

Purpose to Make an Impact

Carl H. Stevens Jr. is pastor of Greater Grace World Outreach located in Baltimore, Maryland. Pastor Stevens is also chancellor of Maryland Bible College & Seminary and host of the international Christian radio program "The Grace Hour." This booklet was created from a message preached by Pastor Stevens.

Pastor Stevens can be seen weekly on cable television stations throughout the United States. Call us for information regarding programming in your area.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

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INTRODUCTION

God created the mountains, the springs, the streams, and the rivers. The Creator of the universe, with the power of His Word, brought this amazing Creation into existence. Yet, in the minds of so many Christians, God is so small. Intimidated by what the world system has placed before them, many are afraid to take steps in any type of faith-adventure.

This booklet was inspired by God's call on our local assembly to reach deep into our city and community, to make a more powerful impact than ever before. We are going forward with a purpose, because we understand that our God is a big God—One who can go far beyond anything that we can ask or think.

Chapter One

LIVING WATER PRODUCES ETERNAL FRUIT

Picture Jesus with the woman at the well. She went to that well when nobody else would be there, probably to avoid being seen by the “respectable” crowd. She had a divine appointment. Jesus, walking twenty-eight miles during the course of this day, met her there and asked her for a drink of water—something that no self-respecting Jewish man would do. Then He said to her, “With the water that you drink, you will thirst again. But the water that I give, when you drink it, you will never thirst again,” (see John 4:13).

She said to Him, “Sir, give me this water to drink.”

The Samaritan woman was saved and filled with the Water of Life, and she became a soul winner that very day (John 4:28-30). She had discovered the value of her own soul, and now she

could see that value in others.

In John 7:37-38, Jesus stood up and cried out: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his [emotions] shall flow rivers of living water." In other words, the life of Christ will fill you, and then it will cause you to reach out to others.

The Shining Soul Winner

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). The word "wise" in the Hebrew text reveals a wisdom that reveals God Himself because he that winneth souls is wise like God Himself, for He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"They that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

A Christian who reveals Christ will suffer with Christ, because he is on earth as God's guest in Satan's territory (for the time being). Yet, when the Living Water springs up from within to glorify God (John 4:14), rivers of life go out, pouring out blessings into others. As a result, the believer becomes part of a special high

order in God's eyes: the Order of the Morning Star.* When I allow God to fill my mind I am a candidate for the Morning Star Order. God is my mind, God is my life, God is my emotions. God doesn't "help" my emotions. When I enter into the Morning Star Order, He is my emotions. Though I have a free will and use it all the time, God is my will, and my body is only for God. This is what the Order of the highest form represents.

Rivers of Life

The river of life is a spring inside us. It is God in every part of us. His life is ready to flow out, not drip out. People go on for years giving just a little here and a little there, but God wants us to be like a river.

Let the water of life flow from our hearts to our minds and to our emotions. We are going forth bearing precious seed. We have the promise, and we will doubtless come again, bringing a harvest of souls with us (Psalm 126).

**For more about this reward, read The Morning Star Order, by Pastor Carl H. Stevens, Grace Publications, 1998.*

Chapter Two

GO FORTH TO THE THIRSTY SOULS

In John 19:28, Jesus Christ was on the Cross and said, "I thirst." According to Josephus and other scholars, Jesus suffered through multiple demonic attacks during His life on the earth. On the Cross, he did thirst physically, but He also thirsted spiritually.

When Jesus Christ said, "I thirst," He had taken upon Himself the sins of the whole world. All of the thirsts of mankind were working on Him. Jesus was identifying with us, so much that when the Roman soldiers tried to give him a pain-numbing mixture called gall to dull His pain, He wouldn't accept it. Finally, they took sour vinegar, put it upon a sponge, and placed it upon His lips just before He gave up His spirit.

No Satisfaction in the World

“Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied” (Proverbs 27:20).

Since the beginning of mankind, three “gods” have been at work: the god of drugs and alcohol, the god of lust, and the god of materialism. The god of drugs and alcohol causes people to thirst so that they will kill, rob, steal, and lie in order to satisfy their thirsts. The god of sensual lust and vanity causes anxiety in the human soul by setting up relationships that are outside of the will of God. People talk when they should be silent; they say things when they have no wisdom. They interrupt when they haven’t heard somebody out. Yet, the worst thirst of all is materialism, or worshipping “mammon” (Matthew 6:24, Luke 16:9-13).

Under mammon’s rule, a person can never get enough. “I have a new car, but now I should build a new house.” “I built a new house, but now I should buy a new boat.” Everyone who lives under mammon’s control is thirsty; they always need something more.

Anyone who lives under the power of these three gods is never satisfied. Some may quit

their addiction for two weeks, but they go back into it. They may go a month, but they will go back. There is a terrible thirst.

