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THE CHRISTIAN — A BIG WHEEL

A hitchhiker was caught out on a country highway at night. A car pulled up near him and stopped as he waved his thumb to ask for a ride. He ran alongside the car, opened the door, and jumped into the front passenger seat. To his dismay, he found that the car had no driver! However, it began to move forward as soon as he was seated. In a moment, it was moving too fast for him to get out. Three miles later, it rolled to a stop beside a cemetery. The terrified passenger started to open the door and get out when the driver's door opened and a man started to get in. The passenger said frantically, "Mr., you'd better not get in this car; it doesn't even have a driver!" To which the breathless newcomer replied, "Yes, I know; I've been pushing it for the last three miles!" Cars have wheels, wheels are designed to roll, and rolling wheels are supposed to deliver both car and contents to the driver's intended destination.

A wheel is a quite distinctive instrument. A wheel is not made to sit on, to throw, to ride elevators, to hang on trees, to bury, etc. A wheel is more than its separate parts. Several parts are normally joined together to make a wheel. An automobile wheel may be made of a rim, spokes, a hub, and a tire. And it may even have several smaller specialized parts. But it is quite distinctive in components and structure, and it is made for quite distinctive purposes, such as *connection* and *conveyance*.

Dawson Trotman was the founder of the international Navigator's organization, an organization that emphasizes the fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission by making disciples who will impact the world. The well-known pastor and radio preacher, Charles Swindoll, said of Dawson Trotman, "In my opinion, Daws Trotman was the second greatest disciple-maker in the history of Christianity — *second only to Jesus Christ, and that includes the Apostle Paul!*" That is a stupendous statement, and you may be sure that Chuck Swindoll had weighed his words very, very carefully before he spoke them. If you have read Trotman's life story, you can see why such an assessment might be made. If you have not read it, do yourself an immediate favor — purchase the book entitled Daws, by Betty Skinner, and read and re-read it for the rest of your life. Stand warned, however, that it *is* a biography, and it starts slowly. But when you get into the heart of the book, it will prove to be a life-transformer for you.

Daws Trotman was a very, very creative person. Not only was he a dynamic, driving Christian, but he was exceptionally visionary and inventive as a Christian. He constantly sought means and instruments which could be used to greatest advantage in building men into the disciples the Great Commission calls for. One of the teaching devices he created and used regularly was a *wheel* — that is, the visual, graphic use of a simple picture of a very common wheel.

When Daws Trotman was working with junior high youth, he tried to devise an illustration that would make the basic practical disciplines of the Christian life more vivid to his active young audience. At first, he used the illustration of a three-legged stool, with the three legs representing the Word of God, prayer, and witnessing. But Daws quickly realized that he did not want to compare the Christian life to sitting on a stool. The Christian life simply should not be lived sitting down! A stool would be great if you were milking a cow, repairing a shoe, peeling potatoes, or playing a guitar. But sitting would never make a good illustration of such an aggressive life as the New Testament called for! He wanted something dynamic, something that moved steadily and with great purpose. Daws said, "I began

to think of a wheel, because a wheel is something a boy or a grown man can identify with. Automobiles, bicycles, ships, and trains all use wheels.” So the concept of “the navigator’s wheel” was born!

Where does a wheel *go*? It goes wherever the *driver*, the *engine*, the *power*, and the *steering mechanism* take it. A wheel must remain intact in connection with its power source, but it does not exist to merely remain intact. *It is designed to go somewhere and accomplish specific purposes as it does so.*

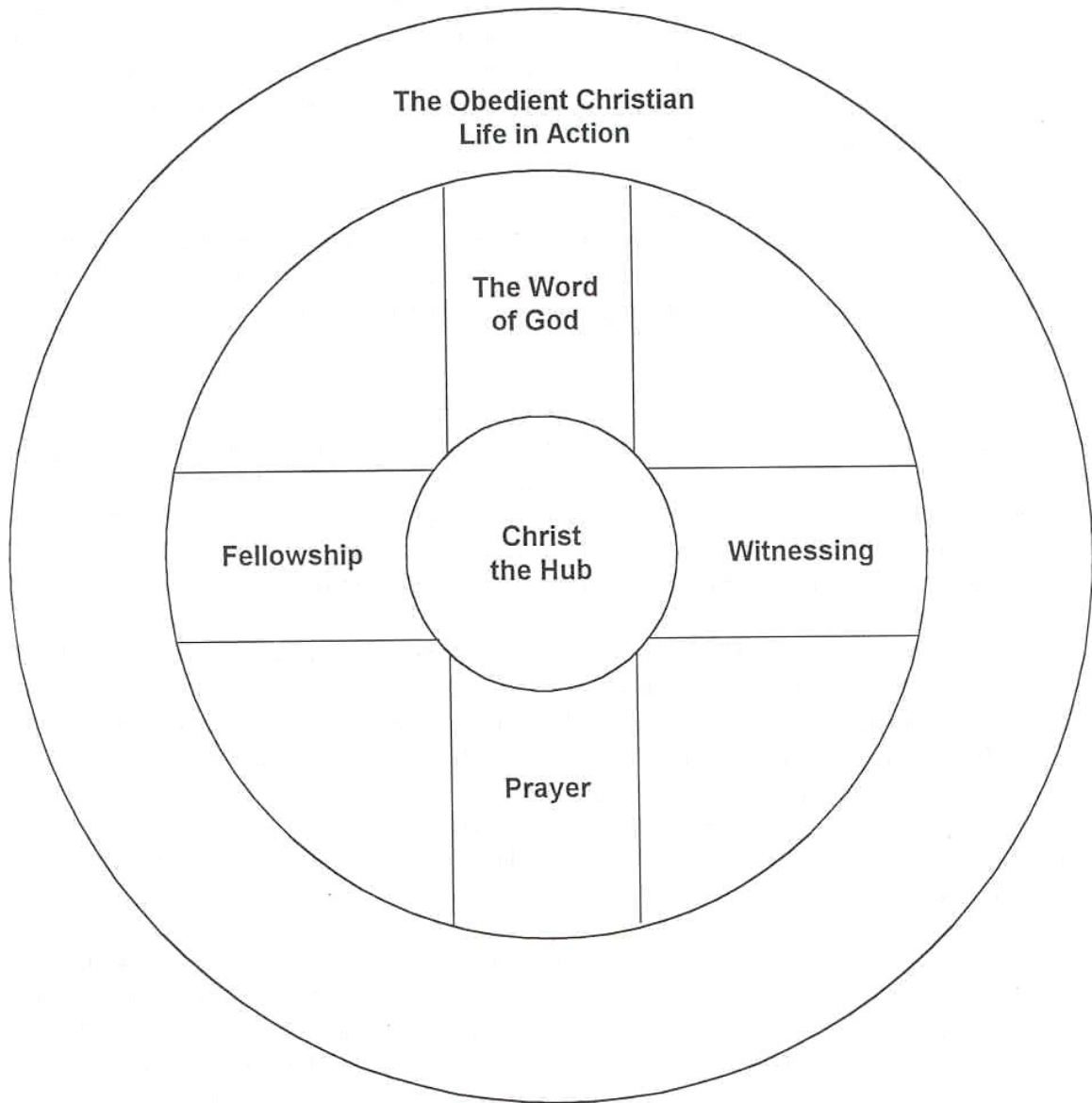
I have a pastor friend whose Datsun automobile has over 375,000 miles on it! How many miles does your automobile presently have on it? How did it get those miles? If it doesn’t accumulate miles, it is violating its purpose. Does it “go” just to be going? No, it has specified purposes, such as the delivery of people and cargo to selected places. The purpose of a wheel on a car is to *deliver people to their selected destination*. Question: *is God getting “maximum mileage” out of our lives? Are we delivering people to **His** selected destination? Are we simply “piddling at the purpose,” or are we operating at full capacity?*

To follow the illustration, the *driver* is Jesus. The *engine* is comprised of all the component parts of the Christian life. The *power* of performance is supplied by the Holy Spirit. The *steering mechanism* is the will of God. The *passengers* are disciples who are being “carried” toward Total World Impact. The *immediate destination* is the building of one such passenger to the point of multiplying reproduction, the *intermediate destination* is the building of an army of such passengers, and the *ultimate destination* in this life is total world impact. The “out of this world” destination is Heaven itself — for as many passengers as can be won in this life.

