

Pastors' Conference

Not for release until Monday, June 8, 11:15 p.m.

“The Road Less Traveled”

By Larry Thompson

Larry L. Thompson has been pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama, since September 1991. The prior four years he was pastor of First Baptist Church, Merritt Island, Florida. Thompson previously served churches in the Midwest and Southwest. He holds an honorary doctorate in letters from the California Graduate School of Theology. His formal education was in theater and theology. Thompson was chairman of the 1992 Watchmen National Prayer Alert, which involved churches weekly in intercessory prayer on the “Watchman’s Wall.” Thompson and his wife Cynthia have been married for 20 years and have two teenage daughters, Taylor and Jennifer.

You hardly would have recognized the game of football in 1905. In those days, leather-helmeted players slowly worked their way down the field, running and kicking the ball hoping for a few points over the course of a game. Offenses featured formations such as the “flying wedge,” a play in which seven players joined together and forcefully ran into the middle of the defense, hoping to gain three, maybe four yards at a time. It was a bruising bullying boring game.

In 1906, the forward pass was allowed for the first time. Quarterbacks could suddenly move the ball 40 or 50 yards with a strategic throw forward. Strangely enough, though, almost every team chose to bypass the forward pass that first year, staying with the traditional tried and true ground game. Almost everybody. The coaches at St. Louis University immediately saw the value of this option and developed a new offense centered around the forward pass. The team’s opponents were left running into crowds with their more comfortable but less productive offenses, while St. Louis University outscored its opponents, 402-11, that season.¹

As the twenty-first century approaches at an incredible pace, so too approach the challenges that confront those of us

in the Kingdom of God. The rules, the principles found in the Word of God, are the same. But our game of church growth is changing exponentially. The tragic truth is that the world is throwing passes over our head while we are running the same game plan we had fifty years ago!

It hasn’t always been this way. The apostle Paul was certainly one who could watch his world and adapt to the changes taking place. While Paul never changed the message, he often changed his methods to meet the needs of his contemporaries. Listen to Paul explain his philosophy in ministry:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law, I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel that I may share in its blessings. (I Corinthians 9:20-24)

As we consider the work of the church in the twenty-first century, it would do us well to realize again that no church or organization ever rises above the level of its leaders. If we are going to make a difference in this decade and into the next century, then many of us are going to have to be willing to take the road less traveled. By looking at four different Biblical leaders, we will see more clearly the challenges that await us on the road ahead.

Do you remember the words of Robert Frost? “I shall be telling this with a sigh; Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, *And that has made all the difference!*”³ To make the difference that God has called us to make, then we must make a deliberate decision to choose the road less traveled.

I. On the road less traveled, you find leaders who take risks, not chances!

Let me draw a distinction between the often-confused concepts of risk and a chance: A risk is based on carefully

calculated knowledge, while a chance is based on ignorance.

Let's consider one of the great risk-takers of the Old Testament, David. Look at the risk involved in his encounter with Goliath.

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you." (I Samuel 17:32-37)

David was a classic leader who knew the value of taking risks, not chances! The risk-taker in contemporary ministry bases his leadership on three principles: 1) Prayer 2) Preparation 3) Perspiration.

Many ministry leaders have lost the vision for taking a risk. We tend to play it safe. After all, it is much easier to assume the posture of David's older brother and sit in the background and be critical of the risk-takers. Criticism has always been a tool of the devil to attempt to destroy the spirit of a genuine risk-taker. I'm thankful that criticism did not deter John Bisagno and the innovative methods he used to reach his city through crusade evangelism...Or Bill Hybels in the progressive approach he used to reach the unchurched...Or the Integrity music company that began as a small operation on the outskirts of Mobile with a dream to bring freedom and power in worship to mainline denominations...Or Dr. Adrian Rogers and others like him who 15 years ago saw Southern Baptists going the way of other mainline religious organizations that drifted into a sea of liberalism, and took a risk to take back this great denomination for the honor and glory of the Lord.

David did not see a giant problem; he saw a giant opportunity. We must remember that Jesus never performed any miracle in which He did not have a problem as the platform for the miracle—the feeding of the 5,000, the healing of the sick, the blind, the lame and the dead.

Every risk-taker will carefully evaluate the situation, then calculate the proper response and take the appropriate risk. David told the King that he was not taking a chance, but he had carefully prepared for this opportunity for many years. He had already fought the bears and the lions. What is a giant compared to those enemies?

As a leader, David spent time alone with God in prayer. He knew his weapons, had used them skillfully in the past, and was well-prepared for the task. Finally, he was willing to take the risk and act on carefully calculated knowledge, exerting the perspiration necessary to accomplish the task. David was blessed in his quest because of a well-considered risk wisely grounded in prayer, preparation and perspiration.

Once when Billy Sunday was preaching in a dead country church, the spirit of the Lord took control and people began to respond. First, there was an occasional "Amen," then "Praise the Lord!," and finally one young woman in the balcony stood to her feet and shouted, "Glory to God!" She got so excited that she lost her balance and fell over the edge of the railing. The man behind her reached out to rescue her but could only get hold of her dress. As she was going over the edge, her dress came off and she was left hanging over the railing only in her undergarments. Billy Sunday, realizing what had happened, warned the congregation, "If anyone turns to look at that half-naked lady hanging from the balcony, may you go blind!" One old farmer turned to his wife and said with one eye closed, "Maw, I think this is worth risking one eye!"

The road less traveled in this Church of the twenty-first century will be the one where Godly men are willing to take risks, not chances, in building the kingdom of God. If we look at the great churches in our denomination today—small and large—the ones that are reaching people and impacting their cities are the ones led by leaders who know how to take a risk. The truth of the matter is that the biggest risk you take is to take no risk at all.

II. The road less traveled requires us to be leaders, not just managers.

What is the difference between a leader and a manager? Managers do things right, but leaders will commit to doing the right things!

Some time ago, I had gotten so involved with the management of ministry that I began to bog down in the details and lose the joy of my call. I was a good manager of ministry, doing things right, but a poor leader in not always doing the right thing. One night, I was bemoaning the fact that I had already put in a full day and still had to go and teach our evangelism equipping study. My wife listened to me describe the work and said, "You know the problem with you? You need to quit just teaching people how to lead others to Christ and go do it yourself." It's wonderful to be married to the Holy Spirit! She was right. That night, I led a baseball scout for the Seattle Mariners to the Lord. There was a difference between doing things right and doing the right thing!

A Sixth Century B.C. yuppie named Daniel is the classic character study for this principle. For the first introduction to this young man of God, we see that while the world made him

a manager, God made him a leader. His commitment was not just to do things right, but to do the right thing!

“But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king’s choice food or with the wine which he drank...”(*Daniel 1:8*)

Daniel knew that Satan is always trying to dislodge those men who stand strong in God. In his book, *Transforming Leadership*, Leighton Ford explains that God wants to build leaders, but Satan develops miss-leaders!

The tool the Deceiver chooses is as old as the temptation in the wilderness. Satan appeals to the leaders in the Kingdom to seek “self-gratification” (by turning stones into bread), “self-glorification” (by doing something sensational so all the world will notice you) and finally, “self-preservation” (by doing whatever it takes to look after “me-first”). To get the job done, managers might try to turn stone into bread or call in an extra work force of a few thousand angels. But leaders will make sure they do the right thing, even if it means enduring the wilderness.⁶

The distinct difference between managers and leaders has never been more essential or evident. Look at the leadership in our own nation over the past cycle of four generations of leaders:

The first generation of leaders emerged after the Second World War. These people are now in their sixties and seventies, but they were considered the movers and shakers in the forties and fifties. They were visionary men and women with big dreams, and courageous and forceful leadership.

The second generation, those now in their fifties, were born during the Great Depression and grew up during the conservative years after World War II. History shows that the first generation did not give them the opportunity to take leadership, so they tended to be managers of the first generation’s dreams. Since the older generation viewed this generation as competition, they were not taught to be innovative visionaries.

There’s also a third generation, those who were born in the late forties and fifties. They are now in their thirties and forties and they are the first truly post-modern generation. They want to lead, they are tired of waiting and they are willing to take risks. They have grown up in the television age and have more of a commitment to people rather than products.

There is a fourth generation: those now in their twenties and early thirties. Many are still in college and many others have just joined us in our ministry endeavor. The jury is still out on this generation. Will history repeat itself? Will the third generation view them as competitors instead of comrades? Will they be overlooked, or will we make a commitment to

make them more than managers who do things right, but leaders who do the right thing?

We face few greater dangers in ministry and in our denomination. Don’t cast such a giant shadow that those under you have no opportunity for growth. Rather, allow those who will follow you to stand upon your shoulders for a better view of the future.

When we encounter Daniel again in the sixth chapter, he is associated with two other managers. Daniel’s distinctive response offers two lessons in leadership. The first lesson: During times of adversity, your spiritual stability will be evident. The only thing more difficult than adversity is prosperity, and that’s where we learn the second lesson: During times of prosperity, our spiritual integrity will be evident. In other words, can you be trusted with the position that has been granted to you?

As a boy, I used to think in Sunday school, “What did Daniel do that was so terribly bad that they threw him in the Lion’s Den?” Of course, his only crime was a commitment to do the right thing.

Verse four tells us “they tried to find grounds to accuse him in relationship to the government but could not.” He was so clean that even the National Enquirer could not find any dirt on this man of God. He was doing the right thing. Although Daniel knew what Nebuchadnezzar had commanded, verse ten says “he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day praying and giving thanks before his God as he had done previously”!

