



Would they call you at 2 am?! After a family left the church the senior pastor asked his young associate one question: *If this family faced a crisis at 2 am, would they call you?* Who would you call? Who would call you? Who wouldn't?!

THE GREATEST.

MATTHEW 22:37-40

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

ANGER. MANAGEMENT.

PROVERBS 15:1 "A SOFT ANSWER TURNS AWAY WRATH, BUT A HARSH WORD STIRS UP ANGER."

A church member of mine once sent a letter to the Conference with 30+ signatures, complaining how I and the head elder had failed to lead the church properly. I was fuming on the inside - mind you, he had not talked to me in person! #Matthew 18?! So, I decided to pay him a visit and let him have a piece (not peace!) of my mind! But I didn't get to say a word. He confessed to me how much stress he had been under and that his girlfriend was pregnant. *I prayed with him and left relieved that God had shut my mouth!*

When a church board opposed a healthy cooking ministry I wanted to invite I almost stomped out of the meeting; I didn't. Later a church member thanked me for not giving up on them - like previous pastors had! *Close call!* 🙏

EXAMPLE: CHRIST. LIKE.

"Jesus, in His treatment of Thomas, gave His followers a lesson regarding the manner in which they should treat those who have doubts upon religious truth, and who make those doubts prominent. **He did not overwhelm Thomas with words of reproach, nor did He enter into a controversy with him; but, with marked condescension and tenderness, He revealed Himself unto the doubting one.** Thomas had taken a most unreasonable position, in dictating the only conditions of his faith; **but Jesus, by His generous love and consideration, broke down all the barriers he had raised.** Persistent controversy will seldom weaken unbelief, but rather put it upon self-defense, where it will find new support and excuse. Jesus, revealed in His love and mercy as the crucified Saviour, will bring from many once unwilling lips the acknowledgment of Thomas, "My Lord, and my God" (3SP 222).

RESTORATION

JESUS' PROPHETIC MODEL OF FORGIVENESS

- **Jesus restored Peter** not on the level of his mistake but on his level of love! → Daniel 9:24-27: 457 BC → 34 AD = 490 years
- **Matthew 18:21-23:** Peter: forgive up to 7 times? Jesus: 70x7 → 490 years! | Kingdom: "settle accounts" → investigative judgment
- **Daily ❤️ Check:** 1 Corinthians 13 · Revelation 2:4 ("first love") · "God is Love" (1 John 4:8,16) - can they tell?!

CROSS. CARE.

LUKE 23:34 "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY DO."

Forgiveness of one's enemy is the measure of perfection!

Matthew 5:44-48 "... I say to you, love your enemies, **bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,** 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? **48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**" → **John 13:35!**

QUALITY. CONTROL.

CASE STUDY: JOSEPH. #HEBREWS 12:15 "NO ROOT OF BITTERNESS"

Summer 1990. Quality Control at Bosch. One morning I decided to attach the crane hook to the conveyor line - and push up! The entire line bent upwards 🙏! My boss got his tool box, reassembled the line to original factory specification, and walked off - without saying a word. And I - I still had my summer job! Talk about forbearance!

🔑 *"Cartilage has many functions, including the ability to resist compressive forces, enhance bone resilience, and provide support on bony areas where there is a need for flexibility" (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/>).*

Galatians 6:1 "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, **you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness,** considering yourself lest you also be tempted."

"Pure love is simple in its operations, and separate from every other principle of action. When combined with earthly motives and selfish interests, it ceases to be pure. God considers more with how much love we work, than the amount we do. Love is a heavenly attribute. The natural heart cannot originate it. This heavenly plant only flourishes where Christ reigns supreme. Where love exists, there is power and truth in the life. Love does good and nothing but good. Those who have love bear fruit unto holiness, and in the end everlasting life" (YI, January 13, 1898).

"The Holy Spirit is wanting in our work. Nothing frightens me more than to see the spirit of variance manifested by our brethren. We are on dangerous ground when we cannot meet together like Christians, and courteously examine controverted points" (1SM 411).

