True faith in Christ demands a change of focus and orientation. The Scriptures envision a life that includes self-renunciation. The heart, and its ordering, is central to this. “Keep your heart with all vigilance,” says Proverbs 4:23, “for from it flow the springs of life” (ESV). The scriptural understanding of the heart’s “fallen” bent or orientation calls us to be careful in monitoring what it is that captivates and then captures our hearts.

As Ken Boa often points out, in line with Augustine long before him, the central call of Scripture is to love God supremely, to learn to love him correctly, and to love others practically. The Christian life is a love story, and the struggle of existence, if you will, is over who, what, and how we love (see Matt. 22:36–40; John 13:34–35). St. Paul reminds the young Timothy that the goal of his ministry is love “that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5 ESV). In light of this, and other clear teachings of Scripture, the exhortation of the Proverbs to keep or guard our hearts is a serious warning and a vital, timeless concern.

Luke records Jesus’ central teaching in terms of self-denial. “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23–24 ESV; see also Luke 14). As Dallas Willard has pointed out, self-denial is a key element of spiritual formation. With this in mind, let’s consider our cultural moment—its dominant mood and the difficulties it creates for such a vision of discipleship—in light of the Greek legend that tells the tragic story of Narcissus.

A Legendary Mind-Set

Known for his handsome features, Narcissus was oblivious to others; he scorned or ignored the people around him. When someone angrily lashed out, “May he who loves not others love himself,” something like a curse fell on Narcissus: he became fixated by his own reflection in a pool of water. Gazing in adoration at his own beauty and magnificence, he was unable to hear Echo’s call, until eventually he fell into the pool and drowned. Narcissus died a lonely, self-absorbed death, consumed in the end by his own self-infatuation.

As we move from ancient mythology to modern times, we note (continued on page 10)
by Kerry A. Knott

President, C.S. Lewis Institute

Dear Friends,

For the disciple of Christ, what does one do when it seems that trends continue to push Christianity further and further away from the center of culture? At times it seems like the string of bad news continues unabated—the recent court decision in New York barring churches from meeting in public schools, Bible-believing churches losing their properties through court decisions, and recent surveys highlighting the serious decline of biblical literacy, the list just goes on.

So what can we do? I suggest the best way for us to address this decline is by focusing on discipling a few other believers. If each disciple of Christ were to disciple three or four other believers each year, and then each of those were to disciple others in the coming year, pretty soon we would see dramatic change in our churches, our neighborhoods, and our overall culture. Karl Johnson’s article, “It Starts with You,” makes this point forcefully. Toward that end, I encourage you to consider our new Heart and Mind Discipleship—this ten-week program provides a thematic approach using DVD lectures, short articles, Bible study questions, and group discussion questions. This resource includes instructions from some of the best discipleship leaders around, and it is based on what we’ve learned from decades of discipling others.

And while it is easy to get discouraged from time to time, there is actually a lot to be excited about. The Holy Spirit is working in America, and we see evidence of this in churches that are refocusing their attention on discipleship and in ministries that are finding effective ways to explain and defend the gospel and reach new audiences with the message of Christ’s saving grace.

The articles in this issue should equip you as you continue your journey of discipleship. Stuart McAllister offers excellent guidance on how to understand and deal with today’s culture of narcissism. Tom Tarrants delves deeply into the Holy Spirit’s work in discipleship, and a classic piece from Thomas à Kempis is a powerful reminder about our desires and weaknesses in fully following Jesus. The profile of Bishop Hanley Moule and the sound words from Dr. V. Raymond Edman should inspire each of us to pursue God’s call for us to grow to spiritual maturity.

As we learn and grow, I encourage you to invest in people. The people you disciple today could change the world tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Kerry A. Knott
K.Knott@cslewisinstitute.org
The Discipline of Discipleship


“If any man will come after me” (Luke 9:23)

Discipleship means “discipline!”

The disciple is that one who has been taught or trained by the Master, who has come with his ignorance, superstition, and sin, to find learning, truth, and forgiveness from the Saviour. Without discipline we are not disciples, even though we profess His Name and pass for a follower of the lowly Nazarene. In an undisciplined age when liberty and license have replaced law and loyalty, there is greater need than ever before that we be disciplined to be His disciples.

Discipleship requires the discipline of conversion, wherein we recognize our lost estate because of rebellion against God, and with penitence come to the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. We assent from our hearts that “all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (Isa. 53:6), that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), that “the Scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Gal. 3:22), and that we “were by nature the children of wrath, even as others . . . strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:3, 12).

This discipline is difficult for the natural heart of each one, for we will not humble ourselves to admit our sin and shame; but it is easy for the honest and good heart that sees itself in the light of Calvary’s Sacrifice for sin. In the dispensation before the Cross, David, seeing himself, cried, “I have sinned against the Lord”; and to God replied through His servant, “the Lord also hath put away thy sin” (2 Sam. 12:13). When Peter saw himself in the light of the Lord’s presence and power, he fell down saying, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). A woman wept as she stood by His feet, which she washed with her tears of repentance; and she heard the Saviour’s word, “Thy sins are forgiven . . . thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Luke 7:48, 50). The penitent Publican smote his breast in genuine sorrow for sin, and prayed, “God, be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13), and went home justified.

Thus it has been down the ages; the despondent, despairing of themselves, have come to the Saviour for mercy, and have been saved. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). Without salvation no sonship; without sonship, no discipleship!

It is His sons whom God disciplines that they might bring honor to His name. He wants to teach and train them, to soften and sweeten them, to strengthen and steady them, that they may show forth the excellencies of Him who told them, “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29). Without discipline we are not His sons; but as His own we need the exhortation, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son who he receiveth” (Heb. 12:5, 6). This discipline at the moment may not seem “to be joyous, but (rather) grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (12:11).

Discipleship requires the discipline of cost. Our Lord’s words search deeply into the depth of our souls, (continued on page 16)
Finding Power to Live a New Life

Discipleship and the Holy Spirit

by Thomas A. Tarrants, III, D.Min.
Vice President of Ministry, C.S. Lewis Institute

In recent issues of Knowing & Doing we have looked at Christ’s call to discipleship and at the cost of discipleship. Understanding and embracing these truths is essential to becoming true disciples of Jesus Christ. But knowing what we must do and even committing ourselves to doing it, though necessary, is not sufficient. We need power to live out our commitment. And if we lack it we will become discouraged, then disillusioned, then settle into a life of spiritual mediocrity. This has happened to many would-be followers of Jesus over the centuries.

Jesus tells us very clearly that the power to live as his disciple comes from the Holy Spirit. With this assertion, no one who takes the Bible seriously, whether Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox, would disagree. But, for a variety of reasons, in many churches today there is a lack of clear, in-depth, practical teaching about the person and work of the Holy Spirit in relation to discipleship. As a result, many people struggle in their spiritual lives, and their discipleship is weak and anemic.

In a brief article it is impossible to give a full account of the work of the Spirit in discipleship (the Christian life). What we can do, however, is look at some important truths about the Spirit that will help us faithfully follow Jesus Christ.

Who or What Is the Holy Spirit?

We live in a culture that is significantly influenced by eastern religion, New Age thinking, and other worldviews, all of which can confuse our understanding of the Holy Spirit and his work. As these non-biblical systems of thought have gained strength over the past fifty years, there has been a corresponding decline in biblical literacy in the culture and the church. As a result, many in the church today have very little understanding of the Bible and what it teaches about the Holy Spirit. For example, it is not uncommon to hear professing believers refer to the Holy Spirit as “it.” From this and other anecdotal evidence, it appears that many people think of the Spirit as an impersonal force or power like “the Force” in Star Wars. Because of the vague and erroneous ideas that many have about the Spirit, we need to begin by briefly clarifying who the Holy Spirit is.

Although the Holy Spirit is quite prominent in the New Testament, that is not the case in the Old Testament. He was present and active at creation, was active in inspiring the prophets and anointed and empowered various leaders of Israel, including judges and kings. However, he is not described as empowering the ordinary Israelite living under the Old Covenant. And his Personhood is very much in the background, with his work often (but not always) described in ways that suggest impersonal divine power or agency. This “low profile” and involvement chiefly with the leadership in Israel is a major difference between the Holy Spirit’s work in the Old Testament and New Testament.

The Holy Spirit begins to come out of the shadows so to speak in the New Testament. He first causes the conception of the Messiah, then later anoints and empowers his ministry (Matt. 1:20–21; Luke 1:34–35,
3:21–22). Then at Pentecost he breaks forth in full intensity, launching, empowering, and guiding the church and its mission. This inaugurates the Age to Come, sometimes called the Age of the Spirit, which was prophesied in Joel 2:28–32 and was announced by Peter at Pentecost. From this time forward, all of God’s people—masters and servants, male and female, old and young—will receive the Spirit, and “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21).

