

Family of God - Growth Gap

by Ralph Sutera

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing spiritual maturity as a lifelong journey and the role of the church community in supporting new believers through their growth gap.

Duration: 1:00:26

Scripture: Isaiah 1:19-21, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the challenge of living a godly life and how imperfect beings can strive to do so. He emphasizes the importance of understanding our reactions and emotions when faced with difficulties. The speaker then introduces the concept of the family of God, which consists of four classes of people: the spiritual, the hungry-hearted, the casual, and the carnally-minded. He explains how individuals can transition from one class to another through a spiritual awakening and a change in their priorities. The sermon concludes by highlighting the need for genuine Christian fellowship and the danger of merely engaging in surface-level conversations with fellow believers.

Transcript

God goes to work among his people. When he does that, those who respond to him, who responded to him, need to understand that they are just really babies in the spiritual walk. They are just babies in the spiritual walk.

They must always remain as learners, remain as learners in walking with God. And they must always be quick to deal with sin and any misjudgments that might come about in their Christian life. I'm talking now about those who are just entering into the spiritual walk.

They must see themselves this way. They must also remember that there are others ahead of them spiritually, no matter how recent their response. Unconsciously, some of us think that because we were the last ones to respond to God, we must be the holiest people in the church.

After all, we were the last ones to have a direct line to heaven. Implication is that I'm the closest to God because I was the last one to talk to him in a very real way. And yet the truth is that you can be filled with the Spirit in a few moments, but spiritual maturity is the process of a lifetime.

It's the process of a lifetime. This is not in your notes. I'll tell you where you can find this.

Tomorrow night you can purchase a copy of the manual entitled *Where Do You Fit in the Local Church?* And this will be in it. Spiritually minded members in a church. Spiritually minded members.

When God works in a church, the spiritually minded ones will understand and will rejoice. Those who are already walking in the Spirit. They will also recognize that it's God's timing for certain people in the congregation to respond to God.

And then they will realize their responsibility to those who have responded. Because they recognize walking in the Spirit is something new to many people. It's a whole new lifestyle.

Those who have been walking this lifestyle know the perils, they know the dangers. And therefore they are prepared and will understand those who are just entering in to what it means to walk with God at a different level, at a deeper level. They will also intercede in prayer.

A spiritually minded member of the congregation will intercede in prayer for those who are just entering in to the Spirit-controlled walk, recognizing how vital and important it really is. They will also minister to any excesses and misjudgments of those who are just beginning to walk in the Spirit. In other words, they will minister.

If you're a spiritual Christian in the congregation, when he sees a person who is just beginning to walk in the Spirit, making an error or misjudgment, then the spiritually minded one will minister to that. He will also resist any temptation to devalue what God is doing simply because of the excesses or casualties or even the imperfections of the human instruments that God saw fit to use. A spiritually minded Christian will minimize the imperfections of the instruments and any excesses.

He will resist the temptation to just make judgments on those things. He will also deal with any discouraging influences. In other words, if he senses there are other people in the congregation who are trying to discourage those who are walking in the Spirit, saying, ah, that's emotionalism, ah, that won't last, and all the rest of it, a spiritually minded Christian will relate to that.

He will go after a person like that and say, brother, you have no right talking like that, and I want to rebuke you. No, no, no. And I'm praying for you that God's going to show you the danger of discouraging others.

And then, of course, he will always communicate and minister to other people in the congregation who don't understand what's happening. Those who have been respected spiritually in the congregation and appreciate what God's doing, when they sense there are certain people who don't understand what's happening, then they will take it on themselves as a responsibility to minister very specifically to those who are not sure what it is that God is doing. All I've done for you is said that you will be able to recognize the spiritually minded Christians in a congregation by how they relate to what God is doing.

Now, I'm not suggesting that everyone need to respond to the prayer room in a crusade ministry like this. But I am saying that everyone needs to be responsive to the Holy Spirit. Spiritually minded Christians will be recognized by their responsive attitude or relationship to anything God the Holy Spirit may be saying to them in a very real way.

Now, when we talk about ministering and relating to each other, so what about people who don't understand what has happened to me? How can I relate to those around about me? You have on your sheet, in the back side of it, an article that says, what about those in my church or in my family who do not understand what has happened to me? What about those? Maybe you've run into some in the

congregation already or friends who you've tried to explain to. You know what the problem is? When you say to somebody, you ought to come down to our church or to this church. We're having a revival.

Well, they say, well, I hope you have a good one. You know, they know what revival means to them. Seven days of meetings that they wish they could do without.

