

**'Look at yourself in a mirror....
You are an expression of the glorified,
eternal Christ who lives within you.
Begin to believe that about yourself
and you will start to experience His
life as a daily reality.'**

**LIVING
WITH
JESUS
TODAY
JUAN CARLOS ORTIZ**

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This book is dedicated to my wife Martha, without whose love and encouragement it could not have appeared.

Also, I gratefully acknowledge the help of David Ord in the preparation of the manuscript.

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**"We have to know
beyond the shadow
of a doubt
that we have within us
all the resources
of the One
who upholds
the universe."**

Juan Carlos Ortiz

1

The Eternal Babyhood of the Believer

We have a phenomenon in the church today which I call the "eternal babyhood of the believer."

We have members of our churches who, after years of hearing messages, are just the same. They continually need a minister to keep after them—changing their diapers, putting talcum on them, and checking that their milk isn't too hot. The church seems more like a hospital than an army.

Sometimes we fool ourselves because we grow numerically. We think that this is growth. But to grow in numbers is not spiritual growth. Cemeteries also grow numerically. To have a hundred people without love, then two hundred without love, is just to get fat.

Often we see the situation, but we don't know what to do about it.

We tell our people, "You should be bearing fruit for Jesus. You should be experiencing the virtues of God. You should have more love, more peace." But we cannot expect such qualities in babies. They are found only in adults.

This was Paul's complaint when he observed the lack of spiritual growth in the Corinthian church. "You are still babies," he told them.

To the Galatians he wrote that he needed to go through the pains of childbirth all over again for them.

And when the people in the book of Hebrews ought to have

been teachers, they needed to be taught the first principles over again: they could take only milk instead of solid food.

I have a little girl called Georgina. If I tell her, "Georgina, give me grandchildren," even if I pray for her, fast for her, and spank her, she cannot give me grandchildren. Not because she is naughty, not because she is rebellious, but simply because she is a child.

Of course, if she grows, she can give me grandchildren, without praying and without fasting. Because that's the natural fruit of growth.

When I was eight or nine years old, our church had a visit from a preacher who had a nice beard. Beards were not as popular in those days as they are today, so it was very unusual. I fell in love with that beard. He looked like a prince!

So I began to pray for the Lord to give me a beard. And I remember that once I had a day of fasting and prayer.

My mother asked, "Johnny, are you not eating today?" I answered, "No, Mom, I'm fasting."

"But why are you fasting?"

"It's a secret petition," I explained.

The beard didn't come, even though I prayed and fasted. But when I was 16, without praying, without fasting and without confessing, the beard came as a result of natural growth and development.

The church is no different. Growth results from life. When we are spiritually alive, we grow in love, in joy, in peace, in longsuffering, in gentleness, and in all the virtues of Christ. These are the natural fruit of spiritual life, and no amount of effort on our part can produce them.

One of the main reasons for the lack of growth in the church is the fact that we are centered in concepts instead of in life. We are very conscious of which doctrines we subscribe to, which theological system we belong to, which principles we hold to.

What do I mean by being concept-centered?

Suppose you ask me, "Brother Ortiz, will you give us a Bible study on joy?" Of course, I am glad to do so.

I go to my office, take a concordance and look for the word "joy." I put down all the verses on joy. Oh, how many! Then I take out those that will suit my message and leave the rest.

Next I look in the Greek dictionary. What is joy in Greek? Wonderful! Now the Hebrew. Oh, still better! I also see what Spurgeon, the great English Baptist preacher of the 1800s, said about joy. Nice! And I check Whitfield, and Shakespeare.

So I have my study ready. Next meeting I come and I say, "Brethren, we are going to speak about joy today.

"Joy in the Greek has a different meaning than in English, because Greek is a richer language. But the Hebrew conveys even more meaning than the Greek.

"Abraham said about joy...Jesus said about joy...Paul said about joy.. .Spurgeon said about joy___"

And the people say, "What a study on joy! Thank you, Pastor."

Someone then suggests, "This is such a tremendous message on joy, Brother Ortiz. Can you give us the notes?"

"Yes, we can make photocopies and give them to you."

So they fold up the notes and put them in the back of their Bibles and forget them.

But nobody has the joy! They have the concept of joy, but not the life of joy.

