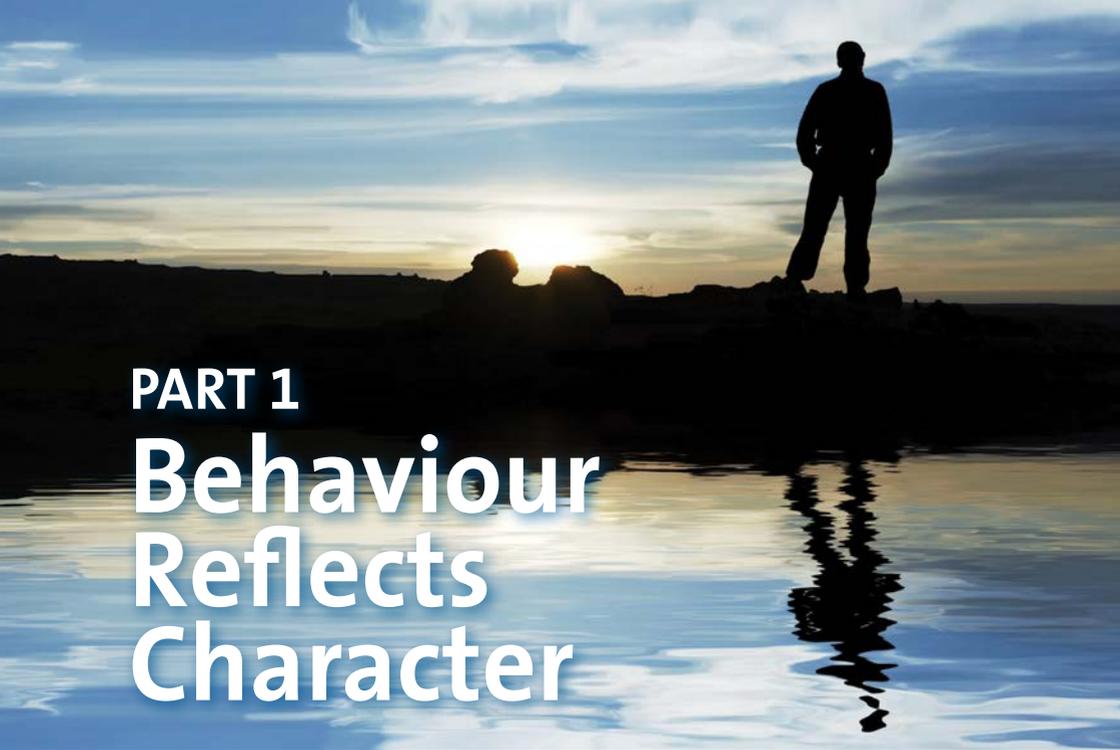


Ethics of Ministry

*“The LORD will give strength to His people;
The LORD will bless His people with peace.”* Psalm 29:11

The message for this booklet was brought by Derek to a group of pastors and lay leaders in Cuba in 1996. Because of restrictions imposed by the Cuban government, Derek was allowed to speak only to small groups in house settings. His comments were addressed to leaders in that locale, but can be equally applied to Christians across the board.

D P M



PART 1

Behaviour Reflects Character

This is a subject I have never actually spoken on directly before: Christian ethics, or how Christian ministers should treat one another. First of all, I want to look at the situation from God's perspective. In a city like Havana, we say there are many different churches. But I don't think that's how God sees it. God sees only one church. After all, Jesus is going to marry the Church, and He is not a bigamist! He is only going to marry one church. So while we think about many different churches, God sees only one church. And I believe God acknowledges only one church in Havana.

When Paul wrote his epistles, he never wrote to the Baptist church in Corinth or the Church of the Open Bible in Ephesus. He didn't write to the Evangelical Church in Philippi or to the Catholic Church in Rome. He always wrote to the Church in the city. We have departed a long way from that with our denominational labels, but I don't believe God has ever changed His mind. What we see as many different congregations, God sees as one. He would call the leaders of those congregations elders, but elders in one church. What we call pastors of churches, God calls elders in the Church. Because of that, it is very important that the different elders know how to relate to one another. It's very easy to become self-centered and to think about *my church* and to focus on that alone. But that is not really a scriptural attitude. We should see one another as co-elders in the same church. It is very important that we know how to relate to one another.

