

VISITING PROGRAM TRAINING CLASS

Fourth Class

November 2, 1968

FORMAT:

1. Open with prayer.
2. World news discussion and drill (5-8 minutes).
3. Difficult scripture drill (30 minutes).
4. Sermonettes and evaluations (30 minutes).
5. Recess (10 minutes).
6. Lecture (one hour)
7. Assignments for next class.

DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES

I. Christ blotted out the law and nailed it to His Cross (Col. 2:14).

- A. No, Christ did not blot out the law. He blotted out the "HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES" (same verse).
- B. This could not refer to the law of God. God's law is not "against us" and "contrary to us" (same verse).

"The law is holy and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).
David said, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119:97).

God's laws don't hurt us--they help us. "Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and IN KEEPING OF THEM IS GREAT REWARD" (Psa. 19:11).

C. The context explains what "ordinances" Paul is referring to:

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

"Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?" (Col. 2:20-22).

What kind of ordinances? "Touch not, taste not, handle not." In other words: asceticism, Stoicism, Catholicism, meatless Fridays, vegetarianism. It certainly doesn't mean the Ten Commandments. It can't mean the Feasts where people ate, drank and danced vigorously. It can't mean the sacrificial law--the priest had a great portion of meat and had to handle and slaughter animals. This was a lusty way of life.

- D. The Greek words for HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES are cheirographon tois dogmasin. This means the note of guilt from keeping man's laws.

CHEIROGRAPHON, according to the Greek Lexicon by Parkhurst means: "Anything written with the hand. . . a bond, note of hand. . . it signifies a sort of note under a man's hand, whereby he obliges himself to the payment of any debt." In other words, a note of debt or a note of guilt.

In the same Lexicon by Parkhurst one of the meanings given for TOIS is "from."

DOGMASIN simply refers to law. (See Strong's Concordance). In this case it refers to the laws of men as proved in Section C above.

- E. The note of guilt is OUR SINS. We have sinned by obeying the laws and customs of men rather than God. What Christ blotted out is OUR SINS.
- F. The Law was not nailed to the cross--Christ was (John 19:18; 20:25). He was made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21). Our sins were nailed to the cross in His body (I Pet. 2:24).
- G. Colossians 2:15 shows what Christ defeated. It was not the Law:

"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." The principalities and powers referred to here are the same as the "spiritual wickedness (wicked spirits) in high places" mentioned in Eph. 6:12--demons.

By making possible the forgiveness of sin, Christ defeated the purpose of Satan and his demons. He made it possible for sons to be born into the God Family.

*NOTE: It may be well to emphasize here that only two things were nailed to the stake at Golgotha:

1. The physical body of Jesus
 2. The "note of guilt" -- the record of our sins which Christ paid for Himself in this sacrifice of His own life
- Therefore, NO LAWS of ANY kind were nailed to the stake -- legal, ceremonial, sacrificial or any other!

II. What does the parable of the garments and the wine bottles mean and what does it have to do with fasting? (Luke 5:36-39)

A. Jesus was answering a question. "Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?" (Luke 5:33) He used this parable to help answer the question.

B. "No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old." (Luke 5:36)

It doesn't make sense to put a new piece of cloth on an old garment to repair it. After washing, the new cloth will shrink and tear the old.

C. "And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish" (Verse 37).

Strong's Concordance shows the Greek word here translated "bottles" really means "wineskins." It would be ridiculous to put new wine into an old wineskin. An old wineskin has already stretched and the fermentation of new wine would burst it.

D. The new cloth and the new wine symbolize the new way of life Christ was bringing. We must change our total approach to God -- our methods and purposes in fasting, prayer, obedience, etc., when we are converted. "Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

E. Jesus gave these two examples as a lesson in incongruities. It would make as little sense for His disciples to fast while He was there as it would to put a new cloth on an old garment or new wine in an old wineskin. We can't fit God's Truth into our old way of life. For instance, if you try to mix the truth of the Sabbath or Divorce and Remarriage into your old Methodist way of life and concepts, it will indeed seem "hard" and "burdensome" to obey God--and will cause a "rent," etc.