In the fuller light of Jesus and the church, the Holy Spirit’s personhood and his crucial role in the work of the kingdom and discipleship becomes evident. Jesus speaks most fully about the Holy Spirit in John 14–16. In these chapters, we see that far from being an impersonal force, the Spirit is a person, “another counselor” who takes Jesus’ place when he returns to the Father; the Greek word for another means one of the same kind. The Spirit is a divine person just like Jesus but, unlike Jesus, he has not become incarnate, taking on human nature and a physical body. Yet the Spirit carries on the work of Christ and makes him personally present to us in this world. (Note the way the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ in Romans 8:9–11.) In John, Jesus goes on to say that he teaches, brings to remembrance (14:26), bears witness (15:26), convicts (16:8), guides, hears, speaks, and declares the future (16:13).

This picture is further developed in Acts, where we read that the Spirit can be lied to (Acts 5:3–11), speaks (10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 21:11), and confers (“it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” [Acts 15:28]), and forbids (Acts 16:6). And in Paul’s epistles we read, “the Spirit intercedes for us” (Rom. 8:26), wills/decides (1 Cor. 12:11), can be experienced in fellowship (2 Cor. 13:14), can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), speaks (1 Tim. 4:1), and can be quenched (1 Thess. 5:19). In each instance, these are the actions of a personal being, not an impersonal force.

Clearly, the Holy Spirit is a divine person. And this divine person is the third person of the Trinity, as is evident in a number of other places in the Scriptures, including the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19, “baptizing them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” and Paul’s benediction, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). By including the Holy Spirit with God the Father and Jesus the Son, the authors are making it very clear that the Spirit is also God.

Discovering that the Holy Spirit is not just an impersonal force but a divine person dwelling within them has revolutionized the lives of many believers. If your understanding of the Spirit has been a bit vague, ask God to give you clarity and study the passages above.

What Is the Work of the Holy Spirit?

When we survey the New Testament, we see that Jesus Christ secured our redemption; the Holy Spirit (continued on page 18)
On May 17, 1921, while traveling on a train, Bishop Handley Moule wrote a short poem about three places in England that he loved: “Three Affections in One Life.”

The first was the place of his birth—Dorset—his “mother.”

Dorset, my heart’s first warmth is thine
Till all my years are done,
O fair and dear, O mother mine.
O glory of thy son.

Handley Carr Glyn Moule was born on December 23, 1841, the youngest of eight sons of Henry and Mary Evans Moule. Handley’s father was the evangelical Anglican vicar of Fordington, now a suburb of Dorchester. He has been described as “a preacher of a gospel of definite and personal change of heart and subsequent devotion of life.” Handley always gave thanks that “such a personality” embodied to him “the great word Father.” Handley’s godly mother had a love for language and literature. Henry Moule often claimed that she was more responsible than he for his sons’ piety and successes. Young Handley learned from his mother’s example, he said, that “prayer was a work most real, most momentous.”

In Memories of a Vicarage, Handley Moule fondly describes “the silvered waters of the Frome [River] as it flowed on its way through a maze of sunshine and shadow cast by oak and elm in the level meadows of the Dorset Downs.” Handley was educated at home. As a child he suffered with eye problems, so his mother read to him from great books, instilling in him a lifelong quest for learning. At the age of sixteen, he had memorized the Greek text of Ephesians and Philippians. From his brothers he learned the arts of bell ringing and woodcarving. The Moule sons compiled a remarkable record of service in education and the church, two of them becoming missionaries, both as bishops in China.

The revival of 1859 touched Fordington. Nightly meetings in Henry Moule’s church featured no great preacher but simply the reading of Scripture and prayer. Even so, many were “awakened, awed and made conscious of eternal realities.” In later years, on three different occasions, Handley Moule gave up what he was doing and gladly returned to assist his father in ministry at Fordington.

Handley Moule’s second love was Cambridge, which he described as “teacher” and “friend.”

Cambridge, kind teacher of my youth,
Blest home of golden days,
To thee I plight the grateful troth
That reverent friendship pays.

In 1859 Moule matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge, beginning a close association with Cambridge that lasted throughout his life.
At Trinity his teachers included Joseph Barber Lightfoot, later, bishop of Durham—“mighty master of Apostolic and sub-Apostolic literature, strong defender of the faith, shepherd of the people.” Young Moule respected Lightfoot for his learning and loved him for “the great goodness of his personality and [his] true-hearted kindness.”

Moule had a brilliant academic career at Cambridge, excelling in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, and winning awards and prizes for his essays and poems. But the academic environment prompted theological doubts and questions and put his childhood convictions to a severe test. He kept faithfully, however, to church attendance and to religious reading on Sundays, knowing it was his father’s wish. Moule often referred to the mental and spiritual benefits of devoting Sundays to reading works of Christian devotion—a practice he followed all his life.

Years later Handley Moule wrote that during this time of doubt and confusion, God had kept him from a “wrong life, though not from a world of evil within.” His Cambridge friends were unaware of the depths of his struggle. One wrote that Handley Moule was “very simple and retiring, very affectionate, always the same quiet, earnest Christian, exerting his unseen but widely felt influence beyond the circle of his friends.”

Moule’s doubts were resolved during the 1866 Christmas vacation. He wrote to his father, describing what had happened:

I was able to find and to accept pardon and peace through the satisfaction of the Redeemer, as I had never done before; and to feel a truth and solid reality in the doctrine of the Cross as I have ever been taught it at home, such as I had sometimes painfully—very painfully—doubted of, under the continual dropings of the controversies and questions of the present day.

Was this a conversion experience or the recovery of his childhood faith? We cannot be sure, but we do know that those days at the end of 1866 firmly established Handley Moule’s Christian faith and gave new purpose and direction to his life. Many years later Moule remembered “that glad day” when he was “permitted to realize the presence, pardon and personal love of the Lord, not reasoned, just received.”

Because of his own spiritual struggles, Handley Moule was always able to help people who were experiencing what some have called a “dark night of the soul.” To many, as to Christian in The Pilgrim’s Progress who was sinking in the deep waters of fear and doubt, Moule’s voice came like the voice of Hopeful: “Be of good cheer, my brother; I feel the bottom, and it is good.”

Handley Moule began to think about becoming a minister, with an eye toward helping his father. He wrote (continued on page 23)
Discipleship: 
*It Starts with You*

by Karl Johnson, Lt. Col., USMC 
*C. S. Lewis Institute Fellow*

Last summer the president of the C.S. Lewis Institute, Kerry Knott, outlined the vision for the “Decade of Discipleship.” It could not have been timelier. It’s no secret that the church is suffering; whether it’s called moralistic therapeutic deism (MTD), casual Christianity, easy-believism, or nominalism, “the lives of most professing Christians are not much different from their nonbelieving neighbors.” Instead of adopting a biblical worldview, Christians tend to share the same basic presuppositions as nonbelievers and embrace ideas and values “that actually contradict the gospel we claim to believe.” This has contributed to a significant degradation of discipleship. But this is not news. This has been described in four previous editions of *Knowing & Doing*, so I will not rehash this but use it as a point of departure to address people like me: the laymen and laywomen of the church. And I’ll use my own journey as a backdrop to illustrate how we can frame this critical issue.

**My Personal Journey**

Although I was raised in the church I never grasped the importance of discipleship. When I finally heeded the call of the Spirit, I embarked on a journey of intense independent study and learning. I read every book I could find, sought out the best minds, and added much-needed intellectual rigor to a faith that was never much more than a feeling or general disposition. But as I studied the “big questions,” I realized something was missing. The Spirit made it clear that I had to act on what I had learned. I had to balance knowing with doing. And to do so I needed a guide, a mentor. As I evaluated my spiritual journey and mentally charted its trajectory, I realized that when I had been more faithful there had been strong, prominent Christians in my life. Some were mentors; others were peers. When I had strayed, there had been a conspicuous absence of any such presence.

I began my first foray into discipleship when God placed a strong brother in my life, and I grew through his encouragement and fellowship. When we began a Bible study and he learned that I’d never led one, his encouragement and advice nudged me more toward the doing. As we regularly spent time together, I realized that I wanted a faith like his. He had a strong mind, but that was not the sum of his faith. His was a practical faith, one that translated directly into everyday life.

At my next duty station I intentionally sought others with whom I could build similar relationships, and God led me to the Tun Tavern Fellowship. (The name is taken from the historical birthplace of the Marine Corps.) In this band of brothers, I found passionate, bright, and committed Marines and a place where I could teach, encourage, and challenge and be taught, encouraged, and challenged, a place where discipleship was the very raison d’être. It was in their DNA. I encountered one particularly astute brother who challenged and encouraged me by continually pulling me up to his level. He wasn’t impressed with my learning but was interested in how I was applying it. I was used to being coddled and praised for my
“spiritual initiative.” This was the first time I’d really been challenged and had someone push back on me. And it was good!

