

## Chapter One

### His Ways

“O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” (Jeremiah 10:23)KJ

“Man’s goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?”(Proverbs 20:24)

The world at large has always maintained that they themselves were the captains of their own ships to the contradiction of the above two scriptures as well as a host of others that state in essence that a man’s life is like grass or a flower: it flourishes for a brief moment and then it is gone forever. How then can he know what lies ahead of him? (1 Peter 1:24; Ps 103:15; Isaiah 40:6)

No doubt we all in some measure have the strength and knowledge to meet life with certain gifts and abilities learned by our own experience, observing other life experiences and also by the study and instruction of books.

The person who lives life independent of any input from God is at a great and eternal disadvantage,missing out on the most important wisdom available. Though they have felt no desire or inclination to receive from such a vast resource, they simply push along in hope that no tragedy would befall them trusting that they have and will continue to make the correct choices each time they come to the fork in their road, optimistic

that luck, intuition and knowledge will be enough to steer their ships clear of the many hidden reefs lying just below the surface. You could say it's a wishful rolling of the dice lifestyle, a complete reliance on self, individuals who are not asking for too much of anyone, confident that they are equipped to make it through one more day drawing from their own human assets.

Each human being on this earth has his or her own brand of religion or spirituality that they choose to practice and live by. The atheist may scoff at such a statement believing himself an independent free thinker, educated in the sciences of this world and never willing to be influenced by the 'religious opiates' of the masses which in his opinion would cloud his clear sophisticated thinking. He is distinct from the mindless crowds which are in his estimation easy targets of control and manipulation. Nonetheless, entrenched and enshrined in each person is a God ordained built in understanding that there is an Almighty power that has designed this universe and placed us within it. The man of the world may deny it and argue against God's existence but residing deep within the core of all humans is a knowledge that there is a God. (Romans 1:18-23)

Man in his fallen state perceives the world and the universe around him with a darkened understanding. He goes about his affairs thinking that he is in full control of his life, at the top of the food chain and, through natural selection, has lucked out over all the other species to advance and exert his superior intellect in conquest of the planet. Fate, luck, karma, or chance are the gods of his making and selection. However, the man outside the habitation of Christ is a lost individual, a foolish man and in his estimation he sees no evidence of God anywhere. Although, in a more accurate sense he has no need or desire for God in his life for that would present an accountability factor that he is not willing to face let alone admit. So out of his religious nature, he has acquired his own array of gods, mythologies and fables to ease his mind of the obvious truth, choosing to live in a self-made valley of deception. In conclusion: a man or women filled with their own ways.

What about the Christian man or women? Have we been 'enlightened' in our walk with God to understand in light of scripture that we are not our own and that we have been purchased with the costly blood of Jesus Christ? Has the science and knowledge of this world dulled our ability to hear and respond to Jesus in a way that honors and exalts Him as our Lord and Savior? We may have stepped into the Kingdom of God but beyond that initial step have we failed to advance to a deeper and more intimate relationship with Jesus? Inwardly, we know that along this road we will be required to shed some baggage and deal with some internal and deeply personal areas that maybe sinful, dysfunctional and downright un-Christ like. To be able to draw near to the pure light of His Majesty and Beauty and enjoy the Presence of His Son we will have to pay a price; the 'Cross' of Christ will continue to confront our hearts and demand that we lay things aside if we are to continue in our pursuit.

In obedience, each disciple will experience the death of his or her own ways in exchange for God's ways. This is not an earned or merit issue; it will come right down to a willingness to lay all things on the altar for the sake of our love for God and in obedience to His will without any sense of religious duty or of compensation. It will be a simple exchange based on love.

Someone once said "we have as much of God as we want". Each believer in truth holds their hand on the throttle moving them closer to God or remaining idle and in place for years. Much has to be said in regards to why so many of us remain parked or stalled, as it were, unwilling or sidelined for whatever reason to press ahead to apprehend God.

The Christian life to be sure is no walk in the park as the saying goes. In my last book I focused on the Cross where Jesus says to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save His life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it." (Mathew 16:25, 25)

I have come to realize over the years that Christians fall into certain categories in their relationship with God. The following observations are just that, observations, though not scriptural in reference to any chapter or verse, they do however outline how people relate to God. I have broken down these categories into four basic groupings. The distinctions of these groups serve as an example and tend to reveal a pattern of believer mindsets and attitudes in their ongoing association with Jesus Christ.

