

GENTLE SHEPHERD MINISTRIES

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH ~ MAKING DISCIPLES ~ EQUIPPING THE SAINTS FOR MINISTRY

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The Odyssey

Part 6

THE WRESTLING MATCH

By Rayola Kelley

One of the activities that has worked a great deal into my character involves the wrestling matches I have found myself embroiled in during my spiritual journey. It appears that my initial years as a Christian involved more of a boxing match than a wrestling match where it seemed as if punches of defeat and despair were being thrown at me on a consistent basis. I unsuccessfully struggled with various spiritual issues in my own power. As Jeannette so eloquently stated, "Christians try to live the Christian life without Christ."

Clearly, I was trying to climb every mountain without submitting to the Spirit, lining up to Jesus' example: His disposition of humility, His attitude of meekness, His way of submission, His truth about righteousness, and His life of authority and power. I failed to put on the Lord Jesus Christ so that I would not give way to the lustful ways of the flesh (*Romans 13:14*). Eventually, it got to the point that I did not know which way to veer or when to duck. In the end, the punches of life managed to hit the target. I was brought down to utter hopelessness. However, it all caused me to once again look upward in total brokenness to the Great Physician. He faithfully picked me up and began a restoration process in my life to bring me forth as a new creation.

Before I was saved, I admittedly encountered what I now consider to be wrestling matches with my conscience. There were times I betrayed my sense of right and wrong. Then guilt would slam against my conscience like a fierce storm. It would rage until my logic shut the door on

its encroaching indictment. I did not realize at the time that I was excusing away necessary character and truth as a means to maintain a high opinion of myself. Someone once said that if you have to dress a matter up with excuses, you need to realize you are probably in the wrong. I know in my case my excuses were silencing the moral judgment of my conscience against wrong thoughts and actions. Such excuses put off the inevitable—the reality of me facing the spiritual depravity of my inward condition. The truth is I was terribly wrong before God and I needed Him to save me from complete spiritual ruin.

When I finally received Christ, the first evidence of my salvation was a clean conscience. *Hebrews 10:22*, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." However, later I was to learn that a conscience that has been cleansed, has also been made tender and will quickly become a battleground for the various affronts and assaults from the enemies of the soul.

As I moved forward in spiritual growth, I found that the wrestling match that often ensued was intense. Each opponent wanted to pin me down to the mat of ineffectiveness. It appeared that as I strove to move forward, the opposition tried to cause me to stumble and fall at the point of my testimony. I found myself trying to make the right moves to get around the different obstacles, but the opponents varied in the different wrestling matches, presenting diverse challenges and traps. Occasionally, I found myself wrestling with Satan about matters of the mind. Sometimes, I discovered that I was wrestling with the entanglements of the world, which surrounded the issue of my affections. Then there were times I wrestled with my "old man" over the matters of the heart.

It is easy to say that the battle-

ground of the conscience is about right and wrong. To some degree such an evaluation is right. But, I have learned that the real battle that takes place in the conscience in the spiritual walk comes down to faith. This is not only brought out in *Hebrews 10:22*, where it exhorts us to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, but *Hebrews 10:23* goes on to say, "Let us hold fast, the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)"

We are told we are to walk by faith in *2 Corinthians 5:7*, and *Jude 3* talks about contending for the faith that was first delivered to the saints. In a world that brings so much confusion, we would like to think all matters are black and white. However, we humans are the ones who confuse all issues, causing the blacks and whites of a matter to become grey, allowing for debate and compromise. It is for this reason when people tell me that matters are black and white and there is no debate, I often ask them if their belief is such that they live according to the black and white issues of life. In other words, do they believe a matter enough to obey and do what is right.

When it comes to the faith walk, the most subtle sin is the one of omission: the failure to do what is right (*Romans 14:23; James 4:17*). The sin of omission usually finds its origins in a wrong attitude. We often excuse wrong attitudes in order to justify away honorable conduct. However, Jesus clearly states that if we love Him, we will obey Him (*John 14:15*). Here we are reminded that genuine faith walks hand in hand with love for God (*Galatians 5:6*). How can you have faith towards one whom you do no love or trust?