Grace Produces Works

I would say the real basic question is Christian character. After all, the way we behave is an expression of our character. So I am going to talk about Christian character. First of all, I want to say that what we are derives from grace. It all begins with God's grace, but grace always produces works. To say you have grace without works is to deceive yourself. Let's look at just one or two passages:

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Paul is emphasizing here that we are saved by grace and not by works. We are saved by faith and not by what we do. But faith doesn't stop there; that is not the end of grace. Paul goes on in verse 10:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

So we see that we are saved by grace, but that grace produces good works. If we don't produce good works, we really don't have the grace.

“we see that we are saved by grace, but that grace produces good works”

Then we look in Titus 2:11-14:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

In the beginning of that passage, Paul speaks about “the grace of God.” But then he speaks about grace “teaching us.” Grace teaches us how to live. Then it speaks about the basis of our life, which is expecting the return of Jesus. It says about Jesus that He gave Himself for us on the cross “that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

So you see, grace always ends in good works. If I were to talk to you about the things you ought to be doing and the way you ought to be living, I am not saying it is by works. Instead, it is the product of grace. But if grace does not produce the good works, then it isn't really grace.

Sin and Sinful Nature

Let's look back at Ephesians 2 and read these verses all together:

And you He [God] made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. verses 1–3

At the beginning, Paul says we were “dead in ... sins.” At the end he says, “We were by nature children of wrath.” So, there are two related problems. One is our sinful acts; the other is our sinful nature. Salvation must deal with both.

The solution for our sinful acts is forgiveness — we need to be forgiven of all our sins. But that doesn't deal with our sinful nature. If our sinful nature continues the same, then we will go on committing the same sins. There has to be a solution that deals with the sinful nature too. That solution is the cross — that is where God deals with the sinful nature.

In Romans 6:6, Paul says:

... knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

This is God's remedy for the sinful nature. As I have said many times, God's remedy is execution. He does not reform the sinful nature. He does not take the sinful nature to Sunday school or to church. He has only one solution and that is execution. The good news is that the execution took place twenty centuries ago. When Jesus died on the cross, our old man was crucified with Him. That is a historical fact. It does not depend on our knowing it or believing it. It is true whether or not we know it or believe it. But knowing it and believing it can change our lives.

So Paul says, “*Know this, that our old man was crucified.*” There are many parts of the Body of Christ that have not received this truth. The result is that people sin, repent and confess their sins and they are forgiven — but they go out and start sinning all over again because the sinful nature has not been dealt with. There must be a solution for the sinful nature.

A Look Back

Many years ago, I was pastoring a small congregation in London. We used to hold three street meetings every week in the centre of London, and I was one of those who preached. One night during that period I had a very vivid dream. I saw people standing around in a ring as we did in the street meeting, and there was a man in



the middle of the ring preaching. I said to myself, “What he is saying is good, but I don’t like the way he looks.” He had a club foot and his body was twisted. After I awoke from the dream, I thought, *I just don’t understand it.*

About a week later, I had exactly the same dream. So I realized God must be trying to tell me something. So I said, “Lord, about that dream and the man who was preaching. What he was saying was good, but I didn’t like the way he looked. There was something crooked about him.” So I asked, “Who was the man?” And God said, “*You* are the man. Your preaching is all right, but there are things in your life I don’t like at all.”

As it was the season of Easter, I was thinking about the death of Jesus on the cross and I had a mental picture of a hill with three crosses on it. They were empty, and the middle cross was taller than the other two. The Holy Spirit said to me, “For whom was the middle cross made?” And then He cautioned, “Be careful before you answer.” So I stopped for a while and thought. Then I said, “The middle cross was made for Barabbas, but at the last moment Jesus took his place.” Then the Holy Spirit said, “But I thought Jesus took your place.” I said, “Yes.” The Holy Spirit said, “You must be Barabbas.” And I had this immediate understanding that my nature was as sinful, as crooked and as evil as that of Barabbas, and that I deserved to be on that cross just as much as Barabbas. When Jesus came on the cross, He not only took the place of Barabbas, but He took the place of Derek Prince. And I thought to myself, *Well, I understand that, but how can it ever become true in my experience?*

“It is not enough for me to believe in my heart, I also have to confess it with my mouth.”