First, let us start with the masses of people that followed Jesus; these were the people that never ventured in too close. They were content to follow from a distance, observe the many miracles, eat of the multiplication of the bread, listen to His teaching but were ultimately unwilling to enter into a closer relationship. Jesus admonished them because they sought after Him for the many signs and miracles. They were typical of a bystander: they ate of the loaves and fishes and had their bellies filled and then left before something could be required of them. Jesus was to them a provider, an inspiration, even a prophet; one who was able to take care of their natural needs, filling their stomachs and healing their bodies and at the same time exciting their emotions, touching their very souls with His words and compassionate acts. They were awed by Him: 'no one ever spoke like Him' or did such mighty deeds... (John 6:6, 26; John 2:11;)

There is certainly nothing wrong or strange about seeking after God to witness His awesome signs and miracles. Many unbelievers began the quest for God only after they had observed some great supernatural event in their lives or in the lives of someone they knew. Certainly signs and wonders are important; the Holy Spirit gives witness to the preaching of the Gospel by having these signs follow them that believe. It is a heavenly confirmation to the authenticity of the Gospel message. (Mark 16:17)

The preoccupation with signs in the North American Christian Church has certainly captured center stage. A sign in and of itself of where we have come to put the emphasis in regards to the whole counsel

of God's Word. Jesus told His followers that a perverse and adulterous generation seeks after signs. (Mathew 12:38) Was Jesus opposed to God's miraculous wonders? Of course not, He Himself demonstrated the will and love of the Father through them in touching our human condition countless times. Yet in our pursuit of God we should soon discover that our affections and focus should shift from the peripheral things of God to the 'main event' which is Jesus Himself. Jesus was aware that the multitudes and Pharisees sought signs and on many occasions rebuked them, for at the heart of their request was not a desire to draw closer, or to be taught, and certainly they did not want to be His disciple. Rather they craved the supernatural wonders of God and perhaps the resulting benefits.

Multitudes were able to come and go; free to simply walk away uncommitted in their hearts towards Jesus. Through their lack of response to the Son of God and the miracles He exhibited, their hearts, unknowingly, were simultaneously being hardened, no longer able to rightly appreciate nor discern that some resolution might be required of them as they stood spellbound gazing at the miraculous wonders. Failing to acknowledge that the God of truth was in their midst and pushing away the obvious light of conviction in turn sealed their hardened hearts with an imperceptible hidden judgement of spiritual blindness. Light was shut out. Hearts which for a moment began to melt sensing the drawing appeal of His love were once again hardened. What should have been obvious to all those bystanders in those initial encounters would have been enough to move the souls of masses to cry out for mercy. Those cries were now silenced. (John 3:19; Mathew 11:21)

The Children of Israel are another prime example of a people who witnessed the most miraculous works of God in recorded history yet remained hard and callous in their hearts; although they stood in the company of God's Glory and Majesty as first hand witnesses they never ventured too close to God, neither were willing to open their hearts. Their aversion to obey God turned into outright strife and finally rebellion, bringing the children of Israel - a favoured people of God - into

judgement.

Let us be mindful that God's wonders confront, in the soul of man, the eternal reality of a Grandeur and Splendor beyond the realms of reason or logic. Man is at once faced with a choice: accept and embrace the "Intelligent Designer", not as some impersonal force of the cosmos, but as a unique all-powerful benevolent "Presence" knocking on our door, as it were, in our reality zone and for our acknowledgement and acceptance. Any other choice that is filtered through our natural reasoning or worldly wisdom will eventually begin to solidify the heart, just as soft clay turns to rock in the hot sun. Whether the children of Israel, the people in Jesus' day or in ours, the wonders of God are teachable moments meant to crack the shells of hard hearts. Our continued rejecting of the obvious Presence and purpose of the miraculous will be our undoing thus rendering us hard and obstinate in regards to God's attempt to capture our attention and turn us around into His ways. (Romans 1:20; Ps. 19:1-6)

The Western Christian Church in its desire to attract the world to its message of salvation tries in vain to appease the hostility of the world by presenting the benefits of salvation while avoiding the heart of the message. This is a misplaced compassion that believes the world is not interested in the 'old rugged cross' anymore. It is deemed too offensive, so we, the church, throw the world a few 'pearls': a workshop or two on being successful, "possibility thinking" or programs on self-esteem. We expect them to appreciate these but then we are surprised when they, even after many years in the pew, have no desire for the Lordship of Jesus Christ or salvation for that matter. They are the mixed multitude that in time turns away or against the Church and tramples underfoot all that we have come to love and esteem.