Patrick Morley says that integrity is what you are when no one is looking. We are suffering from an integrity crisis in ministry today, and we will never make an impact on the world in the twenty-first century until we allow the Lord to make an impact on our lives today.⁷ My father in the ministry said, “Live your life so that no one knows that you are a pastor, but they wouldn’t be surprised if they found out!”

III. To walk the road less traveled, leaders must recognize signs of our contemporary times, not conventional charts of wisdom.

Conventional wisdom is committed to programs, but cultural wisdom is committed to people.

When asked about his winning technique, the Alabama state bass champion said he strayed from the common strategy of copying his colleague’s casting techniques. Instead, he said, “I watched the fish while the others watched the fishermen!” There comes a point when we as leaders need to not ask what the other fishermen are doing, but we need to watch what the fish are doing!

Again, I remind you of the Apostle Paul and our key text.

Paul carefully cast his gaze upon the world in which he lived, then made appropriate adjustments to reach his world. If anyone would have had the opportunity to stay bound within the tradition of his conventional wisdom, it would have been this well-educated Jew from the tribe of Benjamin. However, he resisted tradition that he might make his ministry relevant and meet the needs of the society in which he lived.

In Paul's effort to be contemporary and not just conventional, two qualities are clear. First, he offended others only when necessary to further the gospel of Jesus Christ. Second, he was unafraid to pursue people through unconventional methods.

If you recall, Paul was winning the Gentile world when he received a fax from Peter, "You are offending your brothers in Jerusalem. Your methods are not acceptable. We have never done it that way before. Your Brother in Christ, Peter."

Church growth research indicates that seventy-five to eighty percent of America's churches have either quit growing or are declining. It is time that someone sound the alarm! We have got to be leaders who will be willing to take a careful and critical look at every program and ministry that we participate in and ask ourselves this question, "Is this a sacred cow?" Let me tell you something about a sacred cow: "If your sacred cow ain't givin' any milk then you better look again, because chances are all you got is bull!"

Paul said, "I am a slave to all..." knowing that a slave was one who lost his identity and looked only at opportunities to meet the needs of others. The response of the religious leaders of his day should be familiar: we hear those same empty words echo across the halls of our own churches today. In Paul's day, just as in our own, there were always certain religious leaders watching to ensure that no one colored outside of the lines!

With the advancement of modern technology and media, we can see what others are doing all across the nation. While we peruse the latest church newsletters that come across our desk, the world waits impatiently for someone who understands and wants to reach the USA today. We must relate to those in our contemporary society and not be bound to the conventional methods that have been with us for years.

IV. The road less traveled means we will build a legacy, not a resume!

A legacy lives beyond your life, but a resume only lives for today. Perhaps we can only understand the difference by kneeling with Jesus in the Upper Room:

After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to

Him, "Lord, are You going to wash my feet?" Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." "No," said Peter, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me." "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" (*John 13:5-9*)

If we are going to take the church into the twenty-first century with strength, conviction and power, then we must address the issue of modeling our ministry. Those who follow the road less traveled say, "I will build a legacy for others to follow, not just a resume for them to read!"

We have got to turn our theology into a biography. The most common complaint in ministry today comes from those who know us best: our families. Jesus Himself said, "What does it prosper a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or, what would a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Men, we cannot have an effective message unless we have an effective ministry. We must get back to the place where we acknowledge that our ministry begins in our homes. Too many of our messages on the family have been negated by our model in our homes.

In my own life, the reality of this was made known almost ten years ago when I truly felt that it was more important to be a great pastor than to be a great husband or a great father. What a shock when my wife made an appointment with my secretary to see me and shared with me that we had a great ministry but a lousy marriage. She looked at me and said with great conviction, "I'm not your best friend anymore. I really feel that you love your staff more than you love me!" We were going in separate directions and she felt I loved my church more than I loved my family.

That encounter led to some strong soul-searching and the redirection of priorities in ministry. We established a "date night" every Friday that has been modeled by many in our church. Each spring, we lead a "Courtship after Marriage" retreat. Two weeks ago, more than eighty percent of our young couples attended our first such retreat at Dauphin Way. In that retreat setting, one of the most successful businessmen in my church said, "My problem is that I am a great success at work, and that is why I spend so much time there. I am affirmed at work, but when I go home I am reminded of how much I have failed as a husband and father. It is only natural for me to gravitate to my strengths and run from my weakness. They taught me how to be a great businessman, but no one taught me how to be a husband and a father."

One of the greatest freedoms I had was last year when it was time to make a decision about accepting the pulpit at Dauphin Way. I was ready to take a step of faith toward Mobile, but my 14-year-old daughter had an overwhelming sense of apprehension and uncertainty. One night, I turned to

Cynthia and said, "I have made a decision. God has given me direction on how to deal with our daughter. I am not going to Dauphin Way unless God gives peace to her. We are a family, and if God is big enough to call me and show me His perfect will, then He can surely do the same in the life of one I love." That night, I went to her bedroom and said, "Dad has made a decision. My decision is that you will never grow up thinking in your heart that there is a church that is more important to your dad than you are. If the Lord wants us to move to Mobile, then we will wait until He brings perfect peace to *all* of our hearts. If the peace does not come, I can accept that, and we can continue to enjoy our ministry in Merritt Island. Please don't worry, honey. I love you more than that church, and if I fail you as your father, then I have failed in ministry."

God miraculously gave her a peace that led us to Dauphin Way, but only after He showed me that my priority is being a servant-leader to my family on the road less traveled. My legacy begins in the living room, not in the pulpit. My legacy begins with a basin of dirty water, not an overflowing fountain of fame.

Three years ago, Los Angeles Dodger Orel Hershiser pitched his greatest performance yet on the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*. When asked his strategy for success, Hershiser hit a home run with these words: "I give my credit to my personal submission to Jesus Christ. Each time I assess my major-league career, I ask myself these questions: 'Am I still married? Are my children happy, and do they know that their father loves them and is committed to their mother and to them? When I am finished with my baseball career, my most important goal is not to make the Hall of Fame, but to see my family successful as a result of my influence.'"¹⁰

One week later, in *USA Today*, another baseball great, Pete Rose, was featured. In an effort to get the story on Rose, a reporter interviewed his daughter. Rose's daughter said, "He's the worst father in the world. I will never understand why he never had any time for any of us. We really didn't expect anything from him. We just wanted him to like us. Even if I wanted to call my Dad, I couldn't. He will not even give me his phone number. I have to call his agent and then wait for him to return the call."

Here's how Rose responded "I don't know what she's complaining about. I bought her a new Mercedes last week and had it sent to her."

What if *USA Today* were to interview your wife and children? What would they say? What if they were to interview your kids twenty years from today?

As the church walks into the twenty-first century, God is calling us to be:

Dauids who will stand against the Goliaths of this generation and take risks, not chances.

Daniels, who will not just do things right, but are committed to doing the right thing

Pauls, who are more concerned about the contemporary needs of our people than with the conventional programs of the past.

And finally, He is calling us to be men who will say, "Lord Jesus, give us Your heart, Your life, Your ministry that will enable us to leave a legacy that will last for eternity, not just a resume to be read in this day."

"We shall be telling this with a sigh; Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and we—we took the one less traveled by, AND THAT HAS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE!"¹²

RESOURCES

¹Robert J. Kriegel and Louis Patler, *If It Ain't Broke, Break It*, Warner Books:1991

²The Holy Bible, New International Version, International Bible Society: 1978

³Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," *The Poetry of Robert Frost*

⁴The Holy Bible, NIV

⁵Jones, *1,000 Illustrations for Preachers and Teachers*, Broadman: 1986

⁶Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership*, Intervarsity Press: 1991

⁷Patrick Morley, *Man in the Mirror*, Wohlgenuth & Hyatt: 1989

⁸Johnson, *Easy Doesn't Do It*, XESS Press:1991

⁹The Holy Bible, NIV

¹⁰*The Wall Street Journal*, March 15, 1989

¹¹*USA Today*, March 22, 1989

¹²Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken," *The Poetry of Robert Frost*

“You Won’t Believe Who Was In Church Today”

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

By Jim Henry

Jim Henry has been pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., since 1977. He was president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference in 1981, a trustee of the Foreign Mission Board from 1978-88 and a member of the SBC Peace Committee from 1985-88. Before First Baptist in Orlando, he was pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, 1965-77, and of churches in Sledge, Miss., and Melvin, Ala. A Nashville native, he is a graduate of Georgetown College in Kentucky, holds a master of divinity degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and has received honorary doctorates from Georgetown College and Southwest Baptist University.

I'll never forget when Steve came to church. As far as I knew, he was the first of the hippies to come to our local Baptist church. He had on green bibbed overalls and a purple coat that hung down to his knees. He had long red scraggly hair and a bushy beard that made you realize this wasn't your usual corporate executive that dropped in to the local Baptist church on Sunday morning. But Steve came in looking for God. I don't know about the other households at our church, but I know that at *our* household we were saying, "You won't believe who was in church today! You just wouldn't believe who was in church today!" We talked about Steve. The long shot of Steve's story is that God did a wonderful work in his life. The last time I saw him he was growing in Christ and serving Him faithfully.