In this study, I want to borrow Trotman’s illustration and put my own mind to it. This particular wheel has six very important parts. Each part is an absolutely indispensable part of the whole wheel. The premise of the study is that the Christian life is like a wheel. Since it is a *life*, it insists on total vocational living, that is, living that includes every second of every day after one becomes a Christian. So it has many aspects and many “angles.” However, just as life has several urgent “parts,” and each of these specific parts has both *immediacy* and *ultimacy* about it, so it is with the *Christian* life.

Vance Havner wrote, “It’s about time we (Christians) cut out the theological *grand opera* and got back to *practicing the scales*.” When the late great Bear Bryant, the legendary University of Alabama football coach, was preparing for his last game as a coach, the Liberty Bowl game in Memphis, Tennessee, he was asked this question by a reporter, “How is it that you always have your teams vying for the national championship when you have no more scholarships available than any other school in the country?” After a few moments of thought, Bear Bryant replied, “Our procedure was always very simple. We recruited the best athletic specimen we could find, got him in the best possible physical shape, and then we taught him over and over and over again *the basic fundamentals of blocking and tackling!*” Christians simply cannot be reminded too often of the basic fundamentals of the Christian life. Any true disciple-making process will build these fundamentals into the disciple — through teaching, reading, modeling, assignments, accountability, etc.

In our daily, physical, earthly lives, the “vital moving parts” are: 1. The essential cardio-vascular functions which supply the living and driving force to all parts of the body; 2. The regular, disciplined eating of wholesome and healthy food, which supplies the necessary nutrients to the entire body; 3. The regular breathing of clean air, which both replenishes and cleanses the entire body; 4. Regular and adequate rest which renews the body; 5. Regular and proper exercise which gives strength and tone to the entire body; and 6. The use of the body for some purpose beyond its mere physical functions. Since man is *more than physical*, he needs some *metaphysical purpose* to motivate the proper *use* of his body.



A champion body-builder was returning from a long and strenuous workout in the local health spa. He passed an artist seated beside the sidewalk. The artist was absorbed with canvas, easel, brushes and paints, and was painting a picture. The macho man stopped to observe his work. He said to the artist, “Man, how do you find so much time to do things like that? I spend all my time just keeping fit.” The artist soberly replied, “*Fit for what, young man, fit for **what?***” The human body was created by God to be a vehicle, a means of conveyance, *like a wheel — not an end in itself.*

In this study, we will explore the six “vital parts” of a common wheel. We will see that, since a wheel is designed to move, all these parts are, in one vital sense, “moving parts.” And we will see that each of the six parts pictures an absolute essential in the living of a true Christian life. The six vital parts of a wheel are the *hub*, the *four spokes* (a carefully selected number), and the outer *rim*.

I. THE HUB

First, we will examine *the hub* of the wheel. The hub is the operating center of the wheel. In our illustration, the hub represents the operating center of the Christian life. What is the operating center of the Christian life? The answer sounds simplistic, but it certainly is *not* simplistic. In fact, the answer to that question has proven to be subtly elusive to millions of Christians. This was the case in my own Christian life for many years after Jesus Christ saved me. Nobody ever explained the basics of the Christian life to me (!!!). And I have found this to be true of multitudes of born-again people.

Our treatment of new-born Christians is often intolerable and unforgivable. While an entire medical science is devoted to the care of infants during the first forty-eight hours after they are born, and this care entails close observation and the rendering of regular services, the Christian community pays no such attention to new-born Christians. Our procedure is more like putting a new-born into a refrigerator than the giving of proper care.

If the proper hub of the wheel is not intact, or is misplaced, the wheel is going absolutely nowhere. Christian, ponder these words carefully. Disciple, ponder these words carefully. *Disciple-maker, ponder these words carefully.* And remember “the first rule of spiritual life and leadership”: *Do not assume anything! Do not take anything for granted!* Be sure the hub is understood, intact, and in its proper place.

What is the hub of the wheel? What is the operating center of the Christian life. *The operating center of the Christian life is **JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF!*** That sounds simple enough, doesn’t it? But the truth is, you can meet thousands of Christians who reveal in a thousand ways every day that this simple, basic truth has never become a practical reality in their lives. In fact, it is evident that most Christians have lived eccentrically as far as this truth is concerned — somewhere away from “ground zero,” somewhere off the mark, whether near or far.

We must have a good look at this hub. We must explore it until we cannot mistake *what it is, where it is, how vital it is, and how to be sure it is the true operating center of our lives.* In order to be sure I am not assuming anything, let me rephrase the last sentence. We must explore *Jesus Christ Himself* until we cannot mistake Who and what the Bible says He is, *where He is, how vital He is, and how to be sure **He is the true operating center of our lives.*** This is no idle assignment. This is no spare-time exercise. This is no indifferent task. This is the Top Drawer, Card “A,” High Level, Heavyweight Championship vocation of every Christian. If the Christian is wrong here, the wheel will not roll and the intended conveyance will not occur.

We will let the New Testament clearly identify and place the hub of the wheel. It cannot be said too many times: The hub of the wheel is Jesus Christ Himself. The Apostle Paul said, “To me to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). Examine these words carefully, technically, and minutely. Jesus said, “Man lives by *every word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” We must not take liberties with the words of God, either with regard to His *choice* of words or the *arrangement* and *placement* of those words in His communication to us. Note that Paul did *not* say, “To me to live is to *know* Christ.” That is a subtle addition, but to have Christ as the operating center does not allow so much as a verb between me and Christ. Similarly, Paul did not say, “To me to live is to *confess* Christ,” or to “*live for*” Christ, or to “*serve*” Christ, or even to “*be like*” Christ. Christian, ponder this vital emphasis: The operating center of the Christian life is not any *function*, or *attribute*, or *accompaniment*, or *activity* of the Christian life, as important as they all may be. No, the operating center of the Christian life is Jesus Christ Himself.

He Himself is the Source, the Secret, the Substance and the Strength of the Christian life. And just as the presence and function of the hub are absolutely essential in the proper deployment of a wheel, so the moment-by-moment central presence and essential function of Jesus Christ are absolutely essential in the living of a true Christian life.