Before long the Spirit led me to the C.S. Lewis Institute (CSLI). While attending CSLI lectures, I fell under the watchful eye of the man who would become my mentor. He invited me to take part in the Fellows Program, where I discovered the joy and rewards of discipleship of the heart and mind by drawing closer to God. I was stretched spiritually and learned in new ways. The knowledge offered ran deeper than doctrine and theology. It was more than intellectual knowledge. It was understanding. One aspect of the program that I had dismissed as an inconvenience—the triads—became one of the more enriching experiences, and through it I experienced what Greg Ogden calls the “hothouse of Christian growth.”

Further, my mentor encouraged me to press beyond the Fellows curriculum and read the likes of J. Oswald Sanders, Greg Ogden, and Michael Wilkins. It became clear: discipleship is my calling. It’s our calling.

Further, I was disabused of the notion that “discipleship is for an elite, more committed, or more specifically trained person or group of Christians.” The reality is that “discipleship is not just one aspect of the church’s mission, but it encompasses all that the church does.”

Why did this take me almost forty years to learn? Why didn’t anyone tell me this? How about you? Do your small groups sometimes feel like the blind leading the blind? Does your involvement in church seem fractured or disjointed? Do you feel, as a friend said to me, adrift despite your efforts to the contrary? Do the various ministries and activities in your church seem like a loose conglomeration of efforts that are hardly related? I contend that most churches have not grasped this simple yet profound reality.

What really grabbed my attention were two questions posed by Ogden at a CSLI lecture. First he asked, “How many consider themselves Christians?” Every hand went up. Then he probed further: “How many of you consider yourselves disciples?” Two-thirds of the hands went down. Is there a difference? How can you be a Christian without being a disciple? Matthew 28:19 is clear: “Go therefore and make disciples,” not, “Go evangelize,” or, “Go make Christians.”

In fact, I was stunned (continued on page 27)
Understanding and Dealing with Today’s Culture of Narcissism
(continued from page 1)

that the past two hundred years in Western cultures have shown an increasing focus on the place of the individual, the role of choice, and the “demand” to be personally happy at whatever cost. Moral and social restraints have been rejected, weakened, or targeted as instruments of oppression. Looking good and feeling good has replaced being good and doing good, and most people cannot tell the difference. We’re told that nothing should hinder the life we want. The endless cycles of “reality TV” shows invite us all to a feast of self-absorbed personalities who live to win no matter what. The outcomes, however, are somewhat suspect.

_Moral and social restraints have been rejected, weakened, or targeted as instruments of oppression. Looking good and feeling good has replaced being good and doing good, and most people cannot tell the difference._

One result has been what Christopher Lasch famously and controversially called “the culture of narcissism.” We see it in the infantile and self-obsessed characters of popular culture, such as Peter Griffin in *Family Guy* or Sheldon in *The Big Bang Theory*. *Seinfeld* and *Friends* seem to make a virtue out of the quirkiness of self-absorption.

Writing in the late eighties, Lasch described the dependency produced by this kind of culture. “The narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. He cannot live without an admiring audience. His apparent freedom from family ties and institutional constraints does not free him to stand alone or to glory in his individuality . . . For the narcissist, the world is a mirror, whereas the rugged individualist saw it as an empty wilderness to be shaped by his own design.”

Lasch further proposes that narcissism is an unhappy condition. “Plagued by anxiety, depression, vague discontents, a sense of inner-emptiness, the ‘psychological man’ . . . seeks neither individual self-aggrandizement nor spiritual transcendence but peace of mind, under conditions that militate against it.” The narcissist turns to therapists, hoping to achieve “the modern equivalent of salvation, ‘mental health.’”

Ravi Zacharias wrote a compelling work in which he asked, “Can man live without God?” The narcissist mind-set seems to ask the question, can man live as God?

_How does a dictionary of sociology define narcissism? “The dominant personality type of modern society is said to be internally impoverished, fluctuating between exaggerated self-love and self-hatred, consequently needing parasitic relations to reinforce the former; it is unable to tolerate frustration, inadequacy, and strong feelings, due to a lack of ego-development.”

I believe, particularly in America, that narcissism is the problem of our age. And it leads to other serious problems. Lasch notes several, including chronic boredom, promiscuity, and hypochondria—always looking for a cure. I see here what St. Augustine called concupiscence or a permanent rage of “wanting, wanting, wanting.” There are varieties of the manifestation of narcissism. The church seems to have its share. I think of the person who endlessly “consumes” religious services, seminars, and messages but rarely does anything and commits to little. The preening culture of personality so widely popular is replicated in a mirrored version by our own celebrity fixation with religious leaders.

The culture of narcissism fosters discontent, hunger, and restlessness as a constant condition. The endless stimulus and intentional bombardment of marketing plays into the spirit of the age. Somebody loves you (actually, your money) and has a wonderful plan for your life (resources). Our legitimate needs, longings, fears, wishes, and hopes are studied, analyzed, and utilized as strategies against us. Even knowing this, many of us
still fall prey to the market’s powerful seductions. They are so . . . well . . . so much fun! Just think—if we become happy and content, if we begin to enjoy what we have, to like how we look, to live with less, we may not feel the urge to consume, and as we know, “When the going gets tough, the tough . . . go shopping.”

The Hungry Soul

The notion of a “hungry soul” is a powerful one. C.S. Lewis and G.K. Chesterton were quick to perceive what they saw to be the misfit between modern philosophies, ideas, or ideologies and modern men and women. The patient was being diagnosed with problems that were supposedly reducible to material or social influences alone. People were told they were the result of random forces plus chance and necessity; meaninglessness bellowed in their thoughts, yet their hearts cried for more! This demands that we reflect on the human condition.

Our cultural moment and its many voices reveal a deep restlessness with what is or how things are. Augustine is a good guide here in describing three types of unhappy people. “The one who seeks what he cannot obtain suffers TORTURE, and the one who has got what is not desirable is CHEATED, and the one who does not seek what is worth seeking is DISEASED.”

The massively felt discontent of our age, what Colin Gunton expressed in Enlightenment and Alienation, provides Christians with an apologetic point of contact—a bridge. John Eldredge offers a useful perspective. He talks about “the journey of desire” as “the desire for life as it was meant to be.”

Eldredge cites Gerald May:

*There is a desire within each one of us, in the deep center of ourselves that we call our heart. We were born with it, it is never completely satisfied, and it never dies. We are often unaware of it, but it is always awake . . . Our true identity, our reason for being, is to be found in this desire.*

Our desires are misdirected, relocated, and sadly misguided. At stake are core identity issues. What am I? Why am I here? It speaks to issues of calling, the quest for meaning and purpose in life. The modern world and its media (propaganda system?) have a wonderful plan for your life, unless, that is, you seek the real thing.

If we don’t know what we are (*imago Dei*) and how we are supposed to function, we find ourselves constantly searching for—but unable to find—satisfaction or significance. The quest has an insistent demand and drives us with relentless energy. That great physician of the soul Blaise Pascal notes that a sign of human greatness is our ability to know that we are miserable. He says: “What can the incessant craving and this importance of attainment mean, unless there was once a happiness belonging to man, of which only the faintest traces remain, in that void which he attempts to fill with everything within his reach?”

Pascal sees our disordered desires as a symptom of our brokenness and as evidence of a fall from greatness, a focus that Abraham Kuyper also addresses, asking whether the world is in a normal or abnormal condition as we encounter it. Who defines the norm, the standards, or the lines by which
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we measure? This is a worldview and life-view issue that has serious consequences.

A Workable Model?

Let’s examine this a bit more closely. One of the tests of a worldview and lifeview is its livability. The “modern” and now the postmodern eras have struggled greatly with finding a workable model for a truly satisfying life. Assured that the past was largely bad and all wisdom lives in creativity, the moment, the “now,” we are left as slaves of our limited horizons. Narcissism is one of the results. The book of Romans charts the path of descent that inevitably follows ignoring, rejecting, or turning from God. Consider the mid-portion of Romans 1.

• Verses 18–20. We see that there is a knowledge of God that is public, that is perceived, what the Reformed tradition refers to as “common grace.” However, this knowledge does not lead where we’d expect or perhaps wish.
• Verses 21–23. Humankind does not “honor him as God” or “give thanks to him,” which would express contingency, dependency, and gratitude. They prefer their own reason or the “reasons” they can find around them (the creation). This is an inward turn.
• Verses 24–25. God therefore gives them over. They can have what they want (and all the consequences that are entailed). The downward and inward pull takes over and becomes predominant.

However, as beings made in the image of God, they are tormented and left with infinite longings bounded by finite capacities. Desire’s reach is so much greater than life’s confined ability to deliver (without God).

