

in his consecration and was happy in his Christian life. And God provided for him to the day of his death.”

God does not promise that all faithful believers will grow rich. But we have the assurance that our Maker will supply life's necessities. Christ gave everything for us. Let's give our hearts completely to Him now. Discover the joy of sharing Christ with others and of growing in His wonderful grace.

Dear Father: I thank You for Your promise of joyful living. Thank You for Your grace and Your love which enable me to grow. Help me share You in the way I live, give, and act. May I always let Jesus live His perfect life in me. Keep me ready until Jesus comes. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

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DISCOVER

THE SECRET OF GROWTH THROUGH SHARING

Larry was enjoying pleasant conversation, Japanese tea, and rice crackers at Mr. Komori's house when the other guests began taking out their Bibles. They all looked at him expectantly. "Could you please give us our study now?" Mr. Komori asked politely.

Larry almost choked on his tea. He'd thought this get-together was just to have fun. And now he couldn't think

of a thing to say.

Larry had actually taught many Bible classes at the Christian English language school in Japan where he worked. But they were all well-planned. He could give out information on the Bible with ease. But to just talk about God spontaneously . . . that was different.

Larry had heard all the Bible stories since childhood. But they meant very little to him on a personal basis. He'd been doing things He knew were wrong in God's eyes. So he kept his distance. How could he talk to others about a God he himself didn't really know?

Now, sitting there on the sofa, surrounded by expectant people, his charade was about to collapse. In that moment of fear, a verse flashed into his mind, something about the Holy Spirit giving us words to say when we are brought before people to give witness (Luke 12:12). He uttered a desperate prayer for help and latched onto the most familiar story he could think of: the Prodigal Son.

As he described how much God loves even those who wander away from Him, Larry found himself speaking straight from the heart. His words were sinking in. For the first time in his life Larry realized how much God loved him.

That night Larry knelt by his bed and committed his life to a God who'd finally become real. Sharing God's love had made it much more than just a familiar abstraction. It was now a fact that overwhelmed him.



DECIDED IN HIS HEART to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER.—2 Corinthians 9:5-7.

Offerings are a matter of individual decision. They are used for financing the spread of the gospel in addition to the tithe which is used exclusively to support the gospel ministry.

God's plan for systematic giving aids both the spread of the gospel and our own Christian growth. Jesus promises you:

“Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.”—Luke 6:38.

Believers have proven over and over that you can't out-give God.

H.M.S. Richards once related this experience:

“A lifelong gambler attended my meetings in Los Angeles, and I shall never forget the time I talked with him alone in the rear of the auditorium. He took a roll of bills from his pocket, \$500, and gave them all to me, saying, ‘This is my first tithe.’

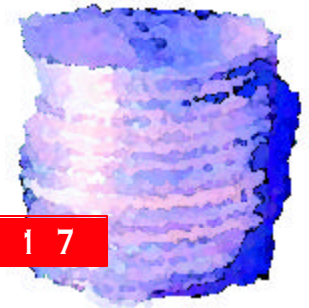
“The man was not well, and he had done nothing but gamble for 30 or 40 years, so I said, ‘How are you going to live?’

“He replied, ‘I have only five or six dollars left, but this other belongs to God.’

“Then I asked, ‘What will you do?’

“I don't know,’ he answered, ‘but I know that I must pay my tithe to God, and He will take care of me.’

