

Casas Adobes Baptist Church  
Sunday Morning, August 28, 2005  
Roger Barrier, Senior Pastor

spiritual growth IMAGE  
SG Series #3  
S-1683

The American Health Organization commissioned the Gallup Organization to poll over 1000 adults in America about their self image.

SLIDE #: The average American woman wants to wear a dress two to four sizes smaller, be an inch taller and weigh eleven pounds less. She would like more muscle tone, curly brown hair and smooth tanned skin. 48% would like to cover up tell-tale signs of aging; 37% would like to change their teeth;

SLIDE #: 34% would like better looking legs; 32% would like to change their bust measurements and 18% would like to make their feet smaller.

SLIDE #: Men wouldn't change a thing. They like themselves just the way they are.

SLIDE #: The average American man wishes he were an inch taller, a pound lighter and more muscular. Men like to think that women wish they had hairier chests and they are right. 36% would like to have more hair. 27% would like to hide signs of aging and 19% would like a different nose.

SLIDE #: Men, on the whole seem less maladjusted than women. Men are either just more naturally contented or more naturally slobs.

The thing that intrigues me about that poll is that the majority of people have something about themselves that they don't like.

Maybe that is you today. You look in the mirror and you hear that song, "I've got to be me and you say, "Really, do I have to?"

Sometimes we believe that our appearance as individuals is lackluster, that our efforts are dumb, that our failures are self-defining—and that somehow God was not having His best day when He made me.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would you change?

SLIDE #: If I could change anything I would like to change to be more like Christ.

God longs for every Christian to grow up to look like Jesus.

SLIDE #: 2 Corinthians 3:18: And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from

the Lord, who is the Spirit.

#### REVIEWING THE CONCEPT OF LORDSHIP

Overhead: Campus Crusade circles

#### REVIEWING THE PROCESS OF IMAGE MAKING

Overhead: Hammer and wedge circles

SLIDE #: Hebrews 5:8-9: Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him

SLIDE #: Romans 8:28-29: And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, Note that the purpose of these verses is to conform us to the image of Christ.

VIDEO: Griffins

Spiritual Parents tend to grieve the loss—that is normal: then they begin looking for all the good things God will bring from this.

They might say, “Thanks God, you will use even this experience to make us look more like Jesus.”

SLIDE #: Miles Stanford: The open secret of healthy spiritual growth is to know and settle upon this fact as set forth in Romans 8:28-29. When we see that all things are working together to make us more and more like the Lord Jesus, we will not be frustrated and upset when some of these “things” are hard, difficult to understand, and often contain an element of death. We will be able to rest in our Lord Jesus and say to our Father, “Thy will be done.” And our constant attitude of faith will be: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15). This is our matriculation to spiritual maturity.

#### THE SANCTIFYING WORK OF THE CROSS

SLIDE #: Matthew 16:24: Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Jesus asked three things of His followers. He invited them to deny themselves, to take up their crosses and to follow Him.

Where did He take His cross?

SLIDE #: To Golgotha. What did He do on it there? He died on it. In contemporary terms Jesus Christ called all followers to get into the electric chair and give up their lives there.

The cross is a basic tool for developing Christians to look like Jesus. To live the life of Jesus Christ—to experience the resurrection power—is predicated on the fact that no one ever had a resurrection until he or she first had a death. Resurrection can only follow a death.

SLIDE #: Philippians 3:10: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Three Simple Truths About Dying On A Cross.

SLIDE #: First, dying on a cross hurts.

SLIDE #: Second, dying on a cross takes time.

SLIDE #: Finally, no one ever committed suicide (self-crucifixion) by dying on a cross.

SLIDE #: No one ever bled to death on a cross. Hanging on a cross with arms outstretched, strength fails rapidly. As the body sags the chest cavity compresses, exhaling carbon dioxide waste products was not possible without pushing up strongly with the feet. As strength ebbed, unable to exhale, the poor soul literally asphyxiated.

This is why the authorities broke the legs of the two thieves who were hanging beside Jesus to hurry their deaths. It was against the Law to have unburied bodies exposed on the Passover. As long as those two men could still push up with their feet, they could live. But, with broken legs, they died quickly. None of Jesus' bones was broken. He was dead.

SLIDE #: A.W. Tozer: "It is doubtful that God has ever used a man greatly until He has first hurt him deeply."

