

Seven Earmarks of a Man of God

ESSENTIAL QUALITIES
for every
CHRISTIAN MAN

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by Mark W. Weaver

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Preface

THE CHURCH of our generation is running low on manliness.

As our nation's slide toward apostasy accelerates, God beckons Churchmen to step into manhood and manliness. Along with countless, local dedicated pastors and laymen throughout the nation, several Christian leaders and organizations have risen to answer God's call on a national scale, issuing a challenge for men of God to step into His high call to manly vision and leadership.

- **Bill McCartney—Promise Keepers.** In early 1990, Bill McCartney, head football coach of the University of Colorado, began to share his vision to fill a stadium with men of God. In the years following, Promise Keepers has grown into a "Christ centered ministry dedicated to uniting men through vital relationships to become godly influences in their world."
- **Edwin Louis Cole—Christian Men's Network.** Author of *Maximized Manhood*, Cole founded the Christian Men's Network in 1981 in order to "...see men change through the power of the gospel." With more than fifty years of ministry, several published books, and conferences and events touching over 10,000,000 men, Cole has been a forerunner in the Christian men's movement.
- **Dr. Gene A. Getz—Bible Teacher and Christian Radio Personality.** Getz's book, *The Measure of a Man*, is widely recognized as the Christian standard for books on Christian manhood. It

examines 20 characteristics of Christian maturity drawn from Titus and 2 Timothy. Getz also authored the *Men of Character Series*.

- **Weldon Hardenbrook—Orthodox Leader.** Hardenbrook's book, *Missing From Action: A Powerful Historical Response to the Crisis Among American Men*, traces the gradual decline of manhood and manliness in American culture from the Victorian era forward. Hardenbrook links the decline of manliness to the rise of industrialism and the movement of men from the farm to factories and boardrooms.

As interest in Christian manhood grows, so does the availability of quality literature and teaching materials on the subject. Most of these materials define manhood in terms of Christian character. *Seven Earmarks of a Man of God* however emphasizes manliness, in contrast to manhood.

What is the difference between manhood and manliness? The following stories may help distinguish the two.

Manhood. Sometimes we can learn much about a subject by studying what it is not. Take for example Frank, a hard working, thirty-five year old. Recently married, Frank and his wife are expecting their first child. Not long ago, Frank decided to purchase a \$35,000, top-of-the-line diesel pick-up truck. When questioned about his extravagance, Frank responded that now that he was starting a family, he wanted one last opportunity to spend some money on himself. When further questioned regarding his excitement at becoming a father, Frank offered a telling response:

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“Well ... I don’t know ... there’s going to be so much change in my life. I’m going to have to give up so many of the things I’m used to having. My whole lifestyle is going to be different.”

Yes, marriage and family will change Frank’s lifestyle, his bank account and his whole outlook on life. But at the age of thirty-five, isn’t it about time for Frank to grow up?

Such is the essence of manhood—maturing, accepting responsibility, learning to place the needs of others above our own. Manhood involves self-sacrifice and accountability. Others are depending upon us, looking to us for their care and provision. We are leaders, if not yet in our communities and workplaces, then at least in our homes.

Christian manhood involves even more. Christ has become our standard. His lifestyle of purity and righteousness and serving others becomes our model. His example of the ultimate self-sacrifice becomes the basis for our conduct in the world.

What then is manliness? Another story may help elucidate.

Manliness. Tom and John own an excavation company. Running their business requires expertise in many areas. Not only are Tom and John skilled in construction, they also have to work up estimates, produce proposals, negotiate contracts, meet deadlines, manage their workers and their subcontractors and make certain that their invoices are paid on time.

Responsibilities sometimes create stress. Tom and John enjoy getting out in the field with their projects and workers. Tom particularly enjoys running his bulldozer, clearing the land of trees and scrub bushes and

performing rough grading on the site. John finds pleasure in working the backhoe, digging trenches and laying pipe.

Bulldozers, backhoes, front-end loaders, generators, earth-movers, cranes and other heavy equipment are manly things. On Tim Allen’s popular television show, *Home Improvement*, tools and equipment take center stage. Tim “the tool man” Taylor appeals to such a broad audience because he has cleverly touched the very heart of manliness.

As homeowners, few joys compare with planning and building improvements to our homes and property. A home addition or renovation, a new deck or patio, a paint job, or even a freshly cut lawn brings untold satisfaction to the manly part of us.

God understands manly nature. After all, He created us men. Here’s what He said to the prophet Jeremiah:

“See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.”

(Jer. 1:10)

Jeremiah’s mission from God consisted of two essential components:

- *Demolition and uprooting.* Men delight when a wrecking ball smashes an old building into rubble or when a lumberjack hollers “timber,” signifying a crashing tree. We like explosions. And we enjoy turning over the soil in our gardens.
- *Building and planting.* Men’s chests puff out just a little when they enter the basement of a newly constructed home and inspect the floor joists and bracing. “I would have preferred 2 x 10 fir myself.”

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Men stop and peer through knotholes at building construction sites. “What’s going on down there? Are they pouring footers, pilings? Is that foundation going to be deep enough?” Many men also take great pride in planting trees and shrubs and even flowers.

Manliness in the Church. Scripture employs allegorical portraits of both construction projects and gardens to convey God’s principles. His first commandment to man charged him with fruitfulness, growth and the subjugation of the whole earth (Gen. 1:28). In essence God said, “Here’s the earth—build and plant!” Every time ground is broken for a construction project or the cultivation of the earth, man fulfills God’s Biblical command to subdue the earth.

Mankind is made in God’s image—both male and female. Building and planting come naturally to us. For centuries, men utilized their hands and tools to plant their fields and craft earth’s raw materials into finished products. Many of America’s most common names reflect our heritage from the trades: Chandler, Cooper, Glover, Mason, Miller, Sawyer, Smith, Turner and Webster.

When we use our hands to build and plant, to craft and create, we engage in the subjugation of the earth—we fulfill God’s first commandment. And creative activity is by no means limited to the male gender. Women also find great joy in crafting and producing. And many now work in the trades alongside men.

Made in God’s image, men and women bear both masculine and feminine qualities. Naturally, men tend to be more masculine and women more feminine. But it is not unusual for a man to cry or for a woman to make a logical assessment.

The Church of our generation contains both feminine and masculine expressions. Some pastors utilize teaching, sound doctrine and reasoned Biblical arguments to engage their congregants and guests. Others employ emotion to move both the lost and the saved. Altar calls generally appeal more to the emotional part of man than the cerebral. On balance, the current trend finds the American Church moving toward knowing God through emotional experience and away from an intellectual knowledge and understanding of God.

In truth, God desires that we know Him in all ways possible. God is Spirit and we must first have a spiritual knowledge of Him—we must be born of the Spirit. As we mature, our intellectual understanding of God grows alongside our emotional experiences.

To say that the Church needs more manliness means that Church life must include more than the joy of relationships with God and fellow believers. To be complete, we should be producing, creating, building and planting. We should be bringing in our manly earth movers and heavy equipment and demolishing vain imaginations, pulling down intellectual as well as spiritual strongholds, laying in spiritual infrastructure and erecting spiritual edifices for the furtherance of God’s kingdom.

God’s kingdom should be expanding and not simply absorbed in recovery, fellowship and times of praise and worship. Our minds should be expanding as well, learning more and more about God and His plans and purposes in creation. We should be taking ground for God.