The main reason for fasting is to get closer to God. JESUS' DISCIPLES DIDN'T FAST. They didn't need to fast to get closer to Him because He was already with them. "And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days" (Luke 5:34-35).

F. "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for he

saith, The old is better" (Luke 5:39).

Christ had already explained why His disciples didn't fast at that time. This last analogy was to show why the Pharisees and John's disciples did fast. These men were not ready to accept the example of Christ and His disciples as being right. They didn't want to drink the "new wine"-- the new way of life that Christ was bringing--because they felt the "old wine" of their customs, doctrines and practices was better.

PRAYER, FASTING AND MEDITATION

God has given us certain tools to help us grow, overcome, and draw near to Him. How we use these tools will determine how God can use us -- in His Work now, and in His kingdom in the World Tomorrow! These tools are Bible study, prayer fasting and meditation. In the last class we saw the importance of Bible study for our spiritual growth. Today we are going to see how we should use personal prayer, fasting and meditation to this end.

I. PRAYER

A. Should We Pray

1. God Almighty Is the Source of Everything

Everything we really want and need comes from God! We tend to forget this vital fact in our modern, science-oriented, mechanical, jangling, intellectually vain society. We think in terms of happenstance, influencing men, wheeling and dealing and working the angles about 95% of the time, and look to God only as a kind of last resort when we are really desperate. I'm not talking about the world -- I'm talking about the average member of the Church of God! But God is the source of power, knowledge, progress, advancement, organization, happiness, everything we want! (James 1:17.)

The only source to go to, to solve problems is God! If you have needs, whether spiritual or physical, God is the source of every good gift. He is the source of wisdom, understanding and knowledge (Proverbs 3:6 and James 1:5). He is the source of peace (John 14:27), power, love, and a sound mind (II Timothy 1:7). God is the source of promotion and advancement, not men (Psalms 75:6-7). He is our protector, (Psalms 91) He heals us and forgives us (Psalms 103:3). And when our ways please Him, He grants us favor even with those who hate us (Proverbs 16:7). God promises in Proverbs 6:3 that if you seek His help and guidance in everything you do, He'll make even your thoughts a reality. Do you believe this? You are one of a select few who can talk to and be helped by the Great Creator of

all that exists!

Realize as you go to God that you are going to the source and fountainhead of all things and He is able to bring about what you want and need. Your Father has the power to make it right no matter what your problem, and set you free from guilt, trouble, sickness, trial.

2. You Can Receive Nothing, Except from God

John 3:27 -- Once God calls and begins to work with you, you can receive nothing apart from Him. Realizing this, you should seek God in prayer desperately, urgently as a thirsty man in a desert seeks water (Psalms 63:1-8). Without His direction, guidance, favor, power and help, you can accomplish nothing worthwhile or of lasting value (John 15:5). What you do ultimately accomplish or the spiritual progress you make, or fail to make, is in direct proportion to your realization of this fact (Psalms 127:1).

3. God Requires That We Ask

Matthew 7:7-11 -- God requires that we ask and seek that which we need in order for us to draw near to Him in a close, personal Father-son relationship. He wants us to learn to trust, rely on and look to Him as the source of everything.

Luke 18:1-8 -- In addition, God wants us to learn to persevere in prayer. The parable of the unjust judge shows us this principle. By praying faithfully and steadfastly about problems or needs until God definitely answers one way or another, we build perseverance into our character (I Corinthians 15:58).

B. When Should We Pray

There is nothing permanent about a spiritual mind in a physical body. Therefore, we must renew God's Spirit in us daily (II Corinthians 4:16). God tells us to ask, seek, come to Him positively and persistently -- regularly and often -- to receive the power of His Spirit (Luke 11:5-13). A light bulb is useless unless it is in contact with the source of power, and so are we!

Jesus set the example for us of getting up early in the morning and spending the first part of His day in prayer -- before anything else could interrupt (Mark 1:35), and David said in Psalms 5:3 that he prayed early in the morning.