It is natural for us in our human state to declare a matter as being true, but fail to live it. It is also normal for us to hold onto that which has no real eternal value with great conviction in order to maintain a misty reality that is void of blacks and whites to justify compromises.



It is for these reasons that much of our emphasis and debates about religious matters are like swatting at the gnat of insignificance while swallowing the camel of compromise. It is clear that when one is operating according to the grey curve ball of personal emphasis in accordance to one's way of thinking, it is not a matter of what is right or wrong but whether it fits or goes against his or her personal preferences and desires. This is true for every area of our lives from the issue of attitudes towards morality to lifestyles. It is for this reason that Scriptural instructions that are black and white about a particular matter can be excused away, glossed over, or ignored altogether.

It is in the grey areas that the wrestling match ensues. And, when you tear away the layers of excuses to get down to the real meat of a matter, you will always find that it is the same for a Christian: it is about faith—faith towards God, faith according to His Word, and faith that will be confirmed because of inheriting the promises of God.

The challenge that embroils faith was recently brought to the forefront when a certain individual stated that my faith was no different than the faith of a Mormon or Muslim. The statement did not shock me, but I realized that it is easy to have a wrong misconception about what constitutes faith. There are many pseudo faiths and I have operated in some of them in my Christian life. In fact, I even wrote about my struggles in this area in my book, *"In Search of Real Faith."*

Admittedly, the pseudo faiths that Christians can operate in and those who are unsaved are different. For instance, when you study the fanatic, you see someone who has become insane in his or her ideal of religion. When you encounter individuals who are in a cult, you realize such people have been cleverly indoctrinated in their understanding. For the Christian it is much simpler, it comes down to where he or she is putting his or her faith. Such dependence always rests on that which cannot save and can come down to doctrine, good works, and even church affiliation. However, true faith is not a

matter of insane fanaticism or zealous indoctrination. It is not just a vague idea that is somehow tied into activities, religion, and doctrine. The Christian faith is active, and it always lands on what has been proven or verified as being reliable and true. It is compelling inspiration behind what we as blood-brought Christians do and why we do it. For instance, the reason we have faith towards God is because we perceive that He indeed warrants our confidence, based on what has already been proven through creation, historical and scientific discoveries, and prophecies. It is true that anybody can put his or her faith in anything. It is for this reason that those with a vague understanding or misconception of faith can lump it into one big package.

However, the Bible states that there is only one true faith that must be present in believers (*Ephesians 4:5*). The Apostle warns in *2 Corinthians 13:5* that a person can become reprobate in his or her faith. "Reprobate" means worthless, something you would castaway for there is no substance and value in it. In *2 Timothy 1:5* the Apostle Paul makes reference to unfeigned faith. *Hebrews 11:6* tells us without faith we cannot please God and *Hebrews 11:1* states that our faith in that which is unseen has substance, while *Hebrews 11:6* clarifies the essence of that substance as being, "God is."

With this in mind, I considered the statement that my faith is no different than that of a Muslim or Mormon. If faith is generic this statement would be true. However, the faith I hold to is far from being generic, and I do not think a Muslim or Mormon would appreciate being put into the same category. In fact, each belief system believes that its faith is what distinguishes it from the rest of the religious groups. As a believer in Jesus Christ, I would have to make the same declaration about my faith. After all, if the Christian faith is no different than other beliefs, then why hold to it?

This brings us down to what distinguishes the faith of the different belief systems. Is the faith of a Muslim different than a Mormon? Is the Christian faith different than the faith of a different religion? The answer is yes. They are all different. And, what makes them different? It comes down to who

or what they put their confidence in.

The Muslim does not believe in the same God that I do. The Mormon has a different Jesus than I do. The type of God that is worshipped is going to determine doctrines, attitudes, and conduct. The God that is being adhered to is going to cause followers to put different emphasis and value on different issues.

And how do I know that I have put my faith in the right God? I have to admit this is where true faith comes into focus and where the wrestling match can begin. First of all godly faith is a gift of God; therefore, those who are unsaved do not possess this gift. The initial seeds of faith begin when we hear the Word of God, and those who are unsaved have no intention of believing it whether they hear it or not.

God actually must give us a small measure of faith to act upon His Word as being true. For instance, by faith I receive the Gospel message. Clearly, the measure of faith allows one to choose to believe that he or she can trust what the Bible says (*Romans 10:17; 12:3*). However, the wrestling match begins when what is being said in the Word goes against the grain of personal desires. Faith never has to be activated when we believe something is true; rather, it must be applied when truth runs contrary to what we perceive to be present reality. If it comes from God and His Word, we must choose to believe it is so up front, and flee from going into the arena of carnal logic in order to rid ourselves of any confusion that will immediately arise when our idea of reality is being challenged.

The truth is, my tender conscience reminds me up front that I know what is right, but the flesh tells me that the situation in question should bring peace or pleasure to me, not discomfort or conflict, and my pride states that I have a right to understand or be happy in a matter. Satan can also put his two cents into the situation by implying that it is either insignificant or that God would be too harsh or unreasonable to expect me to not give way to the logic of my conclusions or the experience it is promising me. The Bible calls this wrestling match the war between the spirit and the flesh (*Galatians 5:17*).

I don't know about you but this

Continued Page 5, Column 1

WILL YOU FOLLOW?

By Jeannette Haley

His presence was real—I could feel it in the darkness of my bedroom. At sixteen, my normal bedtime was early on school nights, and this particular night was no exception. As I lay there thinking about Jesus, suddenly I was keenly aware of His sweet presence. My heart responded, “Yes, Lord, I will follow You, wherever You lead, wherever You go, I will follow.” Little did I know what it truly meant to follow Jesus, or the cost involved.

As I look back through the years to that time in my life, what emerges, instead of the perfectly straight, narrow path that was my heart’s desire, I see a crooked, rock-strewn trail, dotted with various pitfalls and snares. There were times when the pathway took dangerous turns, flattening out and blending with the broad ways of the world. Unsuspecting detours, unwelcome interruptions, and overwhelming temptations littered the trail. Occasionally the path narrowed, ascending upwards into glorious, heavenly heights, only to plunge into dark valleys of despair and uncertainty. Raging rivers of opposition and fear, swollen streams of pride, deserts of doubt and frustration, pounding waves of condemnation and destruction, howling winds of many voices, and slippery, icy ridges of hopelessness were there too, seeking to extinguish any resolve to follow Him. Clearly at certain times in the valleys of darkness, as well as in lofty peaks of light the enemy was actively engaged in seeking to hinder my walk with the Lord through sifting, and outright attacks both physically and mentally. My heart’s goal to serve Jesus may have been in the right place, but the priorities of my daily life usually took the lead, which then landed me in cycles of compromise, spiritual leanness, confusion, and failure.

I was young when He called me—totally inexperienced in “church protocol” for missionaries (which in my mind was the only way a female could serve the Lord). Simply put, I was clueless as to what following Jesus really meant, and what *true ministry* is. I figured serving the Lord required somehow “signing up” for a life of Christian service in a church.

There, I reasoned, I could receive the necessary preparation, education, and training. Bible schools or colleges were financially out of the question, the churches I sporadically attended were pathetically lacking in *discipleship*, (although in later years I did attend a great teaching church.) The problem was, after years of teaching and training, there was no outlet granted within that institution to share what the Lord had put upon my heart, so I opened up my home for Bible studies, in spite of the fact that the Church’s leadership frowned upon it. Eventually a great truth began to dawn on me, and that is no Bible school or seminary on earth can even half-way begin to equal the school of the Holy Spirit.