You just can't believe who's in church these days, can you? The same would have been true if you had been in Corinth, that little isthmus of land that sticks out between the Aegean and Ionian sea. This city at the crossroads of the world, was known for its tourists and for the sailors that came through port. It was a city, that if you took the worst of Las Vegas, San Francisco and New York and put it all together, you'd have Corinth. The city had a temple to Aphrodite that was on a hill about 2,000 feet high. People came from around the world to worship this Greek goddess and a thousand temple prostitutes helped people fulfill what they thought was worship to their god.

If you had gone to church at Corinth, and sat down with a person who had been there for awhile, they may have said, "You see that woman over there? That's Wanda. She was a lesbian until three years ago when something wonderful

happened in her life. You see that guy over there? That's Bob. He's known all over town as one of the greediest guys around. I mean, he'd cheat you out of anything, until five years ago. You see, Carol back there? I want to tell you about her. She was a hooker. I mean, she worked the Aphrodite temple for years, until six months ago." You would have said, "What a church! What a church! You mean these people are all members of the church at Corinth?" Paul would have said, "Yes, my friend, they are; they really are."

How did this happen? Paul explains it in these verses. One of the exciting things about these three very powerful verses of Scripture is that the same Truth, the same Person who changed those lives, is at business and works today doing the same thing.

I can assure you, there are some people in church today who would fit the description we're going to look at. There are some others not even listed here who are in church today. Let's find out what happened to them, what can happen to people you know, and even what can happen to you.

Notice first, Paul is giving a definitive statement. He's trying to clarify some issues in verses 9 and 10:

"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?"

Those are the people whose lifestyle is flagrantly against what God's Word teaches. The kingdom of God is the future — he's talking about when God's kingdom shall reign on earth and those who love Him and know Him shall be with Him. He's saying the wicked will not be a part of that future event when Christ shall reign on the earth and the world shall be in His will. He said, "Don't be deceived."

Paul begins with a list of five sins having to do with impurity. He clearly states that people who are practicing these things are not going to inherit the kingdom of God. They're not going to be a part of what God has coming for His children.

First of all, he says, the "sexually immoral." The King James version says, "fornicators." What's fornication? That's all sexual sin. It's a general description of any sexual sin. He says, no person practicing sexual sin shall enter the kingdom of God.

We all know what has happened in our country. There's been a tremendous spread of sexual sin. The April 22, 1991 issue of *U.S. News & World Report* contained an interesting article entitled: "History's Hidden Turning Points." The article reported that the decline and fall of chastity in the United States in the 60's and 70's was one of the turning points of history! Shocking, isn't it? And yet, it's true. What we sowed in the 60's and 70's by sexual immorality, we began to reap in the 80's and 90's.

One of the great heartaches and tragedies is that today we see a tremendous assault against the family. One of the reasons is because of the spread of sexual sin.

Isn't it strange that a few years ago if a student was caught with a condom at school he was expelled? Now they're handing them out at school! Strange, isn't it, what has happened in this turning point of history? Very strange.

The sexually immoral shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Secondly, he says, "nor idolaters." Those are people who practice worshipping or serving any other kind of god. It doesn't have to be one that's a statue or an icon, it can be anything that replaces God. Idolatry is anything that replaces the service, love, and commitment to the Lord God above all gods. They understood that in Corinth because of the temple of Aphrodite. You could just walk out, look up and see it. Idolaters shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Third, he says, "nor adulterers." Adultery is breaking the marriage vows. It's a sexual relationship with someone outside of the marriage commitment. Again, it's a strike against the family. It has a tremendous corrupting influence in our society. As we see this corrupting influence in our society, we see a breaking down of the home. Marriage was God's plan from the beginning to do at least three things. It was to protect us psychologically. In the family where there is true love between a husband and a wife, there's a sense of knowing how to give and receive love. Everybody needs it. When adultery comes, then there's a strike against that because love is shattered and trust is gone.

God has given marriage to protect us sociologically. It is in the environment of the home where a husband and wife learn to give and take, and children learn to give and take and receive and learn to adjust in a family situation. This helps them to adjust in society. When adultery comes and homes are broken, everybody loses.

Marriage is given for theological reasons. God ordained a man and a woman to be a model for Christ and the church. So when He saved us, in a sense, we married Jesus. When adultery comes, it breaks the model. Then people don't see the beauty of Christ and the church. It's a division. So when a marriage is broken by adultery, it's prostitution in a sense, and there's a breaking away. Whenever marriage is shattered by adultery—psychologically it's shattering, sociologically it's shattering, theologically it's shattering.

Most of the problems you see today, happening in our society, are because of the corrupting of the family. What is the most fearful thing that I see and hear? People wanting to throw dollars at the problem. There are many political action groups trying to do something to protect children, but they cannot succeed. How do we protect children? We protect

children by giving them a solid Christian home. We protect children by showing them Christ's love. We protect children by disciplining and disciplining them. We protect children by giving them a godly model. We protect children by worshipping with them. We protect children by giving them security in a solid home environment. When the home is broken, we see what happens to the shattered lives. Lack of self esteem, overwhelming inferiority complex, sociopathic personalities, a craving for love, hunger for attention and affection, turning to drugs and alcohol, promiscuity and perversion; are at epidemic proportions.

We're living in one of the most devastating times of history in this country and a lot of people don't realize it. We can throw trillions and billions of dollars at it and try every program on every political agenda, but until we get back to the very basics and that is the protection of the home—where a husband and a wife make a marital fidelity commitment, and if God gives them children, to raise those children for Christ in the security of the home—all the money in the world will not save our institutions and our country.

Then he lists the fourth thing, "nor male prostitutes." What is a male prostitute? The King James version uses the word "effeminate." That is the passive kind of homosexuality. It shows itself in other perverted forms of sexual immorality. In Deuteronomy 2:5, God's Word says that a man should not dress to look like a woman, or a woman dress to look like a man. Now why did God say that? He was trying to keep mankind from blurring the distinctions between male and female. He made a clear cut call way over in the Old Testament about the distinctiveness of who we are and the way He made us. Yet we're living in a time when we're seeing all kinds of perversions by the obscuring of the uniqueness of male and female.

Some people say, what difference does it make? What a person does in their private life, that's up to them. It's true, nobody can make anyone do anything. Christianity certainly doesn't. It just offers a powerful positive difference. But what happens when a society says it doesn't make any difference what you practice and what you are, when we know what God's standard is and people violate it. Does it make any difference? Look at it.

Congress. Does it make any difference if a congressman can't keep up with his personal checking account? That is personal and private! Yet we're electing people like that, who can not manage their own personal financial life, placing them in office and telling them to run a country that has a trillion dollar budget? And some say it doesn't make any difference what they practice in their private lives!

What about a law enforcement officer? Does it make any difference if a law enforcement officer has a sex change operation, or if he practices homosexuality or some other perversion of effeminate lifestyle? Does it make any

difference? In the military? In the arts? Anyone who doesn't believe there is a carry over from private lifestyle to public consequence, I have a piece of land on the moon I would like to sell you!

Whenever we pervert any of God's standards and choose the downside of it, sooner or later it corrupts. It's poison. It's a killer. Watch it! Watch it!

You've heard the story about the little shepherd boy and the snake. It was a cold wintry night. The snake crawled up close to the little shepherd boy. His daddy had always told him not to have anything to do with the snake. The snake said to him, "It's cold here! Won't you please just put me on your stomach and warm me up? I promise not to bite." The shepherd boy said, "No, my daddy told me you were poison and I was never to have anything to do with you, whatever you said." The snake said, "Listen, we're both out here and it's cold, it's miserable, and if you'll just take me and put me on your stomach I'll warm you up and you'll warm me up and we'll both feel better." He persisted until finally the little boy reached out and took the snake and put him on his stomach. And the snake bit him! As he lay dying, the little boy said, "But I thought you said you wouldn't bite me if I put you on my stomach!" The snake said, "You knew what I was before you picked me up."

When we know what it is, we should be careful what we pick up! When we know what it is, we'd better speak up, we'd better say something, we'd better put people in office and in places of influence who know what the standards are, because if we don't, the snakes will bite and a lot of innocent people will get hurt in the process.

Paul goes on to say, "nor homosexual offenders." We know what that is. Those are people who practice sex with the same gender. Some people say if you really love some person, it's okay. They say, if you really love me, you'll accept me where I am at this point. But the apostle John said in I John 5:2,3, that if I really love God, I will practice His commands. Therefore, if I really love you and you're practicing a lifestyle that's out of context with what the Word of God says, my love for you is not symbolized by my telling you it's okay. My love for you is symbolized by my not telling you what you want to hear. My love for you is shown when I say, "This is what God wants and because I love you I'm saying get away from that." It's not to adapt to a lifestyle that's contrary to the Word of God. If we really love somebody, real love says, "I love you as a person, but I cannot accept the lifestyle because God doesn't accept it."

When you drift away from the definitively clear standard of God's Word, you can interpret it any way you want to. You can choose any philosophy and take good words like love, caring and commitment out of biblical context. These beautiful words then become excuses for people to practice a

perverted lifestyle. But God didn't stutter when He said that anybody who is practicing a homosexual lifestyle shall not enter the kingdom of God. Can it be any clearer? One can try all kinds of exegesis he wants to, he can try to twist it out of context all he wants to, but we've got to come down to one thing if we're going to be honest with God's Word — *God says no.*

Then he lists five other things. These are sins that are practiced in other kinds of ways. In verse 10: "nor thieves." That's where we get the word "kleptomaniac." It's people who are greedy in a certain kind of way. In New Testament days, the laws were tough in this area. If you stole anything worth more than a \$1.50 in today's money, you would be executed. If you were at the public baths or gymnasiums and you were enjoying the beautiful bubbling water in the spa and some guy slipped in and stole your toga or anything that cost 25 cents or more, they'd put him to death for it. If anything was stolen at night, one could be put to death for it. Paul said practicing thieves aren't going to get into the kingdom of heaven.

