

CHAPTER 1

Searing Holiness, Forgiving Love

*Characteristic One. Genuine Christians embrace both God's holiness and God's Love
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

Husband and wife will have time of joy as well as a time of struggle. Either we intended or unintended fight one another, we committed sin against one another. Sometimes, we caused each other a great pain, although we did not commit adultery. We did not grasp the biblical truth about God's love and His holiness. The best way to solve our conflict between husband and wife is to turn to God depend on His guidance. God always opens His mighty arm to embrace our sin and absorbs our evil action into His divine heart. God wants us to walk with Him again in openness and reconciliation, He accepts the punishment we deserve. The marriage life will joyful with God's presence, if both husband and wife truly embrace both God's love and His holiness.

The modern churches want to forget sin and neglect repentance and sanctification, they want to accept God partially. They substitute a new God and a new covenant who offer them forgiveness without holiness.

We like to write our own guidelines for happiness and replace holiness with happiness. When we mess up sometimes, we prefer a divine Buddy who kindly smiles at our sin. The biblical God calls us to think over and discover again who God really is. As we praise God for His unconditional love, He tells us to bow respectfully before His searing holiness. If the church truly

understand God, sin, and salvation, its strength then will be recovered.

In many different ways modern people deny the biblical claim that all people are in rebellion against God's commandment. They claimed that persons are totally determined by their environment. Nothing is universally right or wrong, since the ethical ideas are merely the relativistic by product of economic life, evolution, or our early childhood. Today culture adds its own sad spin to this prevailing relativism. Psychology support us that what ever feels good is right, we have a right to self-fulfillment. We can find someone else who will meet our need, if our spouse is not.

Without forgiveness, marriage cannot be healed, children and parents cannot be reconciled, ethnic hostilities cannot be transcended, economic classes cannot be united. Without forgiveness, oppression and retaliation, violence and counter violence can only grow large. The cross only is a satisfactory solution to the brokenness, violence, and agony of our world.

The agony of broken homes in our hurting society can be ended with forgiveness and the transforming work of the Spirit. The ghastly ethnic and racial divisions that threaten to tear today's world apart can cease with forgiveness, repentance, and redeemed lifestyle. The economic divisions that condemn some to deadly starvation and the suffocating affluence can give way to wholeness for all with forgiveness, and the justice that flows from Christ's compassion. With forgiveness, all things, some now and later, can be made whole.

CHAPTER 2
Conformed to Christ
Characteristic Two: Genuine Christians Live like Jesus
(Ronald J. Sider.)

Christians often imitate the world, they are self-centered, sexually promiscuous, racist and materialistic. Like their neighbor, Christians worship wealth, commit adultery, file for divorce, and destroy the environment.

Because Christians live daily lives don't match the teaching of Jesus, so people who want to accept Jesus Christ turned away. Christians are called to imitate Christ rather than the world. Be holy, because I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16 NIV). Roman Christians were called by Paul that they were to surrender themselves unconditionally to Christ, and turn from the world. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Roman 12:2 NIV).

Christianity is strong only when we totally embrace Christ. Modern churches partially accept Jesus, they accept Him either as mediator or model, not both. Many emphasize His death for our sin, but fail to imitate His actions. Others urge us to follow his example of love and social conduct, but they forget about His Cross.

Central part of Jesus' mission on earth was to preach good news, to care for the poor, and to heal people both spiritual and physical illness. Jesus loved the rich as well as the poor, but He wanted them to follow His and Zacchaeus' example. He preached Zacchaeus for giving half

of his wealth to the poor, there for Zacchaeus costly shared his wealth with the needy (Luke 19:8-9).

Even if people object to women as ordained church leader, they cannot escape the radical message from Jesus that women should never be treated as second-class citizen. Jesus allowed a sinful women washed his feet with her tears, wiped with her hair, kissed and perfumed them. In His day, Jesus preached against His cultures' attitudes toward women.

If we observe a little boy looked up a famous athlete, we will see him tries to walk, to talk, and to dress like his super star. If we approach Jesus as a little boy looked up his superstar, we too can live up to Jesus' example through His Spirit and power. Mother Teresa also lived like Jesus, when she talked about the poor and the sanctity of human life, her words had power.

