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in Christ
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“We train disciplemakers...”

Update from Kansas Communities Ministry

Abiding in Christ

Be sure to check out our current podcast which features a message by Richard Spann at a recent Young Leaders Development Conference

[*Making Disciples Naturally Podcast*](#)

What is meant by “maturity in Christ”?

[See the article on page 3](#)

“The Lifeline Illustration” is this month’s featured blog
<https://kansasnavs.org/2016/12/>

[*Dr. Spann’s blogs are found at KansasNavs.org/blogs*](#)

We are created to see, both the beauty of this world and the beauty of our Lord.

[See the article on page 4](#)

“Strengthening Your Stakes” to be topic at Men’s Retreat

Registration is now open for the Navigators Men’s Retreat, March 31 - April 1, 2023 at Hesston’s Cross Wind Conference Center. This would be an excellent opportunity to bring a friend, your pastor, your youth pastor or other person to learn more about The Navigators © and to be encouraged to grow in your faith relationship with our Lord Jesus.



Our speaker is Richard Spann, MD, retired pulmonologist from Wichita, who is known and loved by many as a faithful disciplemaker.

Richard shares, “The overall theme is *Strengthening your Stakes*. Wherever Lorne Sanny traveled in his tenure as President of the Navigators, this would be his topic. He felt that everyone needed continued encouragement and reminders of the fundamentals of our spiritual walk and ministry with Christ. These fundamentals are vital to a reproducing ministry.”

To register, go to [KansasNavs.org/conferences](https://kansasnavs.org/conferences) for this year’s Spring Men’s Retreat. The retreat starts with dinner on March 31 through mid-afternoon April 1, 2023. Space is limited so sign up today!

“Gentle and Lowly” by Dane C. Ortlund, Pub. Crossway, April 7, 2020

This widely-acclaimed book is subtitled “The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers.” Rather than focusing on what Christ has done *for* us, it helps us come to an understanding of who our Lord Jesus *is*. What is His heart? What moves him to reach out to us as “sinners and sufferers”?

Sometimes (oftentimes?) we feel like we are on a performance track of trying to always measure up to an impossible standard. We are told (or we hear at least) that we should just keep trying harder and trying to live a perfect life. But that is impossible. And that is not Biblical.

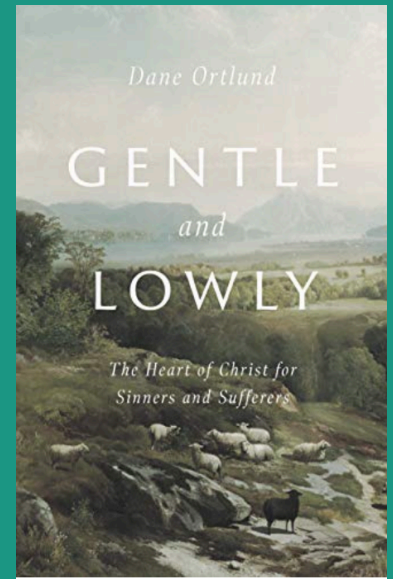
Instead, we are to look to Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18: “And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”) True transformation comes from gazing on Him, learning to know Him better each day and seeing His heart. That’s what this book helps us to do.

The title is taken from the familiar passage “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke on you and learn from me because I

am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.” Matthew 11:28-30 (NET Bible)

Sometimes we see our lives as anything but easy. We see the loads we carry as anything but light. However, as we look to Jesus and truly see His heart for us, realizing that He knows our frame, that we are only dust (Psalm 103:14 NLT - “For he knows how weak we are; he remembers we are only dust.”) we are comforted.

This is tremendously reassuring. We increasingly learn that we are not expected to carry the heavy load of burdensome commandments in order to measure up to some standard. When we are in Christ (and He in us), we know He has carried that load for us. What a relief!



Goads and Nails

By Richard Spann

“Jesus turned around and saw them following and said to them, ‘What do you want?...’” - John 1:38

— Vol. 3 pages 19-21

This question stands at the forefront of the Lord’s earthly ministry. It represents the first recorded words of Jesus following his return from the temptation in the wilderness. John the Baptist had testified to his seeing the Holy Spirit descending on Him like a dove. The Lord had testified to the supremacy of His Father’s will in things physical, spiritual and vocational. Thus qualified, He began His work with a question.

It is significant that these words were chosen to initiate the first conversation with His soon to be disciples. Jesus knew far better than we do that our lives are controlled by our desires. What we want will control our actions, our habits, our character, and our destiny. I have spent time over the years attempting to help others in discipleship who were subsequently destroyed by their desires. In one case, it was the desire for an extramarital affair. Another man desired to be the busiest doctor in his specialty in the state of Kansas. He was subsequently controlled by his practice and his life left a blur, not an impact. One friend pulled back from a commitment to ministry because he wanted his children to have the advantage of several sports options each as they grew up...

Nothing in eternity is able to be compared with the splendor of His infinite glory. To know Him, to love Him, to serve Him and to worship Him perfectly throughout eternity is why we were created. We find our fulfillment as we glorify Him. But what of today? Is it not appropriate to ask that the Lord would do all that needs to be done each day to prepare us for our role in eternity? Should we not also ask for the preparation of others during this life so that they will be able to glorify Him perfectly as well? If this is our desire and if this is what we want, then we must begin today... Eternity is a continuation of the course we are already pursuing. We cannot expect to do perfectly there that which we have not pursued here. What then would my answer be to His question, “What do you want?” It would be a prayer that the Lord would work in the lives of all those who belong to Him and will, by His Grace, come to Him in the future and He would prepare them to glorify Him perfectly throughout all eternity.