**To remove the edge from the Gospel is to also remove the edge from the sword of God's Word where it will no longer cut "asunder to the division of soul and spirit", no longer able to bring conviction of sin and no longer able to deliver one from their sin. The cutting edge of the Gospel is the Cross. (Hebrews**

**4:12; 1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Cor. 2:2)**

Certainly signs and wonders have their place, the multiple power gifts of 1 Corinthians 12 were given primarily to the Church to build and edify the believers, and these manifestations were given and continue to be given to certain individuals as the Spirit wills for the edification of the whole body. Some teach that all believers are equipped with the complete range of the gifts of the Spirit, but this is certainly not scriptural. Should all believers pray? Yes, we are instructed to pray without ceasing for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) We underestimate prayer not so much in the words we speak but where we position ourselves in prayer. When our internal eyes shift from ourselves onto Jesus our hearts are more likely to hear from God in that place of rest. However, what was given to the Church by way of 'gifts' is precisely why God so ordained it so; that the gifts would benefit the church body as a whole in the building up of the saints and not the exaltation of certain individuals on their own personal campaigns. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 18, 25-27; James 5:14)

This is not to say that individuals with giftings cannot operate in them outside the four walls of the church building. Rather, in a more scriptural way, well known and lesser known ministries of the past and present are much more effective in reaching out to the multitudes when the Church has put in place people who can help serve in varying capacities able to return to follow-up likely seekers who may have shown interest or responded initially. This assures that they will be cared for by the 'Body of Christ' all working in conjunction with the Head which is a security measure scripturally sound in the submission of individuals and gifting to the Church at large.

The vast segments of lost humanity do not need the church's well thought out plans in trying to reach them for Christ. They may put up with our techniques and programs for personal benefits up until they are required to 'deny themselves' and carry their cross. Let us love the world as Jesus did and require of them that they not only accept Jesus into their

hearts but that they must also repent of their sins in order to be forgiven and to show forth a genuine willingness to learn His ways. Let us be honest here, something real and genuine in the heart of a 'new believer' will not only bear some initial fruit but a desire to learn and serve in the fellowship with other believers. This is an earmark of a real change inside.

**For the large crowds that follow Jesus at a distance it will take more than a sign or wonder to convince them of their need. For many of us who lived our lives in similar fashion it may have required some crisis leaving us incapable to control the outcome. Or maybe it was a moment when we came face to face with our true self, with all its selfishness, or perhaps our coldness, our distance and un-loveliness. We needed a Damascus road unveiling. Whatever it may have been, it prepared us to see the distinction of our true nature and the beauty and loveliness of God in Christ.**

The second group is the 'seventy'. This group was sent out and commissioned by Jesus Himself in what might have been the first mass evangelistic outreach. (Luke 10:1, 17) Jesus appointed seventy and sent them out in twos to every city in which He himself would come. They returned with joy saying "Lord even the devils are subject unto us through your name."

Being chosen and sent out by Jesus Himself undoubtedly was a wonderful privilege and honor. They went out as directed and returned with a glowing report all to the praise and glory of God. We never find out their names, which is just as well, and we never really read or hear of them again. We would hope that they all remained devoted to Jesus and to the faith; that they would also not be satisfied with preaching and casting out devils but that their inner thirst for more of God had been awakened to propel them further and deeper in their newfound relationship with Christ. We hope that they were not satisfied with merely doing a few wonderful acts, even miraculous ones.

I would venture to say that, more than likely, they found



themselves to be disciples who became offended with Jesus as He invited His people to come and eat of His body and drink of His blood. (John 6:54-66) Jesus spoke of a deeper bond, one He would share with those whom the Father had drawn to Him. Jesus did not hesitate to speak of eating His body and of drinking His blood for fear that He would lose followers. He was calling them to something more than they had ever heard and they found His sayings hard to understand, even as we do today. There is an aspect of this 'Holy Alliance' with Christ that calls us out beyond our spheres of understanding at times. In our natural minds often His words seem too hard, too difficult to understand let alone obey. It is vitally important to disciples at this juncture not to walk away; we all come to the place where God must tests our commitments and trust by introducing 'adverse winds' and place upon us difficult demands and sayings to see if we will continue with Him with a willingness to trust Him.