We can only knee down in worship and pray for the power to live as Jesus lived, sin we know that He is truly King of kings and Lord of lords. We truly, personally know Jesus, we don't just know about Him. By faith, we have a living and have personal relationship with Him. Jesus must be the central passion of our lives.

CHAPTER 3

Renewing Marriage and Family

*Characteristic Three: Genuine Christians keep their marriage covenants and put children career
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

Today we feel like living on another world. In the United States, many marriages are attacked by adultery. Half of all recent marriages will dissolve in divorce. The children, lower then 50 percent, will spend their full childhood living with both their mother and father. About one-third of all children today are born to single parents. Children of divorced or unmarried parents suffer, they need their parents, both father and mother.

Sadly, Christians break their marriage vows almost as often as their non-Christian neighbors. The Christian family would stand out in stunning starkness and appealing beauty, if they followed Jesus rather than the world in our marriages and sexual practices.

Today cheap divorce is widespread. Many married couples give up too easily. It is so sad of those who have been divorced. Temptation and hardship bombard every marriage. It is hardly to imagine that many people face enormous hurt and difficult spouses. Christian community should stand beside those who rightly separate from abusive spouses in appropriate time. God always eager to forgive all who repent, no matter what our sin.

The modern media have undermined sexual integrity and marriage vow, they broadcast every where with the persuasive power. Today sexual revolution spread the poison everywhere. Every one should find their own self-fulfillment. Some people think, if spouse no longer meets their needs, they should find someone who does. Marriage covenant and parental responsibility

are overridden by self-realization.

The work and family separated because of the industrial revolution since early nineteenth century. The mother stayed home to care for the children, while the father left home to work in factories and offices miles from home. The children lost close emotional ties with their fathers and the fathers lost their parenting opportunities.

In the other ways, the family undermined by technology and modern science. Previously, people surrounded by relatives and friends who supported their marriages, they lived in one community all their lives. Today people began to move around the country or even the world to find a job that fit their specialized skills because of easy transportation, scientific specialization and modern education. Instead of spending time with spouse and children, making money become more important to them.

Wholesome family life and faithful marriage are harder today than before. If our society is to survive, we have to find the way to restore marriage and family. Christian faith has the resources to restore the family. If we are willing to surrender unconditionally to God's way, we can joy of lifelong marriage covenant.

Covenant must replace contract; the cross of self-sacrifice must replace personal self-realization; and individualism must give away to community. These three biblical truths, covenant, cross, and church community are the essential for Christian marriage.

The only foundation strong enough to bring us the deep joy of continuing growth and lasting love over a lifetime of mutual submission and sacrifice. The biblical covenant before God, is the foundation of Christian marriage. No matter what the world says, let us keep our vows.

The mystery at the heart of the gospel is only one solution the marriage matter. It is the cross and a costly forgiveness that really work. God embraces the punishment we deserve

because He loves us in spite of our sinful failures.

The only way for husbands and wives to rediscover reconciliation and joy after betrayal is to accept the pain and forgive. The only way to stay happily married for a lifetime comes from costly forgiveness. We can not pretend that we have not been hurt. We can not wish it away, but we can only embrace the pain and forgive. As we reinforce each other, repentance and forgiveness strengthen, the healing and reconciliation will gradually grow.

Wedding covenant, Christian marriage, is not merely a solemn pledge between God and two persons. It is a communal vow witnessed by our brothers and sisters in Christ. Christians enjoy the love and support of the church, our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ promise to help us.

Counseling is very important in Christian marriage. We need premarital counseling as well as post- marital counseling. There are several ways that Christian community could strengthen marriage and family. Our youth and children need to be taught about beauty and joy of lifelong. We need to encourage each other to get counseling when necessary by sharing our marriage struggle in small fellowship groups.

We have to take the time and invest the energy to communicate honestly, repent when we fail, forgive each other, grow together, find delight in each other, and submit to each other. We must keep our vows even in the tough times, and increase our treasure families time. Our joyful, wholesome families should demonstrate powerfully that the Creator's design for sex and marriage is finally the only way to enduring happiness, peace, and self-fulfillment.

CHAPTER 4

Immersed in Prayer, Filled with the Spirit

Characteristic Four: Genuine Christians nurture daily spiritual renewal and live in the power of the Spirit
(Ronald J. Sider.)