In Daniel 6:10 and Psalms 55:16-17 Daniel and David, men entrusted with the highest governmental powers of major kingdoms -- very busy men -- set the example for us of praying three times a day -- morning, noon and night. We need to make these examples part of our way of life! Praying people are producing people, without exception! You must get that prayer in! Nothing is more important! The closer you can stay to God and the oftener, the less you will sin and the more you will accomplish. If you really grasp the fact that all you need and want comes from God and your success, failure, happiness, troubles, are in direct proportion to the extent to which you commit everything to Him in believing prayer, you will begin to fear to make plans, or do anything without seeking His counsel and help (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Be instant in prayer. Ask for wisdom before business meetings, protection before traveling, compassion and patience before going home tired to your wife and family at night. You need to pray always and begin to literally walk and talk with God (I Thessalonians 5:17-18).

C. Where Should We Pray

When you deeply understand and feel the need to seek God, you will wind up in some awfully funny places. Often you must improvise to seek God and show him you will pray no matter what! Broom closets, lavatories, back seats of automobiles, all have been used. The important thing is seeing and feeling the urgency of seeking God's help and guidance and power in all you do, then finding a place to pray is just a matter of course.

D. How To Pray

The overall form for your prayers is in Matthew 6:7. Use this outline especially in the longer, early morning prayers. Begin thanking and praising God for life, your calling, your family, home, His mercy and goodness to you. Realize the need for God's Kingdom, and your part in this Work. Ask God to help you fulfill His purpose and do His Work. Then ask Him to help and direct this Work, its leaders, and fill its needs, the needs of His people and your needs. Ask for forgiveness and beseech God to help you really see yourself. Forgive others -- ask for compassion, a spirit of mercy and kindness, patience. Ask God to keep you from temptation -- to help you resist Satan, this world, yourself, and to make you soft, yielded, pliable, humble so that sore trial isn't necessary to make you see the need to change! Ask God to keep Satan and his demons away from this Work and you and to set His angels about those in His Work and you and your family. Then end praising God.

Realize that God knows what you need, but He wants to hear you phrase it and your approach to it. Then realize that God is your Father, and feel it and see Him in all His glory and splendor. How do your children come to you with their requests? Humbly, openly, expectantly -- knowing you will listen and if it's good for them and within your power to do, you'll grant their request, or help them, or comfort them. God has the power you lack, the compassion you lack, the wisdom you lack. He loves you more than you love your little children (Ps. 103:13-14). Go to Him as His little child -- humbly, openly, expectantly -- knowing He will listen and help you (Jas. 5:16).

Fervent, believing prayers get much accomplished. Get up from your prayers confident and believe that God will act and that which you have asked will come to pass. Expect the answer to come! (Hebrews 11:6)

II. FASTING

A. Why Fast

Jesus Christ commanded and taught His disciples to fast. It is the way to real humility, a close relationship with God, and spiritual character and impact! Without fasting, you may mentally admit that you are not much, but you don't really comprehend it -- you don't feel it. Being human, as long as you feel strong and healthy, you will by nature tend to trust in yourself and fail to see the necessity of relying totally on God.

When you fast, you learn how weak, insignificant, useless, worthless you really are. Your pride crumbles, your self-esteem diminishes, your facade is stripped away and you realize that all that stands between you and death is one breath -- and over a very short period of time, a little food and water. Reduced to this, you feel and understand the need for God, and realize that He truly is your life (Deut. 30:20). You feel closer to Him, more humble and yielded, and will much more readily obey Him.

In short, fasting regularly is the only way to remain close, dependent, yielded and responsive to God. With every little success and compliment, and the influence of the "around1" -- this society, our family and friends, we tend to drift more and more toward a feeling of self-sufficiency and rely on God's help and guidance less and less. Fasting brings us back to reality, the recognition of our utter uselessness apart from God and His Spirit (Gal. 6:3).

B. How Often

Fasting regularly requires self-discipline and therefore results in the development of strong character. In this wishy-washy age, men of character and purpose, those willing to sacrifice and endure hardness are few and far between (II Timothy 2:3). Those who will grow spiritually and be used further by God in His Work should fast regularly -- about once a month on an average.