A closer examination of my journey reveals God’s grace and love in certain people He “planted” along the way that had a profound influence upon my life. As beautiful, colorful and varied as wildflowers growing in a mountain meadow, these people shared of themselves the fragrance of invaluable insights gleaned from their own experiences, profound truths, golden encouragement and fresh challenges. To me, these people are a precious treasure. The Lord says, *“I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures”* Proverbs 8:20, 21. Jesus said, *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* All the material treasure on earth put together cannot equal the value of one priceless, eternal, truth. *“Buy [pay the price for] the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding”* Proverbs 23:23. [Emphasis added.]

Salvation may be free, but “working out” that salvation “with fear and trembling” comes with a price. Consider the parable of the ten virgins in *Matthew 25:1-13* who were told to go and “buy oil” because they were unprepared; and, the parable of the slothful, unprofitable servant in verses *14-30* who was rejected by the Lord. From the lips of Jesus also comes this, *“If any man come to me, and hate not [by comparison to his or her love for Christ] his father, and mother, and wife, and children and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever*

doth not bear his cross [death to the self life], and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” [Emphasis added.]

“Follow me,” Jesus said to fishermen Peter and Andrew, *and I will make you fishers of men”* *Matthew 4:19b*. Jesus likewise called John and James when they were with their father in their boat. All of these men immediately left their fishing business, and followed Him. And so it was with all of His disciples when Jesus called them. The first price they paid was leaving their means of living, and personal lifestyles to follow Him as He taught them to become “fishers of men.” He did not teach them how to build a mega church, or how to start a big money-making “ministry.” Jesus did not promise them wealth and health, fame and fortune, or great power and success such as those who love the world strive and struggle to obtain, and sometimes in the name of Christ. On the contrary, God’s Word assures us, *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* *2 Timothy 3:12*.

What should we do then—those of us who hear the call to follow Him? Are we to drop everything and run off to Africa or some other far off place? Of course not! To follow Jesus may, or may not, be the same as it was for the early disciples; nevertheless, there will be changes in our life—changes in our way of living such as our unholy habits, immoral activities, and our selfish way of thinking and doing. There will be changes in our priorities and goals, changes in our understanding and perspective, and changes in our interests and preferences. And, there will be a great love for God’s Word, accompanied by a desire to study it, which is required if one is to follow Jesus. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* *2 Timothy 2:15*.

To follow Christ means to go where He would go (such as apart to

pray), do what He would do (show compassion to others, not having “respect of persons,” and do good works), say what He would say (as the Spirit leads and gives wisdom), give as Christ gave (sacrificially and liberally), and share the Gospel with lost souls wherever He places you. And, should the Lord grant you any measure of “success,” never touch His glory, but give all glory to God.

When we commit to follow the Lord all the days of our life, we will face many challenges and temptations along the way. We will be a target for the enemy, but we will also gain the victory as we study our “warfare manual”—the Word of God—and follow His instructions. There will be times when our flesh grows weary with it all, and our hearts struggle with loneliness, and sorrow over both the state of the world and lost souls, and, yes, even the heaviness and exhaustion that accompanies overwork, along with discouragement when it all seems to be in vain. Our loving Lord understands these things, and encourages us with this promise, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* 1 Corinthians 15:58. Do not overlook this beautiful promise as well, *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises”* Hebrews 6:10-12.

Sometimes when the Lord calls a person to follow Him, there is a tendency for pride to blossom on the false premise that he or she is “extra special” to God. We are warned in *Romans 12:3*, *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”* Human nature being what it is, it is easy for any Christian to fall into the same disposition that the disciples displayed when they argued over who would be greatest in the Kingdom of

God, yet the Lord tells us whom He will look to. *“...but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”* Isaiah 66:2b. Are you broken hearted? Consider this, *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”* Psalm 34:18. What sacrifice pleases God? *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* Psalm 51:17. (See also *Isaiah 57:15*.) And, *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”* Hebrews 13:15.

