forever.” 1 Kgs 9:4

To Nathan, He told:

“Go and tell my servant David.” 1 Chron 17:4

To Job, He rebuked:

“Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him?” Job 40:1

To Isaiah, He asked:

“Whom shall I send?” Is 6:8

So we see that throughout the Old Testament God broke out of His silences and revealed the secrets of His personal life to man and woman. To His people he communicated His unheard of plan for intimacy and covenant with him, calling them to share in His life and His joy.

In the Old Testament He is revealed as a personal God, who speaks, loves and calls us forth. This is the immense reality that dominates the Old Testament. At first, this word, is intermittent and like unconnected notes, until it is understood as a well orchestrated symphony of wisdom, life, love and hope for God’s people, that will reach its final rhapsody in Jesus.

From the beginning it was hearing His word, not seeing God’s face, that was all the people had. Even in the theophanies, God’s Word is more important than his appearances, (Gen 12:1ff) God’s call to Abram is presented as God’s speaking. Equally significant is the fact that Moses who was gifted with tremendous intimacy with God (of Ex 33:11; Num 12: 6-8; 2 Cor 3:15) could not see his face (Ex 33: 21-23). Even in the visions of the prophets, the words were most important. On Sinar the whole burden rests on the “10 Words” of God. The Word of God in the Old Testament thus creates, announces, proclaims, promises and finally will become incarnate in Jesus.

The Patriarchs

God appeared to Abram, (Gen 18:1) announced the birth of Isaac and the fall of Sodom, and cut a blood covenant with him (Gen 15: 9-20) and thus changed his name (Gen 17:5).

Isaac had a similar apparition (Gen 26:2). So did Jacob (Gen 32:25) during which his name also was changed to Israel at Planuel (Gen 32:28) and Bethel (Gen 35: 9-10).

### Older Techniques of Discernment and Their Purification

It was the custom of people at this time to use divination, dreams, drawing lots and omens. God purified His people of much of the polytheistic and magical overtones of these methods. In Lev 19-26, God said, “You shall not practice divination nor soothsaying” and in Deut 18:10 “There shall not be found anyone among you who makes his son or daughter pass through the fire, one who use divination or practices witchcraft or one who interprets omens or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up from the the dead.”

### The Vrim and Thummin

It was common for them to contact the priest who would use the VRIM AND THUMMIN which he carried in his apron (ephod) who answered questions put to him in brief formulas by drawing out the “Yes”-dice or the “No”-dice. David used this method to perfection and Israel most prospered under him and thus under God. In Deut 33:8, God says “Let your URIM and your THUMMIN belong to the Godly man (of Ex 28:30, Lev 8:8, Num 27:21, Sam 14:41, 23:10).

### Dreams

God’s people realized that God could and did speak to them through dreams. Abimelech (Gen 20:3), Jacob (Gen 28: 12-15), Joseph (Gen 37: 5-10), Gideon’s friend (Jos 7:13ff) and Solomon (1 Kgs 3: 5-14) all thus heard God.

Solomon’s dream is most significant. God told him he could ask for anything he wished. Solomon there upon asked for discernment. God gave this gift in abundance (more than to anyone “before” or “after”) and then so much more. In the midst of all this almost to emphasize by negation, is the tragic picture of Saul who previously had been given the gift of prophecy but then turned his back on God and thus “when Saul injured of the Lord, he DID NOT ANSWER him either by dream, urim or prophecy” (1 Sam 28:6). Joseph used a orvining cup (Gen 44: 2-5) and thus excelled in the integration of dreams (Gen 40:41).

### Prophets

The ability to hear, understand and trust in the Lord’s Word came to the prophets. Those before the Exile (Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Proto-Isaiah) were guardians of God’s word, their proclamations were of fidelity and justice. Since Israel was often both unfaithful to God and unjust to His people, the prophet announced God’s condemnations and announced punishments. (Am 4:1, 5:1, 7:10; Hor 8:7, 13:15; Mi 6-7; Is 1:10,

16:13, 28:13, 30:12, 37:22, 39:5&8). The climax was reached in the Book of Jeremiah who tried detailing rules for discernment:

1. "The word of the prophet should do what he says it should."
2. "It should call to faithfulness." (Jer 23: 13-28)
3. "It should be witnessed to by the heroic life of prophets." (Jer 1: 4-6, 26:12-15)

### Messianic Prophecy

Through the prophecy of Nathan, (2 Sam 7:16) the kingship of David would become forever the kingship of God. This Messianic strain would run throughout the Old Testament. Beginning with Gen 3:15 "The Messiah would be 'seed' of THE WOMAN, descendant of Abraham (Gen 18:18) Isaac (Gen 17:19) and Jacob

(Nu 24:17) and of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10). The place (Mi 5:2), time (Dan 9:25) and manner of Christ's birth, "born of a virgin" (Is 7:14) were foretold. The massacre of infants (Jer 31:15), flight into Egypt (Ho 11:1), ministry in Galilee (Is 9:12), as a prophet (Deut 18:15) and priest (Ps 110:4), His rejection by the Jews (Is 53:3), his characteristics (Is 11:2), His triumphal entry (Lec 9:9), His betrayal (Ps 41:9) for 30 pieces of silver (Lec 11:12) returned to a potter's field (Lec 11:13) are all revealed. Jesus' passion and death including false witness (Ps 27:12), His silence (Is 53:7) His being spit upon (Is 50:6), hated (Ps 69:4), smitten (Is 53: 4-5), crucified (Is 53:12), mocked (Ps 22: 6-8), given gall (Ps 69:21), pierced (Lec 12:10), 22:16) and beaten (Is 53: 4-12) were all foretold, as well as were soldiers casting lots (Ps 22:18), His unbroken bones (Ps 34:26 and Ex 12:46), His burial (Is 53:9), His Resurrection (Ps 16:16) and His Ascension (Ps 68:18).

### Later Prophets

After the exile the spoken word becomes more and more a written and comforting word. In Eziel (3:1ff) the written word will have a fixed character that becomes almost a command (Ezieh 12:25, 24:14). Since Israel has fallen on hard times in Exile, God's word is consoling and promising (Eziel 33: 1-21). Deuteuo-Isaiah (Is 40-55) has both a cosmic and historical quality. God speaks and the earth obeys (Is 40:26; 45:12; 48:13). He speaks again and history is made (Is 40: 1-20; 45:19; 48:16). The word is at the beginning and end of all events, it predicts them, calls them into being and accomplishes them. God holds the poles of history (Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). Finally, in Isaiah 55 infallible efficacy of the word is proclaimed "so shall my word be which goes forth from my mouth." It shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatever I please and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it." (Is 55: 10-11)

### Wisdom Literature

In the Wisdom literature (Job, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom, Proverbs, Sirach) the Word becomes a simple and practical guide in everyday living and culminates with the Word becoming the same who discerns between wisdom and foolishness, justice and injustice, piety and impiety (Sir 15:1, Wis 9:4, Job 28:12) finally wisdom incarnate, (Wis 7-9) entering into holy men from age to age and making them "Prophets and lovers." (of.

Especially Wis 7).

In the Psalms the Word is addresses every conceivable human emotion--fear, worry, doubt, loneliness, guilt, unforgiveness, hatred, jealousy, anger, doubt, lust, pride, desolation, despair, incredulity, resentment, bitterness--and responds to the intensity of the very heart of God.

### Summary

The process of revelation began slowly and sporadically and then developed in length, breadth, height and depth that at its height revealed to men of the Old Testament and to us still today, the very secrets of God. At its depth, it probes the very secrets of the human heart. At its length, it forms history itself and at its breadth, beginning with Israel, it will touch all of mankind. When God first began to speak to His people, seldom were the revelations written down. After the exile men realized God spoke more readily. In its written form, His Word took on a durable, eternal and almost infallible quality. Through the prophets, God's word has a living dynamism. In the wisdom literature the quality is very practical. In the Psalms, the Word touched the wellsprings of the heart. God's word therefore had a wisdom (Noetic) element and a power (dynamic) element. This word was not abstract, for it came from His heart, to the people He loved and still loves. (Gen 17:17, Ps 14:1, Jer 3:16, Is 65:17). It externalized itself as creation, law, covenant, ritual, prophecy and decolonue and Scripture. In terms of prophetic mystique, God's word was progressive, unveiling of the plan through which God entered into an espousal and covenanted relationship with his people. ("I will be your God, you shall be my people.") which would both effect and proclaim salvation.