“And God certainly did. The man's repentance was sincere. He went all the way



“The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”—

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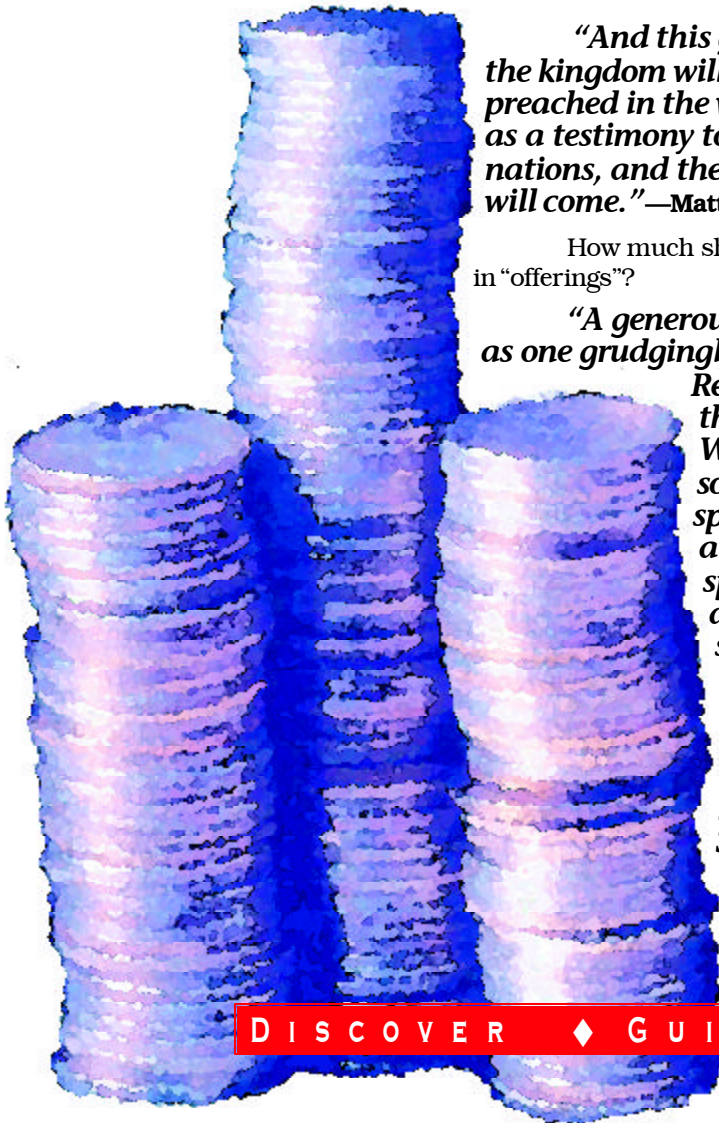
Corinthians 9:14.

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”—Matthew 24:14.

How much should we give in “offerings”?

“A generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. EACH MAN SHOULD GIVE WHAT HE HAS



1. JESUS CHALLENGES US TO GROW BY SHARING

As Jesus was about to return to heaven, He commissioned the disciples to be His personal representatives:

“YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES . . . to the ends of the earth.”—Acts 1:8. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

The disciples had spent three-and-a-half years taking in Christ’s words and actions, and finally His death and resurrection.

“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”—Acts 2:32.

When Christ’s followers gave their hearts unreservedly to Him at Pentecost, the risen Christ transformed their lives through the power of the Spirit. They became witnesses, not only to Christ’s bodily resurrection and ascension, but also to His resurrection power that had changed their lives.

As Christians we are also witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus because we have experienced His renewing power in our own lives.

“But because of his great love for us, GOD, who is rich in mercy, MADE US ALIVE WITH CHRIST even WHEN WE WERE DEAD IN TRANSGRESSIONS—it is by grace you have been saved. AND GOD RAISED US UP WITH CHRIST and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, IN

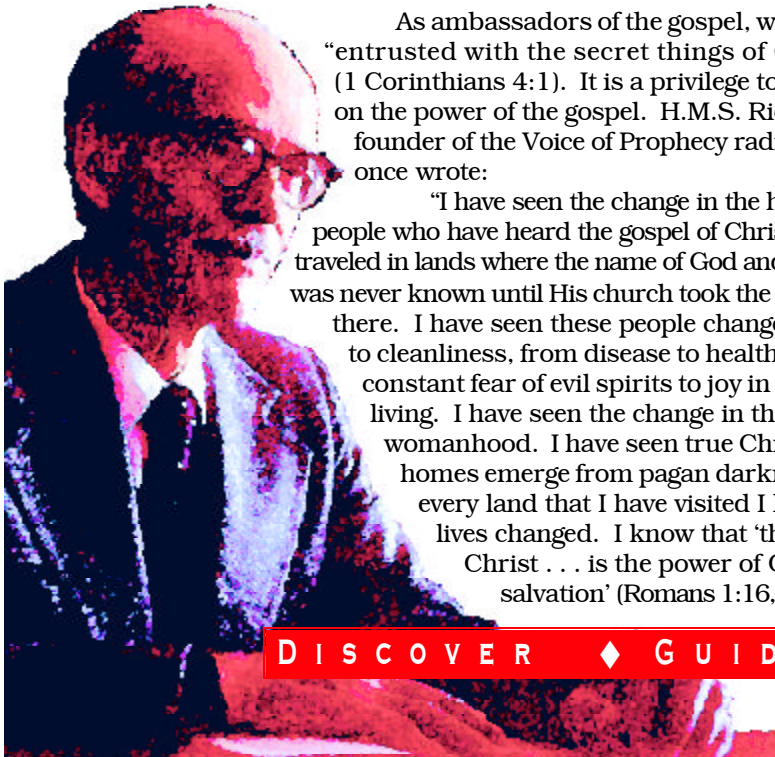
ORDER THAT . . . HE MIGHT SHOW THE INCOMPARABLE RICHES OF HIS GRACE, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”—Ephesians 2:4-7.