And then you, when you sense their coldness, then you try to say, no, no, but this is a real revival. And immediately they say to themselves, this is fanaticism. You see, in one it's not enough, in the other it's too much.

And that's what happens. It happens to people in a congregation. There are some people who don't enter in simply because they think that revival is just a passing fancy.

And then there are others when they sense you're getting so really excited about what God's trying to do. They say, oh, be careful. He's on the verge of fanaticism.

And so the difficulty is how to relate to people. Well, look at where the arrow is. The worst thing to do and the biggest danger is to sit and soak and sour over those who do not sweeten up and understand you.

That's the worst thing you can do. Well, what does it mean if people don't understand me? How do I relate to it? I am not going to take the time to read it tonight, but you need to study that page when you go home. And all I'm suggesting at this point is that it is a tremendous experience and a tremendous test for you to prove how really dead you are to your own rights.

Look what number one says. The experience is a good test of your death to self and your surrendered rights. Does it bother you that people don't understand what's happened to you? Is your commitment big enough for that too? You see, if it really bothers you, then how dead are you? You know, when a man is really dead, you can pinch him and he doesn't move.

Actually, a dead man really never worries about his reputation. Now, before he died, he really was worried about that. He really was worried about it.

Now, he says to his children, now you cut the grass. We don't want our neighbors thinking that we're sloppy in the neighborhood. We don't want this place to look wrong.

Cut the grass tonight. By the time I come home, make sure it's cut. Shovel the rock.

We want to do our part in keeping this neighborhood right. On and on. He's mighty concerned about his reputation.

But when he dies, that's one thing he's not concerned about anymore. He's concerned about what's happening in the casket. When people come piling by, view his remains and pay his respect, he just kind of winks at them a little bit and he says, I wonder what he's thinking about me now.

Oh, here comes that neighbor of mine. I wonder now what he's thinking about me. See, that's one thing he doesn't worry about when he's dead, his reputation.

While he's alive, he does everything to really be concerned about that. But when he dies, now he's concerned about more important things, huh? What have I said? I said, even though, you know, there are very few times I even use an analogy of a casket in relation to death in the spiritual life. Just because of

fear that people will get the idea that once you surrender the rights of your life to God, you're completely dead and there's one of two things.

Nothing left to you, or secondly, you'll have no more problems the rest of your life. And both of those are wrong. Now, you see, I've just taught you a lesson in reverse from the negative.

But the truth really is that when we respond and we react negatively to the way people see us and the way people feel about us and the way people don't misunderstand us, that is one of the sure signs that we're really not as dead as what we said we were. In other words, we need to even surrender that right to God, to even be viewed properly. And when we do that, it will make a tremendous difference in the way we just let God be God.

Now, I'm not suggesting that we just do anything we want and carry on any way we want, so who cares? That's not it. But if we are walking with a genuine concern to be right and to live the right kind of a life and to be the right kind of example, don't you ever think you're going to please all the people all the time? You'll never do that. Jesus was not able to do it, and you're no better than your master.

So what makes you think you're going to be able to do it? And especially being we're imperfect, if he couldn't do it as the perfect son of God, how do we ever expect to do it as imperfect beings? Now, I'm not going to read the rest of that page except to say that that page will go on and give you my ideas and my thoughts about what happens when I react unfavorably, when people do not understand what's going on in my heart and in my life. It's a very important page. Now, that is a frame of reference.

Let's take a look at the family of God. Let's take a look at the family of God. Now, we need to fill it in.

Let's just see if we can come to grips with what it is. There are four classes of people. You notice them on the right-hand side of your paper.

Four classes. There are the spiritual, the hungry-hearted ones, the casual ones, and the carnally-minded ones. Now, how does it all happen? Well, it all happens this way.

We all come into the family of God. We are born again by the Spirit of God. We are born again by God's Holy Spirit.

And we come into the family at the cross. And the truth is that we then have the choice. Either we are going to learn what it means to walk in the Spirit, or else we will walk as Mr. Average Christian, walk in the flesh.

You see, one is walking in the Spirit, the other is walking in the flesh. One is Mr. Normal Christian, and the other is Mr. Average Christian. So when a man says to me, he says, you know, I think I'm as good as the average Christian in the church, you haven't really said too much.

Average Christianity is not worth talking about. But the normal Christian is altogether different. Let me correct this just a minute.

Let me fix that. There we are. Alright, now what are some of the characteristics? What are some of the characteristics? Let's find out the characteristics.

Here we are, first of all. The spiritually minded individual, spiritually minded one, is one who rejoices, who rejoices when God goes to work in the life of a congregation or in other people's lives. He rejoices.

He rejoices. He is also one who is very thankful. He is very thankful to see other people entering into the Spirit-controlled life.