Because of the giddy pace of modern life, the prevailing secularism sneaks into our hearts, the regular prayer and devotional reading seems hard today. Many "important urgent" things are piled up each morning, it is hardly to force ourselves to spare little time in daily devotion. It is rationally wrong to neglect our regular prayer.

The only way to survive is to spend time each morning with the Lord, so He will give us the strength to get through the day. We need to talk to God about our pain, begging Him for forgiveness, and asking Him for strength. If our daily conversation with our Lord become joyful, it will be easier for us to set time aside at the beginning of the day for personal devotions.

One reason we need to pray regularly is Jesus himself took time away from His urgent ministry and had his quiet time with His heavenly Father. Because we know who Jesus is, so we should make our personal prayer a high priority.

Because we are engaged in a life-and-death battle with Satan, so our prayer is important. Apostle Paul is talking about two related things, evil social systems and distorted cultural values that twist and corrupt people. Paul means that behind these two things the demonic spiritual powers try to fight and destroy God's good creation. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6:12 NIV). Satan can only be

defeated through our prayer.

Today spiritual warfare is important. We need to pray effectively to bind the demonic powers, work hard to reduce sex and violence in the media, and reform unfair economic patterns. Because we understand Paul's teaching on spirit warfare, we will do the same.

Because we are weak and needy, we plead with God to send the Holy Spirit sweeping through our hearts and minds. With the Spirit amazing things happen, without Spirit Christians fail. Praying and depending on the Spirit are inseparable.

The modern church needs to take the Holy Spirit as seriously as Jesus and the apostles did. To accomplish His mission, Jesus needed the Spirit (Matt.12:28; Luke 4:1-8). Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit, when He prepared to leave His disciples (John 14:15-18). The fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit are essential for the church. "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23).

Although God wants Christians to be strong in the Spirit, the proper understanding of this strength is important. Sometimes Christians blasphemously try to use it for their selfish purposes, they want to possess and control this awesome divine power. We should understand the gifts that the Spirit bestows, they are not ours to possess and manipulate. We must constantly remind ourselves and others that the glory does not belong to us, but to God. The Spirit seeks to guide us day by day in our personal lives and in the work of the church. The Spirit also desires to illuminate Scripture so our thinking is more thoroughly biblical.

Our minds must unconditionally submit to the Lord. It does not mean we stop thinking, but we should pray without ceasing and seek the Spirit's guidance every moment.

CHAPTER 5

A Little Picture of Heaven

*Characteristic Five: Genuine Christians nurture strive to make the church
a little picture of what heaven will be like
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

Apostle John paints a glorious picture of heaven in the last book of the Bible. "After I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language..." (Rev. 7:9). All tears, hunger, violence, and prejudice have fled.

On the other hand, racial prejudice and ethnic hostility simmer everywhere when we look around our planet earth. The poorest starve while the rich seek fulfillment in greater material abundance. These two pictures show a reconciled humanity in heaven and a warring chaos on earth.

We all know striking example of both. Protestants and Catholics have murdered each other for several decades in Northern Ireland. Syrian Orthodox and Croatian Catholics rape and kill each other. Most congregation divide along lines of race and class. There is no simple answer. These kinds of church misunderstand the Gospel and has no power to transform society.

The Gospel is not only forgiveness, it is Good News of the dawning kingdom. Breaking down sinful dividing walls is at the core of the Gospel, believing women and men of every race, tribe are one body in Christ. God wants the church to be little picture of what heaven will be like.

Disobedient rejection of God's purpose in Christ is a heretical, racism in the church is a denial of the Gospel. Apostle Paul rebuked Peter for "not acting in line with the truth of the

gospel" (Gal. 2:14). Whoever claims to be a Christian should take Jesus' definition of the gospel seriously. When Jesus defined the Good News of the kingdom, He used the word "gospel" (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43). Jesus' definition prevents us from reducing the gospel to a cheap one-way ticket to heaven.

Jesus meant that the Messiah and His kingdom was actually arriving, when He announced the gospel of the kingdom. The prophets had promised that the Messiah would bring both sweeping forgiveness and redeemed community. There would be peace, justice for the poor, and wholeness in the Messianic time (Isa 9:1-6; 11:1-9; Jer. 51:31-43).