Are you willing to follow Jesus? Is He calling you to follow Him? If you are His sheep, then He is your Shepherd. You no longer belong to yourself because you have been bought with a price. He will lead you and guide you on the path He has chosen for you to walk daily. Sometimes when you think you should have more activity and action in your life, He will make you to lie down in green pastures in order to teach you how to simply rest in Him, and how to hear the “still, small voice.” When you want a “ministry” that resembles “shooting the rapids,” He may lead you beside the still waters so you learn to come into a place of peace and quiet where you can enjoy sweet communion and fellowship with Him. Through these places of rest and stillness, He will restore your soul from worldly enticements and entanglements, including spiritual error, false doctrines and teaching. In this quiet, secret place He will give you a greater awareness of His reality, and the truth of His Word. Therefore, He is able to lead you in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake; that is, bringing glory to God and none other.

He will lead you through the dark valleys of the shadow of death, where you will experience your own Calvary where the flesh (old man) is crucified *“with the affections and lusts.”* (Galatians 5:24.) In this shadowy place you will fear no evil for He is with you. God’s guidance, correction, and instruction bring protection as you follow Him. Through perilous valleys of evil, you do not fear, for His presence and the authority He has

given you in His name comforts your soul.

There comes a time as you follow Him that He will prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies, or those who oppose *“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27b). This table, prepared by the Lord Himself will supply all that you need of the Bread of Life (as the showbread in the Tabernacle, representing Christ) and the living Word of God to not only satisfy your own soul with the joy of His life, but also with the riches of His wisdom, providing substance for you to impart to longing hearts, and hungry souls. The table He prepares contains the unleavened Bread of Life and the new wine of the Spirit wherein is communion and fellowship with the Lord Jesus. The Living Water is there for all who thirst, to drink and never thirst again. He will anoint your head with oil, or overflowing grace upon your life with the heavenly anointing that brings forth healing and deliverance to those held captive by Satan. (*“And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing”* Isaiah 10:27.) God will cause your cup, that perhaps formerly ran over with sin, fear and bitterness to run over with faith, hope and love.

When Jesus is your shepherd, and when you are His sheep, following Him in faith and trust, His goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life. His goodness and mercy shall preserve your soul and spirit through all of earth’s trials and tribulations until He calls you one last time. This call issued from the throne of the Most High God is the call you have been waiting for—the call to at last come home where you will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Are you willing to follow? ☩



conflict begins with a tiny seed of doubt. The doubt may seem small but it becomes an inflamed nuisance as soon as logic is applied to it. From doubt and logic, a person will easily slide into speculation as to the why's of a matter. Why would God deem such a matter as being wrong when it seems so right to me? After all, every person perceives that he or she is educated enough to know if something is wrong, intelligent enough to make sure that it will not get out of hand, and smart enough to come out on top. As one speculates the why's about a matter, the individual must conclude that he or she is an exception to the rule rather than part of that which should discipline every Christian life.

It is from this peak of intellectual arrogance that things begin to spin out of control for a person. In my case, I would begin to feel the heat of the fiery ovens. Once I would logic away the why, then I had to address the character of God. Instead of believing God means what He says, and says what He means, I had to convince myself that since God is loving and compassionate, His instructions could be somewhat adjusted to personal matters. However, God does not change His mind about that which is spiritual, moral, and upright. It is at the point of such nagging knowledge that anxiety or worry would enter the scene. What if God means what He says and ends up doing contrary to what I think He should do? Will such a situation prove me wrong? It is at this point that the nagging reality that I was not in control of a matter would begin to consume me with fear that would eventually manifest itself in anger towards my environment. At this point I felt myself falling into the fiery ovens of uncertainty and consequences.

