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To Lead Is To Live, Not Just Profess

I here are lots of people who never come to church. But I have found that many of those who will not come to church would come to Jesus. They are not against Jesus; they are against coming into our church system. We have complicated something that was meant to be simple.

Of course, we who are in it get used to this confusing religious system. But that does not make it right. We on the inside are in the minority. All our rules make it very difficult for those who are on the outside to understand, and they are the majority.

I believe that the things of God are much easier and simpler than we have made them.

Life in the Spirit has to be easy so that the most ordinary person can live it. It has to be natural. It can't be something that you need to read a great many books to understand. Neither can it be something that is frightening us by warning, "Be careful—that could take you into mysticism. That is dangerous."

When we come into God's way of life we are not coming into some strange new thing that is alien to us as human beings. It is the natural way for a human to function. The life of the Spirit is the way God intended all men to live from the very beginning, in harmony with all of the natural laws of the universe. It is very normal.

Abraham is called the father of the faithful—the model of all who are in the Christian way. What kind of relationship did he have with God?

It was a normal relationship, not a religion. It was very natural, very simple.

When Abraham fellowshiped with God he said such things as, *"God, look—You didn't give me any sons. And my heir is going to be one that is born in my house as a slave. Come on, God, do something about it."*

It was a very natural thing for Abraham to talk with God in this way because their relationship was that of two friends. The Scripture says Abraham was the friend of God.

The most complicated thing Abraham did was to make an altar on which to offer sacrifices. Yet it was a spontaneous natural thing for him to do. And where did he build it? He was used to talking with God any place, and when he wanted to give special thanks to God he just did it in his backyard.

In our situation, even the need for an altar has disappeared because Jesus offered one sacrifice forever.

The complicated side of Abraham's fellowship with God was finished at the cross. There are no complications at all for those who are living in the Spirit today. We live the most natural, simple life possible.

A few hundred years after Abraham, the law came. This was the foundation of the Jewish religion. The law seems very complicated to us, and we wonder how a God of simplicity could originate such a complicated system.

But hidden beneath the complications of the law was a very simple way of life. Actually, the only real complications to it were the sacrifices and the temple system. And we can omit all of that because Jesus was the Lamb of God Himself, the perfect sacrifice. So let us look at the teaching of the law.

How simple it was in its essence comes out in Deuteronomy 6:6 where God explained, "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them

when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

This was something that was for the whole of life—it was for everyday living. It affected their homes, their jobs, their walks in the fields, and even what they did in their bedrooms.

"You shall teach My ways diligently," said God. And where were they to teach them?

"In Sunday School?"

No.

"Sunday mornings at ten o'clock?"

No.

Listen: "When you sit in your house, when you walk in the way, when you lie down, and when you get up in the morning." What does that mean?

Always!

You see, even under the law God had in mind a way of life, not a religion. God intended His way to be their life. They were to teach these things to their children. And who was to do the teaching? The father and mother, not the Sunday School teacher. It was not to be a complicated matter, with classes and books and teachers. No, it was to be a part of normal life, passed on by father and mother.

When were they to teach? Continually. Not on Sunday mornings, but all the time.

Today our Sunday School education may be very necessary because in their homes children do not receive what they should be receiving.

Since they are undernourished, we need a hospital to put them in on Sunday mornings. We have to provide them with an oxygen tent and a specialized doctor to give them shots of Bible vitamins because in their homes they are not fed.

We send people to seminaries to prepare them with a Chris-

tian education, and the seminaries too are like hospitals. If people were all healthy and never got sick, we would not need hospitals, doctors or universities in which to study about how to cure diseases.

Our systems are all geared to how to cure this and that spiritual ailment because our homes are not functioning as they should. We teach our children how to use a knife and fork, but we don't teach them the Christian life. And I don't mean instructing them in a religious system. I mean that they see the way to live the Christian life by observing our lives.

This is a problem, because in many homes the parents do not lead, they profess.

To lead is to live, not just profess.

To teach is not to give lessons, but to live the life.

Children have to go to Sunday School to learn that they should not fight. Why? Because mom and dad fight in the home. Daddy steals pencils from the office and brings them home to write with, so the children have to go to Sunday School to learn that they are not to steal.

Mom and dad become irritable and bad-tempered. Where are the children going to learn that they shouldn't be bad-tempered? In Sunday School! And this generates a further problem, because the teacher also may have a bad temper during the week... but not on Sunday!

So many of us are involved in a religious system. It is not real—it is playing games. The church meetings are not the most important part of our spiritual lives. It is the days in between—at the office and in the home—which are the most important part of our lives, not the two hours a week we are in the church building.

When the Lord sees you coming to the church service with your Bible under your arm, He says to the angels, *"We can go and have a rest. They are going to behave nicely here. So let's take a nap. But be ready for when they get out!"*

"Oh, hello Brother!" exclaims the pastor when you arrive.

"Bless you, Pastor," you answer, dressed in your Sunday best.

The pastor thinks to himself, "How spiritual these people are!" But who knows what happens at home?

Don't think that you fool God because you hold hands when you sit together in church. No, God knows more about you than that.