At another juncture in John 8:31 Jesus says to His disciples that "if you abide in My word then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

You get the impression as Jesus makes these difficult statements that He is actually probing their hearts - not for His sake; He already knows what is there but He is trying to reveal to them 'the things' they are still trusting in: not in the Son of God standing right in front of them but in a religious system, or their patriarchs, which neither of them, the religion, its laws nor the patriarchs can do, which is deliver them from bondage of laws and set them free in regards to sin. These disciples were those who had come to believe in Him but were not able to accept His word over the traditional teaching and dogma they had been taught since childhood. (Mark 7:8-13; John 8:53)

Although Jesus did great signs and commissioned the 'seventy' to go out and do the same, these seventy represent the believer who continues to reject Jesus and His teaching claiming that His sayings are either too hard to understand or, more accurately, too difficult to

implement. It was too difficult to lay aside their preconceived ideas and doctrines in order to embrace a faith that called them to a more personal encounter - to abandon all for Him. This believer is being called to draw closer, leave behind all the religious history, with its inability to save or change anyone and to plunge themselves into Christ, no longer willing to dismiss Him based on the hard sayings that demand an honest soul searching answer.

**The sad conclusion to the ‘seventy’ type of disciples is that they are much more caught up with right doctrine as opposed to right living: Jesus is way too radical to take everything He says seriously. So in the final analysis we find this group before Jesus on judgement day confident that what they have done for Him would be the key to entering His Kingdom. “...Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” After all, who wouldn’t want people in their church who could minister in such signs and miracles? (Mathew7:22, 23)NASB “And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”**

This declaration seems harsh and callous until you read on and understand the greater context of why Jesus said this to people who have served Him successfully and are expecting a reward but instead receive a shocking judgement. The next few verses deal specifically with the crucial difference between hearing and doing His word. Jesus places the greatest emphasis on relationship and obedience to His word, in fact so much so that it would appear that these believers did the work and did a good job in their view but in the process failed to spend any time with Him in communion and turned a deaf ear to anything else Jesus was saying beyond doing their good deeds however miraculous.

“I never knew you...” Relationship, relationship, relationship - this is where God places true worth. It is not enough to be gifted and anointed to do the work of the ministry or whatever other tasks have

been assigned to us even by God Himself. God wants children that desire Him in return - a love relationship that is more than just duty or service. He wants children that will seek Him in the good times and bad, a people whose heart is stirred with passion for Him alone, not our outward lip service or dressing up in a weekly religious uniform. There has to be more of 'us' that gets placed on the scales; the weight of our works and ministry alone will fail to tip the balance if relationship is not the prime factor. Service is commendable but personal devotion to Christ is the currency of Heaven.

Thirdly, we come down to the twelve who were all personally called by Jesus to follow Him. Handpicked, they were on a friendship level more casual and personal than all the others mentioned so far. Each disciple knew beyond a doubt that this man was no everyday self-appointed prophet. They were a privileged few called with a holy call who found themselves shoulder to shoulder with their Messiah. (2 Timothy 1:9) These were not special men relative to other human beings, rather it was God's call to them to abandon all and follow Him that was unique. Everyday kind of men, raw and rough at the edges, who carried their own grandiose plans, which amounted to little in light of what was being taught to them out in the fields and cities of Israel.

As people we struggle with why God calls certain people to do great tasks and in the process receive a whole lot of attention and praise. In our hearts we may find subtle murmuring and envy bubbling up; maybe inside we believe we could have done a better job. After all, we are much more trained and prepared for this work; why would God pick such losers. One does not need to read the New Testament long before we begin to see ourselves in any of the twelve in one way or the other. They were, in my opinion, picked because they represented the vast cross section of a lost and dysfunctional humanity - characteristics that continue to reflect us all.

The Twelve were, in essence, the guinea pigs of Christ's particular brand of 'spur of the moment object lessons,' which most of the time left

them baffled. You could call it a 'da-ah' kind of moment - eyes staring out in space, mouths ajar and hands scratching heads. Once alone with Him, these twelve were also privy to the information. He explained it to them again until the lights went on upstairs. There was nothing grand or superior with these twelve. They were granted privileged access, an 'in' to see and hear spiritual insight from the Son of God that others were not. History shows that each of the twelve underwent extreme persecution. Eleven of them were martyred and John, though not martyred, suffered in exile in a work camp into his old age on the Isle of Patmos.

These would be the core, the foundation of the New Testament Church; leaders who in a few short years would be themselves at odds with the political and religious powers of the day. Weak men, impetuous, hot headed, hasty, egotistical, prideful, and pre-disposed to doing things their way: they were the future handpicked powerhouse of God. We look at them and question whether Jesus was hearing right as He assembled this motley crew.

