

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

"Part V: Renewing Household Adults: Addressing Roadblocks - Overcoming a 'Disadvantaged' Background"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) Some time ago, a young man visited me in my office. He shared with me a report of his past life's trials which were especially heightened by the painful, difficult divorce of his parents.

I recalled that his parents had visited our Church years ago, and had filled out a Visitor Welcome Card located in the pew slots. Since I've kept all of the Welcome Cards handed in during the last 15 years, to encourage this man, I decided to locate the Welcome Card his parents had once filled out when they were still married.

When I showed him the card, he stared at it for a few seconds, and then said simply, "This is the first time **ever** for me to see my birth parent's names **together on anything!**"

Question: How can a party with a high level of disadvantage and past hurts associated with marriage even UNDERSTAND what it means to live in a successful marriage, let alone SUCCEED in one HIMSELF?!

(2) Barbara Thompson wrote a moving article, "Global Binge" in the December 1996-January 1997 issue of World Vision to report on the devastating effects of world alcohol abuse. Her statistics I found very unsettling to say the least:

- (a) In the United States, someone is killed by a drunk driver every 24 **minutes**.
- (b) Alcoholism contributes to problems in addiction, poor health, physical and sexual abuse and premature death.
- (c) Russians drink **15.3 quarts** of pure alcohol per capita per year when The World Health Organization warns that just **4.75** quarts per person per year constitutes a health risk!
- (d) In Papua New Guinea, more than 85 percent of all fatal road accidents involve drivers or pedestrians who are drunk.
- (e) In Canada, more than half of all deaths among Native Americans are alcohol-related.

Question: How can a child coming from a background where alcohol abuse is commonplace ever amount to anything significant in view of these startling figures?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: I understand WHAT kind of man or woman God wants me to be, but with the disadvantaged nature of my background, what YOU call MATURITY is but a DREAM for ME! Any suggestions?!

- I. **In Christ, every believer has the raw material to become and to achieve all that God has designed him to become and to achieve:**
 - A. God plans that every believer be conformed to Christ, Rom. 8:28-30.
 - B. God plans that every believer achieve great things, equipping him with an enabling gift to that end, Jn. 15:8; 1 Pet. 4:10; 2 Tim. 1:6-7.
 - C. Also, Christ *oversees* every believer's progress in life, Mtt. 28:20b.
- II. **Yet, the believer (especially one with a deprived background) is responsible to DEVELOP with the right USE of this raw material:**
 - A. A believer must **first** "plug in" to **God's power** to develop properly:
 - 1. Every believer can have Christ living in his lifestyle as an everyday dynamic; Paul's testimony affirms this, 1 Tim. 1:12-17; Gal. 2:20.
 - 2. Scripture describes **how** this "plugging in" step comes to pass:
 - a. The believer must first confess personal sins he does, 1 John 1:9.
 - b. He next must **mentally rely** on God's indwelling Spirit for the correct **will** even to **try** to think and do good things, Ga. 5:16-23
 - B. **After** thus being "plugged in", one must discern **God's will** to see **WHAT** is even **worthy** of his thoughts and efforts, and he discovers that divine will in the following steps:
 - 1. He must follow **Scripture's** teaching as a priority, Ps. 119:105. This means he must get to **know** what the Bible **teaches!**
 - 2. If **Scripture** is **silent** on a matter in question, **THEN** should he **next** get **advice** from godly believers, Pr. 11:14; 2 Tim. 3:13-17.
 - 3. If **both** of **these** sources don't address an issue, he should **NEXT** heed God's signals coming from life's **circumstances**, Acts 16:6-10.
 - 4. **ONLY** if **all three** of **these** sources **fail** to offer insight on an issue should the believer **finally** follow his **own desires**, Phil. 2:12-13.
 - C. In then **trying** what is **worthwhile**, he must use a **quality EFFORT**:
 - 1. In the Holy Spirit's demeanor-controlling power, he must express loyal love and faithfulness toward others, building good relationships to go the distance in all of his efforts, Prov. 3:3-4.
 - 2. In the Spirit's attitude-controlling power, he must work consistently hard to become **skillful** in whatever he does; this, along with the **right deed** in **God's power** yields certain success, Prov. 22:29.