Is it any wonder when our church marquis’ display messages like “Jesus Cares About

Earmark No. 1

You” that most of our churches have more women in their pews than men? Why not deliver a masculine message? “God’s Kingdom is Under Construction. Come in and Help Us Build.”

Over the last few generations in the western world, technology and progress have moved us from our fields and shops to factory production lines and offices with desks and computers. Much has happened in recent generations to strike at Christian manhood and manliness. Today, Christian manhood is in recovery. But how much have progress and technology denuded the Christian man of his manliness? And how much has the Church suffered from a lack of manliness in Church life? How many men and women of God still engage in the classic themes of the faith? Have 20th century Christians drifted away from the noble themes of godly manliness found in generations past and settled for a stripped down version of Church life?

Seven Earmarks of a Man of God presents seven manly Christian qualities—seven classic, manly Christian distinctives to strengthen the Church. These timeless truths are not for Christian men only but for every one who names the name of Christ. They will not only foster Christian revival, but more importantly, they will help to lay the groundwork for the demolition and uprooting of ungodliness and the re-building and re-planting of Christian culture in the 21st century.

Earmark No. 1:

Every man of God should be
Called and Broken
and bear God’s earmark of ownership.

WHAT IS AN EARMARK?

These are the laws you are to set before them: If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free. But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.

Exod 21:1-6 (NIV)

The earmark is a sign of ownership. Sometimes cattlemen, in lieu of branding, mark an ear of their livestock with a distinctive cut signifying their ownership. The unique earmark is their signature. When herds get mixed, ranchers sort out their cattle from the others by their distinguishing earmark.

As Christian men pursue manliness in God, no issue remains more critical than God’s lawful claim to our persons. During a recent radio talk show focused on the theme of assisted suicide, an adamant caller defended the infamous Dr. Kevorkian with the argument that because we own ourselves, we

Earmark No. 1

have the right to choose death. His flawed argument presumptuously presupposed that we own ourselves. We do not. Men are created beings, made and owned by God who has the sole right to determine our appointment with eternity. As free-willed creatures, we can choose to cooperate with God and His plans for our lives or to revolt against Him.

The unregenerate human soul is at war with God. When the new birth occurs, the human soul begins its journey toward surrender. The balance of the regenerate individual's earthly existence consists of a gradual surrender of the will.

Even as God has called us to subjugate the earth, to build and to plant, to cultivate, so He works to subjugate us, to build and plant, to cultivate His kingdom, His culture, in our hearts. Just as the earth is to be conquered and won for God, so our hearts and wills are to be conquered and won by God.

Because our hearts—even our new birth hearts—are hard, God in His mercy makes a way for them to be won over. Men cannot become God's without His aid. His aid comes in the form of trials and tribulations designed to mark us with His ownership. The process always involves pain. Below are four examples from Scripture describing God's earmarking methods. In the first three, God takes the initiative. In the fourth, we see how God uses our own failures to earmark us for His purposes.

FFIRST: CALAMITY

God takes away the things we love. The Biblical example: Job

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

Job 1:21 (NIV)

Job loved God. A blessed man, he recognized that his good fortune came from God. He praised, worshiped and served God and lived a righteous lifestyle.

One day the devil approached God, seeking permission to test Job's faith. The devil, thinking that Job's righteousness came only as a result of his fortuitous circumstances, asked God if he could visit evil upon Job's household. He hoped that once he suffered, Job would turn his heart away and reject God.

God granted the devil's request and the devil began his treachery. Calamity fell upon Job. Within just a few hours, he lost his flocks, his servants and his children.

In anguish he tore his clothes and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground and worshiped God, his heart still true to his Lord.

Frustrated, the devil approached God once more, this time requesting authorization to strike Job with a disease. Again, God agreed, the only caveat being that the devil could not take Job's life.

The devil then cursed Job with painful boils from his head to his feet.

"*Curse God and die,*" jeered Job's wife. But Job rebuked her and refused to utter any judgment against his God.

If this were not enough, Job's friends came and accused him of sin, suggesting he repent before God. But he successfully defended his own righteousness and the God whom he continued to serve.

Near the end of his trial, God himself questioned Job and reminded him of His sovereignty and power. After God helped Job to recall His transcendent power and majesty,

Earmark No. 1

Job recognized the futility of his own flesh and repented, not of any specific sin but rather of his own human frailty and fleshiness.

God restored Job's wealth and children to four generations. Then he died, one hundred and forty years old and "full of days."

There are many lessons to be drawn from Job, especially ones about the sovereignty and majesty of God. God used Satan's treachery to earmark Job as His own, proving that faith without testing amounts to very little.

Job's calamity did not come from Job's sin. He did not reap a harvest of his own bad seed. Job's story begins with Job as a righteous man. God even praised Job's righteousness to the devil.

Our loving God will not spare even the righteous from pain and suffering to accomplish the earmarking process. God desires more from us than our daily quiet time, our best behavior and our praises for His blessings. He wants our hearts especially during the pain and suffering.

Even though God restored Job's wealth and family, and though the Scriptures make no reference, Job must certainly have lived his remaining days with a hole in his heart for the ones he lost. That hole was God's earmark—a unique reminder of His sovereignty—the signature of God's ownership of Job's life.

SECOND: COVENANT - God gives us a promise for something in the future. The Biblical example: Joseph

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. "Listen," he said, "I had another dream, and this time the

sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

Gen 37:9 (NIV)

The second way which God earmarks a man is to give a man a specific promise. The scriptures are of course filled with a multitude of promises for all believers. But many times God imparts specific promises to individuals.

Joseph was the eleventh born son of his father, Jacob. But he was the first born of Jacob's beloved Rachel and that made him Jacob's favorite. And for that reason, Joseph's half brothers harbored jealousy toward him.

God had sovereignly chosen Joseph for an extraordinary role in history. Joseph no doubt grasped, intuitively, that God had singled him out from among his brothers. And to make certain Joseph understood, God gave him a dream.

But Joseph made one tactical error. He shared his dream with his brothers. Hearing of the dream only fueled his brothers' jealousy. More resentful than ever, they plotted to kill him. But at the last minute, when they saw a caravan of traders passing by, they decided to sell him into slavery.

The traders sold Joseph to a wealthy man named Potiphar. Still invigorated by the power of his dream—his earmarking promise from the Lord—Joseph served faithfully, holding on to the hope that God would somehow deliver him. But then one day, Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him. Joseph rejected her invitation and fled. Not long afterward, Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of trying to seduce her.

Things went from bad to worse and Joseph landed in prison. But he did not brood or feel

Earmark No. 1

sorry for himself. He quickly made friends in prison, among them a baker and a butler both of whom had served in Pharaoh's palace.

Even though his circumstances looked grim, Joseph continued to cling to God's promise. One night, both the baker and the butler had dreams and the next morning, Joseph interpreted them. The baker would be executed but the butler would be restored. In three days, Joseph's interpretations came to pass. Joseph asked the butler to remember him but the butler forgot Joseph.

Two years later, Pharaoh had a dream. He called for his magicians and wise men but none could interpret the dream. Then the butler remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about his own dream and how Joseph had provided the correct interpretation.

Pharaoh called for Joseph who came and interpreted his dream. A famine was coming and Pharaoh was to prepare by storing up food. Impressed with Joseph, Pharaoh placed him in charge of the famine preparations.