## Chapter 5

### DISCERNMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### The Synoptic Gospels

In the New Testament, God's word has both a simplicity and richness that is far superior to the Old Testament. For finally in the fullness of time God spoke his fullest, holiest, simplest, most all-embarrassing of words in His Son Jesus, so that He who sees (him), sees the Father (Jo 14: ) (of Heb 1: 1-2). In Jesus, God's word becomes total and incarnational: both Gospel and Salvation. Jesus speaks, teaches, preaches, and testifies and proclaims what He has seen and heard in the bosom of the Father. He is the summit. The Sacred writers can only portray His inexhaustible Mystery by concentrating on individual aspects. Thus for Mark he is "Suffering servant," for Mathew, the "Messiah," for Luke, "the man of the Spirit," for John, the "Logos." Acts presents him as the Risen Lord of History. Paul presents Him as "head of the body" and "indwelling presence." Hebrews shows his priesthood as bigger than life and more exalted than angels and the Apocalypse as the one who will "come again."

#### Jesus as Rabbi & Teacher

Jesus reveals the Father as Rabbi and Teacher. He is filled with the Spirit (Lk 4:18) and the words of God are in his mouth. “This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him.” (cf. Mt 3:17, 17:5; Mk 1:11, 9:7; Lk 3:22, 9:35; 2 Pet 1:17). He teaches both in word and action. He preaches what He practices. “He went about...teaching, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom.” (Mt 4:23, 11:1; Lk 20:1)

His message has an immediacy “The time is NOW; the Kingdom is Here.” (cf. Mk 1:15). It contained the “good news of the Kingdom of God.” Most of his teaching is by way of parables and mostly all the parables have the same theme, “The REIGN OF GOD.”

### Jesus as Preacher and Prophet

The prophets cry out, proclaim, publish, promulgate and proclaim God’s will, His day, His intentions, His promises and threats--So will Jesus. John the Baptist called “the prophet of the Most High” (Lk 1: 76-77), himself foretold by Isaiah (40:3 & 6) will be his Herald (Mk 1: 6-8; Mt 3: 16-17). Like the prophet, Jesus proclaimed both the Kingdom and the necessary repentance (Mk 1: 14-15; Mt 4:17). In the synagogue He applied the words of Isaiah to Himself (Lk 4:18-19; Is 61: 1-2) that he is “to bring good news to the poor, give sight to the blind.” Matthew wrote, showing His Messianic authenticity in that “the poor has the Gospel preached to them” (Mt 11:5). The essence of His message is “Let God be God,” let His Kingdom reign.

Listening to, discerning and obeying the word of the Lord. Man lives by every word proceeding from the mouth of God. Wisdom’s sage is he who “listens to the word of the Lord and obeys It.” (Mt 7:24; cf Lk 6:48). Jesus taught this with authority not like the Scribes (Mt 7:29). His very mother, whom He deeply loved was blessed for this same reason and no other (Lk 11:27). Listening to his Father, discerning His voice, and following it, is the heart of the matter--the way to follow Jesus and grow in wisdom and grace before God and men (Lk 2:52). The Jewish people recognize His prophetic gift “A great prophet has arisen among us.” (Lk 7:16). Some see in Him John the Baptist, others Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets (Mt 16:14). Even the Pharisees were afraid because the people considered Him as a prophet (Mt 21:46). The disciples on the road to Emmaus after He opened up all the Scriptures from Moses to the prophets “Concerning himself” spoke of Him as a prophet “might in word and deed.” (Lk 24:15) What’s more the people, on the basis of Deut. 18:18 referred to Him as THE PROPHET expected at the end of time. (Mk 6:14, 8:28; Mt 21:11) (cf Jo 6:14) “...truly He is the Prophet who is to come into the world?”

Jesus never calls Himself Prophet, just as he never calls Himself God. He alludes to it, however, when like them, he penetrates the secrets of God (Mk 4:11) and foresees his destiny to be that of a prophet. A prophet is not without honor save in his own country.” (Mt 12:57) and “for it cannot be that a prophet comes out of Jerusalem (Lk 13:33). But as a revealer of God’s word, he far outdistanced all the prophets. He was and is greater than Jonah (Mt 12:40) than Moses and Elijah (Mk 9: 2-10; Mt 17: 1-3; Lk 9: 28-36) than David (Mk 12: 35-37; Mt 22: 41-46; Lk 20: 41-44) and even John the Baptist, the “greatest born of woman.” (Lk 7: 18-

23; Mt 11: 2-6). He thus placed himself above all the prophets, as the Son. (Mk 12: 1-12). In his person, He accomplishes the law and the prophet (Mt 5:17). He does not say, "Thus say God, But I say to you." (Mt 5:22, 28, 32)

Not only does he proclaim God's word, but He calls others forth to proclaim it as well. He sends them "to proclaim the Kingdom of God and Heal" (Lk 9:2; Mt 10: 7-8). "Go out into the entire world and proclaim the Gospel to everyone," (Mk 16: 15&20) "...so that those receiving it will be saved." (Mk 16:16; Mt 10:14; Lk 10: 12-17). All this is proclaimed with the highest authority of His name (cf Mt 28: 18-20) for "heavens and earth shall pass away, BUT MY WORDS WILL NOT." (Mt 24:35)

### Jesus as Son of the Father

He is the highest authority because he is more than a prophet. He is by nature not by adoption God's only begotten Son (Mk 12:6). The very essence of the Father (Mt 11:27). "No one knows the Father but the Son and He to whom the Son wishes to reveal Him (Mt 11: 25-27). Thus to the disciples the Father has chosen is given the "grace" to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 13:11; Mk 4: 10-12).

### Stages of Revelation

1. The mystery is hidden in God--a secret full of wisdom (1 Cor 2:7), surrounded by silence (Rom 16:25) hidden from past generations (Eph 3:5; Col 1:26), and evil spirits (Eph 3: 5-10)
2. But NOW the mystery is revealed (Rom 16:25; Col 1:26 Eph 3-8) through the Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ and has entered into its phase of realization (Eph 1: 7-9) thus becoming a historical event. (1 Tim 3:16).
3. In God's plan, the mystery is communicated just to the Apostles and Prophets in Spirit. (Eph 3:5; Col 1:26). These become the mediations and heralds of the mystery (Eph 3:5) and thus become the foundation of the church in which Christ is cornerstone (Eph 1: 22-23; 2: 20-21). Paul is one of these "an apostle" and "minister of the Church" (Col 1: 25-26) (Rom 1:1; 1 Tim 2:7) and has received a very deep understanding of the mystery (Eph 3: 3-4)
4. The mystery is then revealed to all who are "Called out" (the church) so that they can be built up together in Christ (Eph 4:16) "joined together, according to the effectual working of every part, the whole body grows in love." (cf 1 Cor 12: 13-31). The head (Christ) and the body (The Church) now work as one, with the Spirit of Christ giving gifts and ministries to each member for the building up of all.
5. Each member is enabled (1 Cor 12: 1&6-7) to think like Christ (1 Cor 2:16) to love like Christ (1 Cor 13: 1-15) to act like Christ (Rom 8: 1-20) and to become Christ "I live now, not I but Christ lives in me." (Gal

2:20) Just as Christ speaks to Paul, he now speaks to each member of his Body. Each is to present himself as a living sacrifice and not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of his mind and thus be able to discern God's will, what is good, acceptable and perfect. (Rom 12: 1-2). Each person is thus called into a personal relationship with the Loving Lord.

One of these key mysteries was revealed by the Father to Peter who asked who Jesus was (Mt 16:17). The Father thus revealed Jesus was "the Son of God."

### Acts

The apostles, after the Ascension, continue on the work of proclaiming and teaching the gospel of Christ, Faithful to the Risen Christ\* who continues to direct them from above. They witness to His Lordship and Kingdom.\* (Acts 4:12; 5:31 & 10:43) (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30; 10:41; 13:31)

The mark of a Christian is to be filled with Christ's Spirit. (Acts 6:5; 9:17; 11:24; 13:52) and ruled by Him. (Acts 4:12; 10:36)

### Paul

Revelation according to Paul is the fier and gracious activity through which God in Christ manifests to the world the mystery of salvation (i.e., His eternal plan to re-unite "all things in Christ" as head of creation). "In me, the least of all the saints, this grace has been given to proclaim to all of you the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men as to what is the dispensation of the mystery which has been hidden from all eternity in God. (Eph 3: 8-9) (cf Col 1:26; Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 2: 7-8).