SLIDE #: 1 Peter 1:6: "In this you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These trials have come so that your faith of greater worth than gold which perishes, even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

OVERHEAD: Peter understood the purification process for gold. Gold ore is placed in a crucible. The fire underneath heats the ore until it melts and becomes liquid. Since gold is one of the heaviest elements, it sinks to the bottom and the relatively lighter impurities rose to the top. As the impurities surfaced the goldsmith

skimmed them off the top. He continued the process until he saw his face perfectly reflected in the gold. Pure gold was the result.

According to His will and for His purposes, at the precise times, God places His Children in just the right crucibles. The crucibles come in all shapes and sizes. God then turns up the heat.

As God turns up fire we begin to melt. Jesus Christ is constantly skimming off the impurities. When He sees Himself perfectly reflected in the gold, He turns off the heat.

The crucible is never more than we can handle. God has a thermometer inside every crucible, calibrated with the letters, "L-O-V-E." God watches the flame and the temperature. He makes it just hot enough, for just long enough, to boil away our impurities—so that maturing Christians start looking like Jesus Christ.

OVERHEAD: The processing of Elijah is a classic Biblical example of God using the sanctifying cross to mold a man of God. 1 Kings 17:1 begins with the statement, "Elijah the Tishbite." Tishbe was Elijah's home town. The chapter concludes in verse 24 by describing Elijah as "the man of God."

What happened in those twenty-four verses transformed Elijah from "Elijah the Tishbite," into "Elijah the man of God." What happened?

The chapter begins with Elijah announcing to King Ahab that no rain now dew will fall on the land until Elijah pronounces that rain will come again.

Immediately after the announcement God commanded, "Elijah, go to the Brook Kerith and hide yourself." So he did.

The Hebrew name "Kerith" means "to cut, to peel, to file." God instructed the ravens to bring him meat and potatoes and hot rolls and blueberry pie and iced tea. At least that is what most children are told in Sunday School. But, that is not what happened. Ravens were the scavengers of the desert. There was as drought on. They brought him old-dead sheep and cow carcasses. At least he had plenty of water—until the brook dried up.

Please don't despise the educational experience of a drying brook. Where did God send Elijah? To the brook Kerith. Did God know it was going to dry up? Sure, He did.

Was Elijah in the middle of God's will? Sure, He was. But the brook dried up: "God, this couldn't be the plan. Something surely has gone wrong. Where's my water?"

God replied firmly, "You're exactly where I want you."

Sooner or later maturing Christians come to understand that drying brooks are often nothing more or less than God's purpose to grow and mature His children to look like Jesus. God was using this brook Kerith to make a man of God out of Elijah.

When it was time to leave Kerith, God sent him to Zarephath." There was a smelter in Zarephath; and the town was named after the smelter. Zarephath means "to melt." Ninety miles separated the Brook Kerith from Zarephath—ninety miles with no water. Depending on time of year, ninety miles without water can be fatal. The melting had begun.

God told Elijah that when he arrived in Zarephath a widow would care for him. This was a most humiliating proposition. The Old Testament taught that a man who took food or resources away from a widow during a time of need should be cut off from the nation of Israel. This command was a direct affront to his pride.

In Zarephath God melted Elijah. Those who walk with God long enough often discover that God's trials often come back to back to back to back. They certainly did for Elijah.

"The Shaping of a Disciple" by Dale Martin Stone sums up this sanctifying work of the cross.

SLIDE #: "When God wants to drill a man,  
And thrill a man, and skill a man,  
When God wants to mold a man  
To play for Him the noblest part,

SLIDE #: When He yearns with all His heart  
To build so great and bold a man  
That all the world shall be amazed,  
Then watch God's methods, watch His ways!

SLIDE #: How He ruthlessly perfects  
Whom He royally elects;

How He hammers him and hurts him  
And with mighty blows converts him,

SLIDE #: Making shapes and forms which only  
God Himself can understand,  
Even while his man is crying,  
Lifting a beseeching hand...

SLIDE #: Yet God bends but never breaks  
When man's good He undertakes;  
When He uses whom He chooses,  
And with every purpose fuses

SLIDE #: Man to act, and act to man,  
As it is when He began,  
When God tries His splendor out,  
Man will know what He's about!

Only after God "cut" him up at Kerith and "melted and molded" him at Zarephath that God dared to call him a "man of God."

Elijah was now ready to raise the widow's son back to life. So he did. Elijah was now ready to challenge the prophets of Baal and call down fire on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18).

