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How Can You Win Back Those Who Have Drifted Away

By Mike Pace

Here's a great question. There is a simple answer. It will work every time it is used. Any congregation can employ it. The basic requirements are simple. You must truly love and *commit your heart* to the work of winning back those who have drifted away.

James says that in so doing you will, "save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19, 20). Paul declares that "spiritual men are to restore the one that is overtaken in a fault" (Gal. 6:1). Spiritual men who love the Lord can successfully seek and restore the lost.

The elders - deacons - preachers can serve best in this work. It is simple, but not easy. It demands maturity of love and a willingness to "risk". Put it to use in your congregation and watch the miracle of restoration take place as men and women are "brought home" to stay.

Here is the plan of action. Gather the leaders together. Divide them into pairs. Put an elder and deacon together. Allow the most capable one to lead and direct the visit. Admit that as leaders you have failed to do your duty toward those who have drifted away. Think of the many times you could have gone and didn't. Be ready to begin the conversation with a simple request, "Forgive me for failing you". This attitude will not only condition your heart, but will take away the only real excuse one may have for not serving Jesus. Let everyone go out with that plea in mind. It will humble your heart, and cause you to love more deeply.

Now you knock at the door. The fact that all the other elders and deacons are out knocking doors will lend great encouragement. The fact that a good brother stands beside you will help. You will not always be welcomed. The feelings of hostility, guilt, or a deep hurt may be seen in the hearts of the fallen. Whisper a prayer for strength. Do not be drawn away from your purpose. God is with you and good will come from it.

"Good evening," you begin. Insist on a hearing. It is important. Do not be put off if at all possible.

"We've come on a very important mission," you declare. Now get to it. Don't hesitate. Ask them that vital question. Move quickly to the task.

"We have come to ask your forgiveness for we have not done you right. We saw you drift away and did nothing about it. We have passed your doors scores of times and never stopped. We speak for all the elders and deacons, yes even the whole congregation. We are asking your forgiveness! This has nothing to do with whether you return to serve Jesus. This is a sincere request for we who are guilty. Please forgive us, for we have wronged you."

What a wonderful way to begin. In shouldering part of the burden, and humbling your own heart, it just has a majestic way of changing attitudes of those involved. Eight out of ten will object and generally reply by saying, "I am the one that needs to ask forgiveness."

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

By Mike Pace

The Holy Spirit is a subject about which many Christians in the church today have little understanding. This is largely due to the fact that those of us who preach and teach and write have been somewhat negligent in discussing the Holy Spirit.

One of the major differences between New Testament Christianity and denominationalism lies in either our understanding or misunderstanding the Holy Spirit and how it works upon the heart of man. The view that the Holy Spirit, apart from the word, and independent of it, influences either an alien sinner or a child of God, is not found anywhere in God's Word.

By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are making direct reference to the third person of the Godhead, and it is that personality of God, the Holy Spirit, that dwells in the child of God. Jesus, the Son of God, promised the Spirit to obedient believers, "*He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this he spake of the Spirit, which they that believed on Him should receive: for*

When they have forgiven you, then comes the second question, related to the purpose of the visit. It too is simple for it is expressed in these words: "What's the matter?" What he would not tell you when you first knocked at the door, he now will reveal. Let him talk. Let him get it all out. Encourage him to express the hostility, the guilt, the hurt, the living hell that he has been through. Don't make excuses! Don't interrupt! Let him speak, and when his speaking is done, help him.

"Forgive me" and "What's the matter?" make a great team. They are related just as surely as we are generally involved, to a lesser or greater degree, with a brother's unfaithfulness. Such humility and love, when expressed can only bring about a healing of the heart and a reconciliation with God.

Now there is just one thing left to do. Begin!

the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:38, 39). This passage of scripture simply states that the Holy Spirit would be given to believers when Jesus was glorified. And Jesus predicted that He would be glorified when He was raised from the dead, (cf. John 12:23). Peter also explained that Jesus was glorified when He was raised from the dead, was received up into heaven and was seated on the throne of His kingdom, (cf. Acts 2:32-36).