Let the New Testament speak for itself in presenting this vital truth. “Christ lives in me,” said Paul in Galatians 2:20. “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” wrote Paul in Colossians 1:27. “Christ is our life,” says Colossians 3:3. These writings in the New Testament epistles, and many more, are mere echoes of the clearly presented words of Jesus Himself. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He did not say, “I am *a way*,” or “I am *one* of the ways,” or “I am the *best way*,” or “I am *one way among many*.” No, all truth is narrow and exclusive — if it is true, then every opposing possibility is false. In a day when pluralism and accommodation are the very order of thought and action (up to the accommodation of Christianity and its exclusiveness in the interest of truth; these are fully rejected by modern humanism), this makes the Gospel of Christ increasingly unpopular. However, popular opinion has absolutely nothing to do with the determination of truth. Truth is absolute, dogmatic, and immutable, public opinion notwithstanding. Jesus Christ is the only Way to God and Life — “no man comes to the Father except by Me,” He said.

Then He said, “I am the Truth.” The Bible calls Jesus the “Logos” of God. The King James Bible translates this as the “Word” of God (John 1:1-3, 14). However, this word “logos” is the very word from which we derive our English word, “logic.” You can see the two words on the page and easily detect the similarity. *Jesus is the Mind of God; Jesus is the Logic of the universe.* To put it personally and practically, the closer you are to Jesus, the more “logical” you are from God’s point of view, and the farther removed you are from Jesus, the more *illogical* you are *from God’s point of view!* And, no matter what our response or reaction may be, God’s viewpoint is the only one that counts. Colossians 3:2 says, “In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Jesus is God’s “wisdom-and-knowledge treasure vault.” No true wisdom ever derives from any point outside of Christ, and all knowledge — yes, *all knowledge* — is in Him.

Then Jesus said, “I am the Life.” “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” There are three technical and definitive statements in that compound sentence. Jesus said *three things* in that sentence, and *not merely one*. We usually present that sentence as if it meant only one thing, that Jesus is the one and only way to God. It certainly means that, but it also says (and means) *a great deal more than that*. Let me explain it a bit further so we can see the clear distinctiveness of each of these brief statements. “I am the Way” *in order that human beings may be saved*; “I am the Truth” in order that human beings may be *sure they are saved, and sensible about it*. And “I am the Life” in order that human beings may be *satisfied just with Me*. So this verse is a key example (again, only one among many) of the colossal claims of Jesus Christ.

Think of the actual experiences of Christians with Jesus’ words in mind. One hundred percent of all Christians have gotten into Jesus as “the Way” and have been saved. There is simply no other way to be saved. All saved people have received Christ and have gotten into Him as “the Way.” However, there is a substantial reduction in experience among Christians with regard to the second statement in the sentence. Though all Christians are in Jesus as the Way, not all (by a long shot) Christians have so adjusted to Him and believed Him as the “Truth” that they are sure they are saved and sensible (Biblically intelligent) about it. What is going on here? The same Divine Person spoke both sentences. The same Divine authority rests behind both sentences. The same Heavenly “sponsorship” underwrites both sentences. Then why are many Christians not absolutely *sure* they are saved, and even many who are sure they are saved are not Biblically intelligent about it? You see, truth must be known, believed,

and (whenever necessary) practiced. If it is not known and believed, the ignorant and unbelieving person has *practically* negated that truth. For him, it is not truth at all. So he can live temporarily as if his decision determined truth. However, all roads, however variant and deviating and wayward, will converge into a Final Meeting with THE TRUTH. In Amos 4:12, the prophet said, “Prepare to meet your God.” Some in his listening audience prepared, others didn’t — ***but they all met God!*** Some met Him redemptively to their present and eternal advantage, others only met Him finally to their eternal disadvantage — but *they all met Him*. The unsaved man’s reaction to the Truth or rejection of it constitute no determination about the truth at all. Unsaved men do not judge the Truth in their responses and reactions; they only judge themselves.

A man was wandering through the Louvre, the national art gallery of France in Paris. He spoke to a guard in an air of casual superiority: “What’s so special about these pictures? In my opinion, they aren’t much.” The guard replied, “Sir, your opinion doesn’t count here. If anything is on trial here, it is not these paintings. It is you!”

C. S. Lewis wrote a book entitled, God In the Dock, showing that the “modern,” worldly-wise man has placed God in the prisoner’s dock in man’s “courtroom,” and has dared to pass judgment upon Him as if his (man’s) word were final. The Bible calls this, “Man’s day” (I Cor. 4:3). Oh, but nothing that mere man does is ultimate. Nothing that man does is final. *Another Day* is coming, and on That Day, the only Standard will be that of THE TRUTH, Jesus Himself. The Bible says that “God has appointed *a Day* in which He will judge the world by that Man Whom He has ordained — and He has given guarantee of this to all men, in that *He has raised Him from the dead*” (Acts 17:30-31). So if you do not intend to adjust to the truth now, thus *forsaking wisdom and choosing in favor of falsehood*, then brace yourself, because you will still face THE TRUTH.

Christian, you must apply the same standard to your own life. Though argument tends to make truth academic and legalistic instead of vital and alive, you still must face the Truth in your own experience. Jesus is the Truth in order that you might be *sure* you are saved, and *sensible about it*. So your vocation only begins when you first accept Jesus as the Truth. Then begins a lifelong investigation of the Truth, a lifelong adaptation of your life to the Truth, and a lifelong propagation and proclamation of the Truth.

If you are not sure you are saved, you should make your first vital adjustment to the truth at this point. “Make your calling and election sure,” the Bible says, or “be sure you are saved!” Then, if you are a casual learner of the Truth by picking up bits and pieces through teachers and preachers in church, you have another vital adjustment to make with regard to the Truth. You must daily get into the Bible, the Manual authored by the Holy Spirit, the One who presents and mediates the Truth, and let Him teach you therein the “ways and means” of the Truth.

Finally, in John 14:6, Jesus spoke of Himself as “the Life.” He is the Life that we might be *satisfied just with Him*. Are you satisfied with Jesus? Could you be satisfied *just* with Him? None of us could really be confident of our answer to that question unless Jesus was all we had. What if we lost everything but Him? Could we be satisfied just with Him? Paul was! Near the end of his life, he wrote, “I have kept the faith.” The faith was all he *had* to keep! He had lost everything else. But Jesus proved to be enough — yes, *more than enough*. One day, we will leave behind everything we built our lives around in this world. Jesus will be all that is left. When we swirl down into the waters of the Dark River of Death, and Jesus is all we have, will we be satisfied? He wants to be *our very Life!* Jesus Himself is the hub of the Christian life.

In John 10:10, Jesus contrasted His Person and Mission with the person and mission of Satan. He said, “The thief (Satan) comes not except to steal, to kill, and to destroy. I have come that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” It is evident that He wants our lives to abound (overflow) with Himself and His eternal quality of life. He is the hub of the Christian life.

I. THE FIRST SPOKE — THE WORD OF GOD

A vital part of any wheel is the spoke that connects the hub with the rim. We want to become deliberately conscious of the functions represented by the four spokes in our illustration. However, the purpose is not to make us self-conscious about these functions. Indeed, the purpose is to make us *un-self-conscious* about these functions. You see, when a wheel is turning quickly and properly, fulfilling the reason for its existence, *the spokes become “invisible.”* All you see is the hub. When the wheel is standing still, the spokes take up a lot of room, and are very evident, but the minute that wheel begins to move rapidly and smoothly, the spokes seem to vanish. The spokes are still there, but you don’t see them. The hub becomes pre-eminent. When people look at our lives, and *it is our spokes — the daily discipline of our lives — that impress them, we simply are not moving properly!*

In our illustration, the spokes represent the direct supply lines of the Christian life, the channels that keep Christ at the center and convey him to the “practicing edge” of the life.