We have been made alive with Christ, so we can demonstrate the riches of His grace. Jesus asks His followers to take the good news of what He can do in a human life to all the world, and He promises to go with us as we do so.

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . , teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And SURELY I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, to the very end of the age.”—Matthew 28:19-20.

As ambassadors of the gospel, we are “entrusted with the secret things of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1). It is a privilege to help pass on the power of the gospel. H.M.S. Richards, the founder of the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry, once wrote:

“I have seen the change in the hearts of people who have heard the gospel of Christ. I have traveled in lands where the name of God and of Christ was never known until His church took the gospel there. I have seen these people changed from filth to cleanliness, from disease to health, from constant fear of evil spirits to joy in Christian living. I have seen the change in the status of womanhood. I have seen true Christian homes emerge from pagan darkness. In every land that I have visited I have seen lives changed. I know that ‘the gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation’ (Romans 1:16, KJV.)



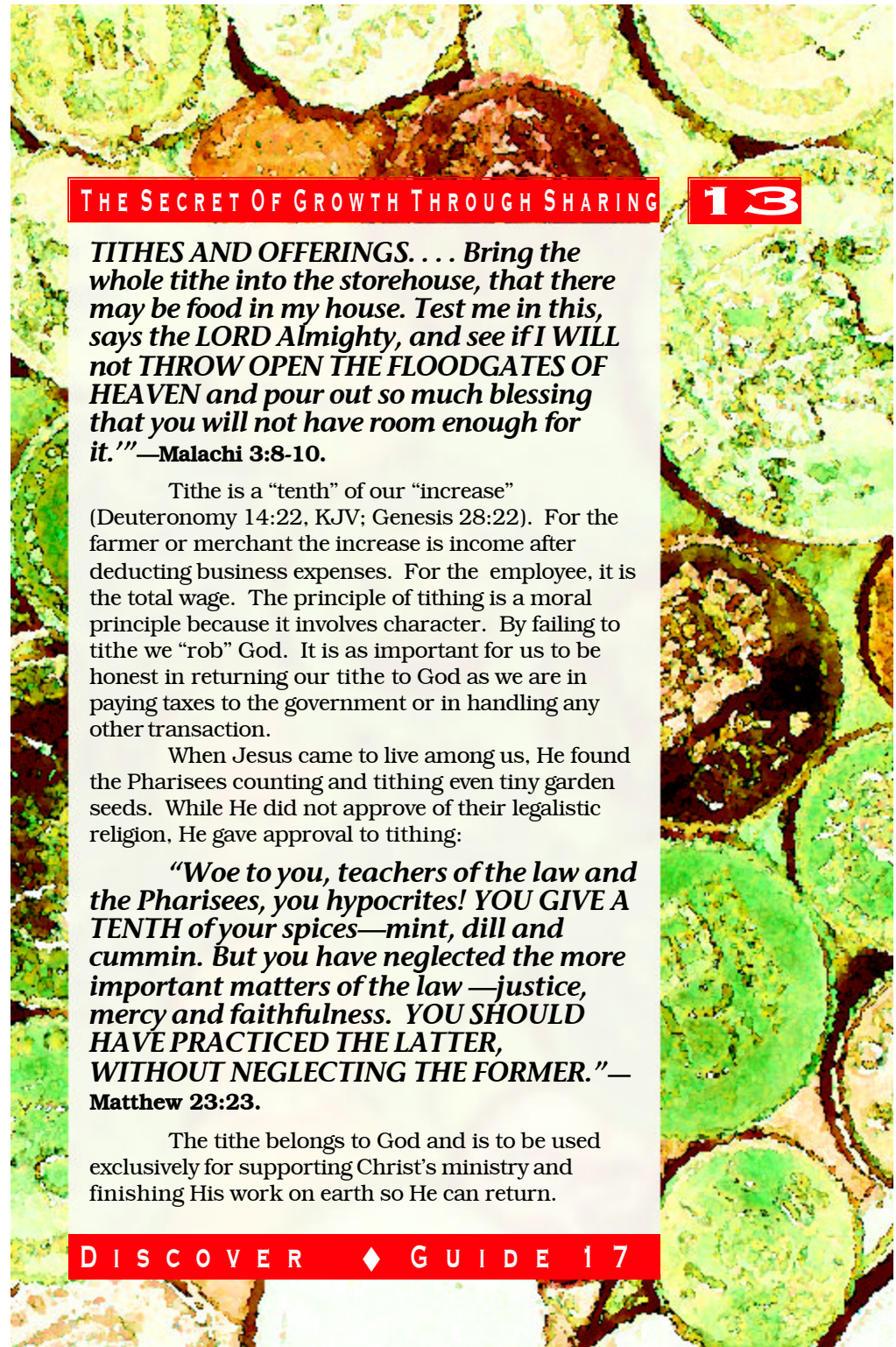
TITHES AND OFFERINGS. . . . Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I WILL not THROW OPEN THE FLOODGATES OF HEAVEN and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”—Malachi 3:8-10.