Jesus longs for us to become a little picture of what heaven will be like. Jesus must sweep when He sees how his body today conform to racial prejudice, nationalistic arrogance, sexual discrimination, and class bias. Jesus promised that if His disciples loved each other the way He loved them, then "everyone will know that you are my disciples" (John 13:34-36).

Clearly, God wants the church to be a preliminary picture of the kingdom that Christ will bring. God intends to purge sin so that "the glory and honor of the nations will be brought" into the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:26).

The gap between rich and poor continues to widen. While we get richer, many desperately poor people live at the edge of survival, millions starve every year. Among those desperate people are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Christ calls his wealthy followers to share with poor sisters and brothers in the way first century Christians did.

The congregation can truly become more faithful picture of heaven if we pray for revival, recover the clear biblical theology of the church, and establish new structures in local congregation and in the broader body. We need to have daily prayer, regular encouragement, and honest challenge of trusted sisters and brothers to live like Christ.

Small groups are one of the best structures for conquering individualism, defying surrounding society, and watching over one another in love. If any local congregation can develop well-led small groups that most members attend regularly for a significant length of time, surely they will dramatically be transformed by our Heavenly Father.

Any church that is predominantly of one race or class should develop a long term partnership free of paternalism with a different kind of church. All the Christian in an area could rent convention centers for glorious multicultural Christian celebrations, may be a quarterly basis.

We should offer help to non-Christians as well as Christians. Our intention also should be to become the kind of church the New Testament mentioned. Our goal should simply be for the church to be the church, and should be to let God create within entire Christian community of what heaven will be like.

CHAPTER 6

Living both Body and Soul

*Characteristic Six: Genuine Christians love the whole person the way Jesus did
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

The most important reasons for the weakness of the modern church are they accept one half of Christian mission and neglect the other. Social gospel cares about the physical needs of people, while Evangelical claims that a living relationship with God in Christ is the most important. According to Jesus and the Scripture, the church is called to do both social action, and also evangelism.

Clearly, in every Gospel, Jesus' tender concern for the whole person, body and soul. Jesus preached and healed, He satisfied sick hearts and sick bodies. "Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness" (Mat. 9:35).

Jesus loved whole people, He healed people because He had compassion for them. "When the Lord saw her, His heart went out to her, and he said, "Don't cry" (Luke 7:13). Because His heart ached for this lonely weeping widow, Jesus raised the boy, her son.

According to the Gospels, Jesus spent a lot of time healing physical sickness. But He didn't mean life on earth was the most important thing. Jesus taught that even if one gained everything in this world, it would not be worth losing one's relationship with God (Mar. 8:36).

If we carefully look at the Gospels, we will find that Jesus spent about as much time preaching as He did ministering to people's physical needs. Jesus is our perfect model, because

He is truly God in the flesh. Since Jesus cared for the whole person, so we should obediently do the same.

Because Jesus was the Creator, he cared about whole persons. Jesus knew we have been created both bodies and souls. Any view that reduces us exclusively to mere bodies or mere souls is simply unbiblical. We are created for a relationship with God, and we are invited to live with His presence eternally.

Faithful Christians nourish a passion for evangelism at the center of their prayers and action. Nothing is more important than sharing Jesus with those who do not yet know Him.

We evangelize because of God's astounding love (John 3:16). We share the gospel because we understand the uniqueness of Christ (Col. 1:19). We tell others about the Savior because Jesus is the only way to salvation (Acts 4:12). We proclaim the gospel in submission to his last command (Mat. 28:19-20). We spread the Good News because Jesus is the best gift we have to offer. We also announce the gospel because we know people are lost, both now and forever, without Jesus Christ (Mat. 25:41). We invite people to Christ because in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has drawn back the curtain and offered us a little glimpse of the future (Rev. 11:15). Finally, we share the gospel so that the whole world may be full of God's glory (Phil. 2:11).

Our broken world needs nothing as much as the gospel. Faithful Christian gladly embrace both evangelism and social concern.

CHAPTER 7

Must We Knock Down Other People's Candle?

Characteristic Seven: Genuine Christians mourn church divisions and embrace all who confess Jesus as God and Savior

(Ronald J. Sider.)

There is just one body of Christ, one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9), one salvation (Acts 4:12), one revelation (1 Cor. 2:6-10), one Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:17), and one Lord. Therefore, Christians are called to unity and love as well as to truth. There are many different gifts in the body, but our common purpose is to build up that one body "until we all reach unity in the faith" (Eph. 4:13).