"Nor the greedy." This is a really powerful word. It's a word used for grappling hooks in the navy in the old days. When the ships would come against each other, these grappling hooks were used to pull the ships together. That's the word used here for greedy. It's a person who's "grabbing," who's "catching hold." He says the people who are greedy, grabbing for money, are not going to enter the kingdom of God. A man who attended a church I pastored told me, "I guarantee you, if there's \$2.00 blowing down the street, I'll get one of them and I'll fight like the devil to get the other!" That's greed! It was a lifestyle.

Third, he said, "nor drunkards." That's pretty clear what a drunkard is. You don't even have to explain. He says, "nor drunkards." God doesn't give any pretty words to it, He says a person who boozes it up shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

"Nor slanderers." That's people who rape with the tongue — gossips.

"Nor swindlers." That's con men, extortioners, embezzlers, switch-and-bait kind of people, the tell-you-one-thing-and-do-something-else kind of people with products. These kinds of people will not inherit the kingdom of God.

It's a very definitive statement. Is it exhaustive? I don't think so. It's just to give us an idea that people who practice these and other lifestyles that contradict His Word will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

However, notice in verse 11, he speaks of a dynamic change. Something happened to these people? This is one of the greatest verses of Scripture in all the Bible! "And that is what some of you were." Past tense!

Guess who was in church, last Sunday, in Corinth. Former drunkards, former thieves, former greedy people, former slanderers, former swindlers, former homosexuals, former effeminate, former adulterers, former sexually immoral fornicators, former idolaters, they were all in the church at Corinth. He's looking at this congregation and saying, "That's what some of you — not are — some of you were." Something had happened! That church was full of ex's — ex-adulterers, ex-homosexuals, ex-thieves, ex-drunkards. What had happened to these people; this church full of ex's? Christ Jesus had transformed and changed their lives. That's why they were ex's. And every person here who has been saved, whatever the lifestyle, however publicly perceived, it took the same grace, the same blood of Jesus to save us all, because we are all sinners.

I think he put that in there just to remind people that it doesn't make any difference how bad one may be, Jesus Christ can change any life. That's called being born again.

Don Moomaw who used to be the pastor of former President Reagan when he was governor of California, was asked one time, "Is Governor Reagan a born-again Christian?" His answer was very simple, "Is there any other kind?" There's just one kind of Christia—born again!

We live in a day when there are many definitions on what a Christian is. People have such a loosey-goosey interpretation of Christianity — as long as you're not a Muslim or a Moonie or a mango, it's all right — you're a Christian. But not according to Scripture. Scripture says a believer is a person whom Jesus Christ has changed.

So, something happened to these people. Guess who was in church Sunday? What happened to them? They were changed, and now he describes in the latter part of that verse the position of these people and the position we're in. Notice what he says, three things, first: "you were washed." That means the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin. That means that we were all stained and polluted with sin. It's just like when we take a bath and remove the dirt. I talked to an archeology professor who was returning from an archeology dig and it was so dusty it took him three tubs of water to get the dirt off! All of us have a spiritual dirt problem. We're all dirty, and so we had to be washed. What washes us is the blood of Jesus — it cleanses us and brings us new life.

Then he says, "you were sanctified." Sanctified means a new behavior. These Corinthian Christians had ceased practicing the above-mentioned sins. They had a new lifestyle. Sanctification is the process of attitudes and actions being progressively changed to conform us to the image of Christ. There's a new behavior because of what? He says in the third place, "you were justified." That's our new standing before Christ. That's a legal term. That means, because we've been saved, in God's sight we're okay.

I saw a funny thing happen recently. I was at one of the Orlando Magic games. I guess a guy had purchased a ticket and sat in the upper bowl. As he looked down he saw a vacant seat and he thought he'd come down at half-time and occupy that seat closer to the action. In a matter of seconds, the usher was there and escorted him back out. You know which seat he picked out? The owner of the Orlando Magic, Mr. DeVos! Whoa man! You don't belong here! You're not justified in being here. You're legally out of order. You can't sit here. This seat legally belongs to somebody else.

It's the same thing spiritually. If we try to get to God or come to Christ in any other way except through the blood of Christ, we cannot sit down in heavenly places.

Some had practiced ungodly lifestyles, but they were washed, they were sanctified, and they were justified. Washed, removed the penalty of the sin. Sanctified, removed the power of sin. Justified, removed eternally the presence of sin.

How does that happen? In the latter part of the verse he designates the agent who did it all — "in the name of the Lord..." (He uses all three titles) "... the Lord," which means His position. "Jesus," means Savior, "Christ" means Messiah or The Anointed One. "And by the Spirit of our God..." The Spirit of God is the life-changing agent that changes us and transforms our lifestyles, our tastes, our whole being— inwardly and outwardly when we receive Jesus.

The question comes, can Christians commit these sins and still be a Christian? A Christian can, but he won't stay there long. He might, but he'll be convicted. He'll be burdened. There will be no peace in his mind, in his heart, in his life. She can't be comfortable as an adulteress. He won't be comfortable being greedy. There will be no peace from God because God's Spirit is indwelling that person and that Spirit is being sullied by sinful living.

One old preacher put it this way and I think it's as an apt description. He said, "If you take a wild hog and put him in a pen, he'll squeal and squeal and squeal and root and try to get out. Finally, if you open the gate that pig will take off and head for the woods and he'll never come back to that fence. But if you take a sheep — it'll bleat and bleat and bleat and want out, and you can let that sheep outside the gate and it'll scurry around just a little bit and the next thing you know it'll come back to the gate and bleat and bleat and bleat and beg to come back in. Because it knows the security of the fold and the shepherd's voice."

If a person has never been genuinely converted, they'll be like that wild hog. They're gone. They'll probably stay gone because they've never been transformed by Jesus Christ. A believer won't do this unless he begins to fall away from the Lord. And how does that happen? By losing your affection for Him. Not spending time praying, not spending time in the

Word, not worshipping, not saying “no” to the wrong things, not saying “yes” to the right things. You can get a cold heart and it begins to look pretty good back out there where you used to live. I think I’ll dabble with that snake just a little bit. And you get out there and POW! It bites! And you’ll want to come back home and get in the fold and be warm again, because sheep, even though they wander, know who the Shepherd is.

There are four or five truths I think we can draw from this powerful passage.

First, we cannot ignore the moral dimensions of the Christian experience. When we get saved, the lifestyle changes. The expectancy level changes. There are some things we just say “no” to. There are some things we just say “yes” to, when Christ comes into our lives. We can no longer continue to practice being a slanderer, if that’s what we did before we were saved. Raping people with our tongues and speaking ill of people. We can’t do that!

Tim Burke, just recently saved, plays for the New York Mets. Tim Burke said, “Before I came to Christ, my wife and I got married. We didn’t live together but just a few weeks before we knew we were going to have problems.” He said, “We finally went to a Bible Study and began to hear about a new kind of life. We accepted Christ.” Tim Burke said, “Two things happened. I use to drink all the time. Alcohol went. Secondly, my mouth used to be a pig pen and God cleaned up my mouth.” What happened? Tim Burke met Jesus and the moral dimension of his life changed.

Has there been any difference in your moral commitments since you met Jesus? One of the most frightening things is, and recent statistics have shown it, that in the church—evangelical churches—young people are getting pregnant without marriage just as much as people out in the secular world. What is that saying? Perhaps that the principles of godly living haven’t been understood or their experience was not genuine. We can’t escape the moral dimensions of the Christian experience. Jesus makes the difference. Because He says, some of these things “you were”—past tense—but no longer.

Second, we can’t explain the power that transforms a person. How do you explain a person’s life being changed like that? Well, you can take them to HRS and IRS and CBS and everybody else in the world and try to get a fix for them and they can’t help them. How do you explain a Tim Burke? How do you explain a person who is a homosexual, who though may be tempted to continue practicing, says, “No! Jesus has changed my taste.” How do you explain it? You can’t explain the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, but that same Person and power that changed those people in Corinth, Jesus Christ, is alive today to change people today. And if you find yourself in any of these categories, I want you to know that Jesus can transform you by His power.

Third, you can’t neglect the personal and corporate responsibility we have to forgive and accept those who have confessed their sins and have come to Christ. Those people who are practicing these kinds of lifestyles — we cannot condemn them. Condemn the sin, yes, but love these people! We have no excuse not to pray for them, not to love them, not to care for them, not to seek to bring them from the past into Christ’s glorious wonderful present. Most of us are around people that need the transforming power of Christ to change their lives. The tendency is to say, “Their lifestyle is so bad and I feel so uncomfortable around them. Lord, just get me away.” But those people are hurting and we are to stand at the Door of Life and invite them in.