Then I thought about the phrase, “*Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth*” (Romans 10:9–10). And I realized, “It is not enough for me to believe in my heart, I also have to confess it with my mouth.” Then I thought, “Suppose it doesn’t work?” In the end I saw I had to make that confession. So I began to say, “When Jesus died on the cross, my old nature died in Him.” And gradually it became true for me and I experienced an inner change of my nature. I am not yet perfect, but I am very different from what I was.

The Double Solution

This is the double solution. We have to have our sins forgiven, but we also have to have our old nature put to death. As Paul says in Romans 6:11:

Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Earlier, in Romans 6:6, Paul said, “*Our old man was crucified.*” But in verse 11 he says, “*Reckon yourselves to be dead to sin.*” First of all, we need to know the fact; then we have to *reckon it true* in our experience.



When I asked myself, “What does it mean to be dead to sin?” I came up with this little story about a man, his wife and his children. The man was a very bad man. He did all the things that people who go to church don’t do. He drank whiskey and smoked cigars and watched bad programmes on television. But he let his wife and children go to the gospel service on Sunday evening.

So one particular Sunday evening they went out, leaving him sitting in his chair with a glass of whiskey by him and cigar smoke going up as he watched television. That Sunday evening, they had a wonderful service. They came back feeling so happy. They were actually singing the choruses they had heard in church. They suddenly realized that the man would get very angry if he heard the choruses. So they quieted themselves and tiptoed into the room, but the man did not stir. His cigar was right by him, but he wasn’t smoking it. The whiskey was right there beside him, but he wasn’t drinking it. And suddenly they realized what had happened. He’d had a heart attack and died. So, you see, he was dead to sin. The cigar didn’t attract him. The whiskey didn’t attract him. He wasn’t interested in the television. He was dead!

To the question, “What does it mean to be dead to sin?” my conclusion is this: It means sin doesn’t interest you. You’re not attracted by sin, and it produces no reaction from you. Paul says, “*Consider yourself to be dead indeed to sin*” (Romans 6:11). That is the only way out of the problem of sin. But it comes only through the cross. There is no other way.

The Cross Applied

I have been very concerned lately about all the foolish things that are taking place in the Body of Christ. And all the false doctrines and false prophecies that are flooding the Church. I have been asking God to show me, *What is the protection?* Just recently, He showed me that, very simply, **the only protection is the cross** — the cross applied in the life of a believer. Where the cross is not applied, Christianity is a false religion, because the whole religion is built around the cross. That is the reason for the problems in the Body of Christ. That is the reason for all the deception, the false teaching and the false prophecies: when the cross is not preached, and when the cross is not applied.

Without the cross, Christianity is a false religion. It has no solid basis and its claims are not true. Like every false religion, it is open to the infiltration and the deception of demons. The only protection is the cross. Seeing that really lifted a burden from my mind. Not that I am happy with the situation, but at least I understand it. I realize there is no protection against Satan except the cross.

I have to ask myself, *What about my life? What place does the cross play in my life?* So I turn to Galatians 2:20, which is Paul’s own testimony.

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me . . .”

Is that true in my life? Have I really been crucified with Christ? Am I still very much alive? The cross is the only protection for me.

Then, Galatians 5:24 says:

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

This is a description of those who truly belong to Christ. It doesn't say they are members of a particular church. These are not Baptists or Presbyterians or Catholics. That is not the defining mark. The only mark of those who truly belong to Christ is that they have crucified their flesh.

Our Part

We saw in Romans 6 that Paul said, *“Our old man was crucified.”* That was something *God* did. But in Galatians 5:24 Paul says this is something *you* have to do. You have to put the nails into your own fleshly nature. And crucifixion is always painful. There is no painless way around it.

Take one example of a young woman finding the right husband. Here is a sweet young girl of 18, who is a Christian and a member of a good church, and she meets a young man of 20, who becomes very interested in her. He is not a Christian, but he starts coming to church with her on Sunday. Her perceptive pastor counsels, “He is not coming to church because he wants Christ; he's coming to church because he wants to marry you. And once he's married you, he won't come to church any more.” This young woman has a difficult choice. She can put the nails in her own flesh and say to this young man, “I won't have any more to do with you. You are not a Christian. I am.” That is painful, but the pain doesn't last very long.