Two Driving Principles

Humans everywhere submit to something as the central guiding or driving principle, or force, for their life. The famous psychiatrist M. Scott Peck is helpful here:

To function decently in this world we must submit ourselves to some principle that takes precedence over what we might want at any given moment. For the religious, this principle is God, and so they will say, “Thy will, not mine be done.” But if they are sane, even the nonreligious submit themselves, whether they know it or not, to some “higher power”—be it truth or love, the needs of others or the demands of reality.9

The contemporary era has preferred Nietzsche over Jesus. The “will to power,” the overcoming hero as the self-created and self-ruled individualist, is the icon of our time. The Old Testament shows a glimpse of this personality type in the wicked king Ahab. In 1 Kings 21 Naboth refuses to sell his vineyard to the greedy Ahab because it is his family’s inheritance and a sale would be contrary to the Mosaic Law. Ahab, unable to secure his desire, goes into a huff like a todler whose desires are thwarted and rushes home to his bed. His whole world stops because he can’t get what he wants, right away, right now! His submission is to himself and his passion.

We are all submitted to something, the question is, to whom or what?

Idolatrous Options?

Western culture and its analyzers recognize that something is deeply wrong. It is as if there is a destructive social virus, a seed

If we don’t know what we are (imago Dei) and how we are supposed to function, we find ourselves constantly searching for – but unable to find – satisfaction or significance.
that carries with it its own undoing. The French philosopher Chantal Delsol describes “the individual, supposedly freed from the culture that weighed on him” who:

... reflects a false sense of sufficiency: the individual believes himself to be the source of both the questions and the answers, to contain within himself the alpha and omega, and to provide himself with his own points of reference. He wishes to bind himself to others only through a voluntary contract... He rejects the bonds that preceded him and any debt to which he has not agreed.10

Rejecting all bonds and commitments, and restricting obligations, the narcissist wants to be unrestricted in his choices. All outer, external, or inherited (traditions) reference points are lost or simply don’t matter.

The narcissist believes “it’s all about me,” and of course within his worldview and lifeview, what else is there? This frame of mind has vast cultural consequences, because we reap what we sow. We elevate “winners,” and they become a source for emulation. Harold O.J. Brown documents what he describes as “the sensate mentality” that “is interested only in those things, usually material in nature, that appeal to or affect the senses. It seeks the imposing, the impressive, the voluptuous; it encourages self-indulgence.”11

We have seen this in the Wall Street meltdown, in the tragedies of Enron, WorldCom, and a host of others. We saw it in Bernie Madoff and in many others paraded before us as the models of what we should aspire to. Brown expands, “If [this person’s] hunger for pleasures and sensory values is paramount, what can guide and control his conduct towards other men? Nothing but his desires and lusts.”12

This is so perceptive. The once-so-called seven deadly sins become the seven desired intentions. “People no longer recognize their common interests, for their interests have become highly individualistic and selfish... Whereas in an ideational or idealistic culture lust was something to be ashamed of, in the sensate world it becomes a reason for boasting.”13 Many today mock morality and praise unlimited self-expression. The Bible recognizes this phenomenon and names it. It is the cardinal sin of the Bible and the greatest threat that exists to the faith and faithfulness. It is idolatry, here defined by Tim Keller: an idol “is
Understanding and Dealing with Today’s Culture of Narcissism

anything more important to you than God. Anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.”

Combating Narcissism

Our culture embraces the diversity of idolatrous options manufactured and served up to us on a regular basis. Narcissism finds a welcome in many hearts. How do we resist? What can we do to face the challenge, choose alternatives, and embrace a different way?

The book of 1 John offers vital light on these questions. First John 2:15–17 discusses the battle against the “desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions.” To combat narcissism, we must think more deeply and act more intentionally in ways that cultivate deeper love of the right kind. Augustine wrote that rightly ordered love or charity (caritas) was the secret of a holy and fulfilling life.

Most believers today would never think this way. They lack the tools to diagnose a problem correctly and to find the necessary spiritual solution. In a culture of narcissism, with churches impacted by its pervasive influence, we need help and practice (disciplines) to learn to love the right things, in the right order, and in the right way. The current trend toward formation and discipleship augurs well in this regard.

Let me suggest several counterpoints to the press of narcissism. The first would be a clarified sense of identity and calling. First Peter 2:9–12 speaks powerfully to this. So many in the church who live the unexamined life are being “conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2) because they do not intentionally focus on being “transformed.” We are not consumers (by definition). We are not mere individuals or some product of a marketing campaign. We are made in God’s image, to worship him, serve him, do his will, and glorify his name. We are God’s. We are called!

As Os Guinness notes: “Calling is the truth that God calls us to Himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as a response to His summons and service.”

When considering our call, we need to factor in clarity of purpose, conviction in its implications, and commitment to higher ends.

The second counterpoint would be that of active resistance (1 Pet. 5:8–9), which requires serious attention and intention. We are to be on the alert, “sober-minded” and “watchful” for the adversary. Watching, evaluating, considering—we need to recognize and own that warfare is real and that we are serious targets. There are many unrelenting forces arrayed against us. The command is to “resist.” We resist also knowing that we are not alone, that others suffer with us that we are part of a community for shared learning and support.

This is why fellowship, small groups, Communion, church life, and prayer are essentials, not options. The lone wolf gets devoured. Jacques Ellul would call us to “subversive spirituality” as we resist the idols of our time, and we would do well to learn from the moral commitment of men like Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who saw the corruption of the Soviet system, who felt the press to surrender and conform, but who courageously resisted and said, “Let the lie come, but not through me.”

My third counterpoint would be the need to foster an alternative focus (1 Pet. 4:1–3). Being willing to suffer, to be misunderstood, rejected, or shamed because we choose a higher, better, and more biblical way, is a serious step of resistance to narcissism and its encroachments. It takes a more compelling love, a deeper power, a greater affection, to expel the lesser and the lower. We turn outward and upward with definable outcomes through:

• A willing and ongoing surrender to God where “not my will, but thine be done” is the desire of our heart and
is modeled continually in the flow of daily life.
• A life of sacrifice and not self-seeking. As missionary martyr Jim Elliot said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” For some of us, perhaps for many of us, we need a serious reorientation of values.
• The choice to serve God by serving others. Jesus served his disciples (John 13). He is our model, our master, and our way. The culture of narcissism bids us to exalt self, pursue our own happiness, and neglect all else. The way of Christ, the way of the Cross, bids us deny self, take up our own cross, and follow Christ. One is a path of tragedy, the other the path of life. May we choose wisely!

Notes
2. Ibid., 13.
4. Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, 40.
12. Ibid., 114.
13. Ibid., 118.

We must picture Hell as a state where everyone is perpetually concerned about his own dignity and advancement, where everyone has a grievance, and where everyone lives the deadly serious passions of envy, self-importance, and resentment.

C.S. Lewis, Introduction to The Screwtape Letters, p. ix

RECOMMENDED READING
There are three great motivations to humility: it becomes us as creatures; it becomes us as sinners; and it becomes us as saints...so begins the preface to this classic on Christian humility.

Humility: The Journey Toward Holiness, by Andrew Murray (Bethany House Publishers; from your favorite book seller or free ebook at: http://www.manybooks.net/titles/murrayaother08Humility.html).
The Discipline of Discipleship

(continued from page 3)

as He says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). On a later occasion He amplified that statement to divine principle by saying, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26).

This denial of all, including ourselves, is the deepest discipline of discipleship. There are those who are dearer to us than life itself; but they should not be dearer than the Saviour.

What can be the meaning of this strong, unsubdued standard, to “hate” all, even one’s own life? We are to love and cherish parents, brothers, children; we love others more because we belong to Christ. What then, does our Lord mean? Is it not, that we all, like Saul of Tarsus, truly “count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:8)? We are to make our Lord Jesus supreme, permanent, pre-eminent in our hearts, so that no person nor anything shares that place in our lives. No price of parents or loved ones, possessions or life itself, is too great for His sake.

This denial of all, including ourselves, is the deepest discipline of discipleship. There are those who are dearer to us than life itself; but they should not be dearer than the Saviour. For Him and His cause we have died to them and every other earthly creature or pleasure—it is Jesus only! Our Lord does not desire that we take this discipline lightly or thoughtlessly. He gives two strong illustrations about counting the cost (Luke 14:28-33), concluding, “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.”

One remembers an earnest and effective layman in Ecuador who felt called to God’s service in the ministry; but his wife would not hear of it. She threatened all manner of reprisal if he should leave his lucrative employment to become a servant of the Lord Jesus. One evening he came to me, with a bundle under one arm, and tears in his eyes. I turned to Mark 10, and read to him verses 29 and 30: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.”