Very thankful. And he is also responsive. He always has a spirit that is ready to respond to whatever it is God wants to say to him.

Responsive to what God says. And actually his text, his light verse, could very readily be Philippians 3.10. We may know him, the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his suffering being made conformable unto his death. He just loves that truth.

Here he is, the spiritually minded one. Here he is, walking in the Spirit. There they are.

Here are the Spirit-controlled men, normal Christians, walking the Calvary Road, walking in the Spirit. That's one class. Aren't you glad for that class of people in a congregation? Those who rejoice when God works, those who are thankful to see others entering in, those who are always responsible, always open for God to show them something else in their personal life that needs to be made right.

Then secondly, there are the hungry-hearted ones. And I have the hungry-hearted ones down here as group letter B. Down here. Those are the people who respond during a ministry like this.

They've responded to what it is God has been saying. They are very responsive and responded. They respond positively.

Or if it's he, he responds positively. Responds positively. And Isaiah 1, 19-21, is a good text for him.

The text is primarily the fact that if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the fruit of the land. That's it. If ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword.

But if ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat of the fruit of the land. That's the truth. So in willingness and obedience, he responds with hungry hearts.

So here they are. See here? See these two men here? See them? They came to the meetings. They were as Mr. Average Christian.

But they responded to what God was saying. They knelt at the foot of the cross as it were. Or they bowed in humility and said God was sick and tired of living that kind of life.

Now you notice there's another fellow here. There's another fellow here that has not been picked up by his hair. See here? He has not been transplanted.

That one there. What's wrong with him? Well, that's the reminder that there are some hungry-hearted people who are here who have not responded during a crusade. But that doesn't mean they're not hungry-hearted.

It means that God has used the crusade to take them a step closer to total commitment, total surrender of their rights, the rights of their life to God. And God will use the days in the future to minister specifically to them. The implication is clear that none of us, and I've already stated, none of us are suggesting that everybody needs to be in the prayer room.

And not all are ready to be in the prayer room. There are some who these days have been just a tremendous time of moving you one step closer to that point where you'll say, all right, God, I'm sick and tired of running my own life and I'm going to let you have every area. And so there you are.

Yet they have hungry hearts. Then the third group in the church are those that I call the casual, the casual Christians in the church. Or the casual attenders on Sunday morning.

There's a thin line there as to whether or not some of these people are saved. I'm sure some of them are not. But then there's some who say, well, I'm saved and I'm not going to doubt.

That's between them and God. But they cannot relate. They cannot relate to the truth.

Why? Because they are too casual about it. They're the kind who just show up once a week and pay their respects to God on Sunday morning. They come to church on Sunday morning the same way they go to work on Monday morning.

They've been doing it for so long that it's a habit, it's a lifestyle. And after all, they're not Hindus, they're not Buddhists, they're not Confucianists, they're not Muslims. They are Christians because they like Canada.

They love the Western society. They love the culture. And this culture is considered the Judeo-Christian, that's the right way to say it, ethics.

Those are the ethics that permeate our lifestyle. Therefore, after all, they're not heathen. They'd say they believe in God.

So they have to show up to show that they are, in quotes, Christian. And they may not have too much more than that. Maybe a little more.

Anyhow, they cannot relate to what's been going on here. Who cut my mic down? They cannot relate to what's going on here because they're just not ready, they're just not in the frame of heart and mind to enter into the truth of walking spirit. So there they are, casual.

And so they go along as Mr. Average Christian. You see, those who are on the Calvary Road this way, they're walking the way across. But Mr. Average Christian, you see, you notice how I have this slanted? I have it slanted slightly upward, slightly upward, but a slow, great upward.

Some kind of progress, but we're not really sure what kind. And then there are the carnally minded Christians, those who are committed to walk in flesh. They resist and will not respond.

They resist what God's saying. They resist any attempt to be wakened from their self-sufficiency. Especially if it's it's clouded, no not clouded, it's encroached, it's covered with, no that's not a good word either.

What am I looking for? It is enhanced, that's all right, enhanced by their religious reputation and the fact that they teach Sunday school and the fact that they have a good standing in the church and they are looked up as people with a lot of influence and their self-will and self-sufficiency and self-pride just keeps them stayed in that posture. They will not respond. And they are in the category of Proverbs 28, 13, covering their sin.

They're not going to spiritually prosper no matter how religious it sounds. And of course, in Galatians chapter 5, the reminder that the flesh wars against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh and the two will never be on the same team, they'll never be in the same army, they will never be able to be compatible one with another. There are the four classes of people in the church.