I was at the airport the other day sitting in a room with several business men. Two of them sat beside me. Another one was on the telephone. They were cursing God —every other word they were taking Jesus’ name in vain. They were drinking, they were angry. They were hurting. You know what I felt? I didn’t feel better than them. I hurt for them. We can’t neglect them. And when people come to know Jesus, whatever their background has been...if you know a person who has been divorced five times, or slept with ten women, or has been a homosexual for fifty years and they come to Jesus, our churches must accept them in Jesus’ name. If He’s forgiven, we’re not to judge. We’re to say, “Such as some of you were, but Christ has transformed you. Welcome to the family of forgiven ones, because we’ve all been forgiven.” That’s what it is, isn’t it? A family of forgiven ones. That’s who we are and we give that forgiveness.

Somebody said, forgiveness is a flower that you step on and out of its crushed life comes a fragrance. The fragrance of forgiveness is what so many people need to hear today.

Fourth, we can’t close the doors of the church. They didn’t close them at Corinth. It’s a New Testament church. So the Lord’s church says, come. Those who have family, friends, and colleagues who are homosexuals, adulterers, slanderers, idolaters—bring them. Bring them. Bring them! We’ll not condone their lifestyle, nor condemn them as people, but we will *commend* them to Jesus Christ. We can’t close the doors of the church!

The movie “The Mission” tells a story that happened in the 18th century. A brother who was a slave trader became jealous of his younger brother over a woman and killed him. Later on, this man has a change of heart. He became a Jesuit priest. He takes all the armor he used to wear when he was on his slave trading expeditions in South America and returns to South America. As an act of penance, he ties his helmet, his breastplate of steel, all the swords, everything that he wore into battle, around his neck and he drags all this clanging armor through the jungle. You can hear him coming for miles. Here’s this man who is trying to get penance, trying to know that God has forgiven him for murdering his little brother, and for coming into these villages years before and taking off little

children and killing off the men and taking their wives into slavery. He returns to a certain village and tribe. They hear him coming with all his clanging armor. He's nearly skin and bones. The penance has not lifted the guilt he's carried. One of the tribesman takes a sword and he rushes towards him. As he gets to him, he takes that sword — whoosh — and cuts the rope around his neck, and all the armor goes clanging down the side of the mountain. With disbelief, then tears of joy, he realizes he's forgiven. No longer must he carry the weight of yesterday around his tired body and soul.

People, don't carry that around anymore. The Sword of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, has the power to take over any life to transform it forever. He takes that Sword of His Spirit and — whoosh! — sin's power is cut away.

You'll never guess who's in church on Sunday! Sinners like Jim Henry and like you, and you, and you, and you — all forgiven when we accepted Christ and what He did for us on the cross...and the talk shows up in the walk... "...and such were some of you."

Not for release until after 2:00 p.m., Monday, June 8

"So Help Us God"

JOHN 17:6-26

By Jay Strack

Jay Strack of Dallas, has been president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists the past two years and is a member of the Christian Life Commission. He has served on the anti-drug government task forces led by Nancy Reagan, William Bennett and Robert Martinez. As a youth, he was converted from a life of broken homes, six stepfathers, numerous drug arrests and juvenile detention sentences. He has spoken in more than 3,000 public schools and thousands of rallies and church services in nearly 20 years of ministry.

For ages in this country, we have solemnized our testimonies with the phrase, "So help me God." By that we affirm what we are about to say is of utmost importance and that we believe it with all our heart.

We face an hour of crisis in the church in America today. Our society is becoming shipwrecked, and the church of our Lord Jesus is the only hope. I am convinced that the time is short, and the challenge is great. I believe it is time for us to tell all we know, all we have seen, and all we have heard, So Help Us God!

Tennis star Andre Agassi has been informing us for some months now that "image is everything." Christian people who are theologically informed will have a hard time taking such a statement at face value. Yet, even if we do not accept that idea in such a radical form, we have to admit that image is *something*. In fact, when it comes to how the church appears to the watching world, image may be far more significant than we can imagine.

Unless you have been on the moon for the last few years, you are painfully aware of the fact that the image of the church has been severely damaged by some of those who are most in the world's spotlight. A major ministry here reels under the impact of adultery at the highest level. Another is discovered monkeying with its donor dollars. Still another is proven to be lying to its loyal followers by using electronic techniques to gain "supernatural" knowledge of the needs in the audience. On the local level there are more reports than ever of pastors and church leaders who have compromised their integrity in some fashion. If image *were* everything, we would be on the verge of closing up shop.

As it is, Christian people are more than ever faced with the almost overwhelming challenge of convincing the world

that Jesus can change a life, while at the same time explaining why so many "Christian" lives show such little evidence of having been changed. And, on top of it all, we are reaching an all-time high in our willingness to cast stones at one another. In the Second Century the pagan Porphyry curled his lip as he spoke of these "Christians who have such love for each other." I fear that such a criticism can hardly be leveled at the church that faces the Twenty-first Century.

In the seventeenth chapter of John's Gospel we find the Lord's Prayer, that is, the prayer the Lord prayed for His disciples during His final hours with them. That prayer was, among other things, a petition that outlined the relationship that should exist between the church and the world. David Chytraeus, the great seventeenth century theologian, called this the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. The Scottish Reformer, John Knox, had this prayer read to him every day during his final sickness, and in the closing moments of his life testified that these verses were a great source of comfort and strength for him.

Jesus knew that the time had come for the parting of ways with His followers. When He had first called these men, many months of teaching and experience had lain before them. Now that time has shrunk to a matter of hours. The clock is ticking away the last precious minutes, and like an automobile that is speeding toward a brick wall with no brakes and no way to turn aside, the Savior knows the long awaited hour has come.

If you knew you had but one opportunity left to pray for those who were closest to you, what would you pray? If you knew that in a matter of hours you would be wrenched from the side of those you loved and that they were going to endure a time of great trial, what would you say to God? What would you say to them? Our Lord lifted His eyes to heaven, and after a few words about the trial and the glory that was before Him, He poured out His heart to God in behalf of the ones who would be left to do the work. Jesus was concerned that the church He was leaving behind would be a church that impacted society in the same sort of way that He had.

This is a word not only for disciples then, but for disciples now. This country is in bad shape, and the church is little better. It is time for Christian people to remember that they witness with their lives, their love and their labor. We as Southern Baptists have longed to reach the world for Christ in this century; we have little hope of reaching that goal if we do not heed the words of our Lord in John seventeen. Let's see what He had to say to His disciples in these Famous Last Words.

I. First of all I see in this prayer the Lord Jesus asking that His followers be *undefiled*. In verses twelve through seventeen Jesus says that He has kept them from the evil one (all of them that is, except the son of perdition), because they are not of this world. He then prays to the Father that He will now continue to keep them from the evil one, and that He will

sanctify them in truth.

If there is any hope that the church will be able to make an impact on the lost world, it will have to happen through a sanctified church, a holy church. People, the world simply will not listen to us if we do not show it that being a Christian makes a difference in the way we live. I'm afraid we're not doing a very good job at this.

We live in the generation of the sociologist. For good or for bad, nearly every day we are smothered by statistics. There are even periodicals, like *American Demographics*, that are dedicated to the dissemination of statistics. You can hardly get through a few hours of the day without hearing the word "Percentage" thrown at you from every side. Some of these figures, like the average number of times a person scratches his head in a day (yes, a study has been done on that), are silly. Others are more sobering. When George Barna recently published his study, *What Americans Believe*, it was amazing how little difference there was between those who profess to know Christ and those who don't. Josh McDowell pointed out to us in his book, *Why Wait*, that Christian young people are not, generally living their faith in the dating arena: they have only a four percentage point edge over lost kids in the sexual morality department. It appears that Christian people are little better than the world in areas such as truthfulness and marital fidelity.

The church of today seems to have forgotten that it was called to holiness.

I'm afraid that the old word, "Holiness," sounds a bit archaic to modern Christians; but Jesus calls us to holiness right here in this passage of Scripture. The word "holy" or "sanctify" occurs more than 600 times in the Bible. It should be clear that God wants a sanctified church. But, again, there is that word, "sanctify"; it sounds so Puritanical and severe, and so thoroughly contrary to our concepts of joy and fulfillment.

But if we want to understand holiness and obedience to God, perhaps we should see how it worked out in the life of our Lord. We often forget that He grew up under the stigma of being illegitimate. He also came from a town that was of poor repute. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Why did they say that? Was it known for its lowlifes? Or was it some kind of hick-town back-wash? Jesus was not born into a middle-class family with a good reputation and all the other accouterments of success. He had to battle to serve God with two strikes against him already.

How did He win out over temptation; how did He live a life of holiness? For one thing, I believe we can see in the life of Jesus that He was more conscious of pleasing God than of overcoming sin. When we think of the word holy, it immediately reminds us of all the things we are no longer going to be able to do. "Well that means I'll have to stop this and sell that, and my whole life is going to be just a bore."

And, if we look at it in such a negative way, yes, it can have a severe and serious ring to it. But our Lord looked at the life of holiness as a relationship and a response to the Father. Holiness was fellowship; it was intimacy with God; it was a passion to do, not to avoid doing. I really believe we sometimes have a severe struggle with sin because we are more concerned about the sin than we are about God.

One of my favorite preachers of this century was Harry Ironside. He wrote many books and was pastor of Moody Church in Chicago. When Harry was a young man he worked with the Salvation Army in New York City. Being very talented, Harry had a real problem with pride. No matter how much he prayed about it or gave it to the Lord, Harry couldn't shake the sin of vanity. One day a friend made a suggestion. "Harry, if you'll make a sandwich sign, and write Bible verses on it, and words like REPENT and JUDGMENT, and then if you'll wear that sign downtown Manhattan, preaching on the street corners, I promise that at the end of three days, you won't have an ounce of pride left." So, Harry complied. For three days he wore this ridiculous looking sign, preaching on the streets, as people laughed at him and made fun of what he was doing. When the three days were over, Harry returned to his apartment. And as he took off the sign, laying it on his bed, he said to himself, "You know, there's probably not another Christian in New York City who would do what I've just done."