It was in that same sermon on the day of Pentecost, following Jesus' ascension into heaven that the Apostle Peter taught and promised that all believers who would repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, (cf. Acts 2:38). Also, the Apostle Paul said that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, and "his Spirit" dwells in children of God, read Romans 8:9-11. On another occasion, Paul stated that the body of the child of God is the temple of the Holy

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EDITOR Mike Pace

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"THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT" continued from page 1

Spirit, "*Which is in you, which you have from God*", (I Cor. 6:19). And then in writing to the churches in Galatia Paul said, "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts . . .*" (Galatians 4:6). It is interesting to note that under the old covenant made at Sinai, God promised to "DWELL AMONG" the people and be their God; but under the new covenant mediated by Jesus Christ, God promises to dwell "IN" his people and be their God, (cf. Lev. 26:12; II Cor. 6:16). For anyone to deny the indwelling that God promised is to deny that we have any greater blessing in this respect than the Jews had under the old covenant.

In Romans 5:5, the Apostle Paul declares that the "*Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.*" It is easily recognized by any reader that in this instance, the Apostle Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit making residence in the heart of a child of God. Another descriptive verse which points out vividly the habitation of the Holy Spirit in the child of God is recorded in Romans 8:9 where Paul states, "*But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.*" The Holy Spirit must reign supremely in the Christian; otherwise, he is none of Christ's. Where Christ and the Spirit reign, the deeds of the body are put to death and the fruits of the Spirit are revealed in righteousness. Listen to Romans 8:10, 11 "*And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.*"

A child of God cannot afford to forfeit his right to have the Holy Spirit occupy his soul. We know that by reading such passages of scripture as Matt. 15:18-20

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Changing Attitudes About Divorce

By John Waddey

In past days, Christians and the church stood firmly opposed to the evil practice of promiscuous divorce and remarriage. Always there have been those who were weak and compromising in dealing with this problem. Some never preached on the subject, though they did hold the scriptural point of view. Others performed marriages for divorcees with never a question about the circumstance of their divorce or a scruple about doing so. Some few tried to justify their beliefs and practice but seldom in a bold public way. Now things are changing. In recent years there have been several books and pamphlets published that boldly challenge the long held views on the subject. Not only would such brethren excuse the practice of divorce and remarriage, but they accuse brethren who cry out against this of being trouble-makers and persecutors of innocent people. Here is why.

1. Some congregations have many remarried divorcees in their midst. To appease them they have abstained from preaching against the sinfulness of the situation. Many times the oft-married brother or sister becomes very prominent in the life of the congregation. Feelings of guilt make it necessary either to admit the wrong and right it, or to try to justify the situation (I Cor. 5:6).

2. Some leaders in their desire to have a larger growing membership are anxious to take in anyone regardless, of their life and conduct as long as it is not outrageous by community standards. They equate quantity with quality.

3. Some preachers measure their message by the popularity charts. That which is unpopular is quietly passed by (2 Tim. 4:3).

4. Some are intimidated by wealthy or influential members of their congregations whose lives are affected by this problem. Fearing reprisals or trouble, they conveniently preach on other, acceptable themes (I Tim. 6:17-19).

5. Preachers who weakly went along with accepting such divorced people and who performed marriage ceremonies for them had to rationalize their conduct in the face of Jesus' teaching.

6. Some leaders who once stood opposed to the divorce evil have been gradually worn down by pressures of a degenerate society that steadily beats upon the walls of the kingdom and is slowly encroaching upon the conduct of its members. Their resistance has finally given away to the new morality.

7. Some leaders held the correct, scriptural view and taught it until a member of their family entered into a second marriage which stood condemned. Under those circumstances, they adjusted their thinking to clear the guilty (Prov. 17:15).

8. We now have many leaders in the church who have grown up in congrega-

tions with little or no teaching on the subject. Men who are not taught on a given subject cannot provide effective leadership in that area (Hos. 4:6).

9. Many have been so confused by the numerous theories being tossed about on the subject that they do not quite know what to believe or do.

10. Some leaders have unconsciously grown so accustomed to the darkness of this moral sin that it just does not seem too bad any more.

11. Many have allowed their sympathies for hardships that would be faced by the families, especially where children are involved, to blind them to the righteousness of God's law.

12. Some brethren have turned to this compromising view because they were "turned off" by the attitude and conduct of some leaders who opposed divorces and remarriages which are contrary to Jesus' teaching. Some were harsh and heartless in dealing with men and women trapped in unlawful marriages (II Tim. 3:24, 25). There have been cases of discrimination where some were called to account for such illicit unions while others were passed by (Jas. 2:9). Some ignore the exception Jesus allowed — "for fornication" — and insist on no innocent parties in a broken marriage. Such attitudes always drive some souls to opposite extremes.