Now how do we relate to them? How do we relate? Before I suggest how we relate, notice something. The problem is this, the problem is this. You see these three groups here, they were all close friends.

They were all close friends walking the same direction in the church. Now something happens. And this is what happens during crusade ministry specifically.

Some of them got so excited about coming to the meetings and now they got sick and tired of going this way, but instead they are now saying, all right, let's start walking this way. Now they are beginners in the spiritual walk, that's what I said, beginners in the spiritual walk. Why don't we tighten the auditorium a little bit? If there's room near you, move toward the center so the room can be open off the aisles because people just keep on coming for the next hour.

Just tighten just a little bit so there'll be room for others to keep coming in. Now because these people, because these people have responded to God, and they are no longer on this level, but they are now on this level up here, there now is a gap. The gap is between from where they were down here to where they are up here.

Here is the gap. It's from here to here. Or if you take their heads, it's from head to feet here.

From here to here. See that? They were here, now they're on this level up here. That is not a division.

They did not cause some fight in the church. They didn't come in with some new heresy. They didn't get in trouble with somebody in the church and now they're in a different class.

What happened was they got sick and tired of just living as a status quo, walking the flesh. And God spoke to their hearts and they responded to what God said. And now they're on this level.

That's what causes a gap. It's from where they were to where they are now. Here's the gap.

There's the gap. Now what kind of a gap is it? Here's what it is. It's a growth gap.

It is a growth gap. It is 2 Peter 3.18 where we are reminded, you have that on the bottom of your page as well. It's a growth gap.

Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our blessed Lord. It's the idea, it's the truth, that they now are ready to really grow. They're tired of the status quo, standing still.

It is a growth gap. Now, the problem is, how do we relate? How do we relate to all of those people in the congregation? How do we relate to each of those groups? It is not a division. It is a gap.

Let's see if we can get the paper off here. How do we relate? Here's how we relate. See that all right? All right, the first ones.

To the spiritually minded ones in a congregation. Well, first of all, before I say that, we must always consider temperament differences. Temperament, that word is temperament.

Whenever you talk about how you're going to relate to people, you must always consider the temperament differences between individuals. We talked about that yesterday, that you don't minister to one person just the same way you do to the other because none of us are alike. The temperament differences.

And that's why the study of spirit-controlled temperaments is very important. See, you don't expect certain people to respond the same way others do simply because their temperaments are totally different. The commitments can be the same, but the response is different the way it comes about because of temperaments.

Therefore, how do we relate to people after we've considered their temperaments? To the spiritually minded ones in a congregation. You relate, first of all, by loving them. Loving them.

And then always be thankful to God for giving them to you in a congregation. That's this group up here, letter A, those who have already been walking in the spirit. You love them and you are thankful to God for having them as close friends in a congregation.

What about the hungry-hearted ones? Those who are here, letter B, who responded to what it was God was saying. How do you relate to them? You love them. You love them.

And then you pray for them. You pray for them. In other words, if you had them on your prayer list before, praying that God would touch them, now you do not take them off your prayer list because God has ministered to them, but rather you underline their name on your prayer list twice as heavy as it was before.

Why? Because if they are responding to God, you know the devil doesn't like it. Or he's going to be after them. Therefore they need that much more prayer support than ever before.

And then you minister to them. You have a responsibility to see to it that babes in the Spirit-filled walk are ministered to on a regular basis, one-on-one, as well as in the collective body context. And you sense any of them are faltering in any direction, you just minister to them because they're open, they're hungry.

They're sitting with their mouths open, as it were, put the worm right here, put the spaghetti right here. You know, you understood that George Washington in my country never ate spaghetti. First President of the United States, he never ate spaghetti.

You say, well, how do you know? Because in one of his speeches he said, beware of foreign entanglements. But you know there are people that are now hungry, they're ready for the entanglements. Here, you know, he couldn't say that in Wesley Chapel.

He couldn't come to your international supper, which is on June the 10th. Isn't it tomorrow? Don't you have your international supper tomorrow? Before we leave? So, minister to people that are hungry-hearted. That's all I'm saying.

Don't let them walk out feeling they've not been fed. Or don't let them sense as if you're no longer anxious to be close to them in ministry, where they're hurting, whatever the situation. And what a tremendous opportunity you have right here in this church now.

Door wide open for them. But what about the casual ones, those who could not relate to it? Keep on loving them, keep on praying for them, and then minister to them whenever it is possible. Minister whenever it is possible.

Whenever they allow you to do it. You see, there come times where they may open up somehow, they may give you a chance to minister. Whenever it's possible, minister to them.