The other thing she can do is ignore her pastor's advice. To say good-bye to this man would be too painful, so she marries him. Fifteen years later after she has had three children, he runs off with another woman. Tell me, which is more painful? To say no to the young man? Or marry him and have a miserable life for fifteen years and be left without a husband? One way or another, you are going to suffer pain. One pain will bring you release. The other will end in disaster.

Every one of us at one time or another has a choice. Am I going to put the nails in my own flesh? Or am I going to indulge my flesh and end up in a disaster?

In Part 2, we will be taking a closer look at the picture of character that God expects, which is found in the book of Psalms. We will find out who may abide in God's tabernacle and who may dwell in His holy hill.



PART 2

Christian Character



The Character Psalm

Having established in Part 1 the fact that Christian character only comes through the cross, let's look at a picture of the character God expects, found in Psalm 15. It begins in the first verse with these questions:

LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?

Psalm 15:1

The rest of the psalm contains the answers to the questions. The psalmist David lists eleven characteristics of the people who will dwell in God's holy hill. If we are going to dwell there, we need those characteristics. Remember that they are produced by grace, but a grace that works.

Let's look now at these points about the person who will dwell in God's holy hill. I want to suggest to you in advance that they are the answer to Christian ethics. If we practice these eleven points, we will have no ethical crises in the Church.

1. **The one who walks uprightly** (verse 2).
2. **He works righteousness** (verse 2). He doesn't just preach it; he does it.

3. **He speaks the truth in his heart** (verse 2). What comes out of his mouth is what is in his heart. He doesn't say one thing with his mouth and have another thing in his heart.
4. **He does not backbite with his tongue** (verse 3). He doesn't speak against other people behind their backs. Somebody said that many Christian ministers are wounded in their backs. It is other Christians who have wounded them.
5. **He does not do evil to his neighbour** (verse 3).
6. **He does not take up a reproach against his neighbour** (verse 3) or his friend. In other words, if you try to tell him something bad about his friend, he will not listen to you. He will not take it up. He won't go around telling others, "You know what I heard about so-and-so?" This is one of the most important points of Christian ethics.
7. **In whose eyes a vile person is despised** (verse 4). This is very interesting—he doesn't bow before the wicked. It may be a very important person in politics or even in the church. But if he is vile, he is despised by this man.
8. **He honours those who fear the LORD** (verse 4). He shows respect for all of God's children—even those who might seem unimportant. He treats everyone with respect.
9. **He swears to his own hurt and does not change** (verse 4). If he makes a commitment, he sticks to it, even though it may work out to be to his own disadvantage.
10. **He does not put out his money at usury** (verse 5). He doesn't take usury (interest) from somebody who has borrowed money from him. If a brother in the Lord says to me, "I need some money. Can you help me?" it would be very wrong for me to charge him interest. I would be taking advantage of his troubles.
11. **He does not take a bribe against the innocent** (verse 5). You cannot buy him to do something against an innocent person.

At the end is this promise: "*He who does these things will never be moved*" (verse 5). A person like that is unshakable. If all the elders in the Church were like that, there would be no problems in the Church. For all I know, they may be. Psalm 15 is the answer to Christian ethics. You don't need to go further than that.

Pride or Humility

Coming back to the New Testament, we read in Colossians:

For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members

which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Colossians 3:3–5

How and where did we die? The answer to that question is: on the cross.

Christ is our life. It is important to know that—it is a life that cannot be destroyed. It cannot be extinguished. It is undefeatable and it will continue forever. But in verse 5 we get a *therefore*, and I always say, “When you find a *therefore* in the Bible, you need to find out what it is *there for*.”

You are dead, but Paul says, “*Now put to death your members that are on earth.*” In other words, you have to keep them dead. It will not be just one single experience, but a life of continuing discipline.

Moving on now to Philippians:

Therefore if there is consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Philippians 2:1–4

Here Paul describes our attitude if we are to keep unity in the Body of Christ. He uses various different words, but in my opinion, there is one word that covers it all. It is *humility*. **Humility is the key to unity.**

In Proverbs 13:10, the first half of the verse says, “*Only by pride cometh contention . . .*” (KJV). What is the cause of contention in one word? Pride! So the solution is just the opposite: Humility! And the Bible never says that God will make us humble. The Bible always tells us to humble ourselves. This is something we have to do for ourselves.