13. Some brethren are always looking for easy solutions to hard problems. There are no tougher problems faced by congregational leaders than those of unscriptural marriage unions. While it is highly desirable to seek new and easy solutions in the secular realm, it is fatal in the spiritual (Prov. 4:25-27).

14. Some falsely believe that God's word is not static and unchangeable, but plastic and may be adjusted to meet the changing moods of man's behavior (Matt. 24:35).

15. No doubt, some men are being used by Satan to corrupt and weaken the Lord's church (II Cor. 11:13-15).

16. Human wisdom has sometimes been allowed to be exalted above the revelation of God on these matters. Unscriptural divorce and remarriage just does not appear too bad to man's jaundiced eyes (Isa. 55:8, 9).

17. Liberals who scoff at God's law and reject the very idea of a law that man is expected to conform to cannot bring themselves to accept this strict, high standard for marriage and divorce.

Though men may protest and though a score of alternate views may be proposed, Jesus' word still plainly says, "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, commiteth adultery: And he that marrieth her when she is put away commiteth adultery" (Matt. 19:9).

The Woman I Marry

By Mark K. Lewis

As this essay begins, it is necessary to point out that the author is single, having never been married (presently 27 years old). As I began giving thought to writing an article on this subject, ideas formed in my mind that I decided to commit to paper in hopes that others who are yet single might benefit from them. Marriage is not something I take lightly or consider flippantly, and I have given much study, thought, and prayer to the subject. The following points are some conclusions I have reached about this divine institution (Gen. 2) concerning the woman I intend to marry, if the Lord ever graces me with such a blessing.

The woman I marry must be eligible. The Bible allows only three classes of people to marry: (1) those who have never been married (I Cor. 7:28); (2) those who have been married but whose spouses have died (I Cor. 7:39); and (3) those who have been married but have put away their mates due to the unfaithfulness of that mate (Matt. 5:32). I have absolutely no intention of marrying a woman who does not fall into one of these categories. Marriage is not as important to me as getting to heaven (Matt. 6:19-20), so I will not form a marriage union that would cause me to live in adultery and thus greatly jeopardize my soul (see Matt. 19:9; Rev. 21:8). I have questioned more than one divorced young lady as to why she was divorced, and have not pursued relationships I would have otherwise been interested in simply because the lady was not Scripturally divorced and thus not eligible to be married. Salvation is simply too precious to gamble with.

The woman I marry must be a Christian. To marry outside the body of Christ is, to me, simply unthinkable; it is not a live option. How can I seek first God's kingdom (Matt. 6:33) and then make a life-long commitment to someone *outside* of God's kingdom? Serving God is the number one priority of life (Luke 9:57-62; 10:40-42). The goal of every Christian ought to be to serve the Lord to the best of his ability. The wife, being a "helper" to man (Gen. 2:18), ought to "help" him most of all to get to heaven. **TO ME, THE MAIN PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE IS TO HELP EACH OTHER GET TO HEAVEN,** not companionship or physical fulfillment etc., although these are important things. The whole

purpose of life, including marriage, is to "fear God and keep his commandments" for someday he will bring all things into judgment (Ecc. 12:13-14). Thus, I intend to marry someone who will help me fulfill God's purpose for me in life and help me reach that heavenly home. And only a faithful Christian woman can do that. (I wouldn't even marry a *Christian* if she were not faithful.) Being yoked with an unbeliever in marriage (II Cor. 6:14-17) is simply not the height of wisdom or spirituality. The Christian ought to have his eyes fixed on Christ (Heb. 12:1-2) and to be seeking things above and setting his affections there (Col. 3:1-2).