The one who lusts never finds love. The one who goes after more possessions is never satisfied and never fulfilled. The one who eats excessively is never full. The alcoholic never has enough. He always needs more and is never satisfied with what he has had.

This is why we go forth with the Gospel. This is why Christians everywhere who believe the Gospel need to get their hearts fixed, focus on Jesus, and receive divine power to make an impact. People are thirsty, and they do need the Lord.

The Last of the Last Days

These are the last days—not just the last days such as Peter sensed in 1 Peter 4:7. These are not the last days that Paul spoke about with urgency in Romans 13:12. These are the last of the Last Days.

God said to Noah, “Go forth of the ark” (Genesis 8:15-16).

The Lord said to Moses, “Go on before the people” (Exodus 17:5).

Samuel said to David, “Thou shalt go for-

ward" (1 Samuel 10:1, 3). Saul saw David go forth against the Philistines. Saul stopped going forth (1 Samuel 23:13).

David said to the people (2 Samuel 18:2), "I will surely go forth with you myself also."

The Lord said to Elijah, "Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD" (1 Kings 19:11).

The Lord said to Isaiah, "Go forth!" (Isaiah 7:3).

The Lord said to Jeremiah, "Go forth into the valley" (Jeremiah 19:2).

The Lord said to Ezekiel, "Arise, go forth into the plain" (Ezekiel 3:22).

He makes His own people go forth (Psalm 78:52).

"In that day shall messengers go forth from me..." (Ezekiel 30:9).

He will say to the prisoners (Isaiah 49:9), "Go forth."

In the New Testament, in each of the four gospels and in Acts 1:8, the same message is given: "Go forth."

Today, we may meet the people who serve the gods of this world. They are everywhere. They are thirsty, and they always will thirst. But if they drink of the Water of Life that we offer through the Holy Spirit, they will never thirst

again.

I would consider soul winning to be the most important thing I do, no matter what my profession. Many believers do not operate this way because they do not understand hell and what it means to be lost. They do not understand what it means to wake up morning after morning, thirsting under the influence of the gods of addictions, sensuality, and greed.

So often, the person controlled by alcohol or drugs keeps his addiction a secret. He needs more and more because he has not been satisfied by God in his emotions, his mind, and his will—so he thirsts. The drinking doesn't do much good for him, and he wonders why he does it. Still he does it, and he is never fulfilled.

The person who lusts never finds love. The person who has built many barns still needs to build more. And if he doesn't, he becomes depressed. He may have millions of dollars, but if he doesn't make more, he is still depressed, and he is driven to get more. That is his god at work in him.

The tragic thing in life is this: So many of us do not realize how to be fulfilled. Death isn't the great tragedy. Finding out you have a terminal disease is not a tragedy. No, the real tragedy of

our day is that there are Christians who appear to be fulfilled but who honestly are not fulfilled in their souls. They have to keep a little part of their lives under the control of these three little gods who are subject to Satan, the god of the world's system.

Chapter Three

OUR INCOMPARABLE GOD

God is ontological. Very simply, this means that God has always been everything He is and ever will be. Even before He created the angels and the human race, God was who He is now and who He will be forever. In contrast, God is not “economical,” meaning that God does not operate on the basis of “relative administration.” For example, because God created man, the economical approach to man’s sin would have been for God to become love at that point. But God is not economical, and His love is not based upon the entrance of sin upon the earth. His love is not based upon the fact of man’s failure and that He must now rescue us with love. God’s love is based upon His ontological nature—the nature that He has always had and always will have. He is love, He always was love, and He always will be love, as He says is in Revelation 1:8.

Inasmuch as God is ontological, God is not

capricious, or arbitrary, toward the objects of His love. God is indeed love. God's love is a love beyond any love; His joy is a joy beyond any joy; and His forgiveness is a forgiveness beyond any forgiveness. His wisdom is a wisdom beyond any wisdom, and His power is a power beyond any power. This is what makes God the origin and the source of everything—from His power that is omnipotent, from His knowledge that is omniscient, and from His presence that is omnipresent.

As we put these things together and are trained to think with the Word of God, we are able to think beyond our experience, make decisions beyond our impulses, respond beyond our emotions, and evaluate beyond our reasoning.

A great man of God made this statement: "Man will never be able to excel beyond his understanding of the dignity of God." Whatever we consider the dignity of God to be will be where we stand in relationship to God. In other words, if I understand the dignity of God, I understand the ontological nature of God, that indeed He is not capricious. God does not change. Therefore, based upon my understanding of God's dignity—the mighty God, Lord of lords, and King of kings (Isaiah 9:6; Revelation

17:14)—I can enter into the realization of God's holiness and of God's righteousness, which cannot be understood by natural reasoning or intellectual knowledge.