What about those who refuse to enter into what God wants to do? For whatever reason, calmly minded, will not respond. It's not they cannot respond, they will not. What do you do about that group in a congregation? Well, here's what you do.

Love them. Only notice I put the word more. The others I just said love them.

But now I'm saying this group, love them more. Love them more than ever before. That's this group right here.

Love them more than ever before. Intensify your love. Don't isolate yourself from them.

But love them more now. You see, they are really hurting. And they need to be loved more than ever before.

And the more a person hurts, the more he needs to be loved. You don't isolate yourself from when he hurts, even though he may not understand why. Then you pray for them more than ever before.

And then you commit them to God. You commit them to God. You commit people like that to God.

In other words, you are as a spirit-controlled believer to be submissive to God, but not to be shove-missive onto God's people. Be submissive to God, but not shove-missive. You don't shove people.

You just take your hands off. Say, God, I want to commit that couple or that family or that individual to Thee. I'm just going to love him and keep on loving him and keep on loving him.

You see, when love permeates, then truth penetrates. But you don't punch a man in the nose and knock him flat on his back. And once he's flat on his back, lean over to him in a soft, tender, sweet, compassionate voice and say, Brother, I really love you.

He won't believe that. See, you must love him first. You know what happens when you really love people with Calvary love? You know what really happens in many cases? You can punch people in the nose and they didn't even know they were punched because of love.

The truth penetrates when love permeates. So, commit them to God. Keep on praying, keep on loving God and then wait for the opportunity to minister to them.

You wait for the opportunity. Well, what do you mean by that? And it's the crux of the matter in relation to this whole truth. You see, not everybody is ready for major surgery.

Not everybody is ready for major surgery. Not everybody. If you were here in these days and you were ready for major surgery, you ought to just thank God.

Thank God that he spoke to your heart and he allowed you to have enough sense to respond to him. Thank God for it. But you must always keep in mind how long it took for you to be ready for major surgery.

Do you remember that first time when you went to the doctor and the first time he said to you, Sally, you know, I can give you some pills but you're going to need major surgery? It gave you a stomachache. Do you remember how you reacted? Oh, major surgery. Not that.

He said, doctor, can you please just give me a few more pills? By the way, those of you who weren't here this morning, we had quite a pill-flushing-out time, didn't we? The testimony of people who were delivered from the use of all kinds of pills and drugs and stuff like that. I said all kinds of people? Not all kinds of people. Just a few of us.

Stuff like that. But the point is, do you remember when you said, doctor, can't you give me a few pills to get over the hump? And the doctor said, yes, I can give you a few pills but you're going to need major surgery. Oh, don't say it, doctor, don't say it.

So he gives you a few pills. You go home, you take those pills, the prescription is gone and once the pain comes back, you call the doctor's office, you tell the nurse, nurse, would you please tell the doctor can he prescribe something stronger than the last pills? And the doctor says to the nurse, you tell that lady, tell Sally, yes, I'll prescribe something, she can go to the drugs and get it, but remind her that she needs major... No, no, no, don't even say it. Don't tell me what I need.

Isn't it amazing how we resist just think how long you put up with the pain in your system. Spiritually. Knowing that McCure-Coleman, band-aids and patch-up job would never make the difference and yet not willing for God to do major surgery in your life.

So whenever you see people around you who are not responding to what God is saying, you say, what's wrong with those people? They ought to know better. Just ask God cause you not to be slow of memory, short of memory. And remember how long it's been that God has had to strive with you in your self-sufficiency before you are ready for major surgery.

Finally you get to the place where that pain is so bad and you carried on so long that one day when you have another attack you call the doctor and you say, doctor please can you get me in that hospital as soon as possible I can't stand it any longer. Now you're ready for major surgery. That's one way to be ready for major surgery.

I'll tell you another way. If you have a pain in the stomach and doctor diagnoses it a certain problem, you hear about somebody else that had the same problem. And he has had major surgery.

And that major surgery has come out so well that that person is like a brand new person. Now if you don't think your doctor is doing too well for you you will probably go to that person who's already had major surgery and you'll say, can you tell me who's your doctor? Can you get me in to see him? You look like you're healthy again and you had the same problem that I had and I've seen that you've been living now for six months after that surgery and you're getting better all the time and anybody who's as healthy as you are I want to be that healthy would you tell me who is your surgeon? Sure I'll tell you who my surgeon is. My surgeon is Jesus Christ.

Now I'm getting spiritual, huh? And if you allow him to do major surgery on you you can be just as well as I am. What am I saying? You see, a person is sometimes ready for surgery when he takes a look at somebody else who has had the same problem he had and he sees how well he is. That encourages him to have the same surgery.