Jesus established one church, the New Testament uses the singular word "church" to refer to all who believe in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:32; Gal. 1:13). Apostle Paul begged the Christians in Corinth to "agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought" (1 Cor. 1:10).

Jesus pleaded with God to give Christians such complete unity that the world may believe, He specifically prays for them through the ages. Jesus' final prayer for the church is the call to love and unity in the body of Christ. If we care about our Lord's final prayer, we will resolve anew to work for Christian unity.

Repentance is the place to start to make Christian unity an urgent priority. We must cry out together from all the shattered fragments of Christ's divided body. "O Lord, our divisions are a scandal, an abomination, a damnable sin against you. Have mercy upon us." There is only

one faithful conclusion for serious Christian. We must resolve to make Christian unity, unless we want to defy Jesus' final prayer.

Christians should not refuse to participate in ecumenical dialogue and fellowship with other Christians who accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior. Christians must work hard and pray sincerely to overcome the denominational divisions, ethical arguments, and theological disagreements that divide Christians.

The best thing, perhaps, we can do is meditate long over how much all major branches of Christianity have in common. We all believe that there is one God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and confess that Jesus Christ is true God and true man. Although Protestant, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic Christians disagree on some significant points, on the central points all these Christian traditions agree.

In addition to those central doctrine, we share basic components of the biblical worldview.

However, there are much more we may still debate the details. But there are fundamental biblical perspectives on persons and society that Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic share.

We keep clearly in mind that we stand together in our belief in the trinity, the deity of Jesus Christ, and salvation through Christ alone. Some claim to be Christians and reject the most basic Christian confession that Jesus is true God as well as true man. Many are the nominal Christians whose faith seems to be more ethnic or cultural identity than genuine faith. These issues and many more demand discussions.

Nominal Christians exist in almost every denomination, not only in Eastern Orthodox circle and Roman Catholic. We should invite these lukewarm Christians to experience the joy of a personal living relationship with Christ. God might have given us the glorious privilege of helping them move to a vital, living faith, or He may want them to work for renewal within their own tradition.

Sometimes for the sake of Christian unity, we should change what we do even when it is valid in itself. We can be truly one in Christ and gladly affirm the right of other Christians who use musical styles, liturgical practices and artistic forms that differ from ours.

Surely, we cannot abandon what we believe is clear biblical teaching just because other Christians disagree. Even as we confess that denominations are not God's will, we should gladly accept different denominations.

Sadly we are still too stubborn and sinful to reach the theological unity that the God of the Scriptures desires. Until we can reach greater agreement, we must affirm their temporary, partial legitimacy. Therefore, we must live in the temporary, makeshift shelters we call denominations.

We could express Christian unity in new ways at least five different levels as follows;

1. Closer personal friendship with other Christians.
2. Cooperative coalitions with other Christians to shape public life.
3. Cooperative, informal activities for specifically Christian endeavors.
4. Formal fellowship or councils of congregations and denominations.
5. Organizational union.

It is our risen Lord who promises that Christians can now by His mighty power display such astonishing love and unity that the world may believe.

CHAPTER 8

Bedroom, Boardroom, and Ballot Box

*Characteristic Eight: Genuine Christians confess that Jesus is Lord of politics and economics
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

Many modern Christians do not understand that Jesus is the Lord of politics and economics. They think that church and maybe sexual practices belong to the spiritual realm, politics and economics belong to the secular.

This what it means Jesus is Lord of all. Every area of life should submit to Christ and divine revelation because the theology is the queen of all learning. In theory, Christian faith is to shape every part of society, we need to practice what we preached.

With the astounding success of modern science everything slowly changed. Scientists explained many things that medieval people had believed as miracles. For example, plagues and comets did not happen from God's angry. Some thinkers in the eighteen century claimed that everything has a scientific explanation. Nothing is real or true except that what science can do is measure or describe. Obviously, God can not be measured in the laboratory. God and miracles are replaced by new science and technology.

They failed to see how the effect of science and technology was slowly undermining the Christians claim that Christ is Lord of all. They quietly reduced Christian faith to a small private world of personal belief.

Science and technology proved to be very powerful. The muscles of horses and men are replaced by first water power, then fuel, and then nuclear reactors. Further more, powerful

microchips and sophisticated computers have changed almost everything.