### St. John

In John however comes the fullness of the personal relationship, the very fullness of "life abundantly" that Jesus comes to give. (Jo 10:10). Jesus shows us his relationship to the Father. The text is John 5:15 where Jesus says simply "with all the earnestness I possess I tell you this, the Son does NOTHING on His own, The Son does ONLY what He see the Father doing." Jesus was above all and only the Son of the Father, "The Father and I are ONE" he would later say. "He who sees me, sees the Father." I only do what the Father tells me (Jo 5:30) "The Father is always with me, he has not left me alone for I always do what is pleasing to Him (Jo 8: )

John brings us to the core of holiness--the human nature of Jesus was totally submitted to the Father's voice, Spirit and promotings. "For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that He himself is doing, and He will show Him even greater things than these and you will be amazed. Just as the Father raises the dead to life, so also will the Son give life to whom He wills (Jo 5: 20-21). "For as the Father has life in Himself so also has he given to the Son to have life in Himself." (Jo 5:26). There it is in all its fullness and simplicity, the chief rule of holiness wisdom and discernment--Always to SAY YES to the FATHER "YES ABBA" is the key. A life totally and fully surrendered to the Father is a supernatural life. For the Father is RESPONSIBLE fully

for those fully surrendered to him. The covenant is complete and perfect “I WILL BE YOUR GOD IF YOU WILL BE MY PEOPLE.” I personally will watch over, care for, feed, protect, guide, love, head, bless, anoint, fill, empower, sanctify, send, and empower you, if you let me.

Jesus became the total wisdom of the Father, his is the very WORD of God (Jo 1:1) incarnate among men (Jo 1:1). He continues to live in the bosom of the Father (Jo 1:18). It is through Him, with Him and in Him that the universe was made (Jo 1:3) and “without him nothing was made.” Jesus is the word God spoke to create everything. Yet man remained deaf to the word spoken at creation, so that the Father spoke it again at the to a people He called to be His own “and His own did not receive Him” (Jo 1:11). Finally, after speaking through the prophets, God speaks in the person of His own Son “The word was made Flesh and pitched His tent among us” (Jo 1:14). “No one has ever seen God, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father has made Him known (Jo 1:18). The fullness of revelation is here in Jesus, come among us, as one with us, to show us the very secrets of the heart of His Father, especially His unconditional love for all His children.

John tells us there are three things that make Jesus the perfect revealer of the Father:

1. His pre-existence as LOGOS with the Father. (Jo 1:12)
2. His incarnation as the very word of the Father. (Jo 1:14)
3. The perfect intimacy shared by Son and Father before as well as AFTER the incarnation (Jo 1:18). Jesus is the perfect word of revelation--he who knows conationally the very nature, the very wisdom of God (cf Wid 7-8) becomes the Son of God incarnate--thus every living source of truth, light and life “for all men coming into the world.”

In John, Jesus speaks and witnesses (cf Apos 1:5; 3:14). The noun “witness” (MARTURIA) appears 13 times in John and the verb “to witness” 33 times. (MARTUREIN) John the Baptist witness to Jesus (Jo 1:7), so do the Apostles (Jo 19:35 and 21:24), Scripture 5:39, Himself and the Father (Jo 5:32 & 37; 8:18), the works he does (Jo 5:36 and 9:25) and the Holy Spirit (Jo 5:39).

The son testifies to the Father. He speaks as the Father tells him. “For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God” (Jo 3:34) -- “for the words which you have given me I gave them.” (Jo 17:8) for “the word you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me (Jo 14:24). The Father testifies to the Son by attracting men and women to the Son. “No one can come to me unless the Father....draw him. Everyone who has listened to the Father and has learned comes to me” (Jo 6: 44-45). The Spirit of the Father gives not only the gift of adhering to the Truth. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater for the witness of God

is this, that He has borne witness concerning his Son. The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself, ... and the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON (1 Jo 5: 9-11). "He who has THE SON HAS LIFE." (v12). But also the Holy Spirit acts in the hearts of men and women to keep alive the word which is JESUS.

"Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also in that (word of life) abide in you which you heard from the beginning" (and) "you also will abide in the Son and the Father" (1 Jo 2: 23-24). Jesus speaks just what He hears (Jo 5:30; 8:40; & 26 & 49). His words (Jo 6:63), His doctrine (Jo 7:16) and His works (Jo 7:21 & 9:4) are those of the Father.

### Word as Scandal and Judgment

John as St. Paul sees the word of God, Jesus, as a two-edge sword, a scandal provoking decision and therefore judgment. Those who accept Him as Lord find light, love and life. Those who do not continue in darkness, hatred and death.

No one can serve two masters. (Mt 6:24) God's word revises man's order and thinking. The last are first, the poor and meek are praised, the little ones are called great, the least, lost and last, become the greatest in God's Kingdom. This is disconcerting to human logic, but God's ways are not our ways. As far as the heavens are above the earth so are God's ways above ours (cf Is 55: ). Nicodemus will ask, "How can these things be?" (Jo 3:9). His townsmen will ask, "Is this not Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" "How can he now say, "I have come down from heaven?" (Jo 6:43) The Jews will ask, "How can this man be learned, having never been educated?" (Jo 7:15); Others will say categorically, "No (he is not a good man) he leads the multitude astray." (Jo 7:12) "The rulers do not know that this is the Christ." (Jo 7:26) "No prophet arises from Galilee (Jo 7:52). "Now we know you have a demon." (Jo 8:52) "Who is this Son of Man?" (Jo 8:34)

### Judgment

Also Jesus who has come to save brings judgment. He Himself is not the judge, "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." (Jo 3:17) (cf 12:47). Who believes in Him is not judged, but he who does not has already been judged because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. (Jo 3: 17-19) (cf also Jo 1:4; 8:12; 9:5; 7:7).

The Father gave all judgment to the Son (Jo 5:22) and the Son gives all judgment over to Moses (Jo 5:45) and to his Word (12:48). Although Jesus is the instrument of decision, discernment and judgment "Now judgment is upon this world" (Jo 12:31) "for judgment I came into the world that those who do not see may see and

those who see may become blind.”(Jo 9:39) He is the source only of light and salvation, rejection of the light condemns one to live in darkness.

### Word as Life

Jesus has come to bring us life in abundance. The whole of John is about life. In Chapter 1, he is the very “in-scape” of life. In Chapter 2 he is the “New Wine” of life. In Chapter 3 He is “Life from above.” In Chapter 4 He is “fountains of living waters.” In Chapter 5 He is “Life with the Father.” In Chapter 6 He is the “Bread of Life.” In Chapter 7 He is the Tabernacle of Life,” pitched among us. In Chapter 8 He is the “Light that heals our blindness.” In Chapter 10 He is the “Shepard and Gate of Life.” In Chapter 11 He is “Resurrection and Life.” In Chapter 12, He is the “Passover of Life” - lifted on high. In Chapter 13 He is the “Cleansing Waters of Life.” In Chapter 14 He is the “Way, Truth, and Life.” In Chapter 15 He is the “Vine of Life.” In Chapter 16 He is the “Spirit of Life.” In Chapter 17 He “Passes on Life.” In Chapters 18 and 19 He is “Passion of Life.” In Chapter 20 He is Resurrected Life.” In Chapter 21 he gives a “Second Call” to life.

### I AM

In John we have the I Am’s of Jesus. So fully did Jesus say yes to the Father, did he become the very “yes” and “I am” of God. Since His Father was the “I AM” of Moses, Jesus becomes for us the “I AM” of God.

### Word as Light

Jesus in John declares “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness: but he will have light and life. (Jo 8:12) I have come as light into the world that everyone who puts their faith in me may not remain in darkness. (Jo 12:46) He is the light that enlightens every man coming into the world (Jo 1:4) although some prefer to walk in darkness; they “loved the darkness rather than the light.” (Jo 3:19) “While I am in the world I am the light of the world.” (Jo 9:5) As our light, Jesus “lights up” (our) lives as Debbie Boon sings - “He enlightens our minds with insight, our hearts with love, our lives with His Spirit.

### Passing It On

Jesus not only is the light, but passes on the life and light to His disciples and to us. “If you abide in My Word, then you are truly disciples of mine. (Jo 8:31) Right from the beginning His disciples went with Him. (Jo 2:2 and 12)

MARY, WOMB OF THE WORD

Woman whatever concerns you, concerns me. John 2:4

Finally after thousands of years of men doing their own thing, even their own religious thing, there stood this little Jewish girl who simply stood before the Lord and said “Here stand I Lord, I come to do your will.” For Mary was empty, empty of all that would control or all that would sully. She was empty of vain imaginings, idle gossip, impure thoughts, possessive and controlling ways. She was empty of legalism or fundamentalism. She was simple, clear and open. She was in the biblical sense of the word a “virgin.” She had no plans of her own. She simply was totally at God’s disposal.

And the Father, who had been for centuries preparing for such a one, could not rest. And so in this fullness of time when the night was still in the midst of its course, the Almighty Word leapt from His Royal Throne to the earth below. Oh the Word did not come flaming through the sky with swift compulsion and command, but there was just the tiniest pause in the pulse of life, for He came with all our old simplicities unmarred, with no rejection of the flesh we bear, the hearts we love with, the pain we know. He was to sleep our sleep and with us to dream our dreams.