It's either the pain is more than he can bear or secondly he sees somebody who's well who had the same problem. And I'm suggesting tonight that in the days ahead you will have in this congregation both of those classes of people. Some who have to get worse before they begin to get better.

Some whose pain is yet not severe enough. Some whose self-sufficiency and pride and arrogance and egotistical attitude about their own spiritual maturity is such that God has to continue his work of breaking their heart. And when he does it what are they going to do? They're going to come to you if they see you are well and say, tell me how can I enter into that same kind of surgery? I've watched you for six months.

I've watched you for one year. And I've seen how well it has taken. Now I'm ready for the same kind of surgery.

So what have I said? I have said that the bottom line is that those who have already had the major surgery are the people most responsible to see to it that by your wholeness and by your recovery and by the whole new quality of life that God gives you you will create an appetite in the lives of other people who are not yet ready for that surgery who still don't think your surgery is going to last. You know some of them are really not tuned. They're not sure which doctor you really went to.

Some of them think that the twins did it. And in some cases that might be true and that's why it won't last because Lou has never had any real good learning in major surgery. He's a preacher, he's not a surgeon.

And that's why the Lord gave him a twin brother to try to help straighten out some of the things that he says and teaches. I'm saying that if all you had is something that you think the twins did for you then that surgery is not going to be correct. But if you are convinced and committed to the fact that God has done it and you keep on walking that way in the softness and the sweetness of the ministry of the Holy Spirit there will be such a healing process that will take place and such a whole new dimension to your Christian life that people are not going to be able to resist it.

They're going to see the difference. I have had letters time after time from pastors who will say six months later, a year later, one of two things. One is, it is amazing to me to see now how people who did not respond during the crusade are now entering in because of the tremendous change they've seen in those who met God during the crusade.

And I've also had the letter saying you have no idea now how the youth group has had a revival six months, eight months, a year later. And the pastor will say I am absolutely convinced that the reason is because the teenagers have seen the tremendous change in their parents and now they are convinced it is real it's not just here and gone tomorrow but now six months, eight months, a year later they can't deny it! And now they are ready to open their hearts to respond to God. I am saying tonight that the onus is on every spirit-controlled believer to walk in such a way in humility, in softness, in sweetness not as a member of some holier-than-thou club looking down at everybody else who has not entered in on the same level.

You know, I can still sense there are some people who are so glad for this revival because they know that there are people in this church that really needed it. And they are already looking down from their ivory tower that really is not as ivory as what it seems. It's so easy to see through that kind of phoniness of people who are always so delighted that God finally has awakened everybody else who needed to meet God.

How does it change people like that? It's when they associate over a period of time around people whose lifestyle has so dramatically changed that it whets the appetite for others to say, all right, now I see it. I'm going to quit playing games. I too am going to enter into what God is saying.

That's where the onus is. So, if I were to come back a year from now, only if I'm invited, but if I were to come back a year from now, and I'd say, how are the people doing who were not ready to enter into major surgery with no anesthetic? That's what this is. It's the truth standing out on its own two feet.

Say, well, we're so glad many of them are now entering in. Or if you say, well, I don't know. They're harder than ever.

I'd like to suggest that the onus is on the spirit-controlled believer. I would say, well, what have you done in the year? What kind of a lifestyle have you lived? How is it you didn't entice people to have major surgery because they saw how whole you were? You mean you're still not recovered enough for people to want it? That is so beautiful. It is so beautiful to recognize the tremendous influence that a spirit-controlled believer can have now as a result of taking baby steps in the spirit and the example of his lifestyle is contagious to people around him.

When I say that, what then is the basic problem of a crusade ministry? What is the basic problem? The problem is the change that comes about in a congregation and how people then relate to each other. Let me just show you what I mean. Let me tie this together a minute.

The point is here is this group of people. These are the spiritual ones up here. Here are the hungry ones up here.

Here are the three who entered in, responded to God and here is the one who is still hungry but didn't quite make it. Here are the casual ones here. Here are the calmly minded ones here.

Here is the gap. These people were down here and now they are up in this level. So here is the gap between where they were and where they are now.

There is the gap. We called it a growth gap. It's a growth gap.

What is the difference? The difference is clear. These people when they used to get together, have an evening of fellowship with a class of people or a certain group in the church, say, let's spend the first ten minutes with a short devotion and one person lead in prayer and let's get maple leaves, the CN tower and on and on we go. And the restaurants in town, the spaghetti house, on and on.

What are they talking about? They are talking about the same things that people in the world talk about. The only difference is that they do it with a kind of what they consider a more respectable crowd because they love the theme song, I don't drink, smoke, or chew or run around with those that do. When the whole time all they're having is fellowship with Christians and that's all together different from Christian fellowship.