Returning to Philippians 2:3:

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

In my opinion, the greatest single problem in the Church is selfish ambition. Personal ambition aims for me to succeed, for me to build a big church or have a big meeting. It centres in “me.” The contemporary church in some places is full of selfish ambition.

Relationships Are Vital

Let’s talk a little bit now about personal relationships in the Body of Christ. **Christianity is primarily a religion of right relationships**, not right doctrine. You can have the right doctrine and have wrong relationships.



We Christians sometimes spend too much time on doctrine. We are very exact about some doctrines. If people don't have exactly the same doctrine as we do, we say we can't have fellowship with them.

After all, the Gospel is not a set of rules. It's not a statement about God. Your relationship with God doesn't come through *knowing about God*. The Gospel is designed to bring us into a right relationship with God. If we know all the facts about the Gospel but don't have a relationship with God, it has not achieved its purpose. Any preaching of the Gospel that does not produce that is a disaster. Relationships are very important.

Now I want to deal with a passage where Jesus speaks about how to maintain right relationships. He starts in Matthew 18:15–17.

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.’ And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.”

If possible, settle these situations without involving anybody else. But if you can't solve the problem with him alone, take two or three others as witnesses of what is said.

There are three steps. First, go to your brother by himself—one on one. If you can settle it, then you don't need to go any further. Second, if you can't settle it, then take two or three reliable witnesses so that there is a record of what has been said. Finally, third, if that doesn't settle it, then bring it before the whole church. Whatever the church says must be done. If he will not listen to the church, then don't treat him as a fellow-believer any longer. He has lost the right to be called a believer.

That makes the church very important, doesn't it? I often ask myself if some churches are in a condition where they have a right to do that.

The Power of Harmony

Jesus goes on in verses 19 and 20:

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.”

The word *agree* is translated “common accord,” but it's a musical word. It is the Greek word that gives us the word *symphony*. It speaks about harmony—not just intellectual agreement, but being in the same spirit with people. Jesus says an



amazing thing, “If two of you can harmonize on earth about anything that they ask, it will be done for them.” That’s an amazing statement, isn’t it?

Who are the two most obvious people who should harmonize? Husband and wife. I thank God that I’ve had that relationship both with my first wife and with my present wife. Basically, when we pray, we pray based on harmony. God spoke to us just recently and said, “If you can maintain harmony between you, there is no stronghold of Satan that can resist you.” So I speak to those of you who are married: **Cultivate harmony with your spouse.**

Jesus says in verse 20:

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

That is the basic unit of the church—two or three gathered “into the name of Jesus.” And it’s *into*, not *in*. In other words, the meeting point is the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus represents Jesus. So we do not gather around a doctrine. We do not gather around an experience. We gather around the Person. That is the basic unit of the Church: two or three gathered *into* the name of Jesus.

Then we go back to verse 18.

“Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

That is such tremendous authority we can hardly believe it. It says, “*Whatever we have bound on earth will be having been bound in heaven.*” When you bind it on earth, it is already bound in heaven. And when you loose it on earth, it is already loosed in heaven. In a certain sense, the authority of heaven is committed to us as believers.

But notice, it’s *we* who must do it. I’ve often heard Christians pray and say, “God, bind this or bind that.” That’s not what the Bible says. God says, “**You** bind it in My name.” We have to have the faith and the courage to do that. Then, when we have bound it on earth, it is already bound in heaven.

God, Our Father

I’ve got one more thing to say. First of all, I would like to give a testimony from personal experience.

Recently, my wife and I, as usual, were praying sitting up in bed in the morning. I felt my body being moved by a power. It was like it moved up from my feet to my legs through my whole body. My whole body was being shaken by this power. Ruth told me afterwards that my face went absolutely bright red.



It was not something we were thinking about or praying about. It was entirely spontaneous from God. I had an impression that there was an arm stretched out toward my head trying to force a black skull cap onto my head. I had the impression that it had something to do with the fact that I was born in India. This is just my impression, but it was as if one of the gods of India was trying to take control of me. This hand was removed, and I was set free from whatever it was, and I had a revelation of God as my Father.

Now, I have believed in God as my Father for many years. I've even preached a series of messages of knowing God as Father. Doctrinally, I had it all right, but this was different. This was a personal relationship with God as my Father.