Maybe most of us have come to learn this lesson after getting an honest firsthand look into our hearts and the obvious tangible fruit of our words and deeds. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:27,28 says it best and I'll paraphrase it this way, 'God has chosen the foolish things, the morons and the blockheads of this world to shame the wise; He also chose the weak, impotent and sick things to shame and disgrace the strong and mighty and the base, unknown, despised, contemptible, least esteemed and things that are not even recognized as holding any significance in order to abolish and bring down things that are established, significant and highly esteemed in this world.'

You could say God is not interested in our resume or our own glowing appraisal of us! In fact before we can become effective instruments in His hands, God will have worked within us to bring us down a few notches in our high estimation of ourselves so that we don't go bolting off in every direction under our own steam and wisdom led on by another half-baked idea bungling more of His plans. In time the mature man or

women of God will have come to a place of understanding and reflection and in an honest appraisal will be able to admit that their efforts and skill amount to nothing more than an exaltation of the person who's interest lie mostly with his or her own success.' All that I am and can hope to be or accomplish has no bearing or origin with anything in me, my part is simply coming to the place of agreement with God, receive His enabling power and wisdom to proceed in His ways.

**One act of obedience to God on our part will accomplish more than a lifetime of our own self efforts. "To obey is better than sacrifice" was the word God spoke to King Saul. The King thought what was most important in his view would also hold the same weight in God's. He was mistaken. In God's Kingdom obedience is right up at the top. It is never about what we can do for God; in reality we cannot do anything of value without Him, so it comes down to waiting on Him to direct us and, in the undertaking of His command, receive the spiritual 'equipping' needed to carry out the task.**

The twelve became part of an inner circle - an open door and a golden opportunity for each one to draw closer to Jesus. In this close proximity to the Son of God you would think that they would have recognized the 'moment' they had with Him to glean all that they could in regards to who He was, His life and purpose, but it was not the case. Here and there they seemed to catch a glimpse of who He really was but for the most part missed precious opportunities. On the whole they were satisfied with just hanging out and being part of the Jesus team. What they heard was filtered through a set of beliefs and values anchored in a religious system which bred a hope for a Messiah that would lead a mighty company of 'patriots' in throwing off Roman rule and occupation out of their lands and restoring Israel back to the time of David and Solomon - the glory days of Israel.

Though they all loved Jesus and listened to His teaching each one had yet to come to a place where their spiritual eyes would be opened to

see the true purpose of their calling and commissioning in the birth of the New Testament Church. It would take a cataclysmic event to usher them to a place that was beyond their natural abilities to understand and cope with what God was in the process of doing. (Some things never change.)

Nothing would make sense to them until after the crucifixion; only then would the words Jesus had spoken to them begin to open their eyes and hearts bringing with it a conviction to surrender their own personal visions and agendas they harboured, which would then allow God to take these weak, foolish and base men and use them to turn the powers and wisdom of this world upside down.

“Thou art the Christ the son of the living God” - One of those wonderful moments where Jesus must have smiled from ear to ear after Peter spoke that out in their hearing. (Mathew 16:16) Again in John chapter 8, Jesus sums up His invitation to His disciples to come and eat of His body and drink of His blood - a summons to enter into a deeper communion with Him. At this saying His disciples turned around and left Him, “Jesus therefore said to the twelve, you do not want to go away also, do you?” Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.”

Good ole Peter, you were paying attention after all, though you are strong willed, impetuous, reckless and at times thoughtless, you still managed to ‘hear’ the ringing testimony of God’s Holy Spirit concerning Jesus.

If we are thinking that there is some great attribute that ties these men together and sets them apart to become a group of privileged, supernatural men living within an arm’s length of the Son of God then I believe we would be mistaken. Personally, I believe God chose some of the lowest and most difficult cases of humanity to further drive home the point that it is never about human strength, wisdom or virtue. One of the great beauties of the New Testament is that God is no respecter of persons; God set aside twelve men with a laundry list of deficiencies

a mile long to lay the foundation of His ways deep into their hearts. The life lessons Jesus taught them allowed these so called ‘mighty apostles’ to fully comprehend how weak human flesh really was, especially in light of the closing moments of Jesus’ earthly life. It was a candid view of how much they were going to have to depend on the Lord and the Holy Spirit in the dawning years of the early Church, and until His return.

Finally we arrive at the Three - Peter James and John. For whatever reasons we see these three being selected to accompany Jesus to places like the Mount of Transfiguration or to the Garden of Gethsemane. We could spend time speculating why these three were set apart from the others, but it might all be conjecture on our part except to say Jesus wanted them with Him and perhaps they wanted ‘all there was’ of Him.