Now what happens? Here are these three fellows that got so sick and tired of living the way they were living and they said, God, I want you to do something. I want you to they moved out from this class here, and they moved up into this class. Now their interest is in going this way instead of this way.

And if they're going to go this way, it means now, when they get together, they're saying, let's take the first ten minutes and talk about the blue jays and the weather and making the second million and our new cars, let's get all of that out of the way as quickly as we can, so we can spend the rest of the evening enjoying ourselves around the things of God. That is the difference. I have had people say to me, I've gone to church gatherings, and if I were to say, let's spend some time in prayer, or let's spend some time reading

the word of God and talking about what God's saying to us, it would have been as if I would have been bounced out on my ears.

I would have been saying something out of place. And there I am in a supposedly Christian fellowship. That's not Christian fellowship.

That's merely fellowship with Christians. And because these people have responded to God, now their hungers, their appetites have changed. Now they have an affinity for people here, and what's going on in this direction, whereas before they had an affinity here, with this group, and these people here, so casual, or who are committed not to respond to God, these people look at them and they say, ah, there they go.

You know what happened to those people? They went to too many revival meetings in a row and they got caught. They should have been like we were, much more casual about it. Or they should have been like we were, just resist, only show up three nights during the crusade, Sunday and maybe Wednesday and then another Sunday somewhere, at least people know I'm still in the church, and then they wouldn't have gotten caught.

Then they'd still be down here, with us. The problem is, that this is the same thing that happens when anybody in a church responds to God. This happens, that growth gap will always be there when one person responds and another one does not, there's always a gap.

But the problem is, that in a crusade ministry, it happens to a large number of people in a short period of time. And because 20, 30, 40, 50 people in a congregation may never be the same again, because that is true, it upsets the stability, and can I say, the sociability of this crowd that figures now they've lost some of their friends. Because they do not relate on the same level any longer.

There is no way to change that. That is a fact of life, and you must be prepared for it. You must recognize, that when people are concerned about walking with God, and there are people who are not concerned about walking with God, that in itself is already a threat, one to the other.

And if it's amplified by a large number, it will cause some people in a congregation to feel as if they don't no longer feel at home among their friends. And they're right, they don't. And there are some times in congregations where we see people who leave a congregation after a ministry like this.

Well should we all get upset over that? No, we don't want, I'm not suggesting we want to see people leave, but we do not get upset over that. We recognize that a revival ministry is God cleansing his church. And if an individual is committed to his self-sufficiency, he can find any kind of church he wants to suit the kind of thing he wants to do.

And if all at once now a church comes alive and wants to walk in the Spirit and allow transparent honesty, just like the man who made the statement, he said, you know, he went to the pastor, he said, you know, pastor, he said, I love what I see going on around you. I love all of that. He said, I love the love that I see, that's what he said.

How people are loving each other, that's wonderful, I'm so excited about the love I see. But he said, I can't stand that honesty that's going on around you. And the pastor said to him, brother, you would not have the love if you didn't have the honesty.

And there are some who will not be able to relate to transparent honesty. And as a result of it, they may not feel at home in the church anymore. So what do you do? You just keep praying for them, just keep loving them, and if God gives them liberty to keep on worshipping with you, you just believe that God's going to do it His way.

And if someone, for whatever reason, figures that he no longer wants to be a part of this, it's amazing. You know, you don't get away from what God's saying that easily. You can go to another church and find out that God might be there to deal with you in another way.

You don't get away from God that way. I can tell you the story of a man who on his deathbed called a former pastor. Why? The pastor met God in a revival, and he went home to his congregation and started to share some of the truths of what God was teaching him, and he had a quiet exodus from his church.

Now if you have a church of about 75 people and you lose the choir leader and some of the key people of the church, some of the biggest givers of the church, you almost think you're in the millennium. No, no, no, in the tribulation. Only to find out, and here the pastor was merely sharing the truth, and let's be honest, transparent, open before God, let God deal with this.

And he had a quiet exodus, they just quietly left. Only to find out that some of those people, one specifically, on his deathbed called that pastor right to the hospital room and openly confessed to him the sin and immorality that he'd been living in for several years, and he said, before I die, I've got to tell you, I've got to tell you. And the reason why I left the church is this, I could not stand facing it.

God has his own way of cleansing the church. And that's why I appreciate when a man says to me, he said, you know, if I ever, and he did, he had a church of 800 people, he said, if God wants to cleanse this church and if by the time it's finished, there are only 300 people left, I'm willing, whatever it takes for God to cleanse this church. Now, I'm glad that that didn't happen.