Many people feel that what they need is rational scientific thought in order to run the economy, the government. God seems unnecessary in scientific labs, since factories run by robots and computers.

As long as the religious faith has no interfering with politics and economics, but keep it privately at home or at church would be okay.

Since God cares for the poor, Christians should not accept the way things are without asking whether everybody benefits fairly from the new abundance.

It is only the worldly, liberal Christians, who mess with politics and worry about whether the economic system might displease God. Only secular Christians try to improve the world by changing social structures. They believe that only through individual conversion the world can be changed.

Jesus was "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion" (Eph 1:21). People of Caesar believe Jesus' final words, and sought to govern every area of their lives by the standards dawning of His kingdom. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18).

"God owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps. 50:10). The Bible clearly teaches that God is the Lord of all, includes politics and economics. Both politics and economics submit to God's command.

Because Jesus is the Lord of politics and economics, we should seek for His will. We should adopt a biblically balanced agenda rather than a one-sided preoccupation with just one issue. According to the scriptures, we should care about the poor and the family, sanctify of life and peace, the unborn and creation, and freedom and justice. We should seek a genuinely biblical approach to each issue. We need to do the same for every issue in public life.

In order to apply biblical principles to our complex modern society, we have to examine history, economics, sociology, and politics. We must study modern world as well as the Bible. If we want to implement biblical principles in society to day, careful social analysis is essential. There is no substitute for sophisticate socioeconomic analysis

We need to study on specific political problems to help Christian today integrate biblical principles and accurate social analysis. We don't need the help of those Christians who are thinking responsibly about political issues, but we need the assistance of organizations like Evangelicals for social action.

As Christians, we need to get ethical principle from God's revelation. We should learn from anyone who thinks carefully and gets the "facts" straight. According to the study of this lesson, there are Seven Short Principles for a Political Philosophy that should take into consideration.

1. Everybody should have power, not just a few.
- 2, The poor deserve special care.
3. Every person should have the capital to earn a decent living.
4. Maintain the balance between freedom and justice.
5. Always think globally.
6. Protect the separation of church an state.
7. Understand the limits of politics.

Genuinely Christian politicians would stand out from the crowd, they would be the voice of the voiceless and a model of limitations of politics and integrity. Real Christian politicians would add a humility and civility to political debate, they would not demonize opponents. Biblical people never forget that the Lord they worship is the Sovereign of politics, they will never let political action take the place of evangelism.

CHAPTER 9

Moving from the Chair to the Floor

*Characteristic Nine: Genuine Christians share God's special concern for the poor
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

Successful wealthy ministry, influential congregation should not silence over the plight of the poor. Today, one person in four in our world lives and dies without hearing about Jesus. About fifty thousand people enter eternity every day without being told about God's love in Christ. The numbers of those who dies without knowing Christ are almost as the same as those whose lives are ravaged by hunger, malnutrition, and starvation.

Christian should know that one-fifth to one-quarter of their neighbors are both desperately poor and live their lives without knowing of our Lord. Christians make up 33 percent of the world's population, and annually receive 66 percent of the world's total income. We donate about 2.5 percent to charity, and spend 97 percent of that on ourselves. The gap between rich and poor has been growing since 1960.

Four biblical truths about the poor are essential for today faithful church.

1. According to the Exodus, God acted there to keep the promise to Abraham and to call out the chosen people of Israel. Repeatedly, the texts say God also intervened because He hated the oppression of the poor Israelites (Exod. 3:7-8; 6:5-7).
2. The Bible is clear, if we get rich by oppression or if we have wealth and do not share generously with the poor, the Lord acts in history to destroy us. Many times, the Lord of history

tears down rich and powerful people. We can see how much God cares for the poor.

3. The Bible tells us that God identifies with the poor so strongly and caring for them. " He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord" (Pro. 19:17).

4. The Scriptures tell us that God's faithful people share God's special concern for the poor. God commanded Israel not to treat widows, orphans, and foreigners the way the Egyptians had treated them (Exod. 22:21-24).

No matter how frequent our worship or how orthodox our creeds, if we do not imitate His concern for the poor we are not His people. Israel insisted that Israel was really the pagan people of Gomorrah, because they failed to correct oppression and defend poor widows.