The key to the spokes of a wheel is in their connection. Spokes must be connected to the hub and the rim if they are to do their work. When I was a lost high school student, one night, our gang of rowdy guys collected a bunch of old discarded automobile tires, loaded them in the bed of a pickup truck, went up to the top of the steepest hill in my home town (which was located in the mountains of northwest Arkansas!), and started those tires, one by one, rolling down the street on that steep hill. The “Maple Street Hill” was about three city blocks long at that point, and *very* steep. And a University of Arkansas fraternity house was *at the bottom of the street*, where it made a sharp left turn. So our object was to roll the tires down the hill — and see what happened! Well, *it happened!* Some of them bounced all the way up onto the roofs of houses beside the street. Others smashed into the sides or porches of the houses. I shudder today to think of what might have happened if a car had come around the corner at the bottom of the hill and had started up the hill at the wrong time. A few of the tires, bouncing incredibly high and at great force, bounced onto the roof of the fraternity house at the foot of the hill, and some smashed into the side. What’s the point of my story? Simply this: once those tires were released, they were out of control. They rolled through yards, through flower beds, onto porches, onto roofs, and smashed into buildings. The problem? *Without proper connection, each tire was without proper direction and function — and was a potential instrument of destruction.* When a Christian does not abide in Christ (John 15:1-11), keeping the contact intact, he is constantly in trouble, bumping into other people instead of blessing them, getting into continual difficulty, causing incredible damage, and failing to fulfill the purpose for which Jesus saved him. Remember, the hub is Christ, and constant connection must be maintained with Him through the spokes, the supply lines of the Christian life.

Our wheel will have four spokes. The proper function of the wheel will depend on the balance of the four spokes. If any one of the four spokes is missing or is out of proportion, the entire wheel gets out of balance and the wheel bumps down the street. If any one of the four basic disciplines of the Christian life is missing or out of balance, a lop-sided Christian is the result. The lop-sided Christian always seems to be “out of sync”; things do not operate smoothly.

Two of the spokes are *vertical*, and two of them are *horizontal*. The two vertical spokes represent our direct relationship with God Himself. They represent our spiritual intake, our communion with God as we abide in Christ. The two most important means of communion in the Christian life are the Word of God and prayer. Through the Word of God, *God speaks to the Christian*. Through prayer, *the Christian speaks to God*. Since all possibility of relationship, victory, and communion in the Christian life begins when God speaks to you, the uppermost vertical spoke will represent the Word of God.

The Word of God is *absolutely indispensable* in the Christian life. Sinners are saved by means of the Word of God. We are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (I Peter 1:23). The word of God is the very source of all true faith, whether it be “saving” faith or “sanctifying” faith. “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

The Word of God is the milk for babies to grow on. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere (pure) milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Peter 2:2). And when the Christian moves from milk to the need for meat, the meat also is the Word of God. If you want to see how enthusiastically a new Christian should read, study, and devour the Word of God, just watch a tiny baby sucking furiously on his bottle when he is fed!

Babies also need to learn to walk. “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). A baby will need a great deal of instruction and understanding in order to grow properly. “The entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130).

Babies also need to be kept clean, and as they grow, they need to learn to keep themselves clean. Jesus said, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). Paul spoke of “the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26). Sometimes harmful things in the body must be surgically removed. “The Word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

The one constant need in a believer’s life for sanctification and Christ-likeness is regular contact with the Word of God. “We all (Christians), with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror (the Word of God, James 1:23) the glory of the Lord, are changing into the same image (the likeness of Jesus) from glory to glory (in an ever-progressing way), and this is the work of the Spirit of the Lord” (II Cor. 3:18).

Then the growing Christian is admonished to “herald the Word” (II Tim. 4:2). This he does by giving regular testimony to Jesus and the Gospel. So the Word of God, the first spoke of the wheel, is absolutely essential in living the Christian life.

There are four things that every Christian should do with the Bible every day of his life. He should ***know it in his mind***. This means that he will read it every day, saturating his mind with its incredible truth and allowing that truth to fill and condition his mind, his heart, his conduct, and his speech every moment of every day. Inscribed in the flyleaf of my Bible are these wise words:

“Every Hour I Read You
Kills a Sin,
or Lets a Virtue In,

To Fight Against It.”

He should ***stow it in his heart***. This means that he should seek to understand the mind of God in Scripture. It also means that he should memorize it so he can have it accessible to ready recall at any minute. The benefits of Scripture memory are too many and too great to ignore this discipline. Two of the finest disciples I have ever had, husband and wife, memorized so many verses in just over two years, that they could not hold their Scripture memory cards in both hands! And they never missed the perfect recitation of any verse when I called on them! Today, they are being used of God in incredible ways.

He should ***show it in his life***. Dr. J. M. Price, late great Baptist educator, said, “The best binding for the Bible is not Morocco leather, but a human skin!” It should be the daily goal of every Christian to incarnate the Word of God in his own life.

Finally, he should ***sow it in his world***. “The seed is the Word of God,” Jesus said in Luke 8:11. “The field is the world,” He said in Matthew 13:38. “Behold, a sower went forth to sow” should be the biography of every Christian every day. “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:6).

Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, who personally prayed more than a thousand missionaries into inland China, said, “Your spiritual growth as a Christian will be in exact proportion to the amount of time you spend in the Word of God.” D. L. Moody, the great evangelist, said, “I prayed for faith, and expected it to come out of heaven and strike me like lightning, but it never came. Then one day, I read in Roman 10:17 that ‘faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’ So I started reading my Bible daily, and faith has been growing ever since.” Is it any coincidence that George Mueller, the renowned man of faith in Bristol, England, whose faith sustained several orphanages without soliciting funds, *read his Bible all the way through over seventy-five times — on his knees?* Is it any mere coincidence that Dawson Trotman, who later had a world-impacting ministry personally and through disciples whom he had trained, *memorized over twelve hundred verses of Scripture within three years of his conversion?*

Every Christian should have consistent daily exposure to the Word of God, should practice careful hearing of the Word of God, should render complete obedience to the Word of God, and should make constant confession of the Word of God. Faith *starts* with the Word of God, *stands* on the Word of God, *stays* with the Word of God, *steps out* on the Word of God, *states* the Word of God, and *stops* with the Word of God. I want my life to echo the request of John Wesley, “Oh, God, make me a man of That Book!”

Remember that the Word of God in the believer’s life corresponds to food in his physical life. Job said, “I have esteemed the words of Thy mouth to be more than my necessary food” (23:12). Jeremiah followed the same theme: “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jer. 15:16). Don’t kill your appetite for this food of the soul by eating the garbage of the world. A steady diet of the Word of God while walking in the Spirit will secure steady growth in your life.

Remember, too, that this is the *top* spoke on the wheel. Everything else begins here. The initiative to give the Word and speak to us through it belongs to God, but the intake of it is our responsibility. I do not *intend* to spend many days on this earth during the rest of my life without eating physical food, and this spoke of the wheel corresponds in spiritual life to the eating of food in physical

life. Should I not determine that I will not spend one day on this earth as long as I live without feeding my spirit on the revealed Word of God in the Bible?

II. THE SECOND SPOKE — PRAYER

The second spoke of our wheel is *prayer*. This spoke is at the bottom of the wheel. The Word of God, the upper spoke, brings the life of Christ in a downward direction to us, and prayer is our response to what He says in His Word. Note that the Word of God basically comes in a downward direction, while prayer is an upward response. This teaches us one of our greatest lessons about prayer. One the best ways to pray is to listen to God in His Word — *and then don't change the subject!* My mother used to tell me that it was impolite to change the subject when someone spoke to you, and the more important the person speaking, the more impolite it was to change the subject. Now apply the illustration. We are often in church services where God speaks clearly and powerfully through a message from the pulpit. However, the person who leads the closing prayer sounds as if he was asleep or visiting Planet Mars — he never mentions anything God has just spoken to His people! This is a clear example of “quenching the Spirit” by “despising preaching” (I Thessalonians 5:19-20)!