What do you have? The concept? Or Him who is the life?

The denomination to which I belong decided to get together with another denomination. All went well until we became a little larger and began to write our constitution.

We met in a committee. When the article on "holiness" came up, we said that we believe in holiness. But the other denomination said, "No, we want to put there that we believe in "instantaneous holiness."

"What's that?" we asked.

"Well, that you are sanctified instantaneously."

"No, Sir!" we replied. "We believe in progressive holiness."

I didn't understand the issue because I hadn't studied it before. So I said, "Listen, why don't we put both in the article: 'We believe in instantaneous and progressive holiness.' "

"No, no, no!" was the response.

So there was a division. As a result, neither of the two groups was holy in the way it acted.

In practice, both types of believers are the same. It isn't that some are more holy or less holy. There's no difference at all. It's just the concept. We didn't have the life of it, but we had to be right on the doctrine!

Some people must imagine that when we get to the gates of heaven, St. Peter is going to hand us a piece of paper with a pencil.

"Ten questions. If you get seven out often correct you get into heaven right away. If you get less than seven but more than four, to purgatory. Less than four, to hell directly.

"First question. Which baptism do you believe in? Immersion, ablution, aspersion; in the name of the Trinity, in the name of Jesus alone; three immersions, or to pass under a banner? Put a cross beside the right one."

What a problem! You cannot copy from those around you, because on one side you have a member of the Salvation Army, on the other an Anglican, and you are a Baptist. So the three of you are going to have different answers!

Some people make an issue of things like this, and that brings division to the church. But it's not the right way of baptism that counts. It's Jesus in your heart.

In the kingdom of heaven, they don't take doctrinal tests. St. Peter isn't going to be there with a blackboard, pencils and paper. He has a stethoscope.

Perhaps you come with all your books on doctrine to take your test. "St. Peter, where is the desk to take the test?"

*St. Peter gets out his stethoscope. "Tick, tick, tick, tick."
"Get in."*

"But what about the test?"

"That's all right. You have life, so you belong."

Salvation is coming from death into life. "But this we know that we have passed from death into life, that we love." Love is the manifestation of life. But usually when someone doesn't believe as I believe, there's hatred instead of love.

I'm not against theology. What I am stressing is that if you have no life, you can have the best theology, but you are lost.

Doctrines can have their place, but not the first place. That is reserved for Jesus alone. "Who has the Son, has life." Not, "Who has the right doctrines has life." But who has the right Person.

When we have Him in our hearts, and when we walk in recognition of that fact, we start to grow spiritually. We become more like Him. His life within increasingly shows in the way we live. As Paul says, we are being changed from glory to glory into the same image, by the Spirit of the Lord.

If you have a joy which you can lose when problems come, it has to grow until the joy overflows and nothing can take your joy away. You grow spiritually, in love, in joy, in peace, in longsuffering.

If you can love today more than you did yesterday, it means that you grew. Not that today you know more doctrine than yesterday: that is just to fatten your intellect.

Years ago when I heard someone speaking against me, I started to speak against him.

The next year, when someone spoke against me I gritted my teeth and didn't speak against him. That was better.

The day arrived when someone was speaking against me and I started to praise the Lord. That was growth.

No, we don't have to pray and fast and work and confess to be like Jesus. Growth comes naturally when we center our life in Him, and we know that He lives within us. It is His life within producing the fruit.

The ancient people of Israel were not like other nations because they were the people of God. They were a kingdom of priests which God led by the Spirit through prophets. But they wanted to be like other peoples who had kings to fight their battles.

It's sad, but the church has fallen into the temptation of becoming like any other religion.

What is a religion?

A religion has a founder—Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster. The founder says things which are written in a book. When the founder dies, he leaves the book, and his followers take it and try to do what it says.

The Mohammedans have the Koran. They take their doctrines from the book. They are poor compared with us! They have only four schools of interpretation.

In our Christian religion we have a founder, Jesus Christ, who died a long time ago. The things He taught were written in the Bible. Now we take all our doctrines from the Bible as if He were dead like Mohammed.

So we have the Calvinists and the Arminians. We have the premillennialists, the post-millennialists, and the amillennialists. So many different doctrines, all within the same church. And we fight and throw verses at one another, "Take this, take that."