I had a very good father, who was an officer in the Army. He was a good man, and he provided well for my mother and me, but he had no idea of what it was to be a father. I grew up without ever knowing what it was to have a father. Suddenly, unexpectedly, I had this revelation of God as my Father and having a personal relationship with Him. It really produced a great change in me personally. I felt a new security. My purpose in life was to please my Father. My security was that my Father loved me.

*I just knew
God was my
Father and He
loves me*

I believe that is what the Christian faith should be. But you see, it gave me such security. I didn't have to prove myself right. I didn't have to be a success. All I had to do was please my Father. And I didn't have to worry about where the money came from or other material needs. I just knew God was my Father and He loves me. And I realized that's how Jesus lived on earth.

He said, "*I do always those things that please My Father*" (John 8:29). His motive was not success. When He was successful, it did not inflate Him. And when He was abandoned by people, it did not depress Him, because His peace didn't depend on that. It depended on pleasing His Father.

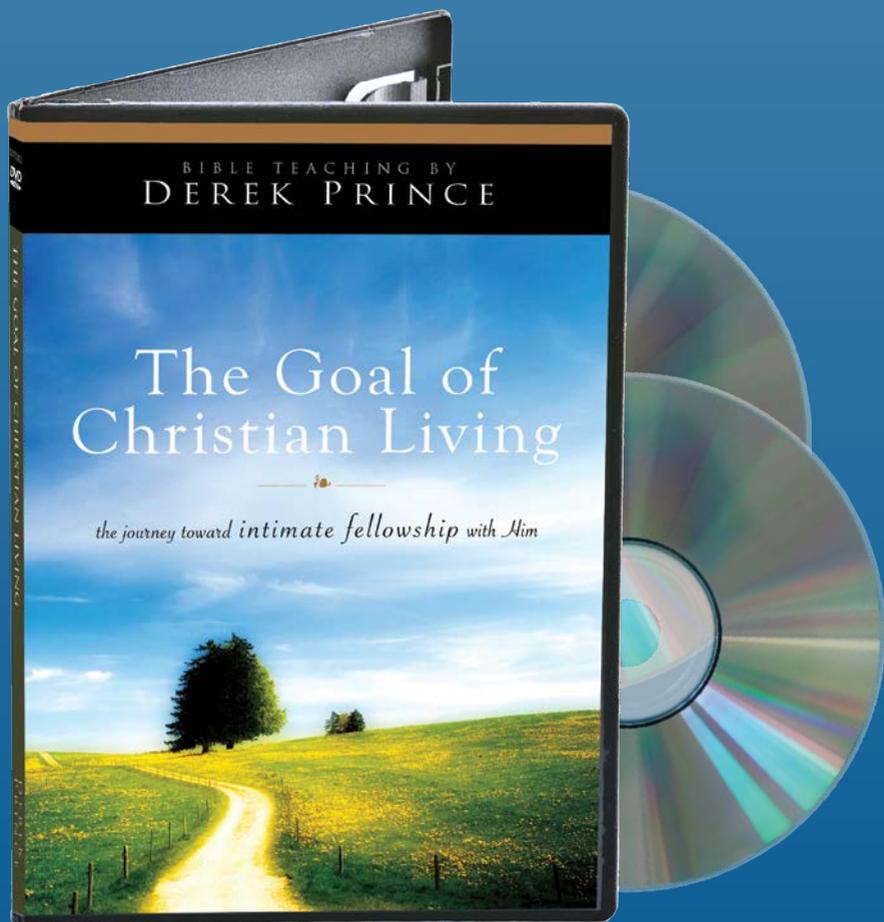
Over the years I've seen many Christian ministers who are very insecure because their security depends on success. If they have built a large church, then they feel secure. But then if the church splits and they are left with just a few people, their security is gone.

I have a different view of life altogether. For me, success is to please my Father. And **security is knowing I am loved by my Father**. I believe that's what the Gospel is supposed to produce. I believe that really is the way God wants us to live. I believe it is the answer for the whole question of Christian relationships. If we get our relationship right with the Father, all other relationships will fall into place.



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 + 44 (0) 1462 492100  enquiries@dpmuk.org

 Derek Prince Ministries-UK, Kingsfield, Hadrian Way, Baldock, Herts, SG7 6AN, UK

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