As we begin to explore the place of prayer in the Christian's life, let's establish the principle that a believer's character is fashioned by his communication with God. Communication is one of the vital secrets of *every* healthy relationship. Good communication will transform mere acquaintances into steadfast friends, and will change superficial contact into intimate closeness. Such communication is built if we employ four guidelines:

All relationships thrive on compliments. Mark Twain said, “I can survive for three months on one solid compliment.” He was not an exception! Nothing aids a healthy relationship more than an honest compliment. David deployed this principle when he wrote, “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His Name” (Psalm 100:5). If prayer does not begin as a means of worshiping and honoring God, then the first purpose of the Christian life has been omitted. But in reality, praying is more *basking in a relationship* than it is *asking for resources*.

All relationships thrive on active listening. Communication is much more than talking! It includes alert listening which conditions the entire relationship. A wise person will give his undivided attention to the other person in a relationship, and as often as possible. Failure to listen is an insult to the dignity and importance of the one speaking. “Be still, and know I am God,” He says to us (Psalm 46:10). II Samuel 7:18 says that “King David went in, and sat before the Lord.” And though his speech to God is recorded, I am sure that he listened as well. “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still” (Psalm 4:4).

All relationships require consistent contact. Consistent contact lets each member in the relationship realize that the relationship is meaningful to all parties in it. However, if contact is not made for long periods of time, the relationship becomes slack and indifferent. If I do not have consistent contact in any of my relationships, the other party feels excluded from my companionship. Problems will develop, whether coldness, indifference, anger, hostility, or whatever.

There are no shortcuts to consistency in a Christian's prayer life. “Life is so daily,” bemoaned one cynic. Well, the Christian life is so daily, also. Irregular communication with God testifies to everyone that the relationship is not a priority to you. But regular communication makes your heart,

your motives, your thoughts, and your steps line up with God. Also, your faithfulness enables you to have confidence before God. Hebrew 4:16 says, “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Consistent communication with God is a necessity if your relationship with Him is to be vital.

All relationships require complete honesty. If dishonesty or deceitfulness creeps in, the relationship is threatened. If these things continue, they are very likely to destroy the relationship altogether. Even so, absolute honesty is the only basis for a good relationship with God. We all know that too many things get into our lives that violate our relationship with God. To try to hide these, or to ignore them (as David did in II Samuel 12), will only deteriorate the relationship. The Christian must “keep short accounts with God,” regularly confessing his sins and receiving God’s cleansing. I John 1:7 says, “If we walk in the light (practice open, honest communion with Him) as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (present continuous verb, “keeps on cleansing”) us of all sin.”

These are wise practical guidelines to follow in our prayer life. Prayer is both a *priority* in our discipleship, and a *proof* of it. We often think of prayer as preparation for the battle, but Jesus showed us that prayer is the battle itself. Prayer was at the very heart of His work while He was on earth, and it is the very heart of His work in heaven today — and it should be at the very heart of our lives and our service for Him.

Where did Jesus sweat great drops of blood? Not in Pilate’s judgment hall, or on His way to Golgotha. It was in the Garden of Gethsemane. If we had witnessed His struggle that night, we might have sadly misinterpreted the situation. We might have said, “Why, if He is so broken up when all He is doing is praying, what will He do when He faces a real crisis? Why can’t He approach this ordeal with at least the same calm confidence that His three sleeping friends have?” However, when the real test came, *Jesus walked to the cross with unbending courage, and His three friends fell apart and ran away!* ***Prayer is not a request for God to help us in His work; prayer is the work itself!***

Luke 18:1 says that “men ought always to pray, and never give up.” I Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.” James 5:16 says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” In John 15:7, Jesus said, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” It is obvious that prayer is one of God’s primary means of grace. Contrary to common belief, prayer is the most practical and relevant thing in life. God’s wisdom comes in answer to prayer. God delivers us from false judgments and unwise counsel through prayer. Prayer keeps us from majoring on lesser and unimportant things. Prayer allows us to have true perspective in life. If you value your Christian experience, be sure to take prayer seriously.

Martin Luther said, “Prayer is the most important thing in my life; if I should neglect prayer for a single day, I should lose a great deal of the fire of faith.” Andrew Bonar said, “The one concern of Satan is to keep the saints from prayer. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless Christian work, or prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil and mocks at our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.” Andrew Murray, a giant of the faith, gives this illustration of prayer’s importance. “When a general chooses the place from which he intends to strike the enemy, he pays most attention to the points which he thinks most important in the fight. Thus there was on the battlefields of Waterloo, a farmhouse which Wellington immediately saw was the key to the situation. He did not spare his troops in his endeavor to hold that point; the victory depended upon it. And it is the same in the conflict between the believer and the powers of darkness. The inner prayer chamber is the place where the decisive victory is obtained.” Sometime ago, Scott Williams, a dear friend and brother, handed me this poem:

Last night I took a journey To a land across the seas;
I didn't go by ship or plane; I traveled on my knees.

I saw so many people there In bondage to their sin;
And Jesus told me I should go, That there were souls to win.

But I said, "Jesus, I can't go To lands across the seas."
He answered quickly, "Yes, you can — By traveling on your knees."

He said, "You pray, I'll meet the need. You call and I will hear;
It's up to you to be concerned For lost souls far and near."

And so I did. I knelt in prayer, Gave up some hours of ease;
And with the Savior by my side I traveled on my knees.

As I prayed on, I saw souls saved And twisted persons healed;
I saw God's workers' strength renewed While laboring in the field.

I said, "Yes, Lord, I'll take the job. Your heart I want to please;
I'll heed Your call and swiftly go By traveling on my knees."

We must remind ourselves that we are seeking Total World Impact. We are battling forces of darkness for a world of men, most of whom are without Christ. Archimedes once said, "Give me a fulcrum strong enough, and a lever long enough, and a place to stand apart from that which I am trying to move — and I can move the world." Think of this statement carefully, and let me apply it to our disciple-making, world-impacting goal. *The fulcrum is the revealed purpose of God. The lever is prayer. The place to stand — apart from the world — is "in Christ."* And if we follow his formula, ***we can move the world.***

Remember that prayer in the spiritual life corresponds to the breathing of good, clean air in the physical life. When a doctor strikes a baby on its backside at birth, that doctor is saying to the baby, "Breathe without ceasing." When the Holy Spirit brings a new Christian to birth, He says to him, "Pray without ceasing."

Harry Denman, the Methodist evangelist, visited a southeastern city for revival services. While he was there, a very gracious Christian couple invited him to be a guest in their home. When the woman showed him to his room, she remarked, "Dr. Denman, this is the room where my grandmother prayed." Throwing all caution to the winds, Harry Denman turned to her in tender fashion and said, "I'm not interested in where your grandmother prayed. Where do *you* pray?" *This* is the crucial question. *Do you pray? Where? Are you systematic and consistent in your prayer life? Do you have a definite time every day for your appointment with God? Are you able to trace any triumphs of God in your life because of prayer? S. D. Gordon said, "Communion and petition store the life with the power and resources of God; intercession lets them out on behalf of others."* If you have been converted, for *your* sake, for the sake of *others*, and for the sake of *God* and *His global cause*, practice regularly the ministry of personal prayer.