We act as if our founder were dead like those of other religions. In this way we lower Christ to the same level. We complain that the Mohammedans put Jesus on the same level as Mohammed; but we do just the same, because Christ is for us what Mohammed is for them.

So we make Jesus to have no word for today. He cannot do anything today. He is gone. We have His book, and that's all. But praise the Lord for the book. Because that book, the Bible, tells us He is alive!

The big difference between us and other religions is that our founder is living and is actually the head of the church. The trouble is, we don't let Him do too much. Even though we

have the concept that He is the head of the church, in reality He cannot rule because everything is settled by our committees.

The church doesn't know what to do when there is a move of the Spirit. "What's this?" we say. "We must be careful."

There is panic, and problems. Divisions come. Why? Because too often the church's structures are not suitable for a living Christ. They are made for a funeral home, for a dead founder.

Often when you go to a church they are talking about the Samaritan woman, and Zacchaeus, and the ten lepers, and the cursing of the fig tree, and the calming of the Sea of Galilee, and blind Bartimaeus, and the multiplication of the loaves and fishes; and the Samaritan woman again, and Zacchaeus, and the ten lepers, and the cursing of the fig tree; and the Samaritan woman, and Zacchaeus, and the ten lepers; and the Samaritan woman, and Zacchaeus... as if Jesus had done nothing since He died.

He really must be bored to hear our sermons. They sound like funerals, because at a funeral we speak about what the deceased person did when he was alive.

A university student who was saved in our church told me, "Brother Ortiz, the first six months I was learning continually in the church. After six months I found out that I had got to the point that I knew everything that everyone else knew. I knew how the second coming of Jesus was going to be, all about the Great Tribulation, the new birth, the Trinity. From then on I was just maintained."

Lots of people don't go to church because they become bored. Not because the services are bad, but because they're always the same. The same hymns, the same messages, the same liturgy.

You really have to be longsuffering to go to all those meetings. Even God has to be longsuffering!

Many people are centered in the church's activities and not

in Jesus Christ. We go to a meeting, and we come from that meeting to a Bible study, and then to a prayer meeting. We are forever in meetings.

We even measure our spirituality by our attendance at meetings. A person who attends all the meetings is very spiritual. "Oh, he's a fine Christian. He goes to all the meetings."

But if he doesn't go to two or three Sunday meetings, "He's backsliding."

I'm not against meetings. But I do wonder what would happen to us today if all the churches were to be closed. What would happen to our religion? Christ, not meetings, must be the center of our Christian life.

Is it any wonder we don't see more growth in God's people when we are so centered in concepts instead of in the Living Christ?

But thank God, all around the world there are people today who are not satisfied as they are. They are tired of trying to live like Jesus and constantly feeling like failures. They see their lack of love, their lack of joy, and they long for a revelation in the knowledge of Him, that they might be the Living letters they were meant to be.

We need a new generation of Christians who know that the church is centered around a Person who lives within them.

Jesus didn't leave us with just a book and tell us, *"I leave the Bible. Try to find out all you can from it by making concordances and commentaries. Bye, bye."*

No, He didn't say that.

"Lo, I am with you always," He promised. "Where two or three gather together in My name, I am in the midst of them." He didn't leave us as orphans. He Himself is within us. "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you. I'm not leaving you with a book alone. I am there, in your hearts."

Paul prayed that God's people might know that Christ lives in their hearts by faith, that they might be strengthened in the inner man by the Holy Spirit.

We today need to know that Christ lives within us. We need to know that we no longer live on our own anymore but that Christ is now our life. We need to recognize that because our old self was crucified with Him, He now lives within us.

Because He is our life, we have His character in us. We don't have to try to copy, in our own effort, what the book says about the way He lived. We don't have to fast and pray that He will give us more love, more joy, more peace. We just have to know that we have the Author of the book within us, and He is all of these things.

When we know this, growth comes naturally. Change comes in our lives because more of Christ is seen. Only this revelation of Christ in us can bring about growth in spiritual fruits.

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus," we sing. In this book we are going to turn our eyes upon Jesus—as our Savior, and as our life, both individually and corporately as His church.

He is to be the center of the church, its very life!

"Lord Jesus, we turn our eyes upon You, that we might know that we have Your life within us, and that we may live that life by faith."