Let us set the individual characters aside for a moment and take a look rather at these three men. With any privilege comes responsibility; we may not read in the text that these men were to carry extra burdens of responsibility but the fact remains that God always has purpose beyond the obvious when it comes to revelation given to men and women. Every God ‘disclosure’ received in ‘the secret place’ brings added insight, wonder and awe of God’s glory and majesty. But it also, as Paul states in 2 Corinthians 12:7-9, places the man or women precariously close to self-exaltation which can only be tempered with some sort of thorn in the flesh to keep one from boasting and also from further forms of pride, smugness and conceit. When God gives secrets to people they are meant to yield more than just goose bumps or bragging rights.

Our love for God is deepened and made so much stronger as we spend time alone with Him. Thankfully His relentless and unyielding drawing of our hearts produces in time the ability to see and hear Him in a more transparent and unobstructed way. An example we read about was the Mount of Transfiguration where the ‘three’ witnessed the Glory cloud of the Father and heard His audible voice - no trivial experience. Here they had an insider view of the majesty and glory of Jesus which I am sure helped them immensely to realize the divinity of their Master.

Another time they are asked by Jesus to come aside into the Garden and there in that moment of anguish Jesus told them that “His soul is deeply grieved to the point of death, remain here and keep watch with Me.” (Mathew26:38)

Here is a snap shot of a personal moment where the Son of God turns to His close friends and asks them to be vigilant, to stay awake and support Him in His dark hour of testing. Though they felt confident of the task they were soon asleep, their senses dulled by the spiritual war now in process all around them. The fact that we are ‘up to the task’ or that we are abysmal failures in those trying moments is not the main point. The truth that I treasure here is the fact that God is willing to open those moments to us at all. This is significant beyond description. That God is faithful and deals with us in love in times when our self-control or obedience falls short or has lacked altogether, that His commitment and His abiding Presence in our lives continues is proof enough that His will and His ways shall be accomplished through our enfeebled flesh by His own sovereign means as we labor, and at times simply rest in union with Him.

**These seasons are reserved for those of us, like Peter James and John, who despite our vain and selfish attempts to be somebody of substance are set aside by God’s grace and at times moved through an open door into the very chambers of the Most High. Sacred Places, Holy Ground places, even though for a moment we see or experience through a “glass dimly”, that one instant of His divine countenance, His gentle touch or the brief sound of His voice will echo through our being into all eternity.**

This, dear saint of God, is not about religious duty or obligation or even commands; this is about His ways. We may have at our disposal volumes of information about God and His word, but the crowning moment that makes it all worthwhile is that one short lived moment here and there where our soul and spirit is overshadowed by the Most High. Oh how I wish it were more often, but when I am able to peer through



all the haze and spiritual fog to sense the splendor of His Presence those rare moments far outweigh any sacrifice or burdens I have been asked to shoulder.

The three represent those disciples who desired more of Jesus. They tended to be individuals who pushed beyond the limits of the status quo where others had settled. Take Peter for instance, who bids the Lord to invite him out of the boat to walk unto the raging seas to meet Him. The same Peter in an attempt to defend Jesus in the Garden takes his sword in hand to slay anyone who threatens the life of His Master. John, whom you find sitting next to Jesus at the Last Supper, was quite comfortable leaning up against Him. John was never too far from his Lord; we find him next to Jesus in many crucial moments throughout His ministry. We also find John at the foot of the cross when all the other disciples had forsaken Jesus and John was a disciple to whom Jesus could entrust His mother's care. James and John, the "sons of thunder", zealous and passionate rough-n-tough fisherman; these were the same two who wanted to call fire down on a city to educate the citizenry a lesson over rejecting Jesus. This snub irked them to the point that they sought immediate judgment on the town folk. It was also James and John who boldly told Jesus that they were able to drink of the same cup that He would and with the same zest and gusto wanted to sit on thrones next to Jesus in the age to come, (even though it was their mother who made the request) this desire for pre-eminence struck a common note in all the disciples based on their ongoing discussion of who was the greatest among them.

These are not your regular go to church on Sunday disciples. They wanted all there was of Jesus and His Kingdom and though they were biting off more than they could chew at times they depict believers whose thirst and hunger for God is never abated or satisfied, ever pressing in closer with the one desire of capturing, however brief, one more glorious moment alone with Him.

Let us not fall in love with our worship services or our Bible

studies or even our prayer sessions. These are all but pointers similar to a teacher's pointer in the classroom. No one stares at the pointer as the focus of the lesson but rather the lesson itself. It is Jesus we seek!