“And so, the streets where Mary walked and all the roads, the shepherd’s and the shepherd’s sheep, the winds, the firelights, Israel’s hills saw just this and nothing more.”

A WOMAN PLAIN UPON THE EARTH AND IN HER ARMS A CHILD. For God’s ways with men is to enhance man’s deepest ways and that’s the glory and the scandal both. The word of life was to be born “of a woman.”

So God sent an angel to Mary, who said “Hail, FULL of Grace. The Lord is with you.” (It is the first greeting of the Lord to this day to all His daughters.) “Rejoice O highly favored daughter; your Lord is with you.” Like us, Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what this greeting meant. The angle reassures her, “Do not be afraid, for you have found grace with God. Behold, you shall conceive and bear a Son and call His name JESUS. Great will be His dignity and He shall be called the Son of the Most High God.” “How can this be?”, Mary responds, “since I know not man (nor man’s ways). “The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow you, hence that which shall be born of you shall be the Son of the Most High.”

Mary simply responds, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy Word.”

Mary’s “fiat” was Jesus’ “yes.” She was taught by the Spirit to simply surrender to God’s plan and power. The key remains “Yes Abba,” “Fiat.” yet, I don’t imagine Mary spoke her “fiat” just at the Annunciation.

Most likely she has said it since her Presentation over and over again, while walking, laughing, dancing, singing, working, “Let it Be, Let it Be,” It was for this reason that God promised to put enmity between Satan and “the Woman,” between Satan’s offspring and her offspring. (Gen 3:15) This was God’s Eternal Plan that a “virgin” would conceive and bear a Son and call His Name “God-is-within-us.” Israel, Ester, Ruth were all types of this woman who was to hear at Cana the precious words of her Son “Woman, what concerns you concerns Me.” (Literally, what (is) to you, (is) to me.) This woman, full of God’s plan, power and presence which is what GRACE means was to magnify the Lord-- “for He that his might has done great things” and “all generations were to call her blessed,” even to this day. Under her guidance in the providence of God, Jesus as to his humanity was to grow “in wisdom, age and grace” before God and Man. (Lk 2:52)

VINE AND BRANCHES

One of the most concise and brilliant parables of the whole of the Gospels is found in the 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. John. It is Jesus' story of the Vine and the Branches. In this parable, Jesus very simple sums up for us the whole of the spiritual life.

He starts with majoring in majors - I AM. This is the starting point. I AM THE VINE and MY Father is the GARDENER. The Father is supreme source. Just as the Vine draws life from the Gardener in that the Gardener sustains its life by the planting, the watering, hoeing and the constant care, so do I draw life from My Father. Since I AM son, word, receptivity of my Father's life - therefore can I give life. Put your faith in the Father. Put your faith also in Me. (Jn 14:1-paraphrased)

“Indeed just as the Father...grants life--so too does the Son grant life to whomsoever He wishes.” (Jn 4:21)  
 What I freely receive from the Father--I am empowered to freely give. I am the receptivity of all life, and I have come to give life. I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.” (Jn 10:10) Life is a relationship of faith, hope and love with Me and through Me to the Father.

“This is eternal life that they may know Thee, the One True God and Him whom Thou has sent.” ( )

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.” (Jn 14) “The words that I speak are not spoken of myself; it is the Father who lives in Me accomplishing His works.” (Jn 14:10)

Therefore I Am

I am the Vine.

I am the Resurrection.

I am the Way.

I am Truth.

I am Life.

I am Alpha and Omega.

I am the Beginning and the End.

I am the Eternal High Priest.

I am Mediator with the Father.

I am the Conceived of the Holy Spirit.

I am the Long Promised Son of Abraham.

I am Emmanuel.

I am the Son of God.

I am the Image of the Father.

I am the Reflection of the Father's Glory.  
I am the Eternal Word.  
I am He through whom all is created.  
I am the True Light which enlightens every man.  
I am the great light blazing in the darkness.  
I am Jesus from Galilee.  
I am the Nazarean.  
I am Mary's Son.  
I am the carpenter's son.  
I am the Son of Man.  
I am the Lamb destined to be slain.  
I am the Messiah.  
I am the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies.  
I am the Anointed One.  
I am He in whom the Father is well pleased.  
I am the very wisdom of God.  
I am God's prophet.  
I am God's spokesman.  
I am God's messenger.  
I am God's priest.  
I am God's Ambassador.  
I am God's Word.  
I am God's Teacher.  
I am the Shepherd of God's people.  
I am He who seeks out lost sheep.  
I am He who lays down His life for His sheep.  
I am the Bridegroom of the human race.  
I am He who comes in the name of the Lord.  
I am Yaweh's Poor One.  
I am the Suffering Servant.  
I am the True Paschal Lamb.  
I am the Passover.  
I am the Perfect Sacrifice.  
I am the Victim for sin.  
I am the Scapegoat.  
I am the Ransom.  
I am the Price of freedom.

I am the True Witness to the Father's love.

I am the God who comes.

I am the Empty One.

I am the Full One.

I am the New Isaac.

I am the New Moses.

I am the New Joshua.

I am the New Isaiah.

I am the gateway.

I am the door.

I am the Source of Life.

I am the Receptivity of Life.

I am the beginning of the New Creation.

I am the New Tent.

I am the New Temple.

I am the New Heavens.

I am the New Earth.

I am the first born of many brethren.

I am the cornerstone of a new world.

I am the New Adam.

I am the New Man.

I am the Reconciler.

I am the Mediator of the New Covenant.

I am the Liberator.

I am the forerunner.

I am head of all things.

I am head of the Church.

I am the Light of the World.

I am Bright Darkness.

I am just advocate with the Father.

I am the Father's Son.

I am the Perfector of Faith.

I am the Cornerstone of Hope.

I am the fullness of Him who fills all creation.

I am the Living Bread from Heaven.

I am the Living Water.

I am the Giver of gifts.

I am the Bright Morning Star.

I am the Hope of all men.

I am the Prince of Peace.

I am the Pearl of Great Price.

I am the Infinite Treasure.

I am the Lord of Lords.

I am the Lord crowned with Glory.

I am He who will come again.

I am Maranatha.

I am He who is Near.

I am the Great Amen.

I am the Eternal Alleluia.

I am Jesus.

I AM - I am.

So come to Me.

Abide in Me.

Live in Me.

I am the Vine and you are the branches. If you enter into intimacy with Me - and you will have Life.

### I AM THE VINE - YOU ARE THE BRANCHES

After explaining that His relationship is from the Father, Jesus assures us “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you...” then a seven-fold blessing will be yours, pre-supposing, of course, these two conditions.

1. Every prayer will be answered.
2. You will be My disciples.
3. You will experience My love.
4. My joy will be in you.
5. You will be able to love with a divine, supernatural “Agape” love.
6. You will be My friends who hear My Voice.
7. You will be chosen for a special anointed ministry among my people.

The conditions are of prime importance. The fundamental issue related to the place Jesus holds in our hearts. If, in fact, the most important object in my own heart is: my work, my family, television, food, having a good time, and only after all these THE LORD then, in truth, the seven-fold results will either not follow or will follow in a very imperfect and limited way. The first condition, the most important one - “If you abide in Me.” - is the first Commandment all over again; it is the fundamental issue of the Christian life. Is Jesus the Lord of your life? Do you allow Him to bring you to the Father? Do you regularly set a time aside for

prayer? If you had a week in which to do whatever you wanted, would it be something with or for the Lord? Do you give Him the first part of every day? Is He the first consideration in every decision? Do you use your talents for Him and His kingdom? In short, do you come anything close to abiding in Him? Do you live in Him? Is there a deep personal and intimate relationship between you and the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus?

The second condition - Do His words abide in you? Do you read, meditate upon and live by the gospels? If we do this, the seven-fold result follows. First of all, every prayer is answered. Why is this possible? The answer is really very simple. If I am into God, and if He is into me by His word and His Spirit, then my mind and my heart are one with His. The desires of His Heart become the desires of my heart; the thoughts of His mind become the thoughts of my mind. I notice myself praying for the lonely, the poor, the desolate. I find myself praying for all my needs and those of my neighbors. I discover myself praying for the gifts of the Holy Spirit - wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord, increased faith, miracles, tongues, discernment, prophecy; and for the fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, and self-control. In proportion to my union with God, so does His Spirit inspire me to pray for that which He wants me to have as I move from moment to moment in union with Him. As my union with Him deepens, a higher percentage of my prayers are in fact answered, and slowly, but surely, I gain a conaturality with the Father. The thoughts, the desires, the plans of His mind and Heart become mine, and the things that I ask for are increasingly in accord with what He wants for me. Conversely, as I move out of His will and His plan for my life, a smaller percentage of my prayers are in fact answered, and the prayers themselves become far less frequent.