SLIDE #: Dying on a cross hurts. Dying on a cross also takes time. One Roman historian declared that the longest he had seen anybody hang alive on a cross was six days.

God is in no hurry. Spiritual growth takes time. "He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

SLIDE #: Miles Stanford: "It takes God one hundred years to make a mighty oak. He can turn out a squash in six weeks." Which would you like to be? An oak? Or a squash? Spiritual growth takes time.

Dying on a cross hurts. Dying on a cross takes time.

SLIDE #: Finally, there is no such thing as self-crucifixion.

People commit suicide in all sorts of horrible ways. People shoot themselves, hang themselves, poison themselves, cut their wrists, overdose on drugs, jump off cliffs and drive into bridge abutments. But, no one will ever commit suicide by crucifixion.

Why? The answer is rather simple. Lay down on a cross. If you have the courage, take a big nail, hold both feet in place and drive that nail through your feet. Take another big nail and ram it through your wrist, and with your free hand, drive that hand into the cross. Now two feet and one hand are firmly secured. The last hand cannot be nailed into place. There is no such thing as self crucifixion!

We don't crucify ourselves. We don't engineer our own spiritual processing. Crucifixion is God's work, not ours.

Some are open, submissive and desiring His work in their lives. Those He need only bend a little.

Some have so much pride and self-dependence that God has much breaking ahead.

By the way, no one can speed up God's process; but he or she certainly can slow it down.

It is of utmost importance for growing Christians to lay their lives bare before the Father and say, "Father, here I am. Take me. Use me. Do whatever you will so that I will be a spiritual man or woman, molding me to look like Jesus and clearly live out His life on this earth.

Bible Fellowships surround us with supporting and helpful people during the journey.

## INTERVIEW WITH BRIAN AND TAMARA ALEXANDER

ROGER: Introduce Brian and Tamara: began a Sunday morning Bible Fellowship a year ago June. You choose a rather unique name, didn't you?

BRIAN: Cheers: Community helping each and everyone raise school-age-children. We have a wide range parents of kids aged K-college

ROGER: Tamara, Cheers is a special name. What else is behind it?

Tamara: From the TV program Friends: Song: "A place where everybody knows your name."

Roger: You center your fellowship around three values?

Tamara: No one carries the load alone.  
Everyone knows your name.  
1st century church: love fellowship and unity

Roger: Brian, it is not good to lead a class alone. You have some very special people you share the load with?

Brian: Rick and Terri Alexander: co leaders  
Tom and Jan Griffin: teaching and wisdom  
Ken and Len Goodwillie: missions and good works and deeds  
Brian and Sherry Carswell: hospitality  
Bruce and Karen Andres: socials and involvements outside of Sundays

ROGER: Tamara, you care for people with all kinds of needs, don't you?

TAMARA: Remarried, divorced, singles, etc.

ROGER: Griffins in video, fire, I saw how you all rallied around them. Recently the Carswells had a hell on earth experience: surgery, blood clot, stroke, half skull removed, Brian paralyzed, can't speak, etc. You all rallied around him. Last Sunday was his first Sunday back.

Tamara: Describe his return, every department lining the halls and cheering, Brian shaking hands: emotional moment.

Wouldn't you like to be in an environment where everyone knows your name? No one needs to go through the journey of life alone.

Don Graham shared a story that in the fall of the year, Linda was traveling alone up the

rugged and rugged highway from Alberta to the Yukon. Linda did not know that you don't travel to Whitehorse alone in a rundown Honda Civic, so she set off where normally only four-wheel drives venture.

The first evening she found an inn near a mountain top and asked for a 5 A.M. wake up call so she could get an early start. She didn't understand why the clerk looked surprised at her request until she awoke to a deep fog enshrouding the mountain. Not wanting to look foolish, she got up and went to breakfast. Two truckers invited her to join them and since the place was so small and deserted she felt obliged.

"Where are you headed," one trucker asked.

"Whitehorse."

"In that little Civic! No way! The pass is dangerous in weather like this."

Well, I am determined to try," was Linda's gutsy, if rather ignorant response.

"Then, I guess we're just going to have to hug you," the trucker suggested.

Linda drew back, "There is no way I'm going to let you touch me!"

"Not like that!" both truckers chuckled. "We will put one truck in front of you and one in the rear. That's what we call "hugging." In that way we will get you safely through the mountains."

As we go through the trials and troubles of life. We all need a hug. We don't want to go through life alone.

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