III. THE THIRD SPOKE — FELLOWSHIP

The third spoke of the wheel is *fellowship* with other believers. We have examined the two *vertical* spokes of the wheel, which represent our direct relationship with God. Now, we will look at the two *horizontal* spokes, which represent our direct relationships with our fellow men. One of the horizontal spokes that powerfully channels the life of Christ to practical personal use is fellowship with other believers.

Recently, I read this riddle: How is it that, in a world that is getting smaller and smaller, people are getting farther and farther apart? The entire world is experiencing a “fellowship crisis.” Sadly, the church also often experiences the same crisis. I read of two porcupines in northern Alaska. If they stayed apart, they might freeze to death. But if they got together, they “needled” each other so badly that they could hardly stand it. This is the dilemma which church people often have. One of Satan’s primary strategies is to “divide and conquer.” Satan tries to turn Christians against one another, because he knows that they will then destroy each other. So Christians who follow Satan’s strategy become like the Philistines, who “set ambushments” against each other. And Satan works through our flesh, so we “just know” that our brothers and sisters are mean, intolerant, and intolerable. Rufus Jones showed perception when he said, “The American churches are like Robinson Crusoe’s goat pasture; the fields are so large and the fences so far apart that the goats inside are as wild as the goats outside!” So a great fellowship crisis has developed in the church, and such “fellowship failures” as *criticism and censorship* of brothers and sisters; *coercion* of others to my own understanding, practices and procedures; and *condescension*, or the assuming of a sinful superiority over my brothers and sisters, prevail everywhere.

“To live above with the saints we love, Oh, that will be glory,
But to live below with the saints we know, *That is often another story!*”

Wacky comedian Rodney Dangerfield said, “My wife and I sleep in separate bedrooms, take separate vacations, and eat separately at mealtimes. *We’re doing all we can to keep this marriage together!*” Too many Christians are making the same kind of artificial moves to “hold things together.” Obviously, we need to discover the New Testament meaning of *fellowship*.

It should be evident that fellowship is not the mere gathering of a crowd of Christians. Fellowship is far more than physical togetherness. A crowd is often nothing more than a large number of “loners” together, and this is just as likely to be true in church as anywhere else. Years ago, David Riesman wrote a book entitled, The Lonely Crowd, and *the title could well describe a Sunday morning crowd of churchgoers!* Furthermore, Christian fellowship is far more than congeniality among Christians. It is more than a warm feeling of personal affinity. Again, fellowship is not the climax of the Christian life. It is not an end in itself. It is a vital means to a number of other things in the Christian life..

Both newborn Christians and veteran believers need rich fellowship with other believers. If a Christian is not given such fellowship when he becomes a Christian, the failure is similar to a mother birthing a baby and putting it in a refrigerator, or out on a doorstep to fend for itself.

I recently picked up a book entitled, Chinese Fairy Tales and Fantasies. It told of a mystical bird that is only half a bird; it had only one eye, one wing, one leg. In order to fly, a “left-hand” bird must find, and cooperate with, a “right-hand” bird. Alone, each is earth-bound, flopping clumsily about. But together, they can soar across the sky. We can only pray that Christians might quickly learn such a lesson. Erich Fromm echoed this need as a universal human need. He wrote, “The deepest need of man

is the need to overcome his separateness, to leave the prison of his aloneness. The absolute failure to achieve this aim means insanity. In fact, the word ‘idiot’ stems from the Greek word for ‘a private person.’”

Every Christian should be carefully and extensively taught to live *relationally*. There are two kinds of theology — *revelational* theology and *relational* theology. The purpose of revelational theology is to foster and nurture right relationships (see Matthew 22:37-40). If a believer does not live openly and warmly in relationship with God and other believers, it does not make any difference how much right doctrine he knows and believes. I John 1:3-4 states the ideal: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

Too many of our hymns, books, magazines and sermons place an unbalanced and unhealthy emphasis on the isolated believer alone with God. For example, a popular old Christian song entitled “On the Jericho Road,” begins with these words, “On the Jericho Road, there’s room for just two. No more or no less, just Jesus and you.” One wonders where that idea came from. I am certain of this: It didn’t come from a visit to the Jericho Road, or from a visit to Scripture! It probably arose from our desire for autonomy, our appetite for personal piety to the neglect of other people, and the general atmosphere of our go-it-alone culture.

The problem we face is not new. During the Middle Ages, there lived a man known as Julian of Norwich. He came to be called, “Saint Julian.” While he was very young, his church in the small English town of Norwich recognized his unusual piety and decided to give him the ultimate recognition. On the day of the elaborate recognition and investiture ceremony, Saint Julian was literally sealed into a small room that adjoined the cathedral. The walls enclosed him tightly, with only a small hole in the side. In that small, dark cubicle he would spend the rest of his life praying, administering blessings to passersby, and writing holy literature. Friends, we may be happy that Jesus was not like that, but we must also sadly admit that Julian of Norwich was not the last person to seal himself off from others — even under the pretext of piety, and *even in church*. The community of faith is often saturated with Saint Julians! And not one of us can assume superiority in the matter, because we are all first-graders in the school of relational theology!

Here, as in all matters, we desperately need balance. We have already talked about the believer’s time alone with God in the Word and in prayer. Now, we must examine the balancing side of the scale — the great need for what Dr. Luke called “*the fellowship*.”

The Old Testament provides a picture of fellowship in one of its “types.” The “type” is the Tabernacle which the children of Israel carried with them in the wilderness for purposes of worshiping God wherever they were. The boards of the Tabernacle were closely connected to the foundation, and thus to each other. In the type, the foundation represents Jesus, and the boards might represent all believers. As each believer truly adheres to Jesus by faith, he is necessarily adhered also to the other believers who are in the same relationship.

The first general epistle of the apostle Peter tells us that all Christians are living stones in God’s building (I Peter 2:4-8). When an independent stone is made a part of a wall or a building, it normally: (1) Has other stones around it. Some are *above* it, some are *below* it, and some are *on either side* of it. These are assigned positions, and have nothing to do with rank. (2) Maintains its identity, though it has lost its isolation and independence. It is now part of a wall or a building, but it can still be clearly distinguished as an individual part of the wall or building. (3) Lends its ability to carry weight and make

a solid wall to all the other stones in the building. Its primary function from the point of its inclusion in the building is to play a role in relation to all other stones in the building.

In his great book, Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis wrote, “You can get the idea plain if you think of us as a fleet of ships sailing in formation. The voyage will be a success only, in the first place, if the ships do not collide and get in one another’s way; and, secondly, if each ship is seaworthy and has her engines in good order. As a matter of fact, you cannot have either of these two things without the other. If the ships keep on having collisions they will not remain seaworthy very long. On the other hand, if their steering gears are out of order they will not be able to avoid collisions. Or, if you like, think of Christians as a band playing a tune. To get a good result, you need two things. Each player’s individual instrument must be in tune and also each must come in at the right moment so as to combine with all the others.” Before leaving Lewis’ illustrations, let’s itemize its parts:

The Fleet of Ships	The Band Playing a Tune
Each ship must be seaworthy	Each instrument must be in tune
The ships must keep from colliding	The instruments must play in unison
The ships must sail under orders	The players must follow the musical score

Let me ask you to give yourself a “fellowship test.” Read this list of Scriptural injunctions and ask yourself, How well am I warmly and widely fulfilling these in fellowship with other Christians?