Harry had made the mistake of believing he could conquer sin by focusing intently on the sin. The way to deal with sin is to first of all look to God. He wants to bring us to the point where we have nothing to prove, but only someone to please. The English preacher of a century ago, J.C. Ryle, said that holiness is a person who agrees with God, and who is more concerned with pleasing Him than pleasing men.

Other folk, however, seem to have the opposite problem. They don't want to have to deal with the sin at all. Sometimes we do have to wrestle with temptation. The writer of Hebrews said that the Lord wrestled with temptation, and that while He always won the battle, the victory didn't always come easy (Heb. 2:17-18). Some people are more caught up with the struggle with sin than they need to be, but others don't struggle enough. I have heard good Christian people say, "Well, I asked the Lord to deliver me from that, and if He doesn't do it, it's not my fault." These folks have forgotten that there will be moments of struggle, and that real spiritual breakthroughs will sometimes come only when we have endured the fight.

There are some key areas in our lives where the Lord expects us to exercise holiness. One of these is pride. In all of the old lists of "mortal sins" pride always was placed first. It was the primary sin of the devil, who aspired to be like God, and it was the primary sin of Adam and Eve, who wanted to "be as gods, knowing. It is the one sin that will ultimately, entirely on its own, keep us from seeking God. Another is

purity. Paul told the Corinthians that the sexual sin was more insidious than other sins because it was a sin against the body itself. Another area of need is passion. When Jesus addressed the motivations that lay behind our sins in the Sermon on the Mount, He directly spoke of sins of passion - murder comes from hatred, adultery from lust.

If God can be Lord of our passions, we can have hope for holiness.

How does God work in our lives to enable us to live victoriously in this old world? Notice what Jesus says. "Sanctify them by your truth." Friends, I bless God that we are a denomination that believes in the full trustworthiness of Scripture; but now it is time to prove that we are a people whose lives have been changed by that same Word. Now, more than at any other time the world is watching to see if the church of the Lord Jesus is going to live with integrity. Jesus said, "By their fruit will you know them." The spotlight is on. We must not falter.

II. Then Jesus says another thing about the church's witness in the world. He says that the Father's desire is that they be in *Unity* with each other. "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in me and I in you; that they may also be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent me" (John 17:20-21). Here He clearly states that the continuing witness of the church to the world depends on the unity of His followers.

Next to overt sin, the biggest black eye the church can give to its witness is divisiveness. As difficult as it is to be undefiled, it is even more of a challenge to walk in unity. How many times in towns and cities across our country has the witness of a local church been diminished because of some squabble in the congregation? And what do we fight about? If the truth were known, I suspect that most church splits are not over the really big issues, like growth and expansion, but are over matters like the color of the carpet in the sanctuary. I was in one church that split over whether to build a fellowship hall or a family life center that would double as a fellowship hall. By the time the split was over they didn't need either one! Isn't it curious how churches that are the result of a split are often named "Friendship Baptist," or "Fellowship Church," or "Sweet Spirit Baptist Temple."

Don't get me wrong. There comes a time for conflict. Machiavelli said that the way to win a war was to "Divide and conquer." In the history of the church it has been just as often, "Unite and conquer." But there comes a time for peace.

It is certain that our denomination has averted the fate that has destroyed many others in our time - the fate of falling into an apostate liberalism that has no gospel to preach and no Savior to save. In fact, the picture that "apostasy" brings to mind is that of a boat deliberately pulling up anchor, setting sail and leaving the safety of the harbor. It describes for us a

person or a church that has chosen to deliberately turn away, allowing itself to be tossed about by every wind of doctrine. We have avoided that fate; our ship is safely anchored. Our banner is flying high, and we sit proud in the waters, anchored to the Rock. But we must not be content to merely sit in the harbor. For you see, our ship is bearing a life-giving serum, desperately needed by those on the shore. We cannot rest content where we are!

There is not a person in this auditorium who is more conservative than I am. When I was told as a young Christian to read the whole book, the godly people who counseled me said that I especially needed to read the very last part of the Scriptures. I was told that it was hard to understand, difficult to interpret, but vital nonetheless. So I did. I read every line and reference in my Concordance. And yes, it was hard to understand, and very deep. But I read and believed it nonetheless.

Perhaps you have heard the story of the mischievous preacher's son who one Saturday evening cut a page from his father's Bible, at the very text where the man would be preaching the next morning. So, when he got up to read his text it said, "And Noah took a wife, and she was [turn the page] three hundred cubits by fifty cubits by thirty cubits." The preacher looked suddenly up from his Bible at the stunned congregation and said, "Folks, I have never seen that before, but if the Bible says it, I believe it."

I believe it all. I am orthodox through and through. But just having a correct theology is not enough. A.W. Tozer once said "The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still." I am concerned that danger may be lurking around the corner for Southern Baptists.

History shows that just being orthodox is not enough. Luther was the great champion of the Bible in the Sixteenth Century, but the second and third generations of his followers had lost their way. They did not abandon Luther's theology, but they no longer possessed his spirit.

Luther had fought the great fight over faith versus works, and had demonstrated that salvation depended on what God had done, not on the works of man. His followers, trying to avoid diluting this great discovery, taught that not only were good works not able to effect salvation, but that they were not even necessary in the life of one who has been saved. The only thing important was the preservation of the theology.

Preaching became an oration about "us versus them," with some Lutheran pastors devoting an entire year to preaching sermons against other Christians - Calvinists, Zwinglians, Anabaptists, Catholics. In this kind of atmosphere, sermons were no longer aimed at the congregations which longed for a living word. The preservation of the theology had taken primacy over the souls of men.

But God was gracious and raised up in the Lutheran church men like Philip Spener, August Francke and Johann Bengel, to add reformation of life to reformation of doctrine. Correct theology is absolutely vital, but it is always incomplete if it doesn't include correct living.

These Pietists and Revivalists were orthodox, conservative adherents to the fundamentals of the faith, in every way that could be measured. But they were not *merely* orthodox. In parts of this country our faith has for too long been associated with *mere* moralism. If you were to ask what the people in that Baptist church over on the corner stood for, folks would often answer, "Oh, those are the people who don't believe in dancing." It is good for Christians to be known as upstanding people (though I'm not sure that rules against dancing are the high-water mark of morality), but the Baptist faith ought to have a more profound effect on the community than that!

As our churches have in the past had the reputation of *mere* moralism, they may now be in danger of being perceived as *mere* orthodoxy. In the days of the Great Awakening the orthodox pastor Charles Chauncy believed that religion was a matter of the mind, and not the emotions or the will. Jonathan Edwards preached that those who did not feel their faith and do something about it might one day discover they were "Sinners in the hands of an angry God."

On July 17, 1987, ten churches went to the Hill Country of Texas for a retreat. Unfortunately the rains had just begun to fall. The banks of the Guadalupe River overflowed from eleven inches of rainfall in twenty-four hours, and the youth and workers were caught in the flood. Some were swept immediately away, but others were able to form a human chain, hand to hand, to reach out and rescue those who were tumbling along in the turgid flood.

We need to join hands in the common cause of reaching this world for Christ. In *USA Today*, March 2, 1992, there was an account of how Arabs and Israelis were working together in an attempt to rescue people caught in a landslide. If they can put aside their differences to save people from destruction, surely we can do the same.

Two sailors were on shore leave, and had offended one another. It was time for them to return to the ship, and rather than risk court martial for being late, they decided to finish their fight later. At 2:00 am they met at the stern of the ship. As they began their battle, some sailors were asleep in their bunks, others were in the galley and still others were in the engine room. Suddenly the night air was pierced with the cry, "Man overboard." In that moment the two men ceased their conflict and joined those who were thronging from all over the ship to unite in the common cause of helping the drowning sailor.

As I criss-cross this nation, I believe our greatest need is to stop and listen - listen for the cry of "Overboard." In the

past we have seen brothers divided by an unbiblical doctrine called "secondary separation." That doctrine teaches that I can't have fellowship with you as long as you have fellowship with someone I have reservations about. We don't have time for that sort of thing. There are men overboard all around the ship, and we need to save them by all means.

Those of us who have gathered at this convention can be confident of this - we have the greatest opportunity in history to reach a dying world for Christ. We have decided together that we are going to stand for an Infallible Word and an Unfailing Savior. Let us not throw away our opportunity because we still have a few issues that divide our attention. We have to show the world that our greatest passion is over lost souls, and not theological debates.

III. Finally, in this great prayer of Jesus, I find him praying for *urgency*. Notice verse twenty, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word." The rest of this prayer expresses in no uncertain terms the urgency of our Lord about the task He has had, that He is now passing on to His disciples.

Charles Hummell has written a marvelous little book called, *The Tyranny of the Urgent*. In that book he speaks of how life clamors all around us, "Take care of this - it is Urgent. No, take care of this - it is Urgent." If we always allow each little issue to dictate to us what is important in life, we will never accomplish anything. We have to make the decisions. What is really important in life after all?

For those of us who are gathered here, there is one urgency that stands above all the others.