Because of his keen insight and astute management of the nation's resources, Joseph became a very powerful man in Egypt. Seven years later, when famine arrived, Jacob sent his sons to seek help. They were directed to speak to Joseph, but did not recognize him as their brother. But Joseph recognized them.

After prolonged testing of his brothers, Joseph at last revealed his true identity.

Joseph's dream—God's covenantal promise—had come true. Joseph is known for his righteousness, his faith in the face of great disappointment and his perseverance. God kept His word, and Joseph's dream—the promise—kept Joseph on God's path. By giving him the promise, God earmarked Jo-

seph for life, preserving and keeping him through many trials.

Because of the promise—God's earmark—Joseph kept his eyes on God. As a result, Joseph became the key player in a huge turn of world history. Within a generation, Jacob's descendants would become bondservants in Egypt and in a few generations God would call the prophet Moses as their deliverer.

Without that dream/covenant/promise—the unique signatory earmark from God—Joseph could never have kept his faith and God's plan could not have been fulfilled in history.

There are many other examples in the Bible of God making a personal covenant with an individual and earmarking that person for life. Probably the most well known example besides Joseph is his grandfather Abraham.

He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Gen 15:5(NIV)

THIRD: CALL

God gives us a call beyond our capabilities. The Biblical example: Moses

But Moses said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

Exod 4:13 (NIV)

The third way in which God will earmark a man is to give a man a call beyond his capabilities. While the covenant is a promise from God, the call is a burden from God. Of course every call of God is beyond our capability. But consider the man Moses and the responsibilities that he bore.

- He confronted Pharaoh, the most power-

Earmark No. 1

ful king in all of the earth.

- He delivered 4,000,000 people from bondage.
- He parted the waters of the Red Sea.
- He tarried in God's presence for countless hours.
- He received and delivered God's Ten Commandments.
- He received and delivered God's lesser laws.
- He received and delivered God's plans for the wilderness tabernacle.
- He received instructions and directed the establishment of the Priesthood, the offerings, and the Ark of the Covenant.

The historical impact of Moses' response to God cannot be measured. The western world still benefits from his obedience. Many of us are old enough to remember cardboard replications of the Ten Commandments hanging on our public school walls. Moses and the laws of God delivered on Mount Sinai have particularly influenced our American culture. Moses gave us the first five books of the Bible—the Pentateuch. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy present the root truths from which the remainder of the Holy Scriptures springs. Our nation's founding fathers constructed our system of government upon Judeo-Christian principles, especially the writings of Moses.

Answering and carrying out God's call did not come easily to Moses. From the moment of his call until his last act as Israel's prophet, Moses bore the burden of being God's spokesman to a hard-hearted generation. Had he known and understood the millenniums-long impact of his work, he may have succumbed under the weight.

Throughout history, God has singled out

individual souls to carry His word-burden in the earth. He sometimes gives divine revelation and insight—little pieces of His truth—to certain ones of His elect. Those chosen must carry that burden and bear that weight of truth as God directs.

The weight of God's prophetic burden upon Moses' was God's earmark. Moses could not escape this unique reminder of His sovereignty—the signature of God's ownership of Moses' life.

In the above three examples, God initiated the earmarking process. In this final example, God utilized human failure or collapse to earmark a man for life.

FOURTH: COLLAPSE

God uses our failures to mark us with His ownership. The Biblical example: Saul/Paul

... although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

1 Tim 1:13-15 (NKJ)

Before he became the great apostle of the Christian faith, Paul persecuted the Church. A ringleader among the oppressors, Paul, then known as Saul, presided over the stoning of Steven and many lesser-known early saints. Trained in the law, Saul knew the Holy Scriptures as well as any man of his day.

Saul's persecution of Christ's followers sprung out of his sincere belief that he was

Earmark No. 1

-serving God. Saul did not know God. He was not righteous but self-righteous. He knew only the law of God and his spiritual pride hindered him from recognizing the messianic reality in the person of Jesus Christ.

Then one day while travelling to the town of Damascus, a powerful light blinded Saul. He shielded his eyes and fell to the ground as Christ interrogated him.

“Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

Unexpectedly awakened to the glorious reality of Christ’s divinity, Saul’s self-righteousness collapsed under the weight of the knowledge of his own sin and treachery. Then God transformed Saul into Paul and he went on to become Christ’s lead apostle in the first century Church. Who better than a one time enemy of Christ to become Christ’s chief apologist? Who could more effectively explain the doctrines of sin, humankind’s estrangement from God and the marvelous grace and forgiveness of God than one whose early religious exploits included the torture and killing of Christians?

Though Paul no longer carried the weight of guilt for his heinous sins, he most certainly carried the knowledge of his pre-Christian acts of cruelty with him throughout his many missionary journeys. Ever present to remind him of God’s glorious grace, his past served him in ministry.

God used Paul’s memory of his life before Christ to uniquely earmark him for service in His kingdom work. Saul’s failure became Paul’s earmark.

God rescues many from the bondage of self-righteousness. Peter’s self-righteousness

collapsed not long after his braggadocio proclamation that he would never deny Christ. And even though his Lord graciously consoled and restored him prior to His ascension, Peter lived out the balance of his years earmarked with the knowledge of his failure.

CONCLUSION. Regardless of what method God may use to earmark a man—and there are no doubt other methods besides these four—the results are always the same.

- Earmarked men are changed men.
- Earmarked men have stepped from the self-life into the God life.
- Earmarked men know the absolute goodness of God.
- Earmarked men know the absolute futility of their own flesh.
- Earmarked men know that their lives are not their own—that they are a possession of God.

If you are a man of God and you do not have an earmark or you are not certain whether you have an earmark, begin to seek God about your desire to become one of His earmarked men. Then be prepared. You are in for a season of pain and heartache. When God initiates the earmarking process in your life, you will discover that you can no longer control or manage your own affairs. You will be forced to cry out to God for His grace and mercy as you recognize the futility of your own flesh. You will learn to humble yourself at His feet and when the earmarking process is complete, you will be a broken, earmarked man.

How can you tell an earmarked man of God? He is a man who has suffered and who understands that his life is not his own.

Earmark No. 2

Earmark No. 2
Every man of God should be
Sanctified
or set apart unto God

NOT ONLY DOES GOD DESIRE that every one of His men be uniquely earmarked with a season of trial and testing. He also desires us to be set apart or sanctified.

It is God's will that you should be sanctified ...

I Thessalonians 4:3 (NIV).

Just what does it mean to be sanctified? The Greek word for sanctification in the above passage is *hagiasmos*, which means purification or consecration. The word occurs several times in the New Testament and indicates God's desire for Christians to be set apart from the world.

Believers sometimes misinterpret the concept of being set apart from the world. To be sanctified or set apart unto God does not mean that God's people retreat from involvement in government, business, education, the arts and other aspects of life. What it does mean is that in our daily discourse with the world, that our behavior and conduct is pure and that our affections and hearts are set upon heavenly things.

Christ is our model for sanctification. He set His life apart to God. He lived to please His Father. He set out to do only His Father's will. Like Christ, our hearts should be turned from self-pleasing to God pleasing. Thus, every man of God should be earmarked with a passion to please God and do His will.