Secondly, if I remain in Him and His words remain in me, then I become His disciple. Each one of us disciples our own god. If I'm into basketball, I talk basketball. I become a basketball disciple. If I'm into TV, I become a disciple of TV. If I'm into cars, I become a disciple of cars, and if I'm into Jesus, I become His disciple.

Thirdly, if these two primary conditions are met, I experience love, even ecstatic love. Jesus says to my heart, "I love you just as much as the Father has loved Me."

This is reminiscent of Isaiah 43 where God says, "I love you, I call you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the dark waters, you shall not drown; when you pass through the fires, you shall not be burned because you are precious in my eyes and honor. I forbid you to be afraid for I go always with you." Also, (Jer 31:3), "I have loved you with an everlasting love, so I am constant in my affection for you." And (Is 49:15), "Does a woman forget her baby at the breast, or fail to cherish the son of her womb? Yet even if these forget, I will never forget you. See I have branded you on the palms of My hands, your walls are always under my eyes." And in (Eph 3), where Paul prays, "May you experience, as all of God's children should, the breadth, the length, the height and depth of God's marvelous love for you and at last be filled with God

Himself.” Many of the saints were so enraptured by the love of God that they would go off into ecstasy. It is recorded that St. Francis of Assisi, being overwhelmed by divine love, would actually cry out “No more, Lord, no more.” The hungry hearts of we Americans need to hear this message.

Fourthly, “I come that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” If I am connected to God and He to me then the joy of His Spirit is mine. Paul urged the Philippians to “rejoice in the Lord always.” Just think, it is possible to be so high on the Lord, to be so filled with His Spirit that I need not turn to tranquilizers, drugs, alcohol or promiscuity. What is fulfilled in the Spirit no longer needs fulfillment in the flesh. Once in possession of this joy, a compulsive need for pleasure will go.

The fifth promise is that I will be enabled to love as Jesus loves. If I serve a God who forgives me, I become a forgiving person. If I serve a God who self-sacrifices himself for me, I become a self-sacrificing person. If I serve a God who lays down His life for me, I am able to put aside my false ego for the ones I love.

Sixthly, I will hear the voice of the Lord, “You are my friends because I tell you everything that I hear from my Father.” The gifts of the Spirit: wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, discernment, counsel will flow directly into my thought life from the Spirit within me. My mind will be renewed by the mind of Christ.

Lastly, I will be given an anointed work by the living God among His people. “You have not chosen Me; I have chosen you and appointed you to go out and bear much fruit.”

Chapter 6

### TWO KEY ATTITUDES

In the matter of discernment there are two keys.

Emptiness or Willingness	-No-
Openness or Prayer	-Yes-

Paul in those magnificent two verses in Romans 12:1 and 2 tells us to say yes to God and no to the world. He reiterates the famous two choices that Moses held out to the people and the two standards of dignities, “I set before you” God, His Way, His Mission which leads to life and Satan, His Way and His Mission which leads to death--choose life.

The first step is crucial. George Muller states that nearly all the difficulties will be solved. He states:

“I seek to get my heart into such a state that it will of its own in a given matter. When we are ready to do the Lord’s will--whatever it may be--9/10<sup>th</sup> of the difficulties are overcome.”

A. W. Tozer puts it this way:

“First it is essential that we be completely dedicated to God’s high honor and surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. God will not lead us except for His own glory and He cannot lead us if we resist His will. The shepherd cannot lead a stubborn sheep. The evil practice of using God must be abandoned. We must submit ourselves joyously to God and let Him work through us to achieve His own ends.”

Jesus says:

“Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains just a grain of wheat but if it dies it produces much fruit. The man who loses his life shall preserve it for life eternal.”

Mother Basilea Schluck says:

“To listen to the holy God always means to act upon His words. It is almost a matter of course that if we listen in the right way, we will also obey, trusting in God’s love.”

Often we feel that the greatest difficulty is in trying to discern the will of God. Most often the main difficulty is a volitional one. Before all else we must pray for an attitude of willingness. Only with such an attitude can I see clearly what God’s will is.

Throughout the Bible when God gives special calls to people, it appears that they were willing even before He called them. This is clear from the fact of their quick response. Even while they felt ambivalence about their abilities to carry out their call (e.g., with Moses and Jeremiah) we don’t sense an underlying resistance.

Willingness means two things.

1. I must be willing to obey God’s already revealed will.
2. I must be willing in advance to accept any alternative in the future.

In short we bring our souls into a state of “poised indifference” ready to go either way, ready to go or stop.

We must always remember that for most if not all people there is always a problem of mixed motivation. Sometimes it is implied that God only speaks to those with absolutely pure motives. This is non-scriptural. The lowest rung of God’s ladder reaches to touch the most wayward sinner. The Lord uses the symbolism of sheep not only because they are dumb but also because they are wayward. If we are honest we must always admit the possibility of mixed and impure motives. It is not good, however, to indulge in useless introspection. Simply come to the Lord as we are and trust Him to lead, purify and strengthen us. Even our sins are his responsibility. It is primarily through prayer that we successfully do battle against our unwillingness.

The flip side or emptiness or willingness is openness to the Spirit. As I die to self, I am open to God. As I tune off the voice of the world, flesh or devil, I open up to His voice IN PRAYER. Listening to prayer is essential. Prayer is our attitude of saying yes to God sometimes with words, sometimes beyond them. God has chosen to give in response to prayer. In reality prayer allows us to receive God's wisdom, love and power into our spirits.

“If you really want to know what God wants you to do, just ask Him.” (James 1:5)

If we ask, we shall receive.

If we seek, we shall find.

If we knock, it shall be opened.

“God does not desire to guide us magically. He wants us to know His mind. He wants us to grasp His heart.”  
(cf John White in The Fight, Downeis Grove, Ill TVPW 197 p. 157)

Prayer is listening primarily. God should do most of the talking.

### Emptiness

“Let that mentality be in you which was also in Christ Jesus Our Lord that even though He was God - He did not see His divinity as something to be clung onto, but rather He emptied Himself taking the form of a servant.”

One of the absolute prerequisites of listening to God - is the willingness not to listen to other voices. We live in America - a very noisy world. There are noises and voices everywhere - calling us, entreating us, enticing us, cajoling us, frightening us, worrying us.

We live frantic, burdened, jostled lives - at least on the surface. In order to listen to the Spirit within, we must go deeper. We must turn off and turn away from other voices and keep our minds fixed on Jesus.

Much internal discipline, internal mortification, and internal self-control is necessary if this is to happen. We must, in the words of the spiritual giants, die to these. We must go through the dark night - first of the senses, then of the will, then of the mind.

The dark night of the senses is transgressed as my deepest self realizes that no pleasure of the flesh - food, drink, drugs, sex, movies, TV, sports, magazines; delights of the eyes, ears, and body, are more fulfilling than my personal inner attachment to the Lord Jesus. In a hedonistic society, this calls for quite an inner transformation; renewing of my attitudes; a deep inner conversion to allow Jesus to be my Romance.

The dark night of the will occurs when I am willing to give up my plans, my dreams, my will, my control of my life - to allow Jesus to be Lord - to be the Controller - to call the shots.

The dark night of the mind occurs as I allow the Lord to give me His insights rather than those of this world; slowly coming to the realization that the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God.

Since these are simultaneous processes, there is for the soul much pain and confusion. God speaks clearly. But so does the voice of the world, at times; so does the voice of the flesh, at times; so does the voice of the rebellious will, the discordant emotions, the unbridled passions.

It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh has nothing to offer. (Jn 6:63)

Along with the outside forces, there is within our very being weaknesses, frailties, inclinations, passions, and assorted evil tendencies that often make being whole seem a far-off goal.

We find it easier, at times, to be evil than holy, angry than gentle, resentful than merciful, lustful than pure, deceitful than truthful, selfish than self-sacrificing; possessive than generous. Each of us has some particular weakness that towers over all our other frailties and causes us to fail.

Some find humility hard, and self-sufficiency easy.

Some find loving their neighbor hard, and aloofness easy.

Some find self-control hard, and lust for food, drugs, or sex easy.

Some find patience hard, and losing their tempers easy.

It will be precisely in this area of our lives that we will find the cross of Jesus. Although Jesus took that weakness and that specific sin of ours to the cross and nailed it there, we have to appropriate the efficaciousness of that redemption to ourselves by calling on the power of His Spirit in moments of weakness and temptation. When we feel weak and call upon His Name, the Holy Spirit within us is released to give us His strength.