In the first years of my Christian life, my logic won out most of the time. The problem is that logic will take you into some type of unbelief. Unbelief holds a certain amount of deception to it. I consoled myself that I was doing things right in certain areas even though hypocrisy reigned in others. The combination simply produced a self-righteous individual who was quick to point out the discrepancies of others, while justifying or defending per-

sonal deviances. Ultimately, I simply became hard-nosed and stiff-necked. This resulted in the knock-out punches of life to shatter my hard nose so that God could adjust my attitude, as well as make my stiff neck flexible so I could humble myself before Him.

Through the years I have felt the fiery ovens of consequences, but I also have felt the ovens that tried and established my faith on the real Rock. My faith towards God has led me through some tough places of loss, despair, sorrow, sickness, and uncertainty. As I faced the different fiery trials of my faith, I have learned to choose to fight the good fight of faith up front. The struggle that ensues proves to be very temporary as I question myself. Will I allow my tender conscience to call on my will to resolve to walk in the way of faith, or will my fleshly personal desires win over my conscience? Will my carnal logic raise its head to excuse away the ways of righteousness, or will my devotion and love toward God choose submission to the Spirit and the way of reasonable and acceptable worship? Since faith is a choice, it is up to me to choose the way of faith. The right choice will guide each obedient step into inheriting the promises of God (*Hebrews 6:12*).

In closing, Jesus asked if He would find real faith when He came back (*Luke 18:8*). Once again, if faith was generic, it would not be the center of our Lord's concern. This brings me back to the original question: Is the faith I put in the true God of heaven and earth different from the faith a Muslim and Mormon displays? Let me answer it this way. The one thing I am sure about my faith is that at the end of it is salvation (*1 Peter 1:6-9*). Can the Muslim and the Mormon (or any other cult) be assured of such a promise? More importantly, can the faith you adhere to make such a declaration? †

"There is no such thing as biblical dating. If you're dating, I don't care who you're dating, you're out of God's will. If you're a young man and you're dating, you're out of God's will. Period. You can come talk to me about it later, you can be mad if you want. But that's just the truth. There's no such thing as recreational dating. There is biblical courtship, there is no recreational dating." ~ Paul Washer

RAYOLA'S Q & A CORNER

IMAGINATIONS, GOOD OR BAD?

Q: *In the beginning of one of your newsletters, it says that the second front of the battle is the imagination. I struggle with this in my situation (which is beyond my control), where it seems I am wasting my life. Finding my potential in the Lord, going to school, and finding a godly woman to start a family. I find myself day dreaming on these things a lot, especially the later. Is this bad?*

A: Destructive imaginations are those that have been perverted. Perverted imaginations will always cause people to become indifferent to present reality. There are two ways to pervert imaginations: living in fantasies and pornography.

The main reason people operate in fantasies and pornography is because they want a different reality, however, the fruits that come from these two different arenas vary. After all, we can direct the outcome of fantasies on the screen of our minds. They can cause such feelings as happiness, but there is no reality to them. Add the reality of life, human nature, and circumstances and all such fantasies can go up in the smoke of disillusionment. Unrealized fantasies often end in torment of what could be, but may never be.

Pornography will often end in obsession with the profane and complacency toward present reality. It causes the imagination to swing from the branches of fleshly, sensationalistic ecstasy. Such ecstasy begins to drive the person to act out the imagination to experience the anticipated results. However, the experience never measures up to the expectation, leaving one feeling empty, resulting in frustration and anger.

You are making reference to dreams. Everyone has dreams about their future. However, there are different types of dreams. There are dreams that are in touch with the present pursuits being realized in the future. For example, one of my dreams (goals) for many years was to finish my books. Each day I have moved towards seeing my dream

Continued Pg. 6, Column 1

"Imaginations" Con't. from Pg. 5

come true and it has according to the grace of God.

It is important to point out that God puts desires in our heart, but we must look to Him to keep them in perspective and to bring them about according to His timing and will. We must also realize He is the only One that brings such dreams forth, but they will always be for His glory and not for our self-serving expectations.