For those God foreknew he also predestined

to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Rom 8:29 (NIV)

The degree to which we have allowed God to do a work of sanctification in us is reflected primarily in the way we handle our relationships. If a man of God is in the process of sanctification, he will constantly be improving in character. His family and friends will see more and more of the fruits of the Spirit coming forth in his life. He will respond instead of react to unexpected difficulties. He will be changing from glory to glory. God changes us and He does so from the inside out.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Cor 3:18 (NIV)

How can we ensure that sanctification is taking place in our lives? Men of God who wish to be earmarked with sanctification can take several steps to aid the process.

FIRST: **BECOME TEACHABLE.** Every man of God must become a learning disciple and be in the process of change. Jesus commanded us to be learners. How teachable are we? Can we receive instruction from others? Can we accept correction? Do we allow our attitudes to be adjusted by God? Are our lives under the constant scrutiny of God's word? Are we changing?

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matt 11:29 (NIV)

Earmark No. 2

SECOND: CULTIVATE A HEART OF HUMILITY. Pride, even religious or spiritual pride, blocks God's grace from operating in our lives. Knowledge of God is a desirable goal. But knowledge alone can foster pride. A man of God earmarked by the sanctification process will seek to cultivate a humble heart.

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:6 (NIV)

THIRD: DEVELOP A DESIRE TO KNOW GOD. To know God is to become like God. There are several ways we can learn about God. Personal study of scripture provides a solid base for growth in our lives. Reading classic Christian literature gives us the perspective of saints from previous generations. Listening to sound, Bible-based messages whether live or on tape, furnishes us with inspiration and instruction. Sharing with others in small groups or in a one on one setting fosters an appreciation for the experiences of others. Prayer, both corporate and private—but especially private prayer—strengthens our inner man as we seek God and press through the spiritual obstacles that often seek to divert us from our relationship with God. And times of thanksgiving, praise and worship—especially the sacrifice of praise—offer us opportunities to learn about God in ways which studying and prayer cannot. The more we learn about God, the more we want to know Him.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death ...

Phil 3:10 (NIV)

FOURTH: LEARN TO SUBMIT TO GOD. Adam failed in the Garden of Eden because he desired to be independent of God. He wanted life on his own terms, not on God's terms. The new birth experience—being born again—does not automatically qualify one as an expert in living the Christ-life. The Christ-life is not only a gift from God, it is also a learned experience. John the Baptist said of Christ, "He must increase and I must decrease." As our wills become submitted to God, our self-lives decrease and His Christ-life increases in us.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7 (NIV)

FIFTH: WORK AT SUBMITTING TO OTHER GODLY MEN. No earmarked man of God should be separate from God's Church. There is no place for "lone rangers" among God's men. Every man of God should be a part of a local congregation and submitted to local church leadership or a board or presbytery of elders. Every man of God should be willing to bring his life and ministry under the governance of church authority.

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

1 Pet 5:5 (NIV)

How can you tell an earmarked man of God? He will be a man in the process of becoming more and more like Christ in his character and behavior.

Earmark No. 3

Earmark No. 3

Every man of God should be
Sound-Minded
and capable of wielding God's ideas

BECOMING GOD'S STUDENT. Earmark No. 2 explored how being an earmarked man of God means that we have elected to set our lives apart unto God—to become consecrated and sanctified in our hearts, our attitudes and our relationships with God and with others. We are becoming men who pursue righteousness or right relationships.

But not only does God desire our *hearts* to be pure, He wants our *minds* to be renewed.

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind....

Romans 12: 2 (NIV)

Life provides countless learning experiences. Even the most obtuse among us eventually learn not to place our hand over an open flame or stick our finger into a light socket. Most of us master basic mathematics, learn to drive a car, and gradually acquire rudimentary life skills. And with minimal conscious effort, nearly all of us eventually learn from our mistakes.

God places a premium on learning. Not only does He want us to function at a basic level, He desires us to make a conscious effort to improve our understanding of Him and His creation. But because of sin, the human mind toils in darkness. Even believers labor to understand God, His purpose and His role for us in the creative order.

Jesus said, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear.*" He calls us upward to a place of

greater understanding. His words imply that not all who have ears to hear actually hear Him. With these words, which are found fourteen times in the New Testament, Christ asks us to put forth the effort to comprehend His teachings.

Learning occurs then at two levels—the unconscious and the conscious. Earmarked men of God are not content to settle for lessons that come from simply reacting to situations that life throws our way. Earmarked men seek to pro-actively enlighten their darkened minds through study.

Paul admonishes us to become God's students.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

2 Tim 2:15 (NIV)

The King James Version reads "*Study to show thyself approved unto God...*"

Pro-active learning involves three phases: Truth Intake, Truth Processing and Truth Dispensing.

TRUTH INTAKE. God provides us with five sensory intake mechanisms. We can hear, see, taste, touch and smell. Two of these senses prove especially pertinent to study. With our ears we can hear God's word. With our eyes we can read God's word.

Also, because we are spiritual beings, we possess a spiritual sensor. If we are truly attuned to the Spirit of God, we can often detect or discern Him communicating to us in our human spirit. He does this by revelation (I John 2:28) and also by providing our con-

Earmark No. 3

science with warnings when we are in spiritual danger. The human spirit then can work together with the ears and the eyes to enhance the intake phase of learning.

TRUTH PROCESSING. As we devote ourselves to listening, reading and discerning, God begins to build a framework of understanding in our minds. Although God Himself transcends His moral laws and the laws of nature in creation, and though He does at times perform supernatural miracles, signs and wonders—thus circumventing or overriding the laws of nature—He is essentially logical. He created reason, and His universe, both natural and spiritual, operates upon divine laws and principles.

God's principles are, in some ways, like if/then arguments in a mathematical equation. If you (my people) do this, then I (God) will do this. Simplified, if you obey, I will bless. If you do not obey, I will not bless.

As our minds become acclimated to His divine nature and attributes—His sovereignty, His holiness, His immutability and His divine laws and principles—we begin to develop an internal grid of truth. As we learn more and more about God from hearing and reading His word—as we muse, reflect, cogitate, ponder and consider His word—this internal grid of truth begins to function like a filter, sifting out the good ideas from the bad. We process what we receive and categorize and judge it according to what we know is true. Truth processing involves critical thinking, learning to place our knowledge into categories, to internally order our understanding of God and His creation.

TRUTH DISPENSING. But these two phases of the three are incomplete with-

out the third. For until we can effectively communicate His truth to others, the truth is not yet fully our own.

Speaking and writing about God's truths help to cement them firmly into our minds. Whether speaking or writing, the important step is to get our thoughts onto paper. Organizing or outlining our ideas solidifies them for us. Consider some of the great writers in history and the ideas they communicated:

- Moses
- David
- The Prophets
- Paul
- Augustine
- Luther
- Calvin
- Wesley

At a glance the complete process looks something like this:

Truth Intake ➔
Truth Processing ➔
Truth Dispensing

or

Listening, Reading ➔
Musing, Reflecting, Cogitating, Organizing
➔ Writing, Speaking

WIELDING IDEAS. God's truths are essentially His ideas. Before God created He conceptualized. The earth, the stars, the planets, the sun, the moon—all existed as God's ideas before He brought them into existence. The oceans, the mountains, the valleys, the forests, the deserts, the prairies and all the creatures that populate them sprung from God's creative imagination.

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Time and space are also God's ideas. Without His ideas and their fulfillment, God would be alone.