St. Paul tells us that the Father has made Jesus to be our “wisdom” our “justification,” our “sanctification,” our “redemption,” and may I add to Paul’s list:

our “humility

our “purity”

our “joy”

our “peace”

our “gentleness”  
our “patience”  
our “dedication”  
our “self-sacrifice”

We can see and sense outside influences, so our decisions can be clearer, but when our choices between good and evil stem from our own inner being, our discernment is often clouded. Our weaknesses are so much a part of us that so much of our evil is compulsive, and even unconscious. Despite the fact that Americans are glutted with possessions - most of us would not face that we are gluttons. Four percent (4%) of the world's population consuming 40% of the world's goods is okay in our eyes and therefore should be in the eyes of God, as well. Most do not even question the softness of their personal lives. They might have a vague awareness of American permissiveness, but their own interior sinfulness is not challenged by they themselves.

Look at the reactions to Alexander Solzhenitsyn's talk at Harvard. Our inner personalities are affected by our own bias, prejudices, rationalizations, self-deceptions that a complete conversion is nearly impossible.

Even those who have been blessed by God with sudden conversion, those who have been touched with a powerful religious experience, (those who have been “born again,” etc.) find themselves beset with temptations in one area or another, and continue to fight against their faults in spite of their conversion. To be touched by God is one thing, to be fully sanctified is quite another. Sanctification is a process of moment by moment surrendering to the promptings of the Spirit. It takes a lifetime, and then some.

Some Christians live in “light groups” wherein they try to speak the truth in love to one another. This is most painful. Most men and women cannot take too much reality. The realists are very few indeed. The truly transparent people, the saints, are hard to find. We cover up so easily, retreating into the safe attitudes whereby we do not have to radically change. Those who live in very intimate relationships, especially husbands and wives, soon, much to their disillusionment, discover this. Most men and women are blind. They live in darkness and prefer darkness to the light. (Jo 1: ). Perhaps the cross that is heaviest is to observe that those who love us react negatively to certain of our inner attitudes. Parents are in conflict often with teenagers. Teachers are in conflict often with pupils. Husbands are in conflict often with wives. We see through the veneer - the false layers of ego - and see the problem areas of our loved ones. Most often they cannot see these areas themselves. Yet, it is precisely these attitudes that cause us problems. Such friction provides a growing Christian with the self-knowledge that he or she needs in order to change.

We see reality “as in a glass darkly.” (1 Cor 13:12) Our inner glory is veiled by more surface and more negative attitudes. One who truly loves us forces us to grow, prays for light for us, and is prepared to withstand even our rejection as they speak the truth in love. Since I can only hammer one hand at a time to

the cross, my loved one must drive the nail through the other. If my hand be the occasion of my sin, or through my ego, if that be the occasion, or through my over-attachment to clothes, or sex, or “good times,” if they be the occasions.

Our friends in the Lord help the Lord to strip us of everything that is not through Him, with Him, in Him.

And if the Lord cannot use friends for this, he uses our enemies who often speak the truth we need to hear - but without the love to cushion it.

The Holy Spirit of the Father prunes everything in us that is not of the Son. Every shadow of selfishness, worldliness, sinfulness, must go if we are to be transfigured into Jesus.

Before the pruning:

We are like the Israelites whom Paul speaks about who have veils over their hearts until they accept Christ. “It seems as though Jewish minds and hearts are covered by a thick veil, because they cannot see and understand the real meaning of the Scriptures. For this veil of misunderstanding can be removed only by believing in Christ.” (1 Cor 3:11)

After the pruning:

We Christians have no veil over our faces; we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him. (1 Cor 3:16)

### The Enlarging of the Heart

As we begin to seek God, God enlarges our capacity to find Him. Our hearts are always smaller than our God. Our God is always better, larger, more fulfilling, more endearing than even our fondest dreams. One of the most stinging criticisms made against Christians is that our minds are narrow and our hearts are small.

So God is always making us stretch; is always opening us up. If He did not enlarge our hearts, we would never grow. We would be stunted, dwarfed, narrow, small, petty. But, as it is, God enlarges our eternal capacities for wisdom, for love, and for power.

This enlarging is a process. It takes time. The love, joy, peace, purity, wisdom, understanding, and gentleness; the faith, the hope the sincerity we have at any one moment is only a shadow of what he wants to give.

St. Augustine said, "His gift is very great indeed, but our capacity to receive it is small. That is why we are told: Enlarge your desires...."

The deeper our faith, the stronger our hope, the greater our desire, the larger will be our capacity to receive that gift, which is very great indeed. No eye has seen it; it has no color. No ear has heard it; it has no sound. "It has not entered man's heart; man's heart must enter into it." "Narrow is the Mansion of my soul; enlarge it that you may enter in."

Jeremiah (29:13) said it long ago as well: "You will seek me and when you seek me with your whole heart, you will find me." A popular folk song says: "The love I have...is only a shadow of your love for me, your deep abiding love."

As we ask, we receive, as we receive, we ask for more. We get still more.

"O God of Truth, prepare our minds to hear and heed your Holy Word.  
Fill every heart that longs for You with Your mysterious presence."

Song by R. Harrison (1748-1810)

God has stretched out these lives of ours in this mysterious thing that we call time. We move second by second, minute by minute, into eternity -

Brightness of the Father's glory  
Springing from Eternal Light  
Source of light by light engendered  
Day enlightening every day.

In your everlasting radiance  
Since upon us, Christ, True Sun  
Bringing life to mind and body  
Through the Holy Spirit's Pow'r.

Dawn is drawing ever nearer  
Dawn that brings us all we seek  
Son who dwells within the Father  
Father uttering One Word.

Wm. Boyce (1710-1779)

This life is communicated into our minds as insights, thoughts, principle; into our wills as convictions,

decisions, resolutions, into our hearts as warmth, love, forgiveness, zeal; into our hands as service, power, healing.

Little by little, God turns us away from other sources of insight, love, and power, and attracts us to Himself as the Source of Insight, Love, and Power.

Poverty is a virtue not so much because it detaches us from things, but because it stretches us toward God as the Treasurer, the Pearl of Great Price - for which a man took and sold everything he had. Virginity and married Chastity are virtues not because they draw us away from carnality, but because they stretch us toward God as the Divine Romance - the truest and most fervent source of fulfillment for our affections.

Our hearts are made for contemplation of God and do not really rest until they find Him.

Obedience is not so much a virtue because it detaches us from our self-wills, but because it attaches us to the will of the Father and to Jesus as Lord.

How vastly different is this from the self-satisfied spirit we see everywhere these days. To be religious appears to be the highest ambition of most Christians. Here they begin and end. Around this they build their narrow temples, and in these cramped confines, they offer cheery thanks. Still the greatest thing in the universe is not space; but the capacity of the human heart. Being made to God's image, we are capable of Him.

DREAMS, A WAY TO LISTEN TO GOD

Man has both a right side of his brain and a left side. The right lobe controls his rational thought processes. The left lobe controls his more creative and intuitive processes. To be balanced man needs both. That is why, I believe, Jesus did not give long theological discourses but pithy parables that grasped both man's intellectual and intuitive facilities. Man is a thinker, yes, but he is also a dreamer who under the inspiration of the Spirit dreams "impossible" dreams, for with God all things are possible. It is a spiritual principle that we are most awake to God, when we are dead to the world. Since God has ordained that roughly one third of our lives were to be spent sleeping, it is undoubtedly true that He has His own purposes for this.

John Newton, author of the popular hymn "Amazing Grace" writes this:

"The most notable impulse which I have ever experienced happened during a dream. Those who know the Holy Scriptures will verify that there have always been warnings and miraculous dreams, which either prophesy or direct the future, apparently as communications from heaven."

Western man has been highly rational, but not too intuitive. As Gerald Vann says, "We must learn to be feminine before God. To be highly rational keeps us in control. Being in control, we fail to surrender to God as holy mystery. We have to learn many ways to open up to and to listen to God. Jesus did always what he 'saw' the Father doing (Jo 5:19). His prayer was contemplative. In praying--his imagination was exercised. The value of the imagination in the spiritual sphere has in its power to perceive in natural things, symbols of spiritual things.

The obedience of Jesus to the Father and the commitment of Jesus to prayer flow from every page of the Gospels.

He always does the will of his Father (Jo 5:19), His meat is to do the will of the Father. He always pleases the Father. (Jo 8:29) Through loud cries and tears he was perfected in obedience. From Bethlehem to Calvary, from beginning to end--Jesus has one purpose, one mission, one desire--the will of His Father.