Great people in the world have always achieved their greatness because they were people of urgency. Mahatma Gandhi spent every day of his adult life battling the injustices of the caste system in India. Why? Because he was a man of urgency.

Jonas Salk worked sixteen hours a day, six days a week, for a period of five years to develop the polio vaccine. Why? Because he was a man of urgency.

Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel lying on his back. It took him sixteen months, and he worked eighteen hours a day, seven days a week to finish the job. Why? Because he was a man of great urgency.

One of the most destructive critics of the Bible in nineteenth century Germany was Ferdinand Christian Baur. A professor at Tübingen, and a brilliant man, he dedicated his life to removing what he considered to be the myths in the New Testament. He was so dedicated that he would arise as early as four o'clock every morning to write, and in the winter it was often so cold in his house that the ink would literally freeze in the inkwell. Yet, he pressed on with his task. Why?

Because he was a man of urgency.

If people like these can have such a passion for what they do, what does that say to us? Philanthropists have a great cause, but not as great as ours. Scientists have a passion to make life better for mankind, but their task pales in comparison to our task. Artists long to create and thus to give us insight into who we are, but their need is nothing compared to the need of a lost and dying world. And if a destructive critic of the Christian faith can dedicate life and health to the assault of the truth of Christianity, what does that say to those of us who say we are called to the defense of the faith once delivered to the saints?

Where is our passion? Where is our urgency? When I see how feeble our efforts sometimes are, I'm reminded of what T. Boone Pickens said about how some businesses operate: "Ready - Aim - Aim - Aim..." On the other hand, I also remember the words of that great English Puritan, Richard Baxter, who, after returning from preaching in a nearby town, wrote in his journal, "I preached as though never sure to preach again; as a dying man to dying men."

We need the kind of passion that made Paul pray, "Let me be accursed for my brethren Israel," or that caused Moses to lay himself down between God and sinful Israel, and cry out "Slay me, and spare them."

Where is the passion that lit a fire in the men of old? Where is the fire that burned in the heart of a Whitefield and sent him across the Atlantic thirteen times to see lost men saved? Wesley had such an urgency that he traveled 250,000 miles on horseback, preaching over 50,000 sermons. Brainerd's passion for souls led him into wild country, and even as he coughed up blood and died at the age of twenty-nine, literally burning out for the kingdom, his dying words were words of passion for God. This urgency caused a William Carey to spend forty-four years in India, and impelled a C.T. Studd to sail to Africa from the shores of England at the age of fifty-one, having already started missions in India and China. As he stood on the pier, leaving his homeland for the last time, never to see his wife again, he said, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."

What has happened to our passion? Dry-eyed pulpits produce dry-eyed members and dry-eyed churches. People all around us are in such pain that they cry themselves to sleep each night. Yet, our eyes, and our souls, are dry.

A few weeks ago I was at two detention facilities in Montgomery, Alabama. At the Mount Meigs facility, I met fifteen kids who were waiting to be tried as adults, several of them for murder. When you look into the terrified eyes of a teenager who may be facing a death penalty, that will make you urgent.

I met with a young girl in Memphis who was scheduled to have an abortion the next morning. I left that evening with a sense of urgency. In March of this year, in a meeting at Shades Mountain Baptist Church I listened as Dr. Carter, a man after God's own heart, poured out his soul. We had moved our meeting at his church up several weeks because he wanted to reach those young people *now*. On Monday evening of that meeting a young man with four earrings in his ear gave his heart to Christ. The next night he was back with a friend who also came to trust Jesus. As I talked with this boy he told me that the night before he had sat in the darkness of his room with his dad's pistol pointed into his mouth, when suddenly the phone rang. He picked it up, and it was this friend. He told him, "Man, I've just found the answer, I gave my heart to Jesus tonight, and I want you to come with me tomorrow night." Not only did that phone call save a life, but it saved a soul. Why? Because a pastor had a sense of urgency, and felt led of God to move a meeting up a few weeks.

Is that the expression of our hearts today? If it is not, the world will give us no heed. If we do not really believe that what we do every Sunday is a matter of life and death, of heaven and hell, then we cannot expect the watching world to pay attention. If we do not have a passion in our hearts, a burning in our souls that we possess the keys to the kingdom, then men will go their way looking everywhere else for the answers that they need. It is up to us to preach, *As dying men To dying men*. Only then will we see the blessings of God on our witness.

Several years ago my family and I were on the island of Oahu and decided to visit the Sacred Falls. Climbing the steep trail we came upon a sight that I shall never forget. There in front of us was a father carrying his teenage son on his back, slowly, but surely, making his way up the mountain to the Falls. It was very obvious by the boy's appearance that he was afflicted with some sort of inflammatory muscle disease. His joints were red and swollen, yet he was very thin and frail. For once in my life I was speechless. I didn't want to go around them for fear of being rude, yet I didn't want to lurk behind them causing them to feel pressured or embarrassed by their pace. Instead, we simply waited and watched. The daddy and the boy continued their way together.

After a while, we were able to continue our trek and suddenly the Falls appeared before us in all their glory and splendor. After the long climb we were anxious to swim in the shimmering pool, which turned out to be unbelievably icy, but a tremendous treat.

As we all enjoyed the refreshment of the water in what seemed like a Polaroid moment, I watched the dad and the boy with interest. Very slowly, very patiently, the dad lifted the boy into the ice-cold water. The youngster squealed with delight, "Daddy, the burning is gone. It doesn't hurt anymore!" The father stood there, beaming. Obviously, the joy of his son was payment enough. Because of his frailty, the

teen soon tired, and once again, with patience and love, the dad slowly lifted him out of the water and set him on a rock.

After helping him dress, he lifted the boy onto his back and together they began the long, tedious descent along the mountain track. We could not help but watch, feeling pity for the boy and admiration for the father.

About thirty minutes later we, too, began the return trip, each of us making our way with care and looking for the pitfalls. It wasn't long before we came upon the dad, still carrying his son, as they talked and shared together. This time I was determined not to be intimidated by the awkwardness of the situation. "Excuse me, sir, but I've been watching you and your son. I know that you must be exhausted. Could I help you out and carry your son for a little way while you rest? I'm sure he must be heavy, and the trip is a long one." It didn't take him long to reply, "No thank you. I appreciate your kind offer, but he really isn't heavy to me at all."

He went on to explain that they had made numerous trips to the waterfall together during their vacation for the sole purpose of the temporary relief of the burning pain in his son's joints. "To see him laugh and splash about like any other kid makes it worth it all."

Here was a man who was keenly tuned to the need in his young boy's life. For him, the Sacred Falls brought comfort and peace. I want you to know today that there is another Sacred Falls on another Hill far away. Down it flows a healing stream - not the icy water of Oahu, but the crimson flood of Calvary. I am confident that everyone in this vast auditorium has an "amen" in their heart to that truth. But I am also sure of one more thing. The sin-sick men and women of this world will never scale its heights alone. It is up to us to bear them there, that they, too, might find healing and forgiveness.

Will we leave this place with an urgency to do that? I pray to God that it will be so!

“Excercising for the Health and Longevity of It”

Kenneth H. Cooper, MD

Dr. Kenneth H. Cooper, M.D., is a leader of the international fitness movement and author of 11 books, including the 1977 bestseller, The Aerobics Way. His books have sold more than 20 million copies in 41 languages and Braille. He is the founder of the Aerobics Center in Dallas and has assisted in the founding of a similar center in Japan and in efforts to combat obesity and stress in Russia, Germany, Poland, Italy, Switzerland and Saudi Arabia. He is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine and a member of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas.

In 1968 I introduced aerobics to the world. Prior to 1968, the word “aerobic” was an adjective found in the medical dictionary which referred to “organisms which live in air or oxygen.” In preparing the manuscript for my first book, I entitled one of the chapters in which I discussed the importance of endurance exercises “Aerobics.” The new noun was used generically to refer to activities such as walking, running, cycling, swimming and competitive sports including handball, basketball and squash.

The publisher thought that *Aerobics* would be a good title for the book. I disagreed, feeling that it was a difficult word to pronounce, spell, or even remember. Obviously, I was mistaken. When *Aerobics* was published in March 1968 it was immediately successful and dramatically increased interest in exercising.

The book answered the following questions: What type of exercise is necessary to improve the cardiovascular pulmonary systems? How can you compare one aerobic activity with another? and How much exercise is necessary if your goal is an improvement in the cardiovascular system?

In the early 70s, aerobics became associated mainly with aerobic dancing. Jacki Sorensen first developed this concept of exercise and entitled it “Jacki’s Aerobic Dance” Aerobic dance studios began to spring up all over the country, but the real enthusiasm for this type of activity occurred in the mid-70s when Jane Fonda published her first aerobics videotape. Since then, millions of women and men have successfully participated in aerobic dance programs.

At the time of the publication of *Aerobics*, the Gallup poll

estimated that no more than 24 percent of our adult population was involved in any type of regular aerobic activity, and there were less than 100,000 joggers. The interest generated by *Aerobics*, followed in 1972 by Frank Shorter’s winning the gold medal in the Olympic Marathon, and the highly successful book published in 1977 by Jim Fixx, *The Complete Book of Running*, triggered an explosion in jogging and exercise.

The Gallup poll in 1984 estimated that 59 percent of Americans over 18 years of age were involved in some type of regular physical activity and there were 34 million people who claimed to be jogging.