Only men made in God's image, and angels can imagine. Animals build their homes and carry out their activities by instinct, not by reason or inspiration. Inspiration carries the spark of divinity.

Sometimes imagination can be fatal. Lucifer imagined himself ascending to the throne of God and becoming like God. Adam and Eve also imagined themselves becoming as gods.

Creation is filled with both good ideas and bad ones. Paul admonished us to "cast down imaginations" and to bring our ideas into alignment with God's word.

... We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Cor. 10:4-5 (NIV)

But Paul appears to be saying that we are to do more than just bring our own ideas into alignment. Aren't Christ's disciples commissioned to wage war against all ideas that are not in alignment with God's word? In colonial times, before our nation came into existence, Christian men founded universities up and down the eastern seaboard. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth and others came into being for the specific purpose of training young men for the ministry. The universities' founders envisioned an army of truth-wielders waging war against ungodly ideas in their culture and beyond.

The following story may further elucidate how important it is for God's men to become comfortable wielding God's ideas.

Karl, a Christian, works as an editor for a national home school magazine. Though much of the home school movement in our nation is Christian, many home-schoolers in the movement are distinctly non-Christian. Karl's magazine, though not anti-Christian, is not Christian per-se in its editorial position.

Recently, Stan submitted an article for publication in Karl's magazine. Stan's article included the following sentence: "Government is the price we pay for failure to be a civilized people."

Karl, a man comfortable wielding God's ideas, immediately recognized the flaw in Stan's statement and concluded that Stan was most likely a libertarian. A student of God's word, Karl understood that civil government does not exist because of our failure to be civilized but that civil government is a divine institution created by God.

Had he not been alert to Stan's unfounded argument, his statement, which sounds essentially good on the surface, might have slipped through the editorial process and been published under Karl's editorial watch. Karl's readers, most not as astute as he, would have been led down a path of falsehood.

How can you tell an earmarked man of God? Like Karl, he is a man who reads and listens, cogitates, muses and reflects, and dispenses God's truths to others. He is a learned man, comfortable wielding God's ideas.

Earmark No. 4

Earmark No. 4

Every man of God should be
Wise
in their understanding

A **STUDIOUS MAN**, a man who wields God's ideas, will be a man earmarked with vision. He will be a man who understands the times in which he lives, a man who sees the whole and not just the part.

We live in a generation where, in many ways, Christianity has been reduced to a salvation experience and a personal relationship with Jesus. Although a salvation experience marks the entry point into the Christian life and a personal relationship with Jesus forms the essential bond between heaven and earth in the life of the individual, God's purposes for mankind do not begin nor end with human souls.

God cares not only about the condition of singular souls, He also cares about everything in creation. He is a God of culture, growing and cultivating a heavenly garden here in the earth. He takes interest in nations, their governments, business, education, the arts and all other components of life. He even cares about the animals He created.

An earmarked man of God understands that the Christian life does not begin and end with his own relationship to God. Nor does it terminate with his family or his church. An earmarked man of God carries a burden for God's creation. He understands that God's purpose in history is to bring all things into subjection under the rule of Christ.

We men of God must step out from the ghetto of our own religious experiences and into our culture as salt and light. We must begin to see ourselves as influencers, those who can help to shape and change the world in which we live.

Fundamental to this change is, of course, leading as many into the new birth experience as possible and getting them on their way to strong, personal relationships with Jesus. But in addition, the influencer will seek to shape and direct their culture toward the positive. Even though every American cannot be a born again Christian, our culture can and should be transformed into a positive force which presses the multitudes toward general civility and morality. This too, is a holy mission—the work of the Christian.

To be a man of vision, a man who understands the times in which we live, requires not only a personal, devotional intimacy with God, but a godly, world-wise insight into what is truly going on around us. Earmarked men of God are laden with Biblical principles by which they judge and discern. God's men today should be like God's men of David's time— ... men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do ... 1 Chr 12:32 (NIV). We should be known as "men of the Church" who understand the times and know what our nation should do.

God has called us to be men of understanding and insight into human nature, scriptural principles and the grace and mercy of God. We must become men of wisdom. In addition to Bible study and prayer, wisdom is also derived from several other sources. We men of God should:

D **VELOP A LOVE OF HISTORY.** A person without at least a cursory interest in history is a person trapped in a life with scant perspective. So many souls today have minimal knowledge of their heritage, both personal and national. Few can explain how their political liberties evolved. Fewer still can defend our nation's constitution and account for its particularities in comparison to the constitutions of other nations. Many Christians

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know their Bible from ancient Israel to the letters of Paul and the Revelation of John. But only a handful can weave together the masterful, unfolding tapestry of God's design for nations and kingdoms and freedom and blessing.

*I will remember the works of the LORD:
surely I will remember thy wonders of
old. I will meditate also of all thy work,
and talk of thy doings.*

Ps 77:11-12 (KJV)

DEEPEN OUR UNDERSTANDING of God's purposes with the nations. God is a God not only of individuals but also of nations. He is the originator of culture and the designer of communities. Among many other things that God does with nations, in His marvelous wisdom, God:

1) Creates some nations to be stronger than others.

*And the LORD said unto her, Two
nations are in thy womb, and two
manner of people shall be separated
from thy bowels; and the one people
shall be stronger than the other people;
and the elder shall serve the younger.*

Gen. 25: 23 (KJV)

2) Judges the nations.

*I will smite them with the pestilence,
and disinherit them, and will make of
thee a greater nation and mightier than
they.*

Num 14:12 (KJV)

3) Divides the nations.

*And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto
heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and
the moon, and the stars, even all the host*

*of heaven, shouldest be driven to wor-
ship them, and serve them, which the
LORD thy God hath divided unto all
nations under the whole heaven.*

Deut 4:19 (KJV)

EXPAND OUR KNOWLEDGE of the nature of God's government and authority in the earth. God has imparted or delegated His divine authority to men in the earth. The earmarked man of God will understand how God's authority is parceled out to men and how His authority is designed to function among men. Government originates with God and is not something we suffer under because of sin. There are godly forms of government and ungodly forms or tyrannies. Every man of God should, at minimum, possess a cursory understanding of the following elements of God's government at work in the earth: with a core of understanding that Christ possesses all authority.

*Then Jesus came to them and said, "All
authority in heaven and on earth has
been given to me. Therefore go and
make disciples of all nations, baptizing
them in the name of the Father and of
the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...*

Matt 28:18-19 (NIV)

God established a triad of His delegated authority in the earth. He has deputized men to handle His governing power by creating various authority-possessing offices. In His governing authority, the power is in the office, not in the office-holder. God has delegated His authority:

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1) To His Church:

- The Fivefold Ministry (Eph. 4:11)
 - Apostles
 - Prophets
 - Evangelists
 - Pastors
 - Teachers
- Local Church Government
 - Elders
 - Deacons

2) To Families:

God has appointed husbands and fathers to be heads of their family households. He expects men to walk in humility with their wives and children and to live in a self-sacrificing manner in the same fashion as Christ has done with His Church.

3) To Civil Authorities:

God has established civil governments in the earth for the management and administration of cities, counties, states and nations. He does not remove corrupt governments easily or lightly and expects governors to rule with godliness. Christians are admonished to pray for their civil leaders.