- D. Having done all this, he must trust God and not quit, Heb. 10:35-11:6.
- III. **We add two Bible biographies as illustrations for encouragement:**
- A. We review the life of a **woman** who overcame a disadvantaged beginning to find God's richest blessing -- Ruth, the Moabitess.
1. Ruth began as an outsider to God's blessings in Israel, and as a childless widow who, in staying with her mother-in-law and not returning to Moab to remarry, was shutting the door on personal achievement in her culture, Ruth 1:5, 12-13. (B.K.C., O.T., p. 420.)
 2. However, out of loyal-love, she remained faithful in relationship with Naomi, her mother-in-law, and to **GOD**, Ruth 1:14-18.
 3. Ruth also exhibited diligence by how she gleaned for grain for her and her mother-in-law's livelihoods, impressing Boaz, 2:2-3a, 7.
 4. God rewarded Ruth by leading her to Boaz's field (2:3b) and in giving her Boaz as a husband and through him a child (4:13-17) who became the ancestor of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Mtt. 1:5-16.
- B. We review the life of a **man** who overcame a disadvantaged beginning to find God's richest blessing -- Jephthah, the illegitimate son.
1. Born as an illegitimate and *intimidated* by his brothers who were born in legitimacy, Jephthah left home as an outcast, Jud. 11:1-3a.
 2. From then on, he *struggled* finally to overcome a low self esteem:
 - a. Round One - Finding himself in a foreign land, Jephthah developed himself to become a leader of other outcasts, 11:3b.
 - b. Round Two - When Israel needed help and asked Jephthah for his leadership, he accepted the call to become its leader, 11:4-11.
 - c. Round Three - In leading Israel to overcome the threatening Ammonites, the enemy tried working on Jephthah's vulnerability for a low self esteem by criticizing his people as not having right to a given parcel of land; Jephthah rebuked the critics, and justly attacked to rescue the land from Ammon, Jud. 11:12-13, 14-29.
 - d. Round Four - However, he revealed some insecurity at this criticism in rashly vowing to sacrifice whatever came out of his house were God to help him defeat Ammon; when his daughter came out, Jephthah grieved at his unbelief, Jud. 11:30-31, 34-40.
 - e. Round Five - Having then learned to trust God implicitly, when the Ephraemites tried to take advantage of Jephthah's tendency to have a low esteem, he trusted God & routed them, Ju. 12:1-6.

Application: We possess supernatural resources to tackle naturally disadvantaged backgrounds! If we thus CAN overcome, let us DO so!

Lesson: All we need to mature and to achieve great things for God regardless of a disadvantaged background is supplied to us in raw material form through our position in Christ: we must merely trust and obey God and apply diligence to use those resources for God's blessing!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the lesson . . .)

My Bible education I owe in part to two alcoholics and a stutterer who overcame their weaknesses through Christ!

(a) A very bad stutterer from Scotland named John P. Forsythe accepted Christ as his Savior and dedicated his life here in Connecticut to serve the Lord. One problem: his stuttering was so bad that mature believers tried to dissuade him from the ministry. However, convinced that God had called him to preach, John received training and worked very hard on his speech. He overcame his impediment and pastored a Baptist Church in Meriden, Connecticut. He was the man who took my mother in as a foster father with his wife, Irene and they led my mother to Christ and taught her the theology he had learned at the Moody Bible Institute. My mother in turn spent hours answering my many questions about Bible theology as I was growing up.

(b) An alcoholic living in Portland, Oregon, committed his life to Jesus Christ, and began to preach and teach the Bible. He became a pastor and started the Multnomah School of the Bible. I attended that school and received my undergraduate education there, receiving as **all** graduates from the school then did -- a **double** major in **Bible**.

This alcoholic taught a Bible Synthesis course from which I received the idea of teaching our Thru The Bible Synthesis, a style of teaching that I do not know is being taught anywhere else today!

This alcoholic man's name was Dr. B. B. Sutcliffe.

(c) Another alcoholic, living in Dallas, Texas, committed his life to Christ, became a minister and began to preach. He encouraged a man named Lewis Sperry Chafer to head up a school in the city training pastors to do a better job at studying their Bibles. He himself, though not knowing Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic, the original languages of the Bible, studied hard and formed his own study Bible which we know today. His name was C. I. Schofield, an alcoholic who developed himself to serve the Lord. The school he encouraged to develop in Dallas was the Dallas Theological Seminary from which I graduated.

Two alcoholics and a severe stutterer -- where would I be if these three men had given up on their own development? If YOU have a disadvantaged background as a Christian, PLEASE don't give up on your development -- generations down the line will be eternally grateful - believe me!