After prayer and tears, I inquired, “And what have you in the bundle?”

“It contains my working clothes. I left my employment today.” He had counted the cost, and had set himself to leave all, and to face whatever persecutions might come; only that he might be Jesus’ disciple. And do we wonder that he won his wife to full allegiance to the Master, and that together they became pillars in the house of God?

Discipleship requires the discipline of cross-bearing. Three things seem to be necessary for us each day: our daily food (for which we are to pray, Matt. 6:11); our daily work (in which we are to be faithful, 1 Thess. 4:11, 12; 2 Thess. 3:10–13), and our daily cross. Our Lord said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23), “And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27; Matt. 16:24).

This cross is not that of our Saviour, who suffered once for our sins upon the Tree, for we add no part to the price of our redemption; and least of all, is it bearing an outward cross, around one’s neck as we see in America, or on one’s shoulder, as I have seen in Ethiopia. It is the denial of self, in the deepest meaning of that word, and of all that life has to offer, in full surrender to the will of God; in the spirit of Calvary’s Cross, to be sure. I find its depths to be plumbed in the experience and language of others:
“I take, O Cross, thy shadow for my
abiding place;
I ask no other sunshine, than the
sunshine of His face;
Content to let the world go by, to know
no gain nor loss,
My sinful self my only shame, my
glory all the Cross.”

“Whatever else Thou sendest, oh, send this—
Not ecstacy of love or lover’s kiss,
But strength to know the joy of sacrifice,
To see life deeply as with opened eyes!
Oh, grant me this, dear God,
Through tears or loss—
To know the joyous secret
of Thy Cross.”

Because of His cross, not in addition to it, we are daily crucified unto the world and all that is therein of good or evil. To bear our cross, because of His, is to learn of Him, the Meek and Lowly in heart, and to be His disciples.

One kneels humbly, perhaps bewildered and blinded with tears, beside the Teacher, who in tenderness and true love for our souls desires to teach us this discipline. The world dazzles us, but is dim in comparison with Him; loved ones allure, but He is the altogether Lovely One. His love has broken every barrier down, and we whisper, “Lord Jesus, at any cost, by any cross, make me Thy disciple.”

Pressed
Pressed out of measure and pressed to
to all length,
Pressed so intently, it seems beyond strength,

Notes

Though our feelings come and go, His love for us does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference; and, therefore, it is quite relentless in its determination that we shall be cured of those sins, at whatever cost to us, at whatever cost to Him.

C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity
applies that redemption in our lives. Having accomplished all that the Father had given him to do, Jesus returned to heaven and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father from whence he will one day come back to judge mankind and establish his eternal kingdom. However, he did not leave his people as orphans. Shortly after his ascension, on the Day of Pentecost, Jesus and the Father sent forth the Holy Spirit to establish the church and to carry on all that Jesus had initiated on earth. The Spirit now carries forward the work of Christ by glorifying him and applying all the benefits of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension in the lives of his people and extending his kingdom throughout the earth.

In terms of discipleship, the Holy Spirit, as his name implies, works to make people holy. He brings God’s people to salvation in Christ and then conforms them to his likeness (Rom. 8:29) and sends them out into the world in ministry. This covers the full spectrum of our life in this world. Some examples of the Spirit’s work include empowering people to preach the gospel message (Acts 1:8; 4:31; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 1 Thess. 1:4–5); convicting the lost of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8–11); bringing spiritual regeneration or new birth to those who trust Christ (John 3:5–6); incorporating them into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13); adopting believers into the family of God and assuring them of sonship (Rom. 8:15–16); dwelling within believers (John 14:16–17; Rom. 8:9ff; 1 Cor. 6:19–20; Eph. 5:18; Col. 1:27); giving them a deep knowledge of Christ and his love (Eph. 3:19); illuminating the truth of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:6–13; Eph. 1:16–20); empowering believers to put to death the works of the body/flesh (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16); producing the character of Jesus (fruit of the Spirit) in believers’ lives (Gal. 5:22–23); imparting gifts for ministry (1 Cor. 12:11); guiding in ministry (Acts 13:1–3; 16:6–10), and more. As we can see, from the time we are first drawn to Christ until the day we are actively engaged in ministry and beyond, the Holy Spirit is at work in us making it happen. In which of these ways are you experiencing the Spirit’s work in your life?

What Is the Holy Spirit’s Work in Discipleship?

As we have seen, the Spirit is involved in every aspect of discipleship from start to finish. John the Baptist proclaimed that the Messiah would “baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matt. 3:11). This appears in each of the Gospels as one of the distinctive features of the Messiah’s work. In John’s gospel, we get the fullest picture: Jesus is described as “the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29) and “he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit” (1:33). The former we see on the cross, the latter on the Day of Pentecost. After his resurrection, Jesus told his disciples that “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). This was fulfilled at Pentecost, when the Spirit created from a prayer group of 120 people, a community of empowered
disciples that quickly grew to more than three thousand. Their corporate life was so attractive in joy and generosity and so electrifying in signs and wonders that it drew in many more nonbelievers to Christ (Acts 2:42–47).

Through the Spirit’s presence and power, the church grew by leaps and bounds, even in the face of intense persecution. The effects of this mighty movement of the Spirit are seen throughout the book of Acts, as more and more people are swept into the kingdom of God as it spreads through the Roman Empire. The Spirit created a community of disciples, filling and refilling both the apostles and ordinary believers as circumstances required, empowering them to live boldly and faithfully and to speak God’s word powerfully, expanding the church.

And note: these early believers were disciples of Jesus in the same sense of that word in Luke’s gospel, as evidenced in Luke’s use of the word disciple twenty-eight times in the book of Acts to describe ordinary believers. (Later, when the gospel reached Antioch, the disciples were given the nickname “Christian” [Acts 11:26]—a name that today often no longer means disciple.) Thus the basic New Testament paradigm of the church is a community of Spirit-filled disciples, engaged in advancing the kingdom of God. This is what many congregations need to recover today.

How Do We Experience This Life in the Spirit?

Life in the Holy Spirit begins when the Spirit regenerates us and gives new birth. Prior to that we were dead in sin; afterward we are alive to God and Jesus Christ. Like the blind man whom Jesus healed, we can say, “one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). This conversion may be sudden, as with Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–17), or gradual, like Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15), who came to faith through the nurture of his mother and grandmother. It may be dramatic, like Cornelius and his friends and relatives (Acts 10:34–48), or quiet and gentle, like Lydia (Acts 16:14). However, one thing will be true in all cases: the man or woman has come alive to God.

The Holy Spirit is the key to authentic Christian life – to discipleship – and without his empowerment, teaching, and guidance it is impossible to live faithfully.

From new birth forward and throughout our life on earth, we are meant to live daily in the fullness of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the key to authentic Christian life—to discipleship—and without his empowerment, teaching, and guidance it is impossible to live faithfully. Is such a life available to us today? Yes, just as much as it was to the first believers. Indeed, Scripture enjoins us to seek it. How do we live such a life? An important starting point is to “believe everything the Scriptures teach about the Holy Spirit, and expect all that the Scriptures promise from the Holy Spirit.” Summarizing all of that information in a brief article is impossible, but in what follows we will look at several important insights about living in the Spirit that can help significantly. I trust this will inspire each of us to do a careful Bible study about the Holy Spirit on our own or in a group.

Seek to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

Early in his letter to the believers in Ephesus, the apostle Paul remembers how, “when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of
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your salvation, and believed in him, [you] were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13). Then a couple of chapters later, he says that he is asking God, “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:16–19). This remarkable prayer for a deeper experience of the Spirit and the love of Christ certainly shows that we cannot rest on one experience of the Spirit at conversion. This prayer should be a top concern for every disciple of Jesus, not only for oneself but for others in the church.

Paul has yet more to say to the Ephesians, “do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (5:18). The Greek verb for be filled is present tense, plural, passive voice, and imperative mood. In this text, the present imperative is a command to continuous action. Thus, Paul is commanding (imperative mood) the entire congregation (plural) to “allow yourself (passive voice) to be continuously (present tense) filled with the Holy Spirit.” What does this mean in daily life? It has often been pointed out that when a glass is filled with water there is room for nothing else; the water is in full possession of the glass. It is the same with us and the Spirit; to be filled with the Holy Spirit is to give him full possession of our lives.

In the verses that follow, Paul describes in practical terms how being “filled with the Spirit” is worked out in relationships between husbands and wives, children and parents, slaves and masters. This verse, too, highlights the fact that we cannot rest on one experience of the Spirit at conversion but need to be filled with the Spirit again and again. Why is once not enough? “Because,” as someone said, “we leak badly.” That is, we yield to sin, which interrupts our fellowship with the Spirit until we confess, repent, and seek to be filled afresh.

Walk in the Spirit

In his letter to the Galatian church, Paul says, “walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (5:16). Here walk is also a present imperative verb, indicating continuous action. The word walk is a figurative term in the New Testament for one’s personal conduct, the way one lives his or her life. Like the Ephesians, the Galatians had received the Holy Spirit at conversion (3:3). Paul is here exhorting them to continue living in the Spirit’s power and resist the temptation to live under the law and in the flesh.

How this works in daily experience is clarified when he speaks of serving one another through love, which occurs as they are “led by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18). Here again we have a passive voice in led, meaning they are to allow themselves to be led, directed by the Spirit. They are to yield, surrendering themselves to the Spirit’s moral guidance. If they do so, they will neither “gratify the desires of the flesh” (5:16) nor live “under the law” (5:18). And the result will be that the Spirit will be able to manifest his indwelling presence in their lives in the form of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (5:22). This is a good description of the character of Jesus, into whose likeness the Spirit is seeking to shape all believers. But this isn’t just a matter of personal holiness. Each of these characteristics has an interpersonal dimension. Thus, as these disciples walk by the Spirit, their congregational life as a whole will reflect Christ to the watching world.

Do Not Grieve the Holy Spirit

Paul describes the attitudinal and behavioral implications of the new life in the Spirit in several places, including Ephesians 4. In the immediate context of sins of the tongue, he warns the believers in Ephesus: “do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (v. 30). This is a very serious warning, evidenced by Paul’s use of the formal description “the Holy Spirit of God.” Perhaps he was also thinking of Jesus’ words, “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt. 12:36–37). In today’s church, many people do not appear to be aware of the seriousness of sins of the tongue or the connection between sinful words and our fellowship with the Spirit. We must always remember that the Holy Spirit is holy and therefore easily offended and grieved by sin. Our unholy words and attitudes cause him to withdraw and distance himself from us. And when he does so, we will have not only a diminished sense of his presence but also a reduction of his power. This makes us more vulnerable to other, greater sins and temptations. As James 3:6 says, “the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the whole course of life, and set on fire by hell.”

What specific sins does Paul have in mind when he says do not grieve the Spirit? From the context, it is clear that any form of unwholesome or corrupting talk is in view. Gossip, slander, cursing, dirty jokes, lies, critical comments about others are some obvious examples. Such evil speaking offends God, can corrupt others, and can lead them into the sin of spreading an evil report. And not least, it can trigger a ripple effect that does great damage to those who are the object of our sinful comments.

If we would walk in the Spirit and not grieve him, if we would enjoy close fellowship with him and have his power to overcome sin and grow in Christlikeness, we must bridle our tongue. If we cannot speak well of another, we should remain quiet. And whenever we do speak, we must be careful to “let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Eph. 4:29). In other words, our speech is never to be sinful but always to be gracious and uplifting to those with whom we speak, as befits people of grace and love. If we will discipline our tongues, James 3:2 tells us that we will be able to bridle our whole body. This is a major key to walking in the Spirit. Many of us have sinned with our tongues. It is one of the most common of the “respectable sins” believers regularly commit. But confession and repentance opens the door to restored fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Grieving the Holy Spirit and impairing our fellowship with him obviously is not limited to the misuse of the tongue. There is a wide range of other sins that have the same effect.

Do Not Quench the Spirit

Quenching the Holy Spirit is quite different from grieving him. In his closing instructions to the believers in Thessalonica, Paul says, “Do not quench the Spirit. Do
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not despise prophecies, but test everything: hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:19–22). The gift of prophetic utterance was among those the Spirit had distributed to believers after Pentecost and was highly commended by Paul (1 Cor. 14:29–33, 39). Those who exercised this gift received messages from God to share with individuals or the congregation (Acts 11:27–29; 21:10–12; 15:31; 21:8–9). This was not prophecy on the level of that given by the Old Testament prophets (and thus inspired Scripture or doctrine) but was focused on circumstances of personal or church life, as in Acts and 1 Corinthians 14. It is very likely that this is what Paul is addressing in Thessalonica. Today, many in the church around the world believe this gift is still in operation. Others disagree and believe that it was phased out after the canon of Scripture was finalized. However, one’s position on this question does not change the relevance and application of Paul’s exhortation.

The larger point of this passage is that we should not despise any communication which might be from God. Rather, we should test and discern whether it actually is from God. It is our responsibility to discern the teaching of that word to ensure it is correct. We are to be like the Bereans, whom Luke commended: “they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Any message, sermon, lecture, or prophetic utterance must be tested by its agreement with what the Spirit has already said in Scripture, for he is the Spirit of Truth, who inspired the writing of the Scriptures and cannot contradict himself. When Scripture speaks, God speaks. What agrees with Scripture we are to hold fast, embrace, and obey. What does not, we must reject. As we carefully study the Scripture and obey it as God’s direction for our lives, we will grow and mature in Christlikeness.

The life of discipleship is possible only through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Discipleship, the Christian life, does not work on any other basis. Only as we daily allow him to fill us by consciously yielding ourselves to his presence and direction can we walk as Jesus walked, do the work he has called us to do, and experience transformation into his likeness.

This article has only touched briefly on a few important aspects of the Holy Spirit and his work. There is much more to learn. If you want to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, a thorough study of what the Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit is essential.

Notes

1. Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version.

“Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Act in me, O Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit, that I love but what is holy. Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit, that I always may be holy.”

Augustine
“Bright Messenger of God”  
(continued from page 7)

profile in Faith

to a friend: “How I long for, and yet fear, the sacred office.” After his ordination, for five and a half years he served with his father as curate of Fordington.

Moule returned to Cambridge and to Trinity in 1872. “Now his return was that of a man who had made full trial of his conversion and ministry, a man of disciplined character and decided conviction,” writes Marcus Loane. When Handley’s mother died in 1877, he gave up his post at Cambridge to once again assist his father in Fordington. When his father died in 1880, Handley returned to Cambridge, where he was appointed the first head of Ridley Hall.

Ridley Hall was founded to preserve and set forth “the sound Scriptural and theological foundations of the Evangelical faith and practice of [the] Church as seen in Prayer Book and Articles.” Moule believed that the “evangelical school” was the truest exponent of Anglican worship and confession. Taking a stand against both ritualism and rationalism, Ridley Hall became a center of evangelicalism at Cambridge. Five hundred men passed through Ridley Hall while Moule was principal. His convictions about the church were summarized in a letter he wrote to a former student:

I believe the best way of all is to make the common people feel that there is no place like the church to go to, to hear the old Gospel of the Grace of God preached straight to their hearts and lives, their sins and sorrows, and let the worship of the church . . . be reverent, simple and real.

In 1880 Handley Moule preached his first sermon as lecturer at Trinity Church, a post he held for twenty-one years. Trinity was the church of the renowned Charles Simeon (1759–1836). Marcus Loane states that Moule’s ministry at Trinity was “perhaps the most notable” in Cambridge since the days of Simeon.

In August 1881 the forty-year-old Handley Moule married Mary Elliott: a friendship based on their love of music and literature—and their fervent faith—had blossomed into love. They had two daughters, Mary and Isabel.

D. L. Moody and his musician, Ira Sankey, conducted an eight-day mission to Cambridge in 1882. Moule signed the invitation to the Americans, but reluctantly, because he was not convinced that the preaching of Moody would succeed in touching the university. When he met Moody and heard him preach, however, he became an enthusiastic supporter.

Moule was in full sympathy with the missions movement. He warmly received Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, who visited Cambridge in 1884 and held meetings for a week. Moule gave a devotional address at the famous World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. When in his last illness, Moule experienced a number of “hallucinations,” almost entirely connected with his lifelong interest in missionary work. “What is the latest news from the mission field?” he asked those around his bed. “Tell me of conversions—of those brought to Christ.”

Handley Moule became a prolific and much-loved author, writing sixty books. He wrote commentaries on Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, with “the critical eye of the scholar and the loving insight of the saint.” Marcus Loane says, “Few men have proved better able to penetrate the hidden deeps of Paul’s heart or to interpret the noble powers of Paul’s mind.” Moule also wrote books on theological topics, such as Outlines of Christian Doctrine (called by the Encyclopedia Britannica the best exposition of “evangelical
“Bright Messenger of God”

Anglicanism”), Justifying Righteousness, and Veni Creator: Thoughts on the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit of Promise. He also penned books of poetry, such as In the House of the Pilgrimage, and books of consolation, including Letter of Comfort, which Moule wrote describing the comfort he found in Christ when his daughter Mary died. It was written with tears, writes Marcus Loane, “and without tears it can scarce be read.”

September 1884 marked a crisis for Handley Moule that would realign his spiritual life and his network. A team of Keswick speakers visited Cambridge. Moule was attracted by these men and their earnest seeking for a deeper spiritual life, but he was concerned about the soundness of their theology. Soon, however, the content of their preaching and his own spiritual hunger for “a deeper personal experience of the possibilities of grace” convinced him that the Keswick message was true.

In July 1886 Moule made his first appearance on the Keswick Convention platform, to which he would return a dozen times. In the first of the six sermons that he preached at Keswick on the occasion of his last visit in 1919, he said: “I know not how better to give in its vital essence the Keswick message than in the words of [Robert Murray] McCheyne: ‘Christ for us is all our righteousness before a holy God; Christ in us is all our strength in an ungodly world.’” Late in his life Handley Moule wrote, “Keswick is very dear to me. It has been for me the vestibule of Heaven . . . and its message is the very heart of the truth of our sacrificed and living Lord.”

According to John Baird, Handley Moule “became one of the chief theologians, and the preeminent scholar, of the [Keswick] movement, as well as its greatest literary exponent.” Moule brought scriptural balance to the teachings of Keswick, saving the movement from extremes of perfectionism (“To the last it will be a sinner that walks with God”—Christian Sanctity) and passivism (Paul prays “that the Colossians may be always practically pious, ‘bearing fruit in every good work’”—Colossian Studies). From Handley Moule people heard the message of Keswick given “with inimitable grace and skill, combining the accurate thought of the scholar with the spiritual fervour of the saint.”

In Handley Moule’s poem, his third love, Durham, is described as his “wife.”

Durham, to thee the call of Heaven
Has wed my willing life;
While strength endures, to thee I’m given,
The husband to the wife.
While vacationing in Beatenberg, Switzerland, in 1901, Handley Moule was called to become the eighty-fifth bishop of Durham. The office was one of personal interest to him because Nicholas Ridley, after whom Ridley College in Cambridge was named, had been designated to be bishop of Durham but “received first the martyr’s crown.” Moule’s Cambridge teacher Joseph Barber Lightfoot had been bishop of Durham from 1879 to 1889. Lightfoot was followed by Brooke Foss Westcott, a man called by Moule “a saint, as true a servant of the Lord and of his brethren as the great Culdee St. Aidan.”

In his introductory letter to the clergy and people of the Diocese of Durham, Moule wrote:

I need and seek your prayers. Ask for me especially . . . a real effusion in me of that grace of the Spirit whereby Christ dwells in the heart by faith; a strength and wisdom not my own for my pastorate, and for the preaching of Christ Jesus the Lord; and a will wholly given over for labour and service at our Master’s feet.

As bishop of Durham, Handley Moule was not a great organizer and administrator like Bishop Lightfoot. Moule found office work taxing and diocesan finance distasteful. He was not at home in political matters, although he served as a member of the House of Lords. Neither did he excel in ecclesiastical discussions. He was not a leader of people like Bishop Westcott. Moule was not always a good judge of character. He was easily imposed on, and some believed he was too quick to agree for the sake of peace. But, he wrote, “I have few greater happinesses than when I find myself in spiritual oneness with a Christian from whom, on grave subordinate points, I differ.” His successor as bishop of Durham said that Handley Moule maintained his evangelical convictions “without compromise, and expressed them without bitterness. No man could doubt either the strength of his faith or the largeness of his charity.”

From Handley Moule people heard the message of Keswick given “with inimitable grace and skill, combining the accurate thought of the scholar with the spiritual fervour of the saint.”

Handley Moule excelled in pastoral ministry. He was more a shepherd of souls than a bishop of a diocese. His people, clergy and laity alike, knew that he loved them. He was the epitome of kindness toward all, listening to people’s cares and concerns and responding with thoughtful and helpful words. He wrote on average thirty letters a day, to all kinds of people with all kinds of needs and problems. A layman said that “he was almost too saintly to be a bishop.” According to John Baird, Moule “showed how good goodness can be.”

Mary Moule died suddenly on July 14, 1914. “He was devotedly attached to her,” wrote a friend, “but he accepted her departure as though she had merely preceded him on a journey.” A few years later, Handley Moule, though painfully ill, preached before the king and queen at Windsor Castle. Moule went from Windsor to his brother’s home in Cambridge, where he died a short time later on May 7, 1920. It was Ascension Day. The biography of Handley Moule by Harford and MacDonald concludes appropriately and beautifully:

St. Luke ends his Gospel showing the Lord’s Ascension as the end of his life on earth, and opens the Acts showing the same story from
A MORNING “ACT OF FAITH”

I believe on the Name of the Son of God.
Therefore I am in Him, having Redemption through His Blood, and Life by His Spirit.
And He is in me, and all fulness is in Him.
To Him I belong, by purchase, conquest, and self-surrender.
To me He belongs, for all my hourly need.
There is no cloud between my Lord and me.
There is no difficulty, inward or outward, which He is not ready to meet in me to-day.
The Lord is my Keeper. Amen.

Bishop Moule’s Thoughts on Union with Christ
Discipleship: It Starts with You
(continued from page 9)

to learn that Christ’s followers are called Christians only three times in the New Testament. It’s fairly well known that we were first called Christians in Antioch, but it is less well known that it was derogatory. As followers of Christ are prone to do, we’ve borne insult as a badge of honor. Despite this turn of the phrase, I echo the sentiments of the late John Stott: “One wishes in some ways that the word disciple had continued into the following centuries, so that Christians were self-consciously disciples of Jesus, and took seriously their responsibility to be ‘under discipline’.”

As a friend once said, the term disciple has more bite to it and just seems to carry more weight. It’s hard to be a nominal disciple. Investing in Lives, a Few at a Time

So that’s my story and concern for the church. I won’t belabor anything; you get it. We are all disciples, and the myth that there are levels or classes of Christians must be exploded. Discipleship is the umbrella under which everything else resides. Evangelism, apologetics, missions, etc., are essential elements of discipleship. I trust you’ve read Knowing & Doing and don’t need me to reiterate this. You want what Marines call the “so what?” So I’ll get to the point. If you’re like me, you have not attended seminary but are an earnest follower of Christ who strives to be a good disciple. You’re involved in your church and are probably even a leader. You are not a nominal Christian and have not bought into MTD. You’re exasperated because you feel like you’re the only one who seems to get it. But I want to challenge you to take the initiative in your church or parish.

As a Marine, I move often and have attended ten churches in the past nineteen years. I can verify that “A great deal of focus has been put on ‘getting people to the door of the church,’ but not enough done to help them grow to spiritual maturity once they are in.” Most churches are busy dealing with the symptoms of this discipleship deficit but fail to treat the malady. And many pastors are consumed by programs. But I also have seen discipleship thrive. One example is the Tun Tavern Fellowship where there is no formal structure by which this loose network gathers. It is simply Marines engaging in discipleship through one-on-one mentoring relationships, triads/quads, and small groups.

I’ve been encouraged to see them fulfill the Great Commission without relying on a brick and mortar institution. It’s a portable (or, as we say in the Corps, expeditionary) ministry that travels with you. They’ve fostered an environment and created a context in which they disciple one another intentionally; I’ve seen Marines disciple one another from different countries. (Personal interaction is preferred, but we do everything possible to maintain relationships.) This happens with great ease and does not require tremendous effort. And if a small group of Marines scattered across the globe can do it, so can the local church. In fact, some do.

Using the CSLI Fellows Program as a model, several churches in northern Virginia have created Fellows Programs of their own. But we don’t need to be that ambitious. We need to understand that our mission is to make disciples; we don’t need to convene an elders’ meeting or initiate church reform to do so. If we invest in the lives of a few at a time, we’ll start something that will grow. We don’t need to be a part of a program to disciple one another. We simply need a vision.

We do not need to corner the market on spiritual maturity. We simply need a vision to share our lives with others and commit to seeing them grow and to grow with them.
Another good example is a church in California where the men’s pastor decided to forgo the typical model of flashy events and large venues as the center of gravity for his ministry. Those events still have their place, but he’s focused his energy into discipleship. Seeing the need for men to get real with God and one another, he created “Guerilla Groups” consisting of three to four men committed to gathering regularly, preferably weekly, to disciple one another. This has led to tremendous growth. And by growth I do not mean in quantity; that is not the metric that indicates real success. Any new program can draw a crowd and give the appearance of growth. Growth should be measured in strength, and the strength of the men’s program has noticeably increased. In fact, the pastor has worked himself out of a job in several instances. For example, he organized a missions trip to Central America in which the biggest ministry was in the lives of the men who went. They returned transformed and renewed and have assumed the planning responsibilities for the next trip. In another instance, he started a weekly outdoor gathering at the church where men cook, fellowship, and share testimonies. He now hardly needs to attend, because it is run completely by laymen. A third instance is when he suggested that the church partner with the local municipality to organize a crisis response network. Again, the men are rising up to become helping hands within the community. By articulating his vision to others and focusing on discipleship, he has seen the men in this ministry grow in their faith. At last count, there were more than twelve Guerilla Groups. Any church and any ministry could do the same.

So what’s involved in this vision? Patience, for one thing. Disciples are not mass-produced. In today’s high-tempo world, we like everything fast, but it’s not enough to hold a discipleship conference. As useful as this is for training and education, it will not bring about transformation. We must recognize what Ogden describes so well in Transforming Discipleship: the most effective way to make disciples is a few at a time over time—life-on-life engagement in which we pour ourselves into the lives of others the way our Lord did with the Twelve.

We do not need all the answers. We do not need to corner the market on spiritual maturity. We simply need a vision to share our lives with others and commit to seeing them grow and to grow with them. We do not need to corner the market on spiritual maturity. In today’s high-tempo world, we like everything fast, but it’s not enough to hold a discipleship conference. As useful as this is for training and education, it will not bring about transformation. We must recognize what Ogden describes so well in Transforming Discipleship: the most effective way to make disciples is a few at a time over time—life-on-life engagement in which we pour ourselves into the lives of others the way our Lord did with the Twelve.

We do not need all the answers. We do not need to corner the market on spiritual maturity. We simply need a vision to share our lives with others and commit to seeing them grow and to grow with them. We do not need to corner the market on spiritual maturity. In short, it must reject shortcuts and focus on commitments; it must avoid expediency and insist on relationships. In short, it must focus on helping others conform to the image of Christ via small, quality, long-term relationships. And it must reproduce. Similar to how I learned to balance knowing with doing, we must encourage those we disciple to do likewise. The vision must not culminate in a “holy huddle.” We must move into new relationships and help others discover what it means to follow Christ, and one of our goals must be to make disciples who will disciple. That’s what disciples do. If we don’t, we’re not.

It helps to view discipleship as a continuum. Instead of falling lockstep into a single method, it’s best to view discipleship as a spectrum along which any gospel-related activity can fall. It’s worth quoting Wilkins again: “discipleship is not just one aspect of the church’s mission, but it encompasses all that the church does.” If we view the
church’s activities through the lens of discipleship, everything will have a unifying purpose. This does not diminish the roles of other aspects of the gospel but enhances them. Because discipleship is a pretext for all gospel activity, it puts them in perspective and also gives them context. David Platt says it best: “Disciple making is not about a program or an event but about a relationship. As we share the gospel, we impart life, and this is the essence of making disciples. Sharing the life of Christ.” Interpreting our lives through discipleship brings us into harmony with the Great Commission and provides cohesion to our efforts. All means work toward a single end, for the gospel and for the glory of God.

And on the practical level, viewing discipleship as a continuum helps us visualize how our efforts fit into the big picture. We might see how in some situations one-on-one mentoring may not be a good fit and why a triad might be a better option, or how a small group of committed, passionate Christian disciples can lead to other ministry opportunities. The keys are flexibility and adaptability. Anyone who’s seen the film Heartbreak Ridge knows that Marines improvise, adapt, and overcome. We specialize in regimen, discipline, and order. But contrary to the stereotype, we are neither rigid nor inflexible. We are one of the most flexible organizations on the planet. We are put into chaotic situations where those disciplines provide a point of departure from which we operate. Our actions informed by training and discipline are situation-dependent and vary, but the principles upon which they are based are fixed. This serves as a great illustration for our vision of discipleship. While the means by which we disciple may differ, the principles do not. We are to love God and love others, and the situation will drive the method of discipleship.

Regardless of the shape of our vision, it’s useless unless it starts with you and me. The Great Commission is not an abstract doctrine to be relegated to theologians or left for missionaries. It’s our mission and we must act. As Dietrich Bonheoffer stated, “The life of discipleship is . . . obedience to the Son of God,” and, “It is now only a question of yes or no, of obedience or disobedience.” If we choose the life of discipleship, “We must get into action and obey.” So let’s join CSLI in the Decade of Discipleship by casting our own vision. We cannot wait for it to come from the pulpit or for a church committee to implement a formal discipleship program. We should encourage this but not wait for it. I challenge you to look at the spheres in which you live, work and play and consider the opportunities before you. For some, the workplace is a harvest waiting to be reaped. For others it may be your neighborhood. For all of us, the church is a great place to start. Let’s reclaim our churches from MTD and reverse the trend of nominalism. Let’s stop blaming the ills of the church on the world and pinning our hopes on politics. Let’s stop blaming the pastorate by exam-

An ancient proverb says: I hear, I forget; I see, I remember; I do, I understand. This suggests how Jesus trained his disciples.

David Watson
Discipleship: It Starts with You

In the legacy of C.S. Lewis, the Institute endeavors to develop disciples who can articulate, defend, and live faith in Christ through personal and public life.

ining ourselves and realizing that it starts with us. If we will invest in the lives of a few at a time with the intent to reproduce and multiply, we will make ripples that will extend beyond our line of sight. And if we share this vision and encourage others to do the same, we’ll create a community of committed, thriving Christian disciples fulfilling the Great Commission. Let’s teach our youth and watch it transform them. Let’s encourage an older generation to mentor a younger one. Let’s teach it in our small groups and form triads of our own. Let’s seek people in whom we can invest our lives and disciple through the ministries in which God has placed us. Let discipleship unite us in the building up of the body of Christ in the knowledge of God, and let us respond as the Twelve did to our Lord: with obedience.

Notes

6. Ibid., 30.
8. Ibid., 14.
10. For a thorough treatment of this deficit, I highly encourage you to read Greg Ogden, “The Discipleship Deficit: Where Have All the Disciples Gone?,” Knowing & Doing (Spring 2011), 6–7, 24–28.
11. For a detailed explanation of triads and quads and the advantages/disadvantages of small groups, teaching, preaching, and discipling see Greg Ogden, Transforming Discipleship, particularly chapter 8.
12. Platt, Radical, 50: “We can so easily deceive ourselves, mistaking the presence of physical bodies in a crowd for the existence of spiritual life in a community.”
14. Wilkins, In His Image, 52. See also Thomas A. Tarrants, “The Grace of God,” CS Lewis Institute lecture, 2007: “[You must] live this out exactly where God has you. We don’t need more people going to seminary. In fact, you could argue the case that we’ve had too much of that. Seminaries have killed off the churches in many places. What we need [are] people just like us living out the Gospel in the midst of the people God has surrounded us with who don’t know the Lord.” It can be found at www.cslewisinstitute.org/node/332.
15. Ogden, Transforming Discipleship, 134.
17. Platt, Radical, 96.
19. Ibid., 78. See also 61: “But then discipleship can tolerate no conditions which might come between Jesus and our obedience to him.”
20. Ibid., 76; see also Ephesians 4 and Mark 2.

To hear Karl Johnson’s thoughts about the Fellows Program please go to: www.cslewisinstitute.org/KJ_on_Fellows_Program
Jesus hath now many lovers of his heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of his cross.

He hath many desirous of comfort, but few of tribulation.

He findeth many companions of his table, but few of his abstinence.

All desire to rejoice with him, few are willing to endure anything for him, or with him.

Many follow Jesus unto the breaking of bread; but few to the drinking of the cup of his passion.

Many reverence his miracles, few follow the ignominy of his cross.

Many love Jesus so long as adversities do not happen.

Many praise and bless him, so long as they receive comforts from him.

But if Jesus hide himself, and leave them but a little while, they fall either into complaining, or into too much dejection of mind.

2. But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the state of highest comfort.

And although he should never be willing to give them comfort, they not withholding would ever praise him, and wish to be always giving thanks.

3. O, how powerful is the pure love of Jesus, which is mixed with no self-interest, or self-love!

Are not all those to be called mercenary, who are ever seeking comforts?

Do they not show themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own profit and advantage?

Where shall one be found who is willing to serve God for naught?

4. Rarely is anyone found so spiritual as to be stript of the love of all earthly things.

For where is any man to be found that is indeed poor in spirit, and free from all creatures? “From afar, yea, from the ends of the earth, is his value.”

If a man should give all his substance, yet it is nothing.

And if he should practice great repentance, still it is little.

And if he should attain to all knowledge, he is still afar off.

And if he should be of great virtue, and very fervent devotion, yet there is much wanting; especially, one thing, which is most necessary for him.

What is that? That leaving all, he forsake himself, and go wholly from himself, and retain nothing out of self-love?

And when he hath done all that is to be done, so far as he knoweth, let him think that he hath done nothing.

5. Let him not reckon that much, which might be much esteemed; but let him pronounce himself to be in truth an unprofitable servant, as the Truth himself saith, “When you have done all things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants.”

Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, and say with the prophet, “I am alone and poor.”

Yet no man richer than he, no man more powerful, no man more free: for he can leave himself and all things, and set himself in the lowest place.
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