THY WILL BE DONE

The will of God is not only the meat of Jesus' life. It should be the very substance of ours as well. For in the will of God lies the origin of all creation--its very being, its life, its glory. In the will of God lies the plan and origin of redemption--the incarnation, the cross, its glory. In the will of God lies the origin and the sustaining of the life of grace for all and for each. "God works both to will and accomplish of his good pleasure." Only in knowing and loving his will, in doing and enduring it can His Spirit, His life, His love and His power grow. Thus I experience joy, rest, peace, hope and life. The Lord Jesus became a man in order to do the will of God and also to show us how to do the Father's will so that we to could live a divine life, God's life upon earth. By doing the Father's will, we enter into, enjoy, and live in the kingdom of the Father. There is an intimate connection between the kingdom of God and the will of God. You cannot have one without the other. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done..."

Jesus presents heaven as a state where the bliss consists in doing the will of the Father joyfully and always. He taught us to pray and to truly desire that his will may likewise be done "on earth as it is in heaven."

The reason why Christians are weak and often live in darkness is that they simply do not know how blessed it is to do the will of God. The imitation of Christ is to all that are living in selfishness, sin or worldliness. "Come with me to the Father, your only source of Life."

...who serves him.....

But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun  
of justice with its healing rays." (Mal 3: 16-18 NAB)

There is an inborn and God-given need for such friendships. They are essential. We desperately need friendships in the Lord. Jesus himself called his apostles "his friends" because He told them everything the Father was doing. "The true friend is patient, kind, not jealous, does not put on airs, is not snobbish, never rude, not seek seeking, not prone to anger, does not brood over injuries, does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the Truth. There is no limit to a true friend's forbearance, trust and love. He never fails you." (cf 1 Cor 13: 4-8) The true friend "sticks closer than a brother" (Prov 18:24), "loves at all times" (Prov 17:17) and "lays down his life for his friends." (Jo 15:13) There are discouraging times, dark times, puzzling times, times of indecision, doubt and opportunity. Friends keep us from becoming dogmatic, insular, and balanced. Our friends "like iron, sharpen us" (Prov 27:17) and help us to discern the most important thing of all - What is God saying? (I.e., What is His Will for my life?)

God I Am Coming To Do Your Will (Heb 10: 1-10)

Since the law had only a shadow of the good things to come, and no real image of them, it was never able to perfect the worshipers by the same sacrifices offered continually year after year. Were matters otherwise, the priests would have stopped offering them, for the worshipers, once cleansed, would have had no sin on their conscience. But through those sacrifices there came only a yearly recalling of sins, because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take sins away. Wherefore, on coming into the world, Jesus said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me: Holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the book, I have come to do your will, O God.’ ”

First he says, “Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings you neither desired nor delighted in.” (These are offered according to the prescriptions of the law.) Then he says, “I have come to do your will.” In other words, he takes away the first covenant to establish the second. By this “will,” we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(Ps 40: 2.3.7-8, 10.11)

Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will. I have waited, waited for the Lord, and he stooped toward me. And he put a new song into my mouth, a hymn to our God. Here am I Lord; I come to do your will.

Sacrifice or oblation you wished not, but ears open to obedience you gave me. Holocausts or sin - offerings you sought not; then said I, “Behold I come.” Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

I announced your justice in the vast assembly; I did not restrain my lips, as you, O Lord, know. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

Your justice, I kept not hid within my heart; your faithfulness and your salvation I have spoken of; I have made no secret of your kindness and your trust in the vast assembly. Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will.

(Mk 3: 31-35)

“Here are my mother and my brothers: anyone who does the will of God.”

The Mother of Jesus and his brothers arrived, and as they stood outside they sent word to him to come out. The crowd seated around him told him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside asking for you.” He said in reply, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” And gazing around him at those seated in the circle he continued, “These are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother to me.”

## Keeping a Spiritual Journal

“But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart,  
so that you can do it.” (Deut 30:14)

The Written Word of God is only one way through which God speaks to us. He also speaks through prophecy, through the gift of wisdom and through a word of knowledge.

The Spirit of the Father and the Son dwells within the believers inspiring their minds with thoughts, insights, understanding and wisdom--to think the thoughts of God.

“Let that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Wisdom, knowledge, counsel, understanding, discernment are all gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are also all mind gifts. They come to us as thoughts. The Father wants us to know what His thoughts are for us to share. He inspires our minds with wisdom, knowledge, counsel and understanding and our hearts with love, warmth, forgiveness, compassion and zeal.

One time-tested way of listening to the Spirit is the keeping of a Spiritual Journal. There are many ways to do this. If the way you are using works for you, keep it up.

I submit a simple method that the Spirit has taught me.

“Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of you.”

Meditating on the Word of God--with His Spirit--and keeping a Spiritual Journal increases our direct relationship with the Lord. I am convinced that during these times God directly, personally and intimately fills our minds with His thoughts and our hearts with His desires. (For those of you who have the privilege of sharing the Eucharistic Presence of the Lord (cf Chapter on the Eucharist--in my book on 2 Cor 3:15), those very precious moments after Communion are powerful times of ecstasy, fulfillment, comfort and insight. But our God is not primarily interested in filling individuals with His Spirit. He is primarily interested in fashioning a people who are His Own.

“I will be your God and you shall be My people.”

The original covenant, although renewed in Christ, is still in effect. God wants a “nation,” a “race,” a “people,” a “royal priesthood” that belongs to Him. A people He can lead through the wilderness of present day darkness, tribulations and sin into the Kingdom of His promised land. I might say a church but most of us experience church as too institutional, too one hour a weekend too important, too surface, too

uncommitted, too un-Christian to be the “Body of Christ.” I will put forth my vision of what kind of Church I see from Scripture that Christ set up in my book on Eph 4:11.

For the present I will develop the communal aspects of the Gospel around “friendships in the Lord;” i.e., small “light groups” of people following the Spirit within larger bodies. This is seen happening everywhere as a result of the CURSILLO, House of Prayer, Charismatic, Evangelical, and Pentecostal movements within Christendom. I see small more fully committed groups sharing life deeply. I recommend to the reader Richard Rohr’s tapes on Community.

Father Rohr has captured much of what the Spirit is - teaching to communities within the Churches.

If the person who is trying to grow in the Spirit will simply ask God for one, two or three others who are earnestly seeking His guidance--God will answer those prayers.

Fellowship with other Christians is the fleshing out of our fellowship with the Father. We simply, as Christians, cannot say we love God whom we cannot see if we do not love our brothers and sisters whom we can see. (cf Jo ) We may speak in tongues and many Christians do today. Even the tongues of angels, but if we do not love one another, we are but gongs. So Jesus tells us “Where two or three are gathered together, in my name, there I am in the midst.” (Mt 18:20)

There is a very real sense in which the hearts of believers will burn inside of us as we walk with the Lord and He opens to us what His Father is saying and what it says in Scripture.

(Lk 24:32) They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures.” There is a beautiful promise in the prophet Malachi:

(Mal 3: 16-18 NAB)

“Then they who fear the Lord spoke with one another, and the Lord listened attentively. And a record book was written before him of those who fear the Lord and trust in his name. And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my own special possession, on the day I take action. And I will have compassion on them as a man has compassion on...”

### The Leading of the Spirit

If you want to be led by the Spirit, give up moment by moment not only your will and wisdom but your whole life. The Fire will descent and consume the sacrifice.

At the next Eucharist unite all you have and are with the unconsecrated host--surrender intellect, will, time,

talent and treasure to be transformed. Unite all your weakness, pain, temptations, fears, worries, insecurities with the wine. Then when that sacrifice is transformed--as you receive it, you will be transformed--not just in your mind and heart, but in your whole being. As bread and wine become the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ so the bread of your life (your intellect, will, emotions, time, talent and treasure) and the wine of your life (weaknesses, failures and insecurities) become the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ as well. As they are transformed, you are transformed. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you have no life in you. But he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in me and I in him. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink." (Jo 6: ) We become Him whom we have received.

The leading of the Spirit must be a thing of faith in two ways. First, the beginning of the leading will come when we learn in holy fear to cultivate and act upon in confidence THE HOLY SPIRIT IS IN ME AND IS DOING HIS WORK. The indwelling Spirit is the crowning piece of God's redemptive work. Here, if anywhere, faith is needed. Faith in this sense is the power of the person to recognize the Unseen and Divine....which receives the impression of the Spirit's presence, as God draws near, and which receives what God brings.

As many are as led by the Spirit are the sons of God. (Rom 8:14) Many think that the leading of the Spirit will be primarily through thoughts and insights or through a passage from Scripture. In moments of doubt and confusion they ask for this guidance and apparently ask for it in vain.