Tithe is a “tenth” of our “increase” (Deuteronomy 14:22, KJV; Genesis 28:22). For the farmer or merchant the increase is income after deducting business expenses. For the employee, it is the total wage. The principle of tithing is a moral principle because it involves character. By failing to tithe we “rob” God. It is as important for us to be honest in returning our tithe to God as we are in paying taxes to the government or in handling any other transaction.

When Jesus came to live among us, He found the Pharisees counting and tithing even tiny garden seeds. While He did not approve of their legalistic religion, He gave approval to tithing:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and the Pharisees, you hypocrites! YOU GIVE A TENTH of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law —justice, mercy and faithfulness. YOU SHOULD HAVE PRACTICED THE LATTER, WITHOUT NEGLECTING THE FORMER.”—Matthew 23:23.

The tithe belongs to God and is to be used exclusively for supporting Christ’s ministry and finishing His work on earth so He can return.



Some people work a lifetime to amass a fortune—only to see it disappear in plummeting stock prices or business failures. But what we give to advance God’s kingdom retains an eternal value.

How much of what we own really belongs to God?

“The earth is the LORD’S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it.”—Psalm 24:1, 2.

“‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the LORD Almighty.”—Haggai 2:8.

We belong to God both because He created us and because He rescued us from our sins, bought us with His blood.

“You are not your own; you were BOUGHT at a price.”—1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

How much of what we possess did God give us?

“He himself gives all men life and breath and EVERYTHING else.”—Acts 17:25.

“Remember the LORD your God, for it is HE who GIVES YOU THE ABILITY TO PRODUCE WEALTH.”—Deuteronomy 8:18.

The crucified and risen Lord invites us to share with Him in extending the gospel to others. How much does he ask us to give to finance that divine mission?

“‘Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.’ But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ ‘In

I know that when the church proclaims the gospel message, changes take place in human hearts and in human homes, and they are visible in the lives of those who respond to its appeal.”

We all have a part to play in this exciting work. God has given to us weak human beings a special role, because sharing is a vital part of our growth. In order for faith to remain healthy, it must be expressed. As Larry discovered so dramatically, talking about God helps make Him real for us too. The act of expressing our faith helps us experience it more fully. *Witnessing helps us grow.*

Besides sharing verbally with people, here are some other ways we can witness:

2. WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE LIVE

A young man who’d grown up in an abusive home once observed: “I looked at my parents who by their example gave me a distorted image of God; I never had the example of someone with skin on who loves me.” People around us desperately need someone who will give them a healthy picture of God. They need someone “with skin on” who will demonstrate godly qualities.

Our most powerful sermon is often simply the way we live. Before a person cares how much you know, they must know how much you care. Peter urges us:

“LIVE SUCH GOOD LIVES among the pagans [non-Christians] that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD DEEDS AND GLORIFY GOD on the day he visits us. . . . To this you were called, because CHRIST SUFFERED FOR

YOU, LEAVING YOU AN EXAMPLE, THAT YOU SHOULD FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS.—
1 Peter 2:12, 21.

Since “Christ suffered” for us at Calvary, we have an example of sacrificial love very close at hand. That love, reproduced in us as loving acts to others, can become a powerful force drawing unbelievers into the arms of Christ.

3. WE SHARE CHRIST BECAUSE OF THE WAY WE THINK

Often it seems so easy for us to fall prey to the temptations of “the world, the flesh, and the devil.” But Jesus was “tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Why did He succeed where so many fail?

When the devil ambushed Jesus in the wilderness with his appeals to appetite, pride, and presumption, Jesus fought back successfully by quoting from Scripture (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). Christ was prepared ahead of time because He had filled His mind with Bible truths. That’s where the battle is won or lost—in our minds. Usually we only think of resisting temptation after it has already saturated our thoughts and all but overwhelmed us. We’ll lose most of those battles. But we can be successful if we attack habits at their point of origin—in our thought patterns.

“For as [a person] thinketh in his heart, so is he.”—Proverbs 23:7, KJV.