"Your love be made perfect" (COL 67.3) . . . *Is my heart ❤️ a fist 🖊️ or an open hand 🙏?*

Am I shouting with my silence?! Would Jesus unfriend anybody?! Am I leaving the door open for someone to come back home?!

"And He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him. And He ordained twelve, that they should be with Him, and that He might send them forth to preach." {290.1} It was under the trees of Eden that the first dwellers on earth had chosen their sanctuary. There Christ had communed with the father of mankind. When banished from Paradise, our first parents still worshipped in the fields and groves, and there Christ met them with the gospel of His grace. . . . In training His disciples, Jesus chose to withdraw from the confusion of the city to the quiet of the fields and hills, as more in harmony with the lessons of self-abnegation He desired to teach them. And during His ministry He loved to gather the people about Him under the blue heavens, on some grassy hillside, or on the beach beside the lake. Here, surrounded by the works of His own creation, He could turn the thoughts of His hearers from the artificial to the natural. In the growth and development of nature were revealed the principles of His kingdom. As men should lift up their eyes to the hills of God, and behold the wonderful works of His hands, they could learn precious lessons of divine truth. Christ's teaching would be repeated to them in the things of nature. So it is with all who go into the fields with Christ in their hearts. They will feel themselves surrounded with a holy influence. The things of nature take up the parables of our Lord, and repeat His counsels. **By communion with God in nature, the mind is uplifted, and the heart finds rest.** {291.1} The first step was now to be taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to be His representative on earth. No costly sanctuary was at their command, but the Saviour led His disciples to the retreat He loved, and in their minds the sacred experiences of that day were forever linked with the beauty of mountain and vale and sea. {291.2} Jesus had called His disciples that He might send them forth as His witnesses, to declare to the world what they had seen and heard of Him. Their office was the most important to which human beings had ever been called, and was second only to that of Christ Himself. They were to be workers together with God for the saving of the world. As in the Old Testament the twelve patriarchs stand as representatives of Israel, so the twelve apostles were to stand as representatives of the gospel church. {291.3} The Saviour knew the character of the men whom He had chosen; all their weaknesses and errors were open before Him; He knew the perils through which they must pass, the responsibility that would rest upon them; and His heart yearned over these chosen ones. Alone upon a mountain near the Sea of Galilee He spent the entire night in prayer for them, while they were sleeping at the foot of the mountain. With the first light of dawn He summoned them to meet Him; for He had something of importance to communicate to them. {291.4} These disciples had been for some time associated with Jesus in active labor. John and James, Andrew and Peter, with Philip, Nathanael, and Matthew, had been more closely connected with Him than the others, and had witnessed more of His miracles. Peter, James, and John stood in still nearer relationship to Him. They were almost constantly with Him, witnessing His miracles, and hearing His words. John pressed into still closer intimacy with Jesus, so that he is distinguished as the one whom Jesus loved. The Saviour loved them all, but John's was the most receptive spirit. He was younger than the others, and with more of the child's confiding trust he opened his heart to Jesus. Thus he came more into sympathy with Christ, and through him the Saviour's deepest spiritual teaching was communicated to His people. {292.1} . . . In happy contrast to Philip's unbelief was the childlike trust of Nathanael. He was a man of intensely earnest nature, one whose faith took hold upon unseen realities. Yet Philip was a student in the school of Christ, and the divine Teacher bore patiently with his unbelief and dullness. When the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the disciples, Philip became a teacher after the divine order. He knew whereof he spoke, and he taught with an assurance that carried conviction to the hearers. {293.1} . . . The disciples were anxious that Judas should become one of their number. He was of commanding appearance, a man of keen discernment and executive ability, and they commended him to Jesus as one who would greatly assist Him in His work. They were surprised that Jesus received him so coolly. {294.1} . . . Yet when Judas joined the disciples, he was not insensible to the beauty of the character of Christ. He felt the influence of that divine power which was drawing souls to the Saviour. He who came not to break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax would not repulse this soul while even one desire was reaching toward the light. The Saviour read the heart of Judas; He knew the depths of iniquity to which, unless delivered by the grace of God, Judas would sink. In connecting this man with Himself, He placed him where he might, day by day, be brought in contact with the outflowing of His own unselfish love. If he would open his heart to Christ, divine grace would banish the demon of selfishness, and even Judas might become a subject of the kingdom of God. {294.3} God takes men as they are, with the human elements in their character, and trains them for His service, if they will be disciplined and learn of Him. They are not chosen because they are perfect, but notwithstanding their imperfections, that through the knowledge and practice of the truth, through the grace of Christ, they may become transformed into His image. {294.4} Judas had the same opportunities as had the other disciples. He listened to the same precious lessons. But the practice of the truth, which Christ required, was at variance with the desires and purposes of Judas, and he would not yield his ideas in order to receive wisdom from Heaven. {294.5} **How tenderly the Saviour dealt with him who was to be His betrayer! In His teaching, Jesus dwelt upon principles of benevolence that struck at the very root of covetousness.** He presented before Judas the heinous character of greed, and many a time the disciple realized that his character had been portrayed, and his sin pointed out; but he would not confess and forsake his unrighteousness. He was self-sufficient, and instead of resisting temptation, he continued to follow his fraudulent practices. **Christ was before him, a living example of what he must become if he reaped the benefit of the divine mediation and ministry;** but lesson after lesson fell unheeded on the ears of Judas. {295.1} **Jesus dealt him no sharp rebuke for his covetousness, but with divine patience bore with this erring man, even while giving him evidence that He read his heart as an open book.** He presented before him the highest incentives for right doing; and in rejecting the light of Heaven, Judas would be without excuse. {295.2} Instead of walking in the light, Judas chose to retain his defects. Evil desires, revengeful passions, dark and sullen thoughts, were cherished, until Satan had full control of the man. Judas became a representative of the enemy of Christ. {295.3} When he came into association with Jesus, he had some precious traits of character that might have been made a blessing to the church. If he had been willing to wear the yoke of Christ, he might have been among the chief of the apostles; but he hardened his heart when his defects were pointed out, and in pride and rebellion chose his own selfish ambitions, and thus unfitted himself for the work that God would have given him to do. {295.4} **All the disciples had serious faults when Jesus called them to His service.** Even John, who came into closest association with the meek and lowly One, was not himself naturally meek and yielding. He and his brother were called "the sons of thunder." While they were with Jesus, any slight shown to Him aroused their indignation and combativeness. Evil temper, revenge, the spirit of criticism, were all in the beloved disciple. He was proud, and ambitious to be first in the kingdom of God. **But day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience. He opened his heart to the divine influence, and became not only a hearer but a doer of the Saviour's words.** Self was hid in Christ. He learned to wear the yoke of Christ and to bear His burden. {295.5} Jesus reproved His disciples. He warned and cautioned them; but John and his brethren did not leave Him; they chose Jesus, notwithstanding the reproofs. The Saviour did not withdraw from them because of their weakness and errors. They continued to the end to share His trials and to learn the lessons of His life. **By beholding Christ, they became transformed in character.** {296.1} The apostles differed widely in habits and disposition. There were the publican, Levi-Matthew, and the fiery zealot Simon, the uncompromising hater of the authority of Rome; the generous, impulsive Peter, and the mean-spirited Judas; Thomas, truehearted, yet timid and fearful, Philip, slow of heart, and inclined to doubt, and the ambitious, outspoken sons of Zebedee, with their brethren. These were brought together, with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit. They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension. His love would lead to love for one another; the lessons of the Master would lead to the harmonizing of all differences, bringing the disciples into unity, till they would be of one mind and one judgment. **Christ is the great center, and they would approach one another just in proportion as they approached the center.** {296.2} When Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord's disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry. {296.3}