When at times they think they have it, it does not bring the assurance or the comfort or the success which they think ought to be the seal of what is really of the Spirit. And so the leading of the Spirit instead of bringing an end to doubt, controversy and anxiety, and a source of light, solace and peace, itself becomes a more painful source of doubt and the greatest difficulty of all.

The answer to this perplexity is so simple, that many miss it. (It is simply this.) The leading of the Spirit is in the Life, not only in the Mind.

The Life is stirred, purified and made holy; the Life becomes the light. As the conformity to this world and its spirit is crucified and dies, as we deliberately "crucify our flesh with its vices," we are renewed in the spirit of our mind; and so the mind becomes able to prove and know the food and perfect and acceptable will of God. (Rom 12:2)

The whole context of Romans 7 and 8 is most important. Paul is engaged in Romans 7 in a battle between flesh and spirit. He, i.e., his whole life, is in consternation and perplexity. He is double minded, because he has still foothold in both the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit. Who will deliver me, he cries out, from this sinful body that leads him into sin and then the answer. Thanks be to God it has been done through

Christ Jesus, our Lord. The Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus somehow becomes the way out of consternation and perplexity.

How? By our simply believing into it, as some would say. Partly. But the real answer strikes more deeply at the roots of sin, which become the roots of consternation and confusion. The real answer lies in appropriating the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus into our beings; i.e., by allowing the Spirit of Jesus free reign so that the Spirit can free us to think, love and act like Jesus. The traditional controversy between faith and works has to be solved. It is solved and integrated in the lives of those who are the sons and daughters of God.

Listen now to Romans 8:1:

“There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus Our Lord. For the Law of the Spirit of Life has set us free from the Law of the sin and death. For God has done what the flesh could not do--namely, sending His own Son into the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin--in order that the just demands of the law might be fulfilled by us who walk not after the flesh but of the SPIRIT.”

The connection between the sanctifying work of the Spirit in our inner life, and this leading comes out very clearly in the whole context. Listen carefully to Romans 8:13. “If by the Spirit you make die the deeds of the flesh you shall LIVE.” There, follows immediately “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” That is, as many who are led by the Spirit in mortifying the sinful deeds of the body, and living a holy LIFE, these are the sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. The Spirit of Jesus works into us the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. We who have been baptized have been emerged with Jesus in His Death to sin, selfishness and worldliness so that we can rise with Him in likeness to His Life.

In short the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Holiness and only as such will He lead. I ask the reader to memorize this line or at least to frame it in some prominent place. “GOD IS RESPONSIBLE ONLY FOR LIVES TOTALLY SURRENDERED TO HIM.” Memorize this one too. “The sin question has to be dealt with convincingly before the Spirit leads. And the basic sin is not allowing JESUS TO BE LORD OF OUR LIVES. Through the Spirit of Jesus, God works in us both to will and to do of His Good Pleasure. Anyone who believe that faith does not work into works, please take notice.

This is highly Scriptural. Salvation through faith includes sanctification. We must consider faith as a relational and life surrendering to the Word, Jesus. In other words, faith WORKS. As John Wright Follette said so well:

“The Divine Nature, of which we are partakers, is a gift of God. We cannot

earn it or buy it, but receive it through repentance by confession of sin and need, and reaching out in faith, the Lord gives us the gift of salvation, and we are given a new nature and become a member of His body. Then He desires a process of building a Christian character in us which will resemble that of Christ. He calls this 'conforming us to the image and likeness of Christ.' This will build in each one of us a character that is Christ-like, that we might begin to reflect His life and thereby BECOME an instrument or vessel for POWER AND LIFE of our Lord Jesus Christ to flow through."

In our meditations of what the leading of the Spirit means, it is most important that we understand these truths in our bearings. IT IS ONLY THE SPIRITUAL MIND THAT CAN DISCERN SPIRITUAL THINGS THAT CAN RECEIVE THE LEADINGS OF THE SPIRIT. Note the double causality: The mind must grow spiritual to become capable of spiritual guidance. Paul said to the Corinthians that because, though born again, they were still carnal, as babes in Christ, he had not been able to teach them spiritual truth. If this holds true of man, how much more so of the Holy Spirit? The deepest mysteries of Scripture, as far as they are apprehended by human thought, can be studied, accepted and even taught by the unsanctified mind. But the leading of the Holy Spirit, does not begin in the region of thought or feeling. Deeper down in the spirit in the inner man, in the inner life, whence flows the powers that mold the will and inspires the mind, there the Holy Spirit takes up His abode. It is there that He breathes, moves, inspires and impels. He leads us by inspiring us with a life and disposition out of which right purposes and decisions come forth.

"That you may be filled with the knowledge of His Will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding:" that prayer teaches us that it is only to a spiritual person that the knowledge of God's Will can be given. The spiritual understanding comes only with the growth of the spiritual man and the faithfulness to the spiritual life. He that would have the leading of the Spirit must yield himself to have his life wholly possessed and filled with the Spirit. It was when Christ had been baptized with the Spirit that "being full of the Spirit, He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness" (Lk 4:1), "that He returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee" (Lk 4:14), and began His ministry in Nazareth with the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me." All leading claims following, it stands to reason that to enjoy the leading of the Spirit demands a docile, meek and teachable person, not just a mind.

To be able to discern the Spirit's teaching Scripture tells us that the ear must be circumcised, in a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ. The will and wisdom of the flesh must be feared, crucified and denied. God's ways and thoughts are not those of carnal man. The ear must be closed to all that the carnal man and his wisdom has to say. In all our thoughts of God or our study of His Word, in all our drawing close to worship and adoration and all our going out to work in Him, there must be a continual and abiding distrust and abnegation of self and a very definite

waiting on God by the Holy Spirit to lead and teach us. A person that continues to daily and hourly wait for Divine leadings will receive them.

In the Holy Spirit is the most intimate communication of Divine Life. Here faith does not judge by what it feels or understands but simply submits to God to let Him do what He said. The man of faith meditates and worships, prays and trusts ever afresh he yields his whole being in adoring acceptance of the Lord's word "I will be with you." He depends upon God's leading from without and within.

Secondly, faith has to be exercised with each specific of the leading. When there is a question that I have in humility and emptiness placed before the Lord, waiting upon His answer, I must in childlike faith trust My God that His Guidance is given. As I have mentioned, not in sudden impulses or strong impressions, not in heavenly voices or in remarkable dreams must we expect the ordinary leadings of the Spirit, although there are persons to whom such leadings are undoubtedly given. The time may come, as our nature becomes like His and our lives more in direct contact with Him that our very thoughts and feelings are the conscious vehicle of His voice. But we must leave this also to Him.

The lower steps of the ladder are let down low enough for the weakest child to reach. **GOD MEANS EVERY CHILD OF HIS TO BE LED BY THE SPIRIT, EVERY DAY.** Begin to follow the Spirit's leading by trusting, not only that the Spirit is within you, but that He does at once undertake the work for which you ask, seek and trust Him. Yield yourself, as you are, to God in undivided surrender. Believe with childlike confidence that God's acceptance of your gift of self means that He is in charge. Through the Spirit of Jesus God will guide you step by step. He accepts you where you are--wherever that is--whether you are the woman with two, three or five husbands, the thief to be crucified or the doubting Thomas and leads you fully to Him one step at a time.

But are we not in danger of being led by our imagining of our own hearts and counting the leadings of the Spirit what proves to be a delusion of the flesh. If so, where is our safeguard against such an error?

Here the whole weight of this book comes to bear in a holistic way:

If we have surrendered our lives to the Lord.

If we have investigated out the Word of God.

If we have listened to the Saints.

If we have discerned it with significant others.

If there is a deep peace.

If there is an inner conviction.

If the circumstances seem right.

Then proceed with childlike faith--for it is then the Lord's responsibility to deter you if you are mistaken and to lead you if you are on the right path. In the perfect harmony of all the right path is discerned.

Remember that only the spiritual man or woman whose inner life is under the dominion of the Spirit can discern the spiritual meaning of the Word. This brings us back to the point of this chapter--the leading of the Spirit is inseparable from the sanctifying of the Spirit.

Let each one begin where he is. Begin at the beginning, obey the Commandments and the Father will send you the Spirit. Give up every sin. Give up in everything to the voice of conscience. Surrender all through the Spirit, mortify the flesh. As a son or daughter of God, place yourself entirely at His disposal to follow whatsoever He leads. And the Holy Spirit Himself through whom you mortify sin and yield yourself to be led as son or daughter will bear witness with your spirit, in a joy and power hitherto unknown, that you are indeed a child of God, enjoying all a child's privileges in His Father's Love and Guidance. The only thing that makes a difference is obedience to His word.