“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.” (Psalm 103:7)

This single verse speaks volumes of the distinct methods God employs in His dealings with individuals. Religion for the most part has taken the spiritual and reduced it down to doctrines, creeds, methods and ceremonies mysterious at times but, in a nutshell, an outward form of devotion to God that largely is unable to transport anyone into the true company of God. If you think about it for a moment you can see that a person can go through all the motions of ceremonial protocol, reciting certain prayers and be quite sincere yet even after years of religious life remains unchanged and spiritually dead towards God. Their hearts never engaged or desired God in any deep or personal way; their “spirituality” was nothing more than outward piety, a legalistic form of religious life on the unproductive treadmill of ‘good works’. But even after decades one is never quite confident that their many efforts will compensate for their sinful side on the scales of God’s justice. Tormented on one hand yet strangely hopeful that their religious repertoire will somehow pay high dividends down the road, many find themselves in that same place decades later. Today, we are well aware that the God of love we have looked to and placed our trust must also, in His love, dispense His justice

God’s ways and methods are revealed to us by way of the counsel and instructions that a Father shares with His children, teaching and admonishing them to obey Him and receive the blessings through the life lessons and many valued Biblical stories written for our instruction. These are the intimate revelations of a God who is not only willing to impart His life but also His wisdom, counsel and His personal affirmation to His children.

“He made known His ways to Moses”. Moses did not dream up

the whole Exodus enterprise; this plan did not originate in Moses but he certainly understood what would happen as God spoke to him of His plans to deliver Israel out of Egypt's grasp. What Moses attempted to do was to take God's plans and carry them out in his own strength and intellect. He killed an Egyptian that was mistreating a Hebrew slave: he saw the injustice and the cruelty that they suffered. Moses' methods forced him to flee from Pharaoh to save his own life. Little did he know that he was running into the wilderness to discover God waiting for him to reveal His ways to Moses, the mighty prince of Egypt.

Moses spends the next forty years in the wilderness tending sheep all in the divine will and purposes of God. In this wilderness, God begins by revealing who He is. God must always initiate the encounter. Only that which is conceived in His heart will yield eternal fruit. We so often 'wait' for God with tinges of irritation and annoyance; we may not admit it but by our own actions we reveal an anxiety to run ahead and start without Him. We are more comfortable with our task mentality: grab the directions or gift and run, but to our loss. We miss a cherished moment to delight in God's Majesty who is waiting to bless us with more than just a gift or set of instructions.

**God's ways are rooted in the training and development of sons and daughters who in their maturity come to realize the importance of every divine moment with God. We should no longer be satisfied with serving in some outer court, performing mindless duties and routines while others return from their superb encounter with God reflecting the light of His Presence; this is our inheritance, ours by invitation, and ours for the taking!**

In our love and devotion we must be able to point to more than just certain duties we perform or creeds we recite or doctrines we have venerated. Outward proofs, grandiose ideas, the many beneficial projects done for others in need cannot, hopefully, be the only evidence of our devotion to Jesus Christ.

This is what God's ways are all about - a habitation of fellowship, the secret places of the Most High, (Ps.27:4,5; Ps.91) the invitation of God Almighty calling to us to learn of Him to observe Him and take note of His character and attributes. Moses was invited up the mountain on a regular basis to not only receive more instructions but was able to speak with God face to face. We men seem to get uncomfortable with the relationship aspect of spirituality as well as in most other human encounters. We struggle with sincerity and transparency. But we will have to allow ourselves to take a risk and become vulnerable if we want to get beyond serving in the 'outer courts'. To have more of God we men will have to get alone on a regular basis with Him and begin to reveal our humanity, including our many weaknesses and shortcomings. Yet in the process of becoming weak and exposed we will begin to sense the tangible presence of God Himself drawing near to confirm His delight in our endeavour to reach out to know Him.

**'His ways' speaks not so much of a literal road or path but more of a course of life or mode of action. Knowing God's ways is essentially knowing how God thinks about a certain issue, how He deals with those issues, His will and purpose, what pleases or what disappoints Him and being in tune in the ongoing commissioning of His will and purpose. (Ex. 33:13)**

Our human nature in its 'unbroken' state lives a so-called Christian life in the absence of an indwelling Christ; an outward cloak that masks an internal bankrupt heart while pretending that all is well with our soul is a tragic substitute. To our spiritual detriment and alienation from God's spirit, we keep trying to polish the outward man, observing the rules and performing great tasks, even sharing the Gospel. (1Cor. 9:27)