CULTIVATE A SOUND theological perspective. Many Christians today bristle when the word theology comes up in a conversation. Perhaps an early experience in a lifeless church distorted their concept of theology. When forced to choose between a living Christ and a spiritless theology, the decision is obvious. But as Christians, we need both the living Christ and a strong foundational understanding of the nature and character of God, His creation and purpose, the human condition, the work of the cross, our future in heaven and life in His Church. The-

ology is the science or study of God. Even as biologists classify and categorize earth's living things, so theologians classify and categorize God's truths. Historically, theology has been separated into five primary areas of study. They are:

- a) Theology – The Study of God
- b) Anthropology – The Study of Man
- c) Soteriology – The Study of the Redemptive Work of Christ
- d) Eschatology – The Study of Second Coming and the Afterlife
- e) Ecclesiology – The Study of the Church

ENGAGE IN MANLY CONVERSATION with other men. One of the best ways to sharpen our minds is to regularly engage in conversation about weighty matters with other men. Men of God should look for opportunities to discuss world affairs, politics, theology and other ponderous issues. Such dialog sharpens our minds, provides us with fresh understanding and rounds out our perspective. We also challenge other men to grow in their understanding.

The following story may help clarify the need for understanding the times in which we live.

Neil grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. Converted at the age of sixteen, Neil began to devour books about God and Christianity. One of the most popular books of that time was *The Late Great Planet Earth* by Hal Lindsey. Neil read Lindsey's book and became convinced that Christ's return was imminent.

During those years, steel mills still belched their fires from tall smokestacks in Cleveland's Cuyahoga River Valley. One day, Neil heard on the news and read in the paper that the Teamsters who hauled the steel had

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gone on strike. Cleveland's mills had stopped producing. The city's primary industry had suddenly ground to a halt.

In a city so dependent on one industry, the economic fallout proved significant. As the strike wore on, news stories and editorial commentaries painted a dim picture of Cleveland's economic future.

The young Neil quickly became persuaded that all of these events were somehow connected to the return of Christ. Neil began to tell others that the strike was a sign of Christ's coming. He even argued with his much wiser parents and berated them for their lack of understanding.

Within a few weeks, the strike issues resolved themselves and the city returned to normal. Neil's eschatological musings and prophetic proclamations quickly faded. Life went on for Neil. He married, raised a family and pursued a career.

Like many men of God, Neil slowly learned to see the whole and not just the part. In ensuing years, Neil came to realize that Teamster's strikes occur every now and then, that labor and management have always been at odds, and that cities, towns, nations and even entire cultures come and go without the world crashing to its end.

As he grew older, Neil gained wisdom and perspective. He came to appreciate history. He learned to contemplate God's purposes with nations and kingdoms. He studied and learned about the nature of God's government and authority in the earth. Gradually, Neil cultivated his own strong theological perspective. Today he regularly engages in manly conversation with other men.

How can you tell an earmarked man of God? He will be like Neil—a man of vision—like the men of Isaachar—a man who understands the times in which he lives.

Earmark No. 5

Earmark No. 5

Every man of God should be
Ecumenical
in their approach to Church life

AN EARMARKED MAN OF GOD grows through suffering, commits himself to the process of sanctification, becomes God's student who learns to wield God's ideas, and develops into a man of vision who understands the times in which he lives. The fifth earmark of a man of God is a broad-based love for God's Church.

Jerry is a man of God. He came to know Christ as a teenager during the Jesus Movement of the late 1960's. Today, Jerry is approaching fifty and will soon be a grandfather. He belongs to a non-denominational church that meets in a school building on Sunday mornings. Whenever he can, Jerry meets for an hour and a half of Bible study and prayer with a few men from his church on Saturday mornings.

On his way to the weekly prayer meeting, Jerry passes the local abortion clinic. Every Saturday morning, like clockwork, a small band of faithful protestors, signs in hand, parade in front of the clinic on the main, four-lane road through town. And every time he passes them, Jerry's heart is moved by the sight of these devoted ones who give up their Saturday mornings to picket the town's abortionist.

One morning, on his way home from the men's meeting, Jerry stopped to chat with these folks. As he approached the group, a man stepped forward and offered his hand in greeting. In the background, Jerry could hear the prayers of the demonstrators who paraded along the sidewalk.

"Hail Mary, full of grace..."

Realizing that these pro-life picketers belonged to the town's only Catholic Church, Jerry swallowed hard, smiled and shook the gentleman's hand. He introduced himself, identified himself as a Protestant and commended the group for their zeal and faithfulness. After a brief, friendly chat, Jerry had garnered a standing invitation to join the group any Saturday morning.

Through the centuries, as Christ's evolving Church divided and splintered, deep prejudices became lodged in the souls of God's people. In the early days of the Reformation, many Christians became martyrs, dying at the hands of other so-called Christians because of religious bigotry. These intolerant acts of treachery cut deep wounds into the soul of God's Church. For generations we have kept at arm's length from one another, carrying with pride our little pieces of the truth. Even as recently as twenty years ago, the young, born-again Jerry would have had little to do with Catholics. But as he matured into godly manhood, Jerry slowly grew to appreciate God's people from every corner of God's church.

Beyond our common faith in Jesus Christ, every mainline Christian denomination shares another common experience. Each began as a renegade movement. Even the Catholic and Orthodox faiths separated from one another six hundred years before Luther and others led the Protestant Reformation. Nearly every Protestant split occurred over a supposed new revelation from God or a fresh insight or interpretation of Scripture. So while our splits have come with the price tag of division, each has also added a genuine piece to the whole.

We all tend to see God's Church in an in-

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complete way. Our built-in and inherited prejudices naturally limit our perspective. We intrinsically think of the Church as people like ourselves. But God's people come in all shapes, sizes and colors. And we celebrate our faith in diverse ways. From the high church mass to the low-church revival meeting, God is ever present when His people gather.

As our culture becomes increasingly anti-Christian and God's people focus on the common bond of our faith in Jesus Christ, we are also beginning to understand the value that each brings to the whole. As the world around us becomes ever darker, we have begun to find succor and encouragement through fellowship with genuine believers from all denominations. Like Jerry, the Church in our nation at last appears to be fostering a desire for true denominational reconciliation.

The Scriptures portray the Church in a number of different word portraits:

- The Body of Christ
- The Bride of Christ
- A Chosen Generation
- A Royal Priesthood
- A Holy Nation
- A Peculiar or Unique People
- The Light of the World
- A City Set on a Hill
- The Branches on the Vine
- A Spiritual House Built of Living Stones
- The Lord's Vineyard
- The City of God

Each word portrait evokes a distinct mental picture of God's people. All represent a particular aspect of Church life. God's Church is multi-faceted. Below are three elucidations:

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S BODY. At the right moment in history, the Word became flesh and came to live among us. For a few short years, Christ walked, talked and fellowshiped with men and women. He served, He healed, He comforted and He delivered many from demonic oppression. He set the standard for His followers and demonstrated how we are to live and relate to one another and the world around us.

When finished, He ascended into heaven and sent His Holy Spirit to empower us to carry on His work. Being the body of Christ means that we are now His hands and feet, His eyes and ears, His mouthpiece in the earth. We are to serve and minister here in this corporeal world as He once did.

We are not all alike, nor do we minister in the same way. Some of us are better equipped for pure, selfless acts of service. Some exercise discernment. Others offer words of encouragement. Some joy in hospitality. Still others teach and equip. The body is made up of many parts and each plays their unique role in Christ's Church.