Even though there is a question about the accuracy of those numbers, it was quite evident that jogging and aerobic dancing had become a part of the American culture by the mid-1980s. But subsequently, there was a decline in participation. By 1990, there were estimates that only 40 to 45 percent of Americans were participating in some type of vigorous aerobic activity. Approximately 20 million were jogging and 15 million were involved in aerobic dancing. Even greater numbers seemed to be involved in walking, swimming, cycling and other less intense aerobic activities, but the exact figure was unknown.

With enthusiasm for exercise soaring among older adults, considerable apprehension arose in the minds of many physicians. There was concern about an increase in deaths from heart attacks as more people past 40 years of age began exercising vigorously.

But as the numbers increased from less than 100,000 joggers in 1968 to estimates as high as 34 million by 1984, was there an increase in deaths from heart attacks? To answer that question, let me quote from the *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 1984: “Deaths from coronary heart disease began rising sharply in the 40s and reached a peak in 1968, and then mysteriously began dropping.” Between 1968 and 1988, the deaths from coronary heart disease in this country declined 48 percent.

Yet, the question arises, how much of this decline can be attributed to modern medicine? According to a 1984 study by Harvard researchers Lee Goldman and E. Francis Cook, only 31 percent of the decline was a result of additional coronary care units, bypass surgery and other treatments; whereas, 63 percent was the result of lifestyle changes, 6 percent was unknown. The lifestyle changes that have accounted for the decrease in coronary heart disease death rates are usually considered to be the following:

1. A reduction in the number of cigarette smokers in the United States. Smoking one pack of cigarettes per day increased deaths from heart attacks by an estimated two-to threefold over non-smokers, pipe or cigar smokers, or former cigarette smokers. So it is highly significant that the number

of Americans smoking dropped from 47 percent in 1968 to approximately 28 percent in 1990. This is probably the major reason why there has been a decline in deaths from coronary heart disease.

2. *Better control of high blood pressure.* If blood pressure is elevated i.e., consistently 140/90 or above, there is a sevenfold increase in deaths from strokes, a fourfold increase in deaths from heart attacks and a fivefold increase in deaths from congestive heart failure. Of the estimated 40 to 60 million Americans suffering from high blood pressure in 1968, only 15 percent had their blood pressure effectively controlled. In 1990, that figure was estimated to be between 50 and 60 percent.

3. *Change in the dietary habits of the American people.* In the late 1960s, it was estimated that a middle-aged American male had a cholesterol that averaged 235 mg/dl. In 1990, that figure was estimated to be between 210 to 215 mg/dl. Several large prospective epidemiological studies have shown that for every 1 percent that you can lower an elevated serum cholesterol, heart attacks and sudden deaths drop by 2 to 4 percent.

4. *Better knowledge of the harmful effects of stress and how to control it.* Without question, stress is a factor in disease-causing cardiovascular illness, chronic fatigue, stomach ulcers, ulcerative colitis and a variety of medical and emotional problems. Yet Hans Selye once said, "Stress is the spice of life. What would life be like if there were no runs, no hits and no errors?"

It is not stress that kills, but the way that stress is handled. I firmly believe that exercise is nature's best physiological tranquilizer, particularly when utilized at the end of a stressful day prior to the evening meal.

Admittedly, the person most consistent with an exercise program is the one who exercises in the morning. The attrition rate is quite low; whereas exercising at any other time during the day is associated with a greater dropout rate. Still, exercising prior to the evening meal has multiple benefits. These include depression of the appetite and reduction of the caloric intake for the evening meal; the production of endorphins, which enhances the feeling of well-being making the remainder of the day more productive; and physiological tranquilization, which counteracts the harmful effects of emotional stress and a Type A personality, a characteristic of most successful people.

5. *At least double the number of people were exercising in 1990 as there were in 1968.* Even though the figures seem to be somewhat vague, questionably accurate, and depend on the poll that is used, the fact remains that more adults are exercising now than were 20 years ago.

Any consideration of exercise in preventive medicine must

include a definition of fitness. Since 1968, my definition of fitness focuses on *aerobic fitness*, or developing a high level of cardiovascular health and endurance. Yet, the question has arisen—is it possible to be fit and unhealthy. Unfortunately, the heart is so masterful in disguising its problems, that you can have severe far-advanced disease and not know it until that first and fatal moment. So you can be fit and still unhealthy.

The popular jogging advocate Jim Fixx would most likely have excelled on any endurance fitness test. At the time of his death he was running up to 60 miles a week and had run over 37,000 miles in the previous 17 years. He was 52 years of age. Yet, his autopsy revealed that he had diffuse three-vessel disease, some vessels almost totally blocked. Furthermore, at sometime in his life, he had two heart attacks.

There was so much concern about the death of Jim Fixx that someone had to respond professionally to his death. That is the reason I wrote *Running Without Fear*, published in May 1985. The dedication in that book explains why I wrote it: "The book is dedicated to the millions of people who are exercising regularly in their pursuit of good health. May this book allay any fears they might have and give them reassurance that what they are doing is right."

The jogging boom declined considerably after 1984, and perhaps the death of Jim Fixx was a factor in that decline. Yet it seems that exercise can be performed quite safely if our guidelines at the Dallas Aerobics Center are followed.

To sum up, the *athlete* like Jim Fixx was fit but not healthy; and very likely, treadmill stress testing may have revealed heart problems. But there is another related question that bears on exercise programs: Can you be healthy and not fit?

If healthy refers to freedom from disease, reduction of all risks of mortality, and prolongation of life, the answer is yes. I wanted to provide objective credibility to that statement when I established the Aerobics Center in Dallas in 1970, so we launched a research project that enabled us to evaluate through *actual observation* the importance of exercise in the practice of diagnostic, preventive and rehabilitative medicine.

Dr. Stephen N. Blair, director of the Division of Epidemiology at the Institute for Aerobics Research, studied a group of 13,400 men and women who were healthy at the time of their evaluations. To be sure that they did not have undetected disease undiagnosed at the time of the initial evaluation, they were not admitted as active participants in the study until 4 years had elapsed.

From 1971 until 1985, a total of 110,000 person years of follow-up was recorded. Dr. Blair then looked at all causes of mortality for both men and women based on five fitness groups—the bottom to the top quintile—and the results of this

study were published on November 3, 1989, in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The next day, every major newspaper in the United States, including the *New York Times* and *USA Today*, covered the results of this article on their front page.

For the first time, this report showed that there is a relationship between physical activity and all causes of mortality and the prolongation of life. Those people in the bottom level of fitness—the lowest quintile—when compared with people in the top 20 percentile, were 65 percent more likely to die of all causes such as heart attack, strokes, diabetes and, yes, even cancer. Yet, perhaps the most surprising discovery was that the relationship between measured levels of fitness and all causes of mortality was not a straight line or direct relationship. For example, the greatest drop in mortality did not occur moving from the bottom 20 percentile level of fitness to the top 20 percentile, but occurred moving from the bottom category just up to the next 20 percentile; 55 percent of the 65 percent reduction in all risk mortality occurred when totally inactive people became involved in even minimal activity. And the 55 to 60 percent reduction in all risk mortality translates to up to a 3-year increase in longevity.

The question remains, however, how much exercise is necessary if your goals are health and longevity? Preliminary studies indicate that minimal activity or simply *avoiding inactivity* is extremely important—and almost as effective as long distance running if your goals are health and longevity. This means that walking 2 miles in less than 30 minutes 3 times a week; or walking 2 miles in less than 40 minutes 5 times a week, or walking 3 miles in less than 45 minutes twice weekly; or participating in two aerobic dance classes for 45 minutes each week would all be enough if your goals are only health and longevity. This level of exercise may be associated with improved health and longevity but would not produce what I would classify as aerobic fitness. To be in a truly fit state of health—and reach the fourth or fifth quintile on the fitness scale—you would have to run 2 miles in less than 20 minutes 4 times per week, or walk 3 miles in less than 45

minutes 4 times per week, or participate in four 45-minute aerobic dance class workouts each week.

In other words, there are considerable differences in the intensity, duration and frequency of workouts necessary to be healthy as compared to those necessary to become fit.

Since we have discovered and published the clear correlation between merely avoiding inactivity and reduction of all risk mortality and prolongation of life, many people have asked if I will change my own lifestyle and stop running my usual 12 to 15 miles a week and earning over 50 to 60 points per week as I have done for 31 years. That is, will I drop back to walking 2 miles 3 times per week?

My answer is a very strong *no*, because I do not exercise primarily for reduction of all risk mortality and prolongation of life. Rather, I exercise for *quality of life*. Many psychological studies, including our own, have shown that people who are fit, as measured by treadmill performances, are different psychologically. They are less depressed, less hypochondriacal, have an improved self-image, and have a much more positive attitude toward life. It is this enhancement of well-being that motivates most people, including myself, to continue their regular aerobic fitness program.

Therefore, I am not encouraging the jogger or aerobic dancer to reduce or restrict their activities unless they are having physical symptoms or problems. To the contrary, I am encouraging the people who are totally inactive to start even a minimal exercise program. If so little exercise is necessary to obtain substantial benefits in the areas of reduction of disease and prolongation of life, can they afford not to exercise?

In summary, exercising can be used for health, longevity and improving the quality of life. Try following these guidelines as well as those given in *The Aerobics Program For Total Well-Being*, and you will find that health and fitness are achievable goals, well within reach for almost everyone, regardless of age or sex.