We may see within ourselves limited growth and maturity, little fruit and little desire to abide in the inner courts with God. Large segments of the Christian Church are trying to keep the "self-man" alive, we have been taught over the years to sidestep our 'crosses', to rebuke

trials and adversity as being from the devil, to dream big and become all you desire to be. And yet Jesus came and made Himself of no reputation and He calls us to join Him on this same road. We have devised a religion of self-esteem and a magnified self-worth out of fear that we do not love ourselves enough when in truth we love ourselves too much and the proof of this is our constant search and yearnings to please and satisfy our personal desires over others. All talk and teaching of denying self and embracing the cross in the form of suffering and adversity is for the most part shunned and excluded from most contemporary Christian churches. This whole teaching of the cross is dismissed as outdated and even taught to be distasteful to the lost and now sadly to the church.

The church in North America has made a detour down the avenue of success and prosperity. We have a Gospel whose fruit is clearly discernible in view of our diminished reflection of Christ, His character and, yes, His power. The church which has opened the door to every new “wind of doctrine” has closed it for the most part to the cross.

In stark contrast to the nature of Jesus, the modern day Church would have seen the Mount of Transfiguration in a light altogether different than what God had ordained it for; Jesus alone. Today’s disciples would have seen a grand opportunity here. First, we would have had at least three books coming off the press describing every detail of their personal experience with Moses and Elijah on the mountain top as they bathed in the Glory light of God. Then the biggest revival meetings of their times would have been set up right there on that mountain top, where the light shone, and the voice was heard. Sadly misguided they would try once again to re create another ‘Transfiguration moment’ believing if God did it once this way He will do it again. You can be sure that every Christian celebrity would be attending even setting up their own tents to draw at least some of the crowds to their own meetings. All trying to reproduce the event, trying to duplicate and manufacture a divine moment which was never meant to be duplicated and especially with our own self serving motives, this scenario dear saint reflect our ways.

The Church, in its insatiable quest for gifts and power at the expense of His Presence, has been left with little of either. We have propped up our own corpses when they should have remained on the cross and then transported to the grave to await Holy Ghost life. We have settled for far less; we bought the lie to get more and so we ate the fruit and, like Eve and Adam, we are naked, blind and in need of gold and eye salve to correct our present veiled condition. (Rev.3:18)

“I must decrease and He must increase”. How can we fail to see that we cannot be Christ-like when we are still so full of ourselves? We have not chosen to truly die to ourselves and be diminished so that Christ may take pre-eminence when we refuse to embrace our undoing. When we cannot take ourselves in hand to deal with our flesh in uncompromising ways, it reveals how much we love ourselves in spite of our grand claims of love for God. (John 3:30; John 14:21)

The crucified man is helpless as long as he or she remains on the cross; the hands and feet are securely nailed in place with no hope of release. No amount of effort on our part can bring release; this is a true picture of a disciple who allows themselves to not only embrace their God given crosses but awaits the expiration of their natural “self-life” for something gloriously more beautiful. We cannot want death to self until we see what living for self is like in the light of Christ. With every glimpse and hint of our carnal man and its ‘fruit’, we will suffer, in our spirit, an abhorrence as we witness our own deviant behavior bent on guaranteeing our own place as number one, in no way wanting to lack anything as we strive to outdo and outshine others to procure what God has already promised He would supply for us. (Philippians 4:19)

**This cry will only surface when our longing for God and for our transformation far outweighs our yearnings to please ourselves and satisfy our fleshly appetites. We must chose His ways and deny our ways. Every plan of the church which allows the self-man to live unbroken at the foot of the cross does so in contradiction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ no matter how well**

**thought-out that plan is. (Phil. 3:8-10)**

God's ways lead to the cross and we cannot bypass this road and expect to live abundantly or experience overflowing joy and peace of heart and mind. Whether we find ourselves as disciples following at a distance - faces in the mass that followed Jesus, of the seventy, or of the twelve and even the three most close to Jesus, each step we take towards Christ will bring us closer to the cross of conformity to Jesus. We will witness from our comfort zone the cost of discipleship; we will hear Jesus bid us to take up our own cross, deny ourselves, die to self-preservation and self-serving to follow and obey Him. There can be no life until there is a death, no death without a cross and no resurrection life without a grave.

Our Christianity can have little credibility in heaven or on earth until the cross has been allowed to work a certain measure of death within the disciple. "He who seeks to save his life shall lose it, he who loses his life for My sake shall find it." (Mathew 16:25) To follow at a distance is easy - nothing lost but nothing gained. However to come up close to touch Jesus will require that we relinquish what we have come to value most in this world, our lives.

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." (Galatians 6:14) KJ