III. MEDITATION

A. What Is Meditation and Why Meditate

Meditation is simply taking a certain theme, problem, scripture and dwelling on it -- asking why, how, when, where and determining what is the end result. Then determining whether or not that is the result you want. It is a matter of looking at things from God's point of view, and is the key to keeping things in their proper perspective.

You can meditate about your job. You can lose it -- will you? What steps can you take to insure your job. Take Leviticus 26:14-16 as an example. Do you know what terror is? Do you want to find out? Read the rest of the chapter. Dwell on it! Roll it over in your mind -- make it personal. This is God's promise to you if You won't change! Do you want it? Of course not!

After meditating and dwelling on it you see much more graphically the need to change. Without meditation, you can understand the scriptures, but you cannot convict yourself of the need for personal change.

B. How To Meditate

Proverbs 4:26 -- Ponder your course of action -- your way of life -- consider the end -- look before you leap: The book of Proverbs is a ready-made key to meditation. These are the conclusions of Solomon through meditation. Read them and reverse the process. Read the conclusion and go back and fill in the thinking and meditation.

Psalms 1:1-6 -- Blessed is the man who savors and loves God's law, because it is good and right and who meditates on it day and night. The ungodly do not meditate and are not grounded and rooted in God's Word, but shallow like chaff.

Joshua 1:8 -- God commands you to meditate on His law day and night, in order that you might obey and do them.

The place to begin is with the Ten Commandments. Let's take number seven for example. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Why not?

Isn't it enjoyable? Yes! Even Hebrews 11:25 says sin is pleasurable for a season. But then what. Read Proverbs 6:23-35; II Samuel 13:14-15,22; Genesis 34:7 and Revelation 21:8. You'll find out that the immediate result may be death at the hands of her irate husband, your reputation ruined and a nagging guilty conscience. Later may come V.D. or a pregnancy further complicating matters. Your own wife finds out and is heartbroken, and your once happy marriage and home is a shambles. Your wife and children no longer can look up to you or trust you. You are destined to carry this scar for the rest of your life. Then what? Well, if not repented of deeply and bitterly, you wind up in the lake of fire.

You simply ask yourself after savoring it all, thinking it all out, pondering it, is it worth it for a few minutes excitement? Ghastly, NO!! Then you think further, trembling by this time -- where does it begin and how can I avoid it at all costs (Matt 5:28)? Christ says it begins with Playboy magazine or a sexy movie, or looking too long at the girl in the office with the short skirt and taking a second to let your mind wander. He tells you further to flee fornication and anything that even looks tempting -- don't play around (I Cor. 6:18). By this time, you are in full agreement and are ready to pray fervently for His help to keep the seventh commandment. But you need to review it in your mind from time to time lest it slip (Heb. 2:1).

C. When To Meditate

Genesis 24:63 -- Isaac was meditating in the evening. That's the best time, because the pressure of the day is over and you are in a reflective mood. But don't just daydream and let your mind wander. Meditate on a definite theme in conjunction with God's Word and law or a personal problem or situation in your life. You'll be amazed at the results and the changes you make in your life!

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT: Before next class read Galatians 5:19-21 which lists the works of the flesh. Look up each word in a dictionary and ponder the meaning of it. Consider how each applies to you personally and how you manifest it in your life. Which ones are more serious, so far as your particular human proclivities and weaknesses are concerned? Meditate on how you can recognize these and overcome them quickly when they begin to crop up. Consider the results of not overcoming these) both in this life and for eternity.

ASSIGNMENTS FOR NEXT CLASS

1. Your Marriage Can Be Happy --Booklet) by Mr. Garner Ted Armstrong.

2. What All Husbands Need to Know!-- The PLAIN TRUTH, June, 1966, by Mr. Roderick C. Meredith.
3. Don't Take Your Marriage for Granted -- The GOOD NEWS, September, 1967, by Mr. Richard F. Plache.
4. How To Build Your Marriage -- The GOOD NEWS, October, 1967, by Mr. Richard F. Plache.