Growing Christians think heavenward. They know God is bigger than the problems around them. They concentrate on the healthy qualities they are

path of life; YOU WILL FILL ME WITH JOY in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.—Psalm 16:11.

6. WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE GIVE

As he was about to baptize a new believer, the late Pastor H.M.S. Richards noticed that the man still had a well-filled billfold in his pocket. Richards asked if he’d forgotten to leave his money in the dressing room. “My pocketbook and I will be baptized together,” the man then explained. He had caught the true spirit of Christianity—giving to help others. Christians grow by giving, and that is why “Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” (Acts 20:35).

How do we make an investment in the bank of heaven?

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But STORE UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”—

Matthew 6:19-21.

wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness.”—2 Corinthians 6:14.

Christ does, of course, want us to keep reaching out to non-Christian friends. Personal relationships are the primary means through which faith is shared. Just make sure that your associates are not dragging you back into the old way of life. If you feel you need to hide your faith while in a certain relationship—something’s wrong.

What we take into our lives, even the entertainment we choose, does have an impact on our spiritual life. We need to be conscious of what we’re feeding our minds.

“I will set before my eyes no vile thing.”—Psalm 101:3.

More and more of the entertainment around us seems bent toward the graphically violent and the sexually explicit. We live in an X-rated world. But there is still an enormous amount of excellent material out there that remains almost untouched. There is plenty in art and literature and music that explores profound truths and touches our deepest emotions. If we remain in a vacuum, the worst will flood in to fill it. This is especially true of our children. But if we feed our souls on the best, the worst won’t be able to drag us down to its level.

Holding to higher standards in the things we let into our homes and minds won’t narrow our lives. We’ll be greatly broadened if we focus on all that is true, all that is admirable, all that is excellent. The Christian has more to make him happy than anyone else.

“You have made known to me the

trying to acquire rather than just the bad things they’re trying to avoid.

“Rejoice in the Lord always, . . . in everything, BY PRAYER and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is TRUE, whatever is NOBLE, whatever is RIGHT, whatever is PURE, whatever is LOVELY, whatever is ADMIRABLE—if anything is EXCELLENT or PRAISEWORTHY—think about such things . . . put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”—Philippians 4:4, 6-9.

What we feed our minds makes all the difference. Garbage in, garbage out. God’s Word in, God’s life out.

4. WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE LOOK

As a representative of Christ, the Christian will be modest even about how he or she looks, avoiding all kinds of extremes. God says of the Christian:

“If any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over . . . when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, THE UNFADING BEAUTY OF A GENTLE

AND QUIET SPIRIT, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way . . . [those] who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful.—1 Peter 3:1-5.

“Dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for . . . [those] who profess to worship God.”—1 Timothy 2:9-10.

Simplicity in dress and adornment has always marked genuine Christ-likeness. So Christians tend to avoid both faddish extremes and the peculiar garb of the fanatic. Simple good taste goes a long way. Ideally, others should be attracted to us not by the statement we make about fashion, but by the statement our lives make about Jesus.

“Blessed are the meek [humble], for they will inherit the earth.”—Matthew 5:5.

5. WE SHARE CHRIST BY THE WAY WE ACT

The historian Edward Gibbon tells us that when Galerius sacked the camp of the Persians, a shining leather bag filled with pearls fell into the hands of a looting soldier. This man carefully preserved the useful bag—but threw away the precious pearls.

People who cling to whatever superficial thrills the world can offer up, while discarding Jesus, the Pearl of Great Price, and the eternal kingdom which Christ offers, are in even worse shape than the looting soldier. It's not just a fortune that can slip through our

hands, but eternal salvation. So Scripture warns us:

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man [appetite] the lust of his eyes [love of the world] and the boasting of what he has and does [pride]—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” — 1 John 2:15-17.

Satan works hard to gold-plate the most destructive sins and hype the worst habits. You would think sin had the world's greatest public relations program. Why do prostitutes on TV shows often seem so lovely and well-adjusted? We seldom see anyone who resembles the abused, scarred, sallow-faced creatures who walk the streets at night. Why do mostly young, beautiful, hard-working, satisfied, intensely happy people populate beer commercials? If it really “doesn't get any better than this,” what are they trying to numb with alcohol? We seldom see anyone who resembles those pathetic figures stumbling out of the liquor store with a paper sack in their hands.

The most destructive pleasures seem to have acquired the loudest voices and the most graphic images these days. We can't just buy whatever the world is selling. Christ asks us to be discriminating: “wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16, KJV).

We also have to be careful of associations that compromise our Christian principles:

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and