He had more than 300 when we left. But it's a beautiful attitude that we are committed to the purity of the body of Christ. And we're going to let God do whatever is necessary to cleanse the church.

Sometimes there are blessed subtractions in a church. And I do not suggest that implying that I'm interested in people leaving. But sometimes there has to be a back door revival in certain situations before there can be a front door.

Sometimes there have to be some people out the back door so that it can open the way for there to be a free spirit for people to enter in. I'm really telling you this so that we understand that the fact that God has ministered to us does not mean that next week there are going to be a thousand people attending Wesley Chapel. Don't you think that everybody loves the truth of death to the self-life? No matter how wonderful it's been to see God at work.

But we need to be committed to walking softly and sweetly and humbly before God. And where God opens the way, then begin to minister at such a level. Now, who is responsible for this gap? See this gap right here? From where these people were, now they're up on this level.

Now there's a gap. Who's responsible for it? We've got to make somebody responsible for it. How many would like to make Group A responsible for these spiritual ones up here? Just think.

If there were no spirit-filled believers in the church at all, then nobody would have even voted to have a crusade because they would have all been down in here and so nobody would have wanted any such thing, especially for three weeks. So there must have been some spiritually-minded people who recognized the need because of wanting to have others walk in the spirit. Just think.

So how many would like to blame this group? If we didn't have this group at all, then there possibly would have never been anything like this happen. How many want to blame Group A? It's now election time. How many want to vote for Group A? Anybody voting for Group A? You mean no votes for Group A? How many want to vote for Group B for this gap? Just think.

If they wouldn't have taken the crusade so seriously, then they would all still be down here and we wouldn't have this gap. How many think Group B are responsible? That's the group responsible for the gap. How many want to vote for Group B? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. 7 votes for Group B. How many want to vote for Group C? This casual group down here.

If they would take things more seriously, maybe then they would have enough influence to influence all of these people to get right with God. How many would want to vote for Group C, casual ones? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. I want to see who's going to win this election. 5. How many want to vote for Group D? This group.

The carnally minded ones. The ones who know the truth but resist it and will not respond to what God says. Just think.

If they would no longer resist, they could be a powerful force that could possibly take in this entire group moving them all in one direction and then they'd all move up and then there'd be no gap. We'd all be up here. How many want to vote for Group D? Group D. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Is there a baker's dozen? I see a little child has a hand up. Maybe we'll make that. 12 or 13.

Okay, there's 12. Well, there's the election. How many don't vote? You didn't register.

Now, is there anybody else you want to blame? Anybody else you want to blame? Some of you didn't vote. I want everybody to vote. Who do you want to blame? Yes? What's that? Group A? You're going to change your vote? So they have one vote now.

Group A. Anybody else want to vote? Yes? What's that? Change the word blame. What do you want to do with it? Anybody want to blame anyone else for the gap? Anybody want to blame anyone else for the gap? Yes? Yes? The Lord? You're going to blame the Lord for the gap? I thought you were going to say the devil. Somebody said in a session like this, Well, you can always blame the devil if you don't know who else to blame.

Yes? Oh. So, you sound like a diplomat. She is.

I think that all of the groups are responsible, but most of all, every individual is responsible. So, the individual. Every individual is responsible for the gap.

Anybody else want to vote? Or have an idea? I thought surely someone was going to say the twins. Let's do what our brother said. Let's get rid of the word blame.

If it's a growth gap, why do you want to blame? If it's a division in the church, then you need to blame. Let's take away the word blame and let's make someone responsible. Who are we going to make responsible?

Who? Everybody? What was that? Everybody that belongs to the cooperative ministry.

Is that what I hear you saying? I can't hear it. It's fine. Oh, the corporate worshipping.

Okay. Anybody else have a suggestion? Don't take my time. So, here it is.

That's good. We can spend a lot of time with this. Here's who I want to make responsible.

Amen. I'm going to make the Holy Spirit responsible for the gap. See, you really weren't too far off when you said the Lord, were you? Why? Aren't you glad the Holy Spirit is still at work? Thank God the Holy Spirit found some people hungry.

Hungry. Hungry enough to respond. Hungry enough to get sick and tired of this kind of a lifestyle.

Hungry enough to agree to begin to walk in the Spirit and no more fulfill the lust of the flesh. Let's never lose sight of that. That's the work of the Holy Spirit and He'll continue His work and He'll keep on working on all these and we just need to walk softly in the Holy Spirit and let the love of Christ and the love of the Holy Spirit pour through us so that we then can influence those about us who are not yet ready and able to respond to what God's saying.

Amen. Let's stand together and let's sing.

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