Man's problem is simply this: We have no natural way to know who God is or what He is like. In the entire scope of human history, throughout all time, by any educational process, man has nothing to compare to God. If we had something to compare with what God is like, we would be able to come up with a reasonable understanding of God—but we cannot.

His Ways Are Not Man's Ways

A person's God is too small when he begins to consider that God is like some great man. The greatest intellectual in the world, the greatest doctor, physician, or surgeon, the greatest professor, educator, or historian—none of them in the smallest way can portray in his human capacity what God is like. Even a very good moral man who is considered very upright and highly esteemed and very much respected cannot give us any idea of what God is like.

If you go to church and hear a preacher communicate the Word of God, and he does a good job preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ,

you may get saved or edified but the preacher will never be able to explain, express, or reveal what God is really like unless *he* understands in his spirit what God is really like. The only way he can comprehend what God is like is through the Finished Work.

If, however, he preaches grace *and* works as a means for salvation, or puts grace in with a measure of legalism, or makes God's love dependent on a number of conditions, then he is not preaching what God is like.

Some Christians relate to God as a policeman—not that policemen are unkind, because they are not, but as representing authority and power of the law. Others relate to God as some very honorable and intellectual professor. That is *not* what God is like, nor can it ever be understood as God-likeness.

The Problem of Discontentment

As we purpose to make an impact on a lost world, we will meet people who are discontented. Therefore, it is crucial that we purpose to be contented in Christ, abiding in all that He is.

Some Christians will not serve God unless they can serve God by doing what they want to do rather than being a servant of God in all

things. If a marriage is not happy in Jesus Christ, regardless of the reason, God is not at the center (see 1 Corinthians 7:14-17). God must be our mind, our soul, and our will. God must be our heart. God must be our conscience. God must be at the center of our self-consciousness, and God must indeed be our focus.

Only as this is understood in the simplicity of divine revelation, in the dynamics of God's manifestation within man, will we see and then reveal God as He really is. In Galatians 1:16, Paul wrote, "God has been revealed in me—not just to me."

For this to be so, the first thing a man must have is the proper premise for thinking: that is, the Word of God. We will be only as effective as our thought life with God is. Once we are saved, the Bible says that we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Yet, until we have this right premise for thinking established in us, we will never have the right thoughts for godly meditation; therefore, we will never have the right words for communicating nor the right life for living. Furthermore, we will never have the proper grace for responding or the proper action for initiating Christ's life.

What Is God Like?

In Isaiah 40, the Lord asks some questions: “Who do you think I am? What am I like? Have you ever in your life made a decision about what I am like?”

“Who will you compare with Me?” God asks.

I will answer that question. I have never found anyone that I can compare with God.

God said to Israel, “Do you think I am like your idols? Like your trees? Do you think that I am like you?”

Then the Lord said, “I am not like you. There is no one that you can compare Me to. So when you have a very good day, don’t ever think that you are like Me, unless it *is* Me in you!” (see Isaiah 40:18-31).

Certainly, a person can be like God when God’s Word is dwelling richly in him, when God’s Spirit is filling him precisely, and when God’s love is being shed abroad in his heart with its wonderful pertinent manifestation of the reality of life. But there is no way to know what God is like unless it is revealed to us through His Word.

The only revelation that God has ever given to man is the Bible in its totality—in its com-

pleteness as the full canon of Scripture. We digest the Word by masticating and assimilating it. The Word becomes resident in us and residual for us, ready to be recalled by the Holy Spirit in us, mobilizing us with divine energy as it circulates through us. That is how we operate in the classifications of biblical categories with the precise message of the Holy Spirit making His revelation known to us. Then and then only can we begin to be what God is like.

This is why all things work together for good to them that love God and are the called, according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). The whole purpose is that we might be conformed to His image. No one can ever be conformed to God's image as long as he has a vail of flesh, in any measure or degree, between him and Calvary (2 Corinthians 3:15-17).

Chapter Four

LETTING THE RIVER FLOW THROUGH US

When the members of the early Church looked away from Moses and the law, the veil went away because they turned to Christ, and the Spirit of the Lord took over. They beheld “as in a glass (a mirror) the glory of the Lord.” Through the mirror the Word of God, we are changed into God’s likeness by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

The mirror or the glass indicate clarity with transparency. The Bible begins in transparency with its description of the four original rivers with their source in the garden of Eden (Genesis 2:10-14). The rivers typify the Holy Spirit coming out of the life of God and moving through the earth. Because sin had not yet entered the earth, the waters must have been transparent, crystal clear. But then Adam and Eve sinned, and things became clouded.

Finally, by the time we get into Revelation 21 and 22, God reveals once again that clarity which comes with transparency: the streets of gold, the light of the Lamb—everything is transparent, nothing is hidden. There is no darkness. There will be no need for the sun, or moon, or stars, or any lights that God created, because God Himself fills up His new Jerusalem. Then at last we will see the most amazing thing—the river of God and the Tree of Life in its midst, spreading out to each side, producing fruit each month with its leaves for healing the nations (Revelation 22:1-2).

The Cross is to us a tree of life. The Cross is for yesterday, for today, and for tomorrow. For all eternity, we will enjoy one great big fantastic river by the Cross. The Cross took care of the confinement of living in time and space, and it transfers us into the eternal value of eternal life and the eternal Person. There we are conformed to Jesus Christ Himself—the completeness of divine perfection.

If individuals in the Church of Jesus Christ would only come to the place of understanding that God is not like them. While I must decrease and God must increase and the Holy Spirit in humility and meekness enlarges my capacity as

I grow in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, then I begin to have an amazing attitude toward the dignity of God.

If I do not have the proper understanding with great reverence for who God is, there is no way I can resist the devil, and there is no way I can bring a clear message to the souls that need salvation. It is only through knowing what God is like and what the Cross has done that I will ever be able to make an impact. It is the people who don't know what God is like who have problems with depression that comes from the gods of addiction, lust, and materialism. All three represent three diverse appetites under the god of this world in which the whole world lies in his infections (1 John 5:19).

Under the Authority of the Word

Now, a person who does not understand what God is like will never understand what George Mueller meant when he said that "The authority of experience is always wrong, but the authority of the Word of God to control my experience is always right."

A great English pastor, said, "One of the great problems of our day is that people live in impulses, and feelings, and experience in their

emotions apart from the premise of God's truth."

When I evaluate the Word of God by my experience and by emotions, I will want counseling. I will stay home and withdraw from the Body of believers. I will be sick and tired of this and that, because my experience makes my God seem too small. But when I'm filled with the Word of God and filled with the Holy Spirit, then I live faith to faith. The righteousness of God takes me out of the faith I'm in today and into the next realm of faith that I need. Then, the Word of God and the righteousness of God take me into this new realm of faith and it keeps on going forward.

This is why God stresses the importance of hearing His Word daily (Psalm 119:97, Matthew 6:11, and Acts 20:31-32). The people in Ephesus assembled daily twice a day for three consecutive years during Paul's ministry there. Many people today don't want to hear every Word of God because it promotes discipleship through the Cross and on to the resurrection side of the Ascension.

So as the Word of God dwells in us, we continually go out of one degree of glory and into another, out of one realm of faith into another,

out of one realm of reflecting God's nature to another.

It all consummates in our heart as we discover what God is like (Psalm 84:7-8), and He takes us from "strength to strength." We go from divine strength to another area of divine strength. We face deeper trials as we pass the previous ones, revealing God's glory as we go. Glory is a reflection of some aspect of the nature of God. Joy, peace, obedience, faithfulness, patience, kindness, gentleness, meekness: These are the aspects of His nature (which is love) that we reflect as we are being conformed to God's image.

Finally, through the river of life that flows out of us, we reveal what God is like. We end up with the experience expressed in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ: It is no longer I who live, but Christ...."

True Sanctification: Life without Hypocrisy

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Remember that the Holy Spirit loves others through us and sanctifies us with how God thinks. When the Word of God becomes the premise of all of our thinking and the presuppo-

sition of all of our words, then Truth becomes the conclusion of our behavior. If we realize that, then we will see the error of movements today that promote a false system of works.

“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:13-14).

While there are born-again Christians in these movements, they are deceived and will miss many opportunities for eternal rewards. They have accepted a counterfeit system that claims to have Jesus Christ but it doesn't have His way of thinking, confessing, and living.

To be right with God, we just keep growing, rebounding when we fail. It is amazing when God who is love shares His love with us by grace. Filled with the character of God, our lives become ontological. In other words, our lives become predictable, consistent in God's grace, because of who we are (and *Whose* we are), in public and in private. We are who we are in God.

CONCLUSION

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD” (Psalm 37:23).

We receive a special anointing to honor and glorify Jesus Christ as we make a real impact upon our cities, with eternal results.

In every city there are those who would be saved, and that is who we are going after. We evangelize everybody, but our purpose is to reach those who want to be saved. If our steps are ordered by God, then we are headed for a divine appointment, and no human appointment can interfere.

Father, we give You praise and thanks. You guide us, protect us, cover us, go before us, and go behind us. You are in us. You have given us gifts of wisdom. Lord, let us operate in the joy You have given as our strength, knowledge of the truth for wisdom, peace for relaxation, and faith-rest to abide in Your plan. We desire to manifest Your power as we go forth. Grant that for us, in Jesus' name. Amen.