“Love one another” — 12 times in the New Testament (example: John 13:34-35)

“Receive one another” — Romans 15:7

“Edify (build up) one another” — Romans 14:19

“Do not judge one another” — Romans 14:13

“Serve one another” — Galatians 5:13

“Bear one another’s burdens” — Galatians 6:2

“Forgive one another” — Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13

“Submit to one another” — Ephesians 5:21

“Show hospitality to one another” — I Peter 4:9

“Lie not one to another” — Colossians 3:9

“Do not slander one another” — James 4:11-12

“Do not grumble against one another” — James 5:9

“Forbear (bear with) one another” — Ephesians 4:2, Colossians 3:13

“Minister to one another” — I Peter 4:10

“Teach and admonish one another” — Colossians 3:16, Romans 15:14

“Be humble toward one another” — I Peter 5:5

“Greet one another warmly” — Romans 16:16, I Corinthians 16:20, I Peter 5:14,
II Corinthians 13:12, I Thessalonians 5:26

“Honor one another” — Romans 12:10

“Confess your sins one to another” — James 5:16

“Pray for one another” — James 5:16

“Care for one another” — I Corinthians 12:25

“Encourage one another” — Hebrews 3:13, Hebrews 10:25, I Thessalonians 5:11

Look each of these “one another” admonitions up in your Bible, study the concept carefully, and get the feel of the context in which each is found. *This is the fellowship ethic of Christianity!* However, most Christians have never noticed this ethic, because they have never read all these passages with this ethic in mind. Dear brother or sister, spend a lot of time mastering the meaning and the practice of these “one anothers.” What a vast and incredible difference it would make if Christians started to widely practice this ethic! Let me encourage you to copy the above list and post it in a place where you will see it every day — and ask God for miracle-grace to do what each one tells you. Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher, said, “Be much with those who are much with God. Make those your companions on earth, who will be your companions in heaven.”

Before we leave the second spoke, let me mention some of the vital interpersonal ingredients which help to produce genuine fellowship.

One is *humility*. When humility prevails among believers, Satan is disarmed of the giant weapon of pride. Ego-struggles are replaced with the desire to lift, help and serve. Another ingredient is *honesty*. When honesty prevails, Satan is disarmed of the weapons of deceit, hypocrisy, and growing sin. Another is *humor*. When humor is free, natural, and unstrained, Satan is disarmed of the weapons of stuff-shirt saintliness and cold conviction. Everyone knows that great friction may easily develop among human beings when they are together. Humor acts like a “relief valve” which allows this friction to be reduced. Someone asked Rufus Mosely, “Do you think Jesus ever laughed?” He happily replied, “I don’t know, but He sure fixed me up so that I can!” There is hardly anything more wholesome than Christians laughing *at* themselves and *among* themselves. A fourth ingredient that makes for fellowship is *harmony*. When harmony prevails among the people of God, Satan is disarmed of the weapons of strife and divisions. Read through the New Testament sometime soon, looking for the number of plural pronouns that are used for Christians. “We, us, they, them,” are common in the New Testament. *Christians are people who are learning to live and serve in the plural!* The final ingredient I would mention in the making of genuine fellowship is *helpfulness*. When helpfulness prevails among believers, Satan is disarmed of the weapons of compassion fatigue and despair. Would you rather be among people more characterized by —

Humility or pride?
Honesty or deceit?
Humor or sophisticated coldness?
Harmony or strife?
Helpfulness or competitiveness?

Have you ever wondered why people in the far north wear more *mittens* in the winter than *gloves*? When people wear gloves, each finger has the protection from the elements by the fabric that surrounds it, but the finger is dependent upon its own heat alone. But when mittens are worn, each finger combines its heat with the heat of all the other fingers, and much greater warmth and health are the result. Christians, we need to take off the gloves and put on the mittens, lending our warmth and health to all other members of the Body of Christ.

Sir Edmund Hillary is renowned as the first man to lead an expedition to the top of Mount Everest in the Himalayan Mountains. He secured a tough Shirpa Indian guide named Tenzing Norgay, and Tenzing proved to be the most outstanding hero of the group. At one crisis spot on the ascent, Hillary slipped and fell into a crevice of the ice. Had he not been attached to the others, he would have fallen into an irretrievable position. However, Tenzing worked slowly and tenaciously for quite a long

time, until he had pulled Hillary up again and secured the entire group of climbers. When Hillary was interviewed by reporters later, he mentioned this feat of rescue to them. They hurried to Tenzing and asked about his heroic leadership. In his reply, Tenzing said, “When I was a boy, a veteran climber transmitted to me his love for climbing mountains, and taught me to climb. I have been climbing ever since. Furthermore, *I have spent my life training climbers. And it is an unwritten rule among us, that climbers always help each other.*” The Bible said it long before Tenzing Nordag did: “They helped every one his neighbor; and everyone said to his brother, Be of good courage.” Dear brothers and sisters, we must not only climb the mountain ourselves — *we must help all other climbers, and we must spend our lives training mountain-climbers.*

G. Avery Lee, in his book, A Fellowship for Sinners, says that the Indian teepee might be used to symbolize the dynamic church. “Each pole in the teepee is held up by all the other poles. Together the poles hold up the teepee. In a church, each Christian serves as a minister or priest to others. Each pleads the case of the other — gives him strength, prays for him, and assists in sustaining his faith.” When this exchange of support takes place and this common ministry is functioning among large numbers of Christians, there you will find a living, energized, growing church.

In Ephesians 3:18, Paul prayed that the Ephesian Christians might “be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.” Note that it is only “with *all* saints” that any *one* saint can understand the love of Christ! Fellowship is not an elective in the school of discipleship; it is a required course!

IV. THE FOURTH SPOKE — WITNESSING

The fourth spoke of the wheel is *witnessing* to those who are without Christ. In one version of our Marching Orders, Jesus said, “Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). He first invited His disciples with the words, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19). Paul wrote much later, “We preach Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ Jesus.” Note the two thrusts of the Christian movement: Evangelism and Education. The winning of the lost, and the making of disciples — for the purpose of presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus. What a commanding task!

Evangelism, or witnessing, or soul-winning, is the *fourth spoke* of the wheel. The order is not accidental. The first three disciplines — the use of the Word of God, prayer, and the practice of genuine fellowship — provide the power base from which witnessing is launched. Missionary D. T. Niles said, “Evangelism is an overflow of the Christian’s life, not a mere program of activities.” The Christian only “abounds” (overflows) if he “abides in Christ.” His abiding is enhanced by the Word, prayer, and fellowship. If these are in their proper place and balance, then witnessing is inevitable. “*God tends to use the instrument that is nearest at hand.*” Live near to Him, and He will use you to win others. The Holy Spirit is the “Booking Agent” of the witnessing Christian. When the Christian is walking with God, the Holy Spirit is filling him, and the Spirit has ways of drawing the right people into his circles at the most opportune time. I have seen this — and experienced it personally — many, many times. And what a blessing it is when it happens!

In a letter to Sheldon van Aucken, C. S. Lewis wrote, “My feeling about people in whose conversion I have been allowed to play a part is always a mixture of joy, awe and even fear. At such a time, I feel like a boy might feel on being first allowed to fire a rifle. The disproportion between his

puny finger on the trigger and the thunder and lightning which follow is alarming. And the seriousness with which the other party takes my words always raises the doubt whether I have taken them seriously enough myself. I think of myself as a fellow-patient in the same hospital as the one to whom I am speaking. I was just admitted a little earlier than he, and thus perhaps can give some advice.”