The woman I marry must love God more than she loves me. She really could not be a faithful Christian if she *didn't* love God more than me. Jesus plainly teaches (and Paul concurs in I Cor. 7:15) that we cannot be his true disciples if we love anything or anyone more than we love him (Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 14:26, 33). Not even one's family is to receive higher allegiance than Christ. We are to love God supremely (Matt. 22:37). In fact, it is one of the great paradoxes of life (and the Christian religion) that *if one loves God more than he loves his mate, he will then be able to love his mate more than if he put his mate before God.* If my wife loves God more than she loves me, she will then love me more than she other wise would. She will always be thinking of spiritual things, of how she can better fulfill the responsibilities God has given her as a wife and mother (see Eph. 5; Titus 2, etc.), and of how she can glorify God as a Christian wife. *True* love for me, i.e., seeking after my wants and needs above even her own, is *commanded* her (Tit. 2:4), and if she loves God more than me, she'll fulfill that. And I'll do the same for her if I love God more than I love her (Eph. 5:25). I see marriage as a beautiful thing when both husband and wife are knowledgeable, faithful Christians who love God more than they love each other.

The woman I marry must be pure in heart and mind. Paul describes the kind of woman I want to marry in Titus 2:3-4: sober, discreet, chaste, a keeper at home, good, obedient. The pure in heart shall see God (Matt. 5:8). And I know that if I have a woman who is pure and chaste I will never have to worry about her being unfaithful to me or having men lust after her because she is immodestly dressed. It

does not take me long to become disinterested in having a relationship with a woman who wears shorts, halter tops, bikini bathing suits, and other immodest apparel. A woman who is pure in heart and mind is a woman who will be adorned with "shamefacedness" (I Tim. 2:9). The word "shamefacedness" refers to the modest attitude that would *prohibit* immodest dress. You couldn't *force* a faithful Christian woman—a woman of pure heart and mind—to wear immodest clothing. The woman I marry must have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), think on godly things (Phil. 4:8), and approve only things that are excellent (Phil. 1:10). The law of God must ever be before her (Psa. 119:30), to prohibit her from doing anything that wouldn't bring glory to God (I Cor. 10:31). Such is what I expect of myself, and I also have a right to expect it of my wife.

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing," Solomon said in Proverbs 18:22. That ought to be true. Too often, anymore, it's not. I pray that someday the Lord will bless me with a "virtuous woman" whose price is truly "far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). But I refuse to marry just anyone who comes along. God will be first in my life and the woman I marry must be able to help me produce more for his cause than I am now producing. Otherwise, she would be a hindrance. May God send us more women, and men, with no other goal in mind than service to him, so that unions can be formed and children brought into the world that will glorify him and help win this world for Christ.

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that all actions and deeds of the body, whether good or evil, proceed from the heart. Hence, when the Holy Spirit reigns within the child of God, there will be none other than the fruits of the spirit, which are good and not evil.

A question which concerns a great many people that consider the indwelling of the Holy Spirit deals with "how" does the Spirit dwell within. Does the Spirit dwell in a child of God independently of the word of God? The christian's awareness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not based on his "feelings" or any other special experiences or manifestations. A child of God knows that the Holy Spirit dwells in him just as he knows that Christ dwells in him and just as he knows his sins have been forgiven. This is by faith. Paul really summed it up when he stated in this way, "*That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith*", (Gal. 3:14). It was the Apostle Paul that exhorted Christians to "*Be filled with the Spirit*" in Ephesians 5:18. I'm sure that you would agree that Paul would not encourage us to do something that was not even within the realm of the possible. Again he said in Colossians 3:16 to "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*".

To be filled with the Spirit then, is to have the word of Christ richly dwelling in us.

It is rather obvious by reading Romans 8:11, 12 that it is the Holy Spirit dwelling in the body of a Christian that will quicken (make alive) the mortal body on the resurrection day. Listen to Paul's words as he explains, "*But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh . . .*"

Our access to God is affected by the indwelling Spirit. It is by the indwelling of the Spirit, and only by this means, that one can have a distinct relationship with the Father. We know this to be true because of what Paul said in Ephesians 2:18 "*For through Him we both have access by one spirit unto the Father.*"

One of the great difficulties in understanding the fact that the Holy Spirit is a **person** who dwells in the child of God, is that many view the Holy Spirit as an influence, a power or a thiestic ideology. The Holy Spirit is one of the Godhead God the father; God, the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. And it is the latter representation of God that dwells in the faithful Christian. We do not fully understand the Spirit, but we can comprehend His message and thereby know of His will and purpose for us.

How to Become a Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). Then, the **HOW** become equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*" (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we come out of our sinful condition, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord.

(Matt. 3:8; Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN