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## **PROFILE OF THE LUKEWARM**

(There are three little books you simply must get: RADICAL and RADICAL TOGETHER by David Platt, and CRAZY LOVE by Francis Chan. Francis is pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, Ca. I am quoting from his book this month.)

*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.* Matt. 13:44

This parable of Jesus describes the only appropriate response to the incredible, eternal God revealed in the Bible. Jesus searched for people who were ready to surrender everything, their very lives, in order to obtain that treasure. He went out of His way to eliminate people who were not sincere seekers. In Luke 8, when a crowd started following Him, Jesus began speaking in parables, "so that" those who weren't serious would not comprehend what He was saying. (Say what? Read Luke 8 for yourself.)

In the parable of the sower, Jesus explained that the seed is the truth of the Word of God. When it falls onto the path, it is heard but quickly stolen away by the birds of the air. (The birds of the air and the beasts of the field always refer to demons.) When the seed falls onto rocks, no roots take hold and it quickly dies. When the seed falls among thorns, it is soon suffocated by life's worries, riches, and pleasures. But when the seed is sown in good soil, it grows, takes root, and produces fruit.

My caution is this: **Do not assume you are good soil.**

Has your relationship with God actually changed the way you live? Or are you choking it out by spending too much time, energy, money, and thought on the things of this world? The goals of American Christianity are often a nice marriage, children who don't swear, and good church attendance. Taking the words of Christ literally and seriously is rarely considered. That's for the radicals who are unbalanced. Most of us want a balanced life that we can control, that is safe, and that does not involve suffering. Would you describe yourself as totally in love with Jesus Christ? Or do the words half-hearted, lukewarm, and partially committed fit better? The Bible says to test ourselves, so think about the following description of lukewarm people:

- LUKEWARM PEOPLE attend church fairly regularly, which is what they believe "good Christians" do. - - - - The Lord says, *"These people come near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE give money to the church and to charity, as long as it doesn't impinge on their standard of living. - - - - Jesus said, *"This poor widow put in more than all the others. They gave out of their wealth, but she put in all she had to live on."*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE desire to fit in both at church and outside of church; they care more about what people think of their actions than what God thinks. - - - - Jesus said, *"Woe to you when all men speak well of you." "I know your deeds, you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead."*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE don't really want to be saved from their sins; they don't truly hate sin; they don't really believe this new life Jesus offers is better than the old sinful one. - - - - Jesus said, *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* Paul said, *"We died to sin, how can we live in it any longer?"*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE are moved by stories about people who do radical things for Christ, but they assume such actions are not for normal Christians. They call "radical" what Jesus expected of all His followers. - - - - *"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE rarely share their faith with anyone. They don't want to be rejected or to make people uncomfortable. - - - - Jesus said, *"Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will acknowledge before my Father in*

heaven. *But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven."*

- LUKEWARM PEOPLE say they love Jesus, and He is a part of their lives, but only a part. They give Him a part of their time, money and thoughts, but He is not allowed to control their lives. - - - - Read what Jesus said to three men who wanted to follow Him in Luke 9:57-62.
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE will serve God and others, but there are limits to how far they will go or how much time, money, and energy they are willing to give. - - - - *Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE think about life on earth much more than eternity in heaven: my income, my security, my health, my family, my pastimes, my vacation. - - - - *"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." "Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there."*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE are continually concerned with playing it safe, they are slaves to the god of control. This keeps them from sacrificing and risking for God. - - - - *Jesus said, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*
- LUKEWARM PEOPLE feel secure because they attend church, made a profession of faith at age 12, were baptized, come from a Christian family, vote Republican or Democrat, and live in America. Israel was warned that they were not safe because they were Jews. - - - - *Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."*

**In light of the clear teaching of the Bible, a "lukewarm Christian" is an oxymoron; there's no such thing. To put it plainly, churchgoers who are "lukewarm" are not Christians. We will not see them in heaven. Jesus says, *I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*"**

I don't want true believers to doubt their salvation as they read this book. In the midst of our failed attempts at loving Jesus, His grace covers us. (We are not saved by keeping the commandments, even the Great Commandment. We are saved by His love for us.) Each of us has lukewarm elements and practices in our life; therein lies the senseless, extravagant grace of it all. The Scriptures demonstrate clearly that there is room for our failure and sin in our pursuit of God. "His mercies are new every morning." The distinction is perfection (which none of us will attain on this earth) and a posture of obedience and surrender, where a person perpetually moves toward Christ. To call someone a Christian simply because he does some Christian-y things is giving false comfort to the unsaved. But to declare anyone who sins unsaved is to deny the reality and truth of God's grace.

## **DOVES ARE SHY**

And John bore witness, saying *"I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained on Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit, and I have seen and testify that this is the Son of God.'" (John 1:32-34)*

A couple wrote about the time they lived in Israel. They leased a house in Jerusalem and were pleased to discover that a pair of doves had a nest on their roof. After a period of time they noticed that whenever they would slam a door, the doves would fly away, sometimes for a long period of time. The husband said, "We have both felt very blessed that those doves are living on our roof, but I don't think they are going to adjust to us and the noise and commotion we make, and eventually they are going to leave. If we want them to stay, we are going to have to adjust to them."

God's Dove is quiet and gentle. It is easily grieved and quenched. If we want His Dove to live around us, we are going to have to adjust our lives to Him.

## **THE TWO BAPTISMS**

### **BAPTISM IN WATER**

When you accept Christ and are born again you are baptized (immersed) into water, symbolizing death and resurrection, cleansing, and being placed in the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the baptizer. I Cor. 12:13, John 1:29, Ro. 6:1-4, I Cor. 12:13.

When you receive Christ you receive the Holy Spirit. John 20:22, Ro. 5:1-5, I Cor. 3:16-17, Eph. 1:13.

## BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Another experience, which may come at the same time but for many comes subsequent to the salvation experience, is the baptism, filling, immersion in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the baptizer. John 1:32-34, Luke 3:16, Acts 1:4-5.

### PURPOSE

1. Power to be a witness for Jesus. Acts 1:8
2. Intimacy with the Lord. 1 Cor. 14:2
3. Personal edification. 1 Cor. 14:4, Jude 20
4. Power in spiritual warfare. Eph. 6:18
5. Being used in the gifts of the Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:1-11
6. When you don't know how to pray in a situation, you can pray in the Spirit. Ro. 8:26-27

### THE GIFT OF TONGUES/PRAYER LANGUAGE /

#### PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

For classic Pentecostals, tongues is perceived as the evidence of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The following Scriptures are used as proof texts:

Acts 2:1-4 - - - Pentecost

Acts 8:14-21 -- Peter and John at Samaria

Acts 10:36-48 -- Peter with Cornelius, which introduced Gentiles to the Gospel.

Acts 19:1-7 --- Paul at Ephesus

On the other hand, there are instances in Acts where speaking in tongues is not mentioned as a result of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. Acts 4:23, 9:17-18, 17:32.

Jack Hayford teaches that a view accepted by many Charismatics and some Pentecostals places less emphasis on tongues and more importance on all the gifts, with speaking in tongues as but one of them.

John Wimber stated that there is no identifiable pattern or 'correct' sequence for being filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit. Our concern should not be *when* we experience the Spirit's filling, but *that* we experience it. The New Testament exhorts us again and again to seek the Holy Spirit. And in 1 Corinthians, Paul encourages us to "earnestly desire the best gifts," to "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts," and "to desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues."

In January, 1973, as a terribly backslidden Methodist pastor, God, in His mercy, led me to the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues at the start of my journey to renewal (which is still in process). It was like being born again, again. My conviction is that it is real, it is Scriptural, it is life-changing, and everyone needs it and should seek it with all our hearts.

## **FORGIVENESS - THE KEY TO WHOLENESS**

(From a teaching by my good friend Jo Ann Atherton, who with her husband, Bob, lead a life-giving ministry named SUNRISE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL, establishing Christian support groups around the world.)

### WHEN FORGIVENESS IS NOT COMPLETE

- Looking at that person makes us uncomfortable, and we go out of the way not to run into them.
- Do you want to be friends (not do you trust)? Do you want to be open and friendly with him/her?
- Do you want the best for him and to bless him?
- Are you critical of him, using sarcasm when you talk of him?

- Do you have dreams in which there are clashes between him and you?
- Do you refuse to think about a painful situation between him and you?
- Are you threatened by that person?
- Have you lost the sense of God's presence in your life?
- Are you troubled in your thoughts about that person, group or organization? (We can have unforgiveness toward groups, denominations, churches, etc.)
- Do you speak disparagingly about that person or group?
- Do you rejoice in his afflictions?
- Are you reaping bad fruit in your life: family turmoil, emotional problems, health issues?

Forgiving others is not a luxury we extend to people who hurt us. God requires it for our own good, and for our protection and blessing.

### HOW DO WE FORGIVE?

1. **Spend time with the Lord, talking with Him and worshipping Him.** Come to Him in humility as a little child. Tell Him how they hurt you. Be specific.
2. **Decide to forgive.** You will never do it if you wait to feel like it. Choose to obey God. Resist the devil's attempts to poison you with bitter thoughts.
3. **Depend on the Holy Spirit to accomplish forgiveness in you.** Ask Him to enable and empower you to forgive.
4. **Ask forgiveness for yourself for any part you played in the conflict.** Ask Him to show you what you did and how the other person sees your part.
5. **Speak directly to that person as if he was present**, saying: "I forgive you and release you for \_\_\_\_\_." Pray for them for their happiness and welfare. Bless and do not curse them. Ask God to bless them. Guard your tongue, you cannot gossip about them any more!
6. **Seek guidance from God (and maybe from a mature Christian friend)** regarding contact by letter, visit, restitution, etc.

### REFLECTIONS

- If you or someone you know is involved in the care-giving of parents (which can be an overwhelming job), I recommend: Ambushed by Grace, by Shelley Beach. Order from [www.Familylifetoday.com](http://www.Familylifetoday.com).
- Awhile back I ministered to a lady, not in my church, who had terrible pain in her back. It started six years before when her twelve year-old daughter died. At that time her husband's personality changed, he became very angry and turned away from God. She kept a shrine of her daughter's things, books, pictures, on the family piano, and was filled with self-pity. We led her to repent for blaming God. To forgive her husband. To renounce the "spirit of grief" (grief is a normal human emotion, but it can become a dark and destructive force if we do not allow God to heal our hearts). We had her picture her daughter in her cupped hands and lift her up to God, her Creator, and release her into his hands. We prayed for healing of her heart and her back, and all pain left. We encouraged her to put the shrine away so it would not be a constant reminder of her loss.
- Remember, **anger can become an addiction!** It releases endorphins and for some can become a pleasurable sensation, in which case it becomes demonic and terribly destructive to everybody!
- In Chapter 6 of Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah had a vision of God, "*high and lifted up.*" Immediately everything changed in his life. When you really see God; that is, when you have a deeper revelation of Him, instantly there are implications for your life. I suggest you meditate on Isaiah 6.
- Praise & Thanksgiving. It is almost impossible to get our minds off of ourselves: My feelings, my health, my job, my spouse, my kids, my security, my problems. Psalms tells us to "*Enter His courts with praise.*" Praise and thanksgiving are God's prescription to enter into His presence and get our minds off ourselves. I see people in church during "worship" who apparently have Novocain in their lips and arms. If that is you, I have a loving admonition for you: "Stop sitting there like a stump feeling sorry for yourself. Stand up and start singing. Get those arms up in the air. Start dancing. (No, I went too far!) Offer God a sacrifice of praise." It will bless God, which is what we are supposed to do. And it will usher you into the presence of our wonderful, amazing God where you will feel His joy.

God Bless,

**Glenn**

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