The other type of dream is detached from reality. It finds its inspiration in the imagination. Our imagination can pervert these dreams in a negative way because they can become useless fantasy. Even though such dreams might give a person some hope or pleasure, the end of such hope and comfort is grave disappointment because life will always throw curveballs our way.

This is why the Bible tells us what to think upon in *Philippians 4:8*. What we think on will determine the attitude we take on in our present situation. It will also determine how we view and handle our present reality. However, to discipline what we think upon, we must first bring all of our thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ (*2 Corinthians 10:5*). Our thought life must be properly channeled by the reality of Christ and His design for our life.

I don't know what the Lord has in mind for you. Perhaps it is all that you dream for, but do not let such dreams become the source of your hope. Jesus is your hope. You must learn to embrace the life you have before you because it could be God's way of preparing you for the challenges that will come when you have the opportunity to pursue the desires of your heart. Keep in mind two important things: when God has His way in a matter, life is never wasted, and unless He ordains a matter, the best of dreams will end in a total nightmare.

You must discern the origin of your dreams and where your hope ultimately comes to rest upon. If it is on the actual idea of the dream, then most likely you will end up disillusioned, but if it comes to abiding rest in Christ, you will learn how to trust each day and your future to the One who holds it all in His hands. †

GETTING HIGH ON WORSHIP MUSIC— Part Two

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"Rock and roll aims for liberation and transcendence, EROTICIZING THE SPIRITUAL AND SPIRITUALIZING THE EROTIC, because that is its ecumenical birthright" (Robert Palmer, *Rock & Roll an Unruly History*, p. 72).

"Rock and roll is fun, it's full of energy ... It's naughty" (Tina Turner, cited in *Rock Facts, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum*, p. 12).

"Rock and roll was something that's hardcore, rough and wild and sweaty and wet and just loose" (Patti Labelle, cited in *Rock Facts, Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum*, p.17).

ROCKERS ARE SIMPLY IN LOVE WITH ROCK MUSIC

Kind reader, did you consider the previous quotes carefully? What do these, the movers and shakers of rock and roll, know about rock music that the "Christian rockers" do not know?

In fact, I believe "Christian rockers" know these things very well, but they will not admit it, perhaps not even to themselves, because such an admission would not fit into their agenda of being able to hold onto their beloved rock music with one hand and supposedly hold to the holy Christ with the other.

After Dan Lucarini spent years using rock music as a praise and worship leader, the Lord led him out of it and he wrote the excellent book *Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement: Confessions of a Former Worship Leader*.

Looking back, he testified of what was really going on in his life after the veneer of piety and the high wall of arguments in defense of rock music was removed: "During our weekly practices, the praise band would often switch into a rock and roll 'jam session'. As the leader, I could have discouraged this but I CHOSE INSTEAD TO INDULGE MY OWN

APPETITE FOR ROCK AND ROLL. ... As I look back on this, I see how hard it was to restrain the rock music beast and prevent it from taking over completely" (Lucarini, *Why I Left*, p.31)

"At the seeker-sensitive churches we attended, the music was ostensibly designed for the unchurched but that excuse was really just a smoke screen obscuring our real reason for bringing CCM into the service. THE BOTTOM LINE WAS THAT WE SIMPLY WANTED TO USE OUR MUSIC IN THE CHURCH..." (Lucarini, pp. 62, 63)

Few are willing to be this candid, but whether Christian rockers admit it or not, the fact is that rock has been [sexual activity] music since it blasted on the scene in the 1950s. Its rhythms are deliberately designed to stimulate physical sensuality above all else.

FLESH AND SPIRIT, LIGHT AND DARKNESS CANNOT BE MIXED

The flesh is contrary to the Spirit. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other..." (Galatians 5:17).

Likewise, light cannot mix with darkness. Holiness cannot affiliate with unholiness. Truth cannot countenance error. God has no fellowship with the devil. Does the Word of God not confirm this?

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

[To be continued in the August issue of Gentle Shepherd Ministries Newsletter]

"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" Isa. 46:b