Strangely, growing wealth often hardens our hearts to the poor rather than shining greater generosity. It is very easy to trust in our wealth rather than God (1 Tim 6:9-10). It is so easy to treasure material things more than person and God. We cannot serve God and money (Matt. 6:24).

The real world is far more complex. Our world desperately needs a balanced understanding of wealth. Many times, people want to blame the poor for their laziness and sinful choices. Some people are poor because they believe a religious worldview that denies them dignity and discourages change. Others are poor because they make sinful choices. For example, Hinduism's caste system claims that the rich and the poor should accept their fate so they will be better off in next lives or future reincarnation.

In these situation, people need to hear the gospel, embrace a biblical worldview about the dignity of all and experience the redeeming power of Christ. Some people are poor because of natural disasters or inadequate tools and knowledge. Others are poor because of insufficient in the way the courts work, the laws are made, the opportunities for education, and the job are shared. They need Christians who will share emergency food and appropriate technology so they

can produce enough to care for their families.

Some people get rich by oppressing others, as mentioned earlier. Christian need to work with all people of goodwill to create free, just social systems. God wants everyone to have the opportunity to own property, earn their living, and to participate freely as members of their community.

If Christians today truly implement God's concern for the poor, the world will be changed. One who is both Creator and Redeemer will rejoice.

CHAPTER 10

Tending the Garden without Worshiping It

*Characteristic Ten: Genuine Christians treasure the creation and worship the Creator
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

Environmentalists think Christians have no concern for the environment, they just want to use all up because God will destroy them all at the second coming. On the other hand, Christians think environmentalists are New Age pagans who belittle people and worship trees. None of these two groups has met Larry Schweiger, a dedicated environmentalist, and a devout Christian.

We are facing serious environmental danger. The rivers, lakes, and air are polluted. One-third of our rain forests have lost in the last forty years. There are holes in the ozone layer.

So often we turn around and worship earth in a different way, the cars we drive, the houses we purchase, and the affluent lifestyles we live. Our lives show that we really worship the god of materialistic consumerism.

Christians must love and care for God's creation because God's word demands it. If we destroy the Creator's garden, endanger a descent life for our grandchildren and their next generations, people will find other religious foundation for their ecological concerns. We must show them biblical faith that they are looking for.

We are degrading the soil that produces our food and the atmosphere that we live by man made chemicals. We are destroy our resources, overfish our seas, pollute our atmosphere, exhaust our supplies of fresh water. Further more, we destroy precious topsoil, forest and unique

species lovingly shaped by the Creator.

The scientists tell completed to warn us of danger and plead with us to change the way we live as they carefully study what is happening to the environment. Secular scientists are pleading with Christians to take better care of God's creation. If we listen, we will hear the same message coming from the Bible. If we are to care for creation as faithful stewards, these are four important biblical principles we should think about.

First, we must hold together God's immanence and God's transcendence. If we talk about God's radical separateness from creation, we miss His continuing love for and involvement with everything He created. If we focus only for His presence in the world, we land in pantheism where everything is divine and good as it is.

Second, human beings are both interdependent with the rest of creation and unique within it. Everything is interrelated in the global ecosystem. Our daily physical existence depends on the forests, oceans and grasslands.

Third, we need a God-tendered, rather a man centered, worldview. Our used of the nonhuman creation must always be a thoughtful stewardship that honors the creation independent dignity and worth in the eyes of the Creator.

Finally, God's cosmic plan of redemption includes the nonhuman creation. Roman 8:19-23 teaches us that the whole created order, including the material world of bodies, and rivers, and trees, will be part of the heavenly kingdom.

Genuine Christians should take the lead in caring for our lovely earthly home, because we know that we are summoned by the Creator to be wise gardeners caring for God's good earth. It does not mean only recycling bottles or newspapers, it also means we must repent of our over consumption and materialism.

Many of the things to be done are identical with the things we need to do to relieve the

hungry and helping the poor. This is very striking, as we think about what to do to care the earth. We can share more with the poor and place less drain on the environment, if we reduce our affluent lifestyles. Others may simply live, if we must live more simply.

Our earth does not lack of the resources to feed everyone. We can overcome poverty and preserve a sustainable environment, if the rich and powerful reduce escalating accumulation of material things for themselves.