THE CHURCH AS CHRIST'S BRIDE. One of God's chief purposes for His Church is everlasting intimacy with His Son. Somewhere in future eternity God's people will play a role in the marriage supper of the Lamb. We will be the bride and Christ will be the groom.

The word portrait of the Church as Christ's bride is one of the most difficult to understand and our marriage to the Lamb, mysterious. Men find it particularly difficult to envision themselves in the role of a bride. Yet the Scriptures brim with direct references and allegorical portraits of Christ and His Church in an eternal embrace.

Earmark No. 6

Part of our task is to prepare for our wedding day. We are to make ourselves ready as a beautiful bride without blemish or wrinkle.

THE CHURCH AS A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD.

We are adopted sons and daughters. We have been brought into the line of royalty that flows from the Godhead. We have been made joint heirs with Jesus Christ and are called to rule with Him. The temple veil, which separated the inner court from the holy of holies, was made of blue, purple and scarlet. This veil tore in two when Christ expired on the cross. Blue is the color of the heavens from whence Christ came. Scarlet is the color of His blood that was shed for our sins. Blue and scarlet combine to create purple, the color of royalty.

The holy of holies, the place where God dwells, was at one time only accessible by Israel's High Priest. When Christ's death caused the veil to tear in two, all who believe in the redeeming power of the blood of Christ became priests. We have not only access to intercede with God through our prayers but also a duty to minister to Him through our priestly offerings of thanksgiving, praise and worship.

Each of the above word portraits of the Church could be equally illustrated. Christ's Church is many things. His people worship in many ways. Some favor the liturgical and ceremonial. Others prefer the humble and simple. Still others incline toward tradition and order sprinkled with free expression. God is author of them all. No man of God should consider that his church or denomination is the only or even the best expression of Christ's people in the earth.

The earmarked man of God recognizes, accepts and embraces God's people in all of their forms and expressions.

Earmark No. 6

Every man of God should be
Father-Oriented
in their relationship with God

HAS THE ADVENT OF SIN into the human equation altered God's original purpose for mankind? Is there more to the work of the gospel than winning souls for Christ? How can we come to know the *Father's* highest and specific purpose for our lives?

In our day, the *Son* and the *Spirit* are receiving much attention. Multitudes are coming to know Christ every year and the *Holy Spirit* is moving in miraculous ways with many signs, wonders and manifestations of power.

But where are we in relation to *Father* God?

From the outset of time, the *Father's* purpose has been to bring all of creation to Himself. In order to accomplish His mission, the *Father* has given full authority the *Son*.

*All authority in heaven and on earth
has been given to me...*

Matt 28:18 (NIV)

Christ is charged with the task of bringing all of His Church under God's governmental rule.

*And God ... appointed him to be head
over everything for the church...*

Eph 1:22 (NIV)

But Christ's work is not limited to the Church. His mission is also to bring all of creation under His rule.

And God placed all things under his

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feet...

Eph 1:22 (NIV)

The LORD says my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."

Ps 110:1 (NIV)

And when His work is done, the *Son* Himself will be subjected to the *Father*.

When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

1 Cor 15:28 (NIV)

Creation is the *Father's* idea. As the *Holy Spirit* begins His work of drawing the unbelieving soul to God, thoughts often include a serious contemplation of creation. The *Holy Spirit* inspires the seeker's mind to consider creation's orderly structure.

...what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

Romans 1:19-20 (NIV)

As the soon-to-be-believer ponders God's creation, he begins to sense his own disconnectedness from the Creator. For although God is three persons in one, it is ultimately God the *Father* from whom humanity is separated.

The normal progression of relational growth in the life of the believer is *Spirit*→*Son*→*Father*. As the unbeliever recognizes his disconnectedness from God, he

perceives his own human depravity and comes to repentance. He discovers his need for a Savior. Thus, though he is contemplating the *Father's* orderly creational design and the *Son's* redemptive work, the new believer's first relationship is with the *Holy Spirit* who draws him toward God.

"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

John 15:26 (NIV)

Not only does the *Holy Spirit* lead us to Christ, He helps us make the choice to receive Christ as our Savior. Once Christ is in our lives, the *Spirit* continues with us and in us to impart God's grace for daily living. He can also come upon us in dramatic ways and impart His supernatural power.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes in you ...

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

After redemption occurs, the believer begins to learn of Jesus' ways and teachings through the personal study of Scripture and through classes, training, fellowship and relationships with other Christians. Gradually, the believer comes to trust in Jesus not only for salvation but also for every area of his life. The new believer learns to call upon His name and to pray regularly in His name. Over time, the *Holy Spirit* continues to help the believer to develop a meaningful, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. ... "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when

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he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

John 16:7-14 (NIV)

Even as the *Holy Spirit* leads us to the *Son*, so it is the work of the *Son* to lead us to the *Father*. He does this first by reconciling us to *Father* God through His shed blood and His redemptive work on the cross.

That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them...

2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV)

...since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Hebrews 10:21-22 (NIV)

He also reveals the *Father* to us through the things He did.

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

John 14:9 (NIV)

The *Son* only did the *Father's* will.

... I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees the Father doing, because what-

ever the Father does, the Son also does.

John 5:19 (NIV)

Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.

Luke 22:42 (NIV)

Yes even Jesus, God Himself in human form, subjected Himself to the *Father's* will. Even as Christ found His destiny and purpose in *Father* God, so too will every Christian. No one will find his destiny or purpose in the *Son* or the *Holy Spirit*. Creation has sprung from the *Father*. We are created beings. Therefore, our destiny and purpose can only be found in our Creator, *Father* God. Sadly, many Christians content themselves to become intimate with the *Son* and the *Holy Spirit* but fail to advance to a meaningful, intimate relationship with *Father* God. This is why our churches are often weak and ineffective in changing the world in which we live. This is why our churches often lack vision.

Today's modern Evangelical/Charismatic/Pentecostal Church is lost in the *Son* and the *Spirit*. We have traveled down the road for a distance but have contended ourselves to relate to only two members of the holy Trinity.

God's purpose for mankind has not been altered by the advent of sin into the human equation. The *Son's* redemptive work and the *Spirit's* sanctifying and empowering work restore us to our original status with the *Father* before Adam's fall. Now we must discover our purpose. Purpose is not found in the *Son's* redemption. Nor is purpose found in the *Spirit's* sanctification. Purpose is found in the *Father's* creation.

Having been restored to right relationship

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with *Father* God through the redemptive work of the *Son* and being engaged in the process of sanctification by the work of the *Spirit*, we are ready to resume the *Father's* original purpose as revealed to pre-fallen Adam.

Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. . . .

Genesis 1:28 (NIV)

The *Son* echoed the *Father's* ideas when he commissioned His disciples.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. . . .

Matt 28:19-20 (NIV)

We cannot fully understand our mission and purpose in redemption until we begin to contemplate God's original purpose for us in creation. God's work does not end with the winning of a lost soul or the commencement

of a sanctifying process. God's will is for all of creation to be filled with His glory.

Every earmarked man of God should be in tune with the *Father's* purpose, looking beyond individual salvation and sanctification and yearning to participate in the process of enculturating the earth with God's glory.

All of history originates from and moves inexorably toward *Father* God. The *Father* sent the *Son* (John 3:16). The *Son* sent the *Spirit* (John 16:7). The *Spirit* leads us to the *Son*. The *Son* leads us to the *Father*. The earmarked man of God understands that the *Father* is both our origin and our destiny.