Even under the law, before the revelation of Jesus Christ, God said that they were to teach His ways to their children continually. It was to be a whole way of life from the time they got up to the time they went to bed. It was to be a process of continual teaching by example.

The home—not our religious organizations and church system—was meant to be the center of the Christian life. We need to gear the church to putting things back into their proper perspective.

Yes, the only complicated thing in the law was the sacrificial and temple system. And we don't need to do those things now. Jesus offered one all-sufficient sacrifice forever, abolishing all of the rituals. What God intended all along was a way of life, not a religion.

We come now to the New Testament. How did Jesus teach?

Do you see Him telling people, "Come to hear me Sunday mornings at ten o'clock?"

Can you imagine Him saying, "We are going to buy a piece of land in front of the central park in Jerusalem, so that our offices are in the best location, and we will have our church building next to our headquarters?"

We don't read of Him planning for a church of 60,000 members, larger than the Jewish church. He never said, "Let's hold a prayer meeting to see if we can find a piece of land on which to build our church."

Jesus' method of teaching was revolutionary from the outset.

When someone asked Him, "Master, where do you live?" He didn't say, "Here's a tract. You will find on the back that you can hear Me every Sunday morning at My church."

No, He just said, "Come and see."

And since He didn't have a permanent home, people had to follow Him for three years until He died. Those who were waiting for Him to set up a headquarters are still waiting, because He never had a fixed address.

He had no schedule of meetings—no Bible studies, prayer meetings, or Sunday morning services at which He would ring the bell and stand at the door saying, "Welcome, good morning. Are you well? Enjoy the meeting."

Jesus was a very simple, natural person who came to live among men, and by so doing to teach them how to live.

How did He teach?

Well, He taught when He got up. As He walked the roads of Palestine, He was teaching. When He sat down, people gathered around and He taught them. It was a way of life, 24 hours a day. He just lived, spontaneously. When He found one person, He lived with that person. When He found a thousand, He lived with a thousand.

"Follow Me!" said Jesus. "Learn of Me," He told them. "*I am.*"

We say, "Don't look at me, look at the Bible. Follow the Bible."

We mean, "I tried and I couldn't do it. You see if you can do it."

Paul taught the same way as Jesus.

"You have become followers of me and of Christ," he told people. "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

Most of our teaching today is so that people might come to know what we know, rather than that they come to be what we are. But to teach as Jesus and Paul taught is to share life, not just to share concepts. They communicated life in order that people would come to be like they were.

Paul said to the Corinthians, "You are the letters of Christ, read by all men."

We are God's letters! How sad that there needs to be a modern Bible called the *Living Bible*, when we are to be the living letters of Christ.

How are we to teach?

Our love, our joy, our peace should be read by every person, so that they will say, "What do you have that we don't?"

We have Him! He is the way, the truth, and the life. And when they see Him, they will want Him too.

Once a group of people asked me, "Do you believe in extra-biblical revelation?" I told them that we all believe in it, because where else could our church system have come from? It's not in the Bible—you won't find it there. So it must be an extra-biblical revelation if it is really from God.

Peter, Paul, James—none of them ever had the kind of system we have today. They taught wherever they were. They taught along the road. They taught any place and every place—on the beach, in the jails, at every opportunity.

They baptized people at four in the morning. It didn't matter what time it was. They never waited for the next church service. Any time was good enough; any place was fine. In a person's home; in the middle of the night, as in the case of the Philippian jailor; in the desert, as with the Ethiopian eunuch. It was a life, not a religious system.

Now I am not trying to say that we have to try to carry our religion over into the rest of the week. No, no, no! I am saying something much more radical than that. I believe that we need to abolish our religion!

To live in the Spirit is to be guided, not by a system of religion, but by the inner presence of God. It is a continual, built-in guidance system for the whole of life. And when we live this life, we become normal people.

Let me illustrate what I mean. In the beginning when God made Adam and Eve, their relationship with Him was very, very simple. I imagine that when God visited them in the garden, He said, "Adam, Eve! How are you?"

"Oh, good morning. We are fine. How are you?" they answered.

"Good. What are you doing, Adam?"

"Well, I am watering the strawberries."

"Are they coming nicely?"

"Beautiful, Father. You know, we gathered a basketful of them and Eve made jam."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, it was very tasty!"

This is how they communed with God. They fellowshiped with Him over the ordinary things of life. He was interested in everything they were doing.

God continued to inquire about their well-being. "Eve, how is everything?"

"Wonderful, Father. This garden is so nice. The temperature is perfect. Everything is so beautiful. It is really comfortable living here."

Many of us don't realize that it was this way. We associate God only with a system of religion, not with normal life. We think that when God called their names Adam said, "Quick, Eve, get on the organ, please. 'All hail the power of....'"

No, it was simpler than that. It was more natural.

Jesus brought to earth the kingdom of God so that it could spread throughout the whole world, transforming the whole of life.

He wanted people to be born into the kingdom so that they could live in the Spirit 24 hours a day, enjoying the kind of continual relationship God intended from the beginning. At last mankind would enter into fellowship with God in every aspect of life, just as He had planned when He created the human race.