In order to feed our growing materialism, the earth is polluted and the species are destroyed. Destroying a species of birds and driving people into poverty and starvation are two harsh alternatives that we are facing. Biblical people will value persons more than birds.

Although we are created both body and soul to enjoy the bounty of material world, but our wholeness and fulfillment come not only from material things, we must have right relationship with God as well as our neighbor.

We can make a difference. The faithful Christians should become devoted environment, take lead to reduce pollution, save endangered species, and avoid ecological disaster. We will leave a better world for our grandchildren and their next generations. Faithful Christians today will carefully tend the Creator's garden. The most important we will honor the Creator, we will worship only the Creator who is also the Redeemer.

CONCLUSION

Christian Faith as Servanthood

*Characteristic Eleven: Genuine Christians embrace servanthood
(Ronald J. Sider.)*

Christians often failed to combine servanthood with truth and more serious in fighting sin than loving sinners gently. Rather than a servant voice for the weak and poor, our political engagement has been a self-serving demand for power. We have failed to imitate the model of our Servant King.

Mother Teresa was the best example in serving others. People knew she was a servant, so they listened to her respectfully. When non-Christian thought of Christian televangelists or Christian politicians, the impact in serving others was the first thing came to their minds. The most important thing for Christian today is to recover genuine servanthood.

Our Lord, Jesus Christ, came to the world to serve not to be served (Mark 10:45). Both in life and death He did that way. He gently washed His disciples' feet and spent large amount of time tenderly ministering to physical needs of others. Jesus bring love and dignity to socially distinguished groups like lepers, tax collectors, bleeding women, blind beggars, and a guilty adulteress.

Washing dusty feet was a degrading task in Jesus' day, often left to slaves and social inferiors. Jesus stooped to this lowly labor by himself. Then, Jesus told his disciples, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you" (John 13:14-14). Jesus

commanded His disciples to follow in his steps, and also modeled them servanthood.

Through out of the New Testament, the apostles urge Christians to imitate Jesus' servanthood in every area of life, in the home, in the market, and in the church. Jesus is the model of humility and service, our attitude should be the same as that of Him.

We are called to imitate the Servant King. As true God, Jesus Christ knows how humanity should live. As true man, Jesus Christ points the path to genuine fulfillment and lasting joy.

The happiest people are the people who deliberately take on themselves the sorrow and troubles of others. The people who can't do anything for anybody, but themselves, are the people who are self-centered, they are the most miserable people.

The world would stop to watch us, if the church today recovered Jesus' pattern of humble service. The world would be changed, if the church truly delivered Jesus' word and imitate His servanthood.

The church that helping the poor and needy will be more attractive church. We need to move from our chairs to sit on the floor listening and helping those who pain and suffer.

The homosexuals will hear our ethical arguments against homosexual practice. The divorcees will hear our claim that life long marriage is the way to joy. Young women contemplating abortion will hear our plea to respect the life within them. Servanthood is very essential to us to serve people effectively. Also we have to have our Servant King's actions and attitudes toward them.

Servanthood must be the high priority of the Christian. We should urge society to turn away from its ethical insanity, and encourage Christians boldly to proclaim God's reveal moral standards. We must learn how to become servants. We will not denounce people like angry moralists, instead we must plead with our broken neighbors like weeping prophets. No matter

what the cost in their journey toward wholeness in Christ, we must share and travel with them.

We must throw our arms lovingly around the sinners and bring them into the kingdom.

The fatherhood in our society needs to be restored. Men must repent of their irresponsibility and ignorance of their wives and children. If men act at home as a big boss, our broken families would never be healed. The family will be restored and the society will be healed, if Christian husbands love and serve their wives in the costly, self-giving way Christ loved the church.

Very often Christians have twisted the biblical doctrine of domination and misunderstood it as domination. Humans are created in the image of God, we are given a special stewardship over the earth. In Chapter 10 in the book of Genesis, God commands us "to work and take care of God's earth (Gen 2:15).

If the Church's leaders truly become servants, our home and our nations could be transformed. There are shining examples of prominent humble leader. Mother Teresa led powerfully with her costly service to the weak, the poor, the unborn and the marginalized. Billy Graham has been modeled of integrity and humility in spite of his fame and influence for decades.

If pastors, deacons return to Jesus' teaching on servant leadership, their congregations will grow in numbers, integrity, and impact in the world.