Why is the Church of our day moving toward the *Spirit* while all of history moves toward the *Father*? Are we moving in the wrong direction? If so, what might be the long-term consequences of our moving toward the *Spirit* and away from the *Father*?

The earmarked man of God relates to God as his *Father*. He sees what the *Father* is do-

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Every man of God should be

Rooted

in sound doctrine

DID YOU SAY DOCTRINE? “We don’t need doctrine, we just need a relationship with Jesus.”

Statements like the one above frequently echo across the sanctuaries and Fellowship Halls of our worship centers and Christian meeting places. Well-meaning believers of our generation—those who have come into a personal, saving relationship with Jesus Christ—often equate creeds and doctrines with lifeless forms and meaningless traditions.

The following story will help elucidate our need for sound doctrine.

William and Sarah are in their late forties. Raised as children in mainline denominational churches, each came into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in their late teens. Having left their denominations, they were both attending a young, non-denominational church when they met and married in the early 1970’s.

In their thirty years as Christians, William and Sarah have been a part of four different non-denominational churches and one denominational church. Their first non-denominational church experience lasted nearly fourteen years. As members of New Faith Community (NFC), William and Sarah developed deep and lasting relationships with many young people with similar backgrounds as theirs. NFC emphasized commitment to Christ, discipleship and long term vision, but above all, allegiance to church authority. As the years passed, William, Sarah

and many of their friends noticed a gradual tightening of the grip of leadership upon their lives. Finally, along with about half of their church friends, William and Sarah began to question church elders. The church became divided over the issue of the exercise of church authority and eventually split. NFC no longer exists.

Nearly all of William and Sarah’s friends banded together and began a new church called King of Creation Church (KOCC). Vowing to learn from the mistakes of their previous church experience, the believers earnestly set about to build a well-constructed church body with a long-term, biblically based mission. Because of his previous experience, the one thing that the young pastor of KOCC feared the most was abusing his authority and controlling his church members. A few months after KOCC began to meet, a new couple began to attend services. After a short while, the new couple began to exercise influence over church members and started to teach questionable doctrines. Still nervous about being on his own, the pastor expressed reluctance to confront this couple because he feared losing their large financial support. Today, KOCC has degenerated into a tiny cult-like group of three or four families. Though still a Christian, the pastor has left the ministry.

While their friends worked hard to launch King of Creation, William and Sarah moved to a nearby town called Springfield where they began attending Springfield Christian Fellowship (SCF). A church of nearly 200 members, SCF emphasized no particular biblical theme. In five years, SCF gradually declined from 200 to about 30-40 members. Today SCF’s 15-20 members still cling together. Their new pastor works a full-time job in addition to his pastoral duties.

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After a few years of little vision and direction from SCF's original pastor, William and Sarah departed SCF, deciding to go back to a denominational church. But after two years of attending a young denominational church that met in a school, they concluded that the worship services were too restrictive. They became discouraged.

William and Sarah are not church hoppers but they realized that they needed more out of church life. They decided to return to the world of non-denominationalism and began attending a large, well-known, outwardly successful church in their town. New Life in Christ Christian Fellowship (NLCCF) boasted a congregation of nearly 1000 members, five full-time pastors, a huge sanctuary, a vibrant worship team and praise band, Sunday School programs for the youngsters, a successful youth ministry, and many other programs. NLCCF also conducted special candlelight Christmas Eve services, observed the Advent and Lenten seasons, and in some ways reminded them of the security of their denominational church experience. William and Sarah had been meeting with their various churches for nearly twenty years in rented school buildings and community centers. After years of marginal success in church life, NLCCF at least offered security and rest.

But as the months passed, William and Sarah realized that despite its nice facility, the many programs and vibrant times of praise and worship, NLCCF offered little more than a common "feel good" experience on Sunday mornings. The church had no adult education opportunities and the leaders did not seem interested in pursuing a program of discipleship and teaching for their parishioners. But William and Sarah were tired. They decided to stick with NLCCF because it was close to home, be-

cause a number of their friends from previous churches had also landed there and because there was really no place else to go.

As seven more years passed, many of William and Sarah's long-time friends gradually departed NLCCF for other churches—most of them denominational ones. Then, two of the associate pastors left NLCCF to launch their own churches and the senior pastor retired, leaving one of the two associate pastors in charge. By this time, the church size had dwindled to around 400-500. Many of the "old-timers" had left and many new faces had emerged, young and inexperienced in their relationships with God. Efforts to see these young saints disciplined and trained in the Word were still being resisted by church leadership.

William and Sarah left NLCCF to become part of a new church in Springfield called Faith Community Church (FCC)—a recent addition to the non-denominational expression of the body of Christ in their town. Led by a passionate pastor trained in a biblically conservative denominational seminary, a man who earnestly worked toward achieving a balance between the Word and the Spirit, FCC offered William and Sarah fresh hope for their church-life experience. And, as Providence would have it, several of their old friends happened to be members there, too. FCC meets in a public school auditorium.

FCC's pastor recently explained to William that a number of his members have privately told him that FCC is their last hope for a successful church experience. Nothing like putting pressure on a man!

Sadly, William and Sarah's experience typifies so many of their generation. Many have left the non-denominational, charismatic

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world and opted for denominational churches. In the last few years, many of William and Sarah's passionate, Jesus loving, Spirit-baptized friends have become Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists. Why is this happening?

Could it be because the experience of Christ is, by itself, not quite enough? Let me explain:

At the beginning of this chapter I wrote, "Did you say doctrine? We don't need doctrine, we just need a relationship with Jesus."

Many churches are built primarily upon a corporate or collective experience of God. But only God has the right to define who He is. He cannot be adequately defined by our experience of Him. When we attempt to define God by our experience alone—to the exclusion of what His word and the historical creeds and confessions established long ago—we create an inferior church, a church prone to chaos and a diminished life span.

But wait a minute. Who is Jesus? Do you believe in the virgin birth? Would Christ be God without the virgin birth? Would Jesus be worth having a relationship with if He were not God incarnate? This is both historical fact and the meaning of the historical fact rolled into one—sound doctrine.

“Christ died—that is history; Christ died for our sins—that is doctrine. Without these two elements, joined in an absolutely indissoluble union, there is no Christianity.”

Christianity and Liberalism
by Gresham Machen, pp. 27

Machen also wrote, “The narration of the facts is history; the narration of the facts

with the meaning of the facts is doctrine.”

We live with a generation of saints who have scant appreciation for sound doctrine and little knowledge of their Christian heritage. Mean while, chaos and disorder often prevail in the non-denominational Christian community. Could there be a connection? What contribution might a healthy dose of sound biblical doctrine make to the Church as a whole in our day?

Here are the three, primary, historical creeds of the Christian church:

- Athanasian Creed
- Apostles Creed
- Nicene Creed

And here are the doctrinal statements of several major Protestant denominational church bodies.

And let us not forget the Catholic Catechism.

Anglican / Episcopal:	Book of Common Prayer, mid-1500's
Lutheran:	Augsburg Confession, 1580
Presbyterian / Reformed:	Westminster Confession, 1647
Baptist:	First London Confession of Faith, 1689
Methodist:	The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church, 1808

How can you spot an earmarked man of God? If you find one who loves and appreciates sound doctrine, they will most likely be a person who knows the futility of building a church without sound doctrine.