I think Lewis is absolutely right. Steve Brown wrote, “If our sin can’t be used as a witness as well as our goodness, we have a serious problem. The church ought to be a fellowship of people who are terribly honest. But instead, we often play a game called let-me-show-you-that-I’m-a-good-Christian.”

With regard to witnessing *technique*, the possibilities range from the highly technical (the extensive Evangelism Explosion training, as an example) to the very brief and very simple (the use of the “Four Spiritual Laws” booklet, as an example). Personally, I want to know how to use all of them, and yet not be bound to any one at any time. It is enough to always have on hand a personal favorite. I have used for years and to great advantage the concentric-circle explanation of the nature of man (spirit, soul, and body), showing what it means to be lost, how a person is saved, what happens when a person is saved, and the different kinds of people there are in the world. Another easy-to-use technique for abbreviated contact with a lost person is the “one-verse method.” This can take any one of several forms. Here is one which uses Romans 6:23 to maximum advantage. The verse says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Note that

Wages are contrasted to *gift*
of sin is contrasted to *of God*
death is contrasted to *eternal life*

and the difference between the two sides is your relationship to Jesus Christ as Lord. This use of one verse can be abbreviated or amplified, as the occasion and the opportunity may call for it.

With regard to witnessing *place*, let me refer you to the study entitled, “Let’s Go Fishing!” Someone very wisely said, “It seems that the alternatives in today’s church are either *cop-out*, *burnout*, or *go out*.”

Two coaches (you would think me biased about the mentality of certain coaches if I told you which sport they coached) went north to fish. They got their equipment, made the trip, found a location, pitched a tent, and cut a hole in the ice. A loud voice broke the silence, saying, “There are no fish under the ice.” They were startled. The words were repeated. One of the coaches said quietly, “Is that you, Lord?” The voice answered, “No, this is the manager of the ice-skating arena.”

If you discovered a cure for AIDS and someone asked you how many people do you want to receive this cure, you would answer, “Everyone who is infected.” Friends, *everyone is infected with the disease of sin*. When a person is saved, the disease is “in *remission*” (!), and the saved person awaits the final and perfect cure. Meanwhile, he is in a position of perfect security; the disease can still frustrate and contaminate him, but it cannot destroy him. And it is his mission to tell every infected person he meets where he found the Person who arrested him (!) and the cure that arrested his disease! To change the analogy, a Christian lives like one who has been rescued from a burning house. He is overwhelmed with the wonder of being saved, yet he is broken at the thought of loved ones left behind. As long as there is opportunity, he must join the other workers in the Rescue Squad and pluck those still in the house to a place of safety, like “brands plucked from the burning” (Zechariah 3).

A final word needs to be said about *courage* in witnessing. In this day of pluralism, relativism and unholy tolerance, every philosophy, ideology, and religion are perfectly acceptable — *except the supernatural Gospel of Jesus Christ*. A book of Christian apologetics would be required to show the reason for this strange mixture of tolerance toward error and intolerance toward truth. But the Christian must remember that he does not get his permission from the world; he obeys a *Mandate from Heaven's King, One who has "all authority."* And he must daily remember that when he witnesses, he is actually *only a second witness*. There is an unfailing law at work whenever a Christian proclaims the Gospel. The one witnessing is never God's first witness in the hearer's life. God Himself is already there before the witness is given. The Holy Spirit has been at work in every unsaved person's life in numerous ways long before a Christian witness speaks the Word of truth to him. So the witness never approaches anyone "cold." *It is not possible for a Christian to give the first witness to a lost person. The Christian never arrives in anyone's life before the Holy Spirit does. I never touch someone before God touches him. When God leads us to somebody, He has been there before us.* When a lost person is saved, it is only a fulfilment of the Biblical statement which says, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses, a thing will be established."

In the movie musical, Camelot, legendary King Arthur instructed his knights to ask every person they met if they had heard the story of Camelot. If not, they were to tell the story loudly and clearly. Our Lord, King Jesus, has instructed His disciples to ask every person they meet about their relationship with Him. If they are not in a favorable relationship with Him, the disciples are to *tell the story loudly and clearly*.

A Welsh Christian wrote these words after he had come to North America and visited Niagara Falls many years ago. "The Niagara excites our wonder, fills us with amazement, perhaps awe; but one Niagara is enough for a continent. That same continent, however, requires tens of thousands of silver fountains and lucid brooks; and let me tell you — those clear springs and busy streams, whose names have never been registered in any geography, prove an inestimably greater blessing to the American continent than the mighty Falls whose fame fills the world." In evangelism, the greatest need on earth is an army of ordinary but faithful soul-winners, combining with all others in the army, and giving regular and radiant witness concerning Jesus Christ. This is far more important than the great crusades and the great crusaders, as important as these high-profile leaders and activities may be.

Every Christian is pictured by this wheel. God wants every Christian to be "a big wheel" for Him. But smooth and steady progress is possible on a regular basis in the Christian life only if all the "vital parts" are kept in their respective places and in good working order. The hub of all of it is Jesus Himself. The individual believer's relationship with Him is sustained through the four spokes -- the Word of God, prayer, fellowship, and witnessing. These activities also allow the Life of Christ to reach the rim of the wheel, the productive part of the Christian life, the place "where the rubber meets the road."

An old man had lived alone for several years after the death of his wife. Finally, his children persuaded him to move into an old people's rest home so he could be adequately cared for in the closing years of his life. He finally consented and moved in. The first day he was there, he went down to the cafeteria to eat a meal. He took his plate to a small round table, sat alone, and began to eat, observing his new surroundings as he ate. Just in front of him, he noticed a little lady sitting at the next table alone, and he observed that she kept staring at him throughout the meal. He looked away, looked back at her later, and she was still staring at him. He diverted his gaze from her for a long time, looked back again — and she was still staring at him. This continued until he finished his meal. He took his empty plate back to the counter, placed it there, then turned and boldly walked over to her table. "Ma'am," he

said, “I think I detect that you have been sitting there staring at me all during my meal. Why have you been staring at me?” She replied, “Well, I’ll declare, sir, *you look just like my third husband!*” “Your third husband?” he exclaimed in amazement. “Good heavens! How many times have you been married?” “*Twice!*” she answered. You see, *she had big plans for him!* However, it would not have made any difference what plans she had for him — *if he didn’t agree with her plans.* Dear Christian, it is apparent by several considerations that **God has Big Plans for each of His children.** He really wants you to be “a big wheel” in His Big Push as He seeks to drive the Enemy back and occupy his territory. But if this is to happen, you must fully play your assigned role. Is the Hub intact in your life? Are the Supply Lines open? Are you moving for Jesus according to His Specifications? Is the world being impacted in an enlarging way because of your disciple-making activities?

A recent “B. C.” cartoon shows one of the aboriginal cavemen standing at the large round rock labeled, “Patent Office.” Another caveman has approached with an invention in his hand. The patent officer says, “You’re kidding! A perpetual motion machine?” The “inventor” answers, “Yep but there’s one little snag.” The patent officer asks, “What’s that?” The inventor wistfully sighs, “*It won’t start.*”

What good is a perpetual motion machine if it won’t start? What good are all the “vital parts” of the Christian life if they don’t function? Christian, it is not necessary to “re-invent the wheel”; it is just necessary to be sure all the parts are in place and the wheel is moving according to the Driver’s Purpose.