In Christ, Richard Spann

“We train disciplinarians...”

What is maturity in Christ? by David Dennis

“We proclaim him by instructing and teaching all people with all wisdom so that we may present every person mature in Christ,” Col. 1:28 (NET Bible)

Paul states that his goal is to proclaim Christ in order to present every person mature in Christ. In fact, in the next verse he says that he is laboring and struggling (or striving) with all the power God gives him to do this. But what is maturity in Christ? What does it look like?

The word the Holy Spirit uses for “mature” is the Greek word “*teleios*.” According to Vine’s dictionary, synonyms include “brought to its end, finished, perfect, full grown, adult, of full age.”

We are aware of what maturity looks like in a physical/mental sense. A baby is immature and does things that babies do — totally focused on their own wants and needs. That is very normal and healthy for a baby — but not for a teenager. A teenager has gained a measure of maturity. But teenagers can also be immature or mature teenagers. Young adults can be immature or mature young adults. At each season of life, a person can display maturity or immaturity, specific for that stage of life.



Throughout the New Testament we see teachings that indicate we are to grow into maturity and not remain infants, immature teenagers or even immature young adults. We are to grow up into Christ (Ephesians 4:13). We are to manifest maturity appropriate for our stage of life. Scripture helps us understand what that maturity in Christ looks like. (The following is a just a small sample of what Scripture teaches about maturity.)

- “No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11 NIV. ***Maturity comes through sometimes painful discipline as we confront life’s difficulties.***
- “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” James 3:17 ***Heavenly (true) wisdom is a totally different perspective than earthly so-called wisdom.***
- “But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, [that is], those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Hebrews 5:14 ***Maturity involves gaining the ability to discern good and evil.***
- “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.” 1 Cor 2:6 ***Worldly wisdom does not lead to maturity. True maturity comes only from God through His word.***
- “Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.” 1 Cor 14:20 ***Maturity is commanded as we grow in true understanding. It takes work.***

As we look at our own lives, and as we invest in others, let’s consider the importance of growing up and not remaining babies in our spiritual lives. True spiritual maturity is critical to glorify God best.

“But when all things are right between you and the Lord, regardless of how much or how little you know intellectually, from the standpoint of the world, *you can be a spiritual parent.* And that incidentally, may be when you are very young in the Lord.”

■ “We train disciplemakers...”

“Created to See” excerpt from blog by Richard Spann

(complete blog found at <https://kansasnavs.org/created-to-see/>)



The Lord has created a magnificent universe for us to see and enjoy. From the smallest flower (Matthew 6:28), to the most distant star (Psalms 19:1), it is designed for our pleasure. Some, however, are born without sight, and others, like myself, are born with poor vision. I started wearing glasses at eight years of age. My vision steadily worsened, but I thought all was being done to help me see because I already wore glasses! In little league baseball I looked like one of the three stooges, (Larry, Moe, and Curly), when I was playing baseball. I didn't react in time to be an infielder, and couldn't judge a fly ball as an outfielder. ... When fitted with the proper glasses I could see the individual leaves on a tree for the first time! After having poor vision for the first twenty-five years of my life, I could finally see what was created for me to see.

There is another type of sight for which we have been created as well. It is the sight that allows us to see spiritual truth. The Lord addresses the need for this sight in the following words, “I have come into the world to give sight to those who are spiritually blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.” (John 9:39, Living Bible) In the spiritual realm, many spend far more than twenty-five years in blindness. We are all born spiritually blind, but only become aware of that fact later in life. The results of spiritual blindness, however, are infinitely more significant than the inability to play baseball or to avoid accidents while driving. What is this spiritual blindness to which He refers? He is referring to the refusal to put our trust in Him as our Lord and Savior. If we have received sight through the Grace of God in Christ Jesus, we need to guard this sight lest we become nearsighted and blind through our failure to persevere in our walk with Him. This warning is recorded for us in II Peter 1:5-9. “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.”

As blessed as we are to enjoy physical and spiritual sight, however, they are only the preliminary gifts of sight! What the Lord has in mind for us to see far surpasses our imagination. It is a sight about which we are told that no one can see and go on living! It is the ultimate in beauty and glory. It is the face of God Himself! The Lord has promised that those who belong to Him will see His face. “They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” (Revelation 22:4) This is what the psalmist was anticipating when he wrote these words long ago. “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” (Psalm 17:15) ...

... We were created to see, not just the material, or the spiritual, but to see the face of God Himself. It is in the seeking of His face now that we discover that God, and God alone, satisfies the longing of our hearts. Until we are with Him in Glory we can only behold Him now with the eyes of our soul. The thirst to see Him, even with the eyes of our soul, is implanted in us by God. (John 17:24) As we respond to this thirst, we are drawn into a worshipful identity with the Trinity, our oneness with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. (John 17:21-22) It is my desire and prayer for you that as you seek Him now your hearts will be filled with His presence as you await the day to see Him face to face.

In Christ, Richard Spann

“God is not disillusioned with us. He never had any illusions to begin with.”

— Luis Palau, Evangelist and speaker, found at <https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/luis-palau-quotes>