

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND DISCIPLESHIP

GOD, MAN, AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

A personal study of evangelical systematic theology is not only conducive to, but is a necessity in discipleship. The topic of how to follow Jesus Christ has been discussed unceasingly for two thousand years. Motivation, philosophy and methodology have all been argued within the body of Christ, and we have a visible church today basically segmented into denominations over the issue of "what is discipleship?" This paper shall seek an introduction to this topic, and more specifically, to deal with the practicality and use of systematic theology in discipleship.

The word "theology" comes from two Greek words, "theos" meaning God and "logos" meaning word. Christ as the living Word and the Bible as the written Word form the whole Word (or logos) of God (John 1:1-5, I John 1:1-3). For the purposes, therefore, of our study, we will define "theology" to mean the process of getting to know the Word of God, written and living, inseparable (Phil. 3:8). In a general sense, we can view theology simply as growing in an understanding of who God is, of who man is, and the difference between. These three areas cover the whole of our experience, and every question pertaining to discipleship in Christ can be answered under one of them. If I ask the question, "How can God's love and holiness coexist?", I am asking, "Who is God?" If I ask the question, "Why am I so prone to wander from God?", I am asking, "Who is man?" If I ask the question, "How can God hold all men responsible to believe in Christ?", I am asking, "Why can't I understand all that God purposes?", which is really confusing the issue of the difference between man and God. So, the study of theology, that is, God's Word, is only a "study" of God and how we fit into His plan as viewed by Him. Our motivation for being interested in such a study, beyond the fact that the Holy Spirit provides such, is that we are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18) and to "come to a knowledge of truth" (I Tim. 2:4). Simply, as a born-again Christian, it is my only desire to know, obey and love Jesus Christ more and more. As I do so, by His grace alone, I will grow in knowledge and love and fruit. But the Scripture leaves no room for complacency in study (II Tim. 2:15) or for ill-founded, pre-conceived religious motion. Our task in concept is simple: to know the special revelation of God's book thoroughly in our hearts, and to trust God to work out the plans of truth contained therein in our daily lives. It is the subject matter of Scripture, and the topics revealed at God's own choosing, that we shall term "Systematic Theology."

WHAT WE MEAN BY EVANGELICAL SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

It is very important that what is meant by "Systematic Theology" is understood fully at the outset. As we consider the whole of truth as revealed in the Word, there are two considerations worthy of mention. First, there is the whole integrated body of Scripture truth which is revealed and exists visibly between Genesis and Revelation. This body of truth is drawn upon by the Holy Spirit and injected into our experience from the day of our salvation until we die. As we put our trust in more truths as found in the Word, we find their outworking in our lives, that heart-knowledge we hear of. Secondly, and as a result of the life long learning process, there exists that body of truth which we retain. In short, there is truth independent of us, but revealed in Scripture, and there is truth which we know of and are putting into practice. The second family of truths always draws from the first. That which we know comes out of that which God has revealed on the whole. Systematic theology may be viewed in this way. In Scripture, there are many topics of revelation, and they give us spiritual explanation for everything which God has deemed that we have need of knowing. The whole

of valid knowledge on any spiritual topic is available to us in the Bible. Do you wish to know how the absolute of the sin nature came into being? Study Genesis. Do you wish to know if there is life after death? Study The Revelation. If your question is, "What is this being we term God like, anyway?", then embark on a study of God's attributes. Systematic theology takes all the truths brought to light from Scripture by the biblical studies and forms them into one organic whole, or rather, attempts to view those truths as God has spoken them to us as an organic whole.

Additon A lists the topics expounded upon by several accomplished systematic theologians. The way in which the Lord burdened these men to write does seem to differ, but we can note several basic topics.

Bibliology: When we speak of the Book of God, we must endeavor always to remember that it is God's message to man and not man's message to man. This is the greatest stumbling block among men. The Bible is verbally inspired, complete, supernatural and exclusive of all other so-called "divine" writings in history. Our sole trust in the authority and supremacy of Scripture is the solid rock on which systematic theology rests. We must discuss the Bible, what it is, and where it came from, before we can learn anything more from its pages.

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (II Tim. 3:16).

All Scripture is God-breathed, and it is no surprise, therefore, that it has been supernaturally transmitted to individuals from Moses to John. If we are speaking of God, it should be no surprise as to how He may choose to reveal Himself. He has done it out of a whirlwind, out of a burning bush, out of a column of fire, through dreams, through visions and now through the mouths of specifically chosen spokesmen. The Word of God (Christ and His Word) stand before us as the final authority in all matters. It is true that the final assurance of that fact comes from trust that it is so, rather than from rationalization, but nevertheless, the total character and divine integrity of the living God remains evident independent of man's ratification. The Bible is the source of revelation and inspiration about all spiritual matters. It deserves our study of itself, and how we have come to acquire this precious Book of Books. Our knowledge of the Word should never fall stagnant but should be ever increasing, for without the very words of Christ, there could be no discipleship.

Theology Proper, Christology, Pneumatology: As we ask, "Who is God?", the answer is found in the Bible within the three topics named above. Systematic theology generally treats God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit separately as they are three in one. But we shall consider God here as three in one. Scripture reveals an infinite, all wise God whose being is an incomprehensible trinity. His character, sovereignty and ways are all bound up together, and without His help and Word there would be no hope for our conception of Him.

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements, since you know" (Job 38:3-5a).

"Who has put wisdom in the innermost being, or has given understanding to the mind" (Job 38:36)?

"And He was saying to them, To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God; but those outside get everything in parables, in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive. . ." (Mark 4:11-12a).

Scripture awaits our study of the attributes of God. This is one of the most basic studies in the Christian walk, and should be undertaken by all professing believers. God wants us to know Him, to know His character, to know His motivations, to know His love,

to know His Law, to know His sovereignty and to know that He is. He has given us much information about Himself, and what pleases Him, and how we are to love Him. Basic to systematic theology is the study of God's attributes. The books of Job and Psalms, as well as many other books, are full of lists and reflections of God's attributes. However, the goal of discipleship is not just to know facts about God, but to know God. To facilitate our heart knowledge, God has revealed His attributes through actions, too. Both in Scripture and in our daily lives we can testify to various attributes of God that we see displayed through His acts (Luke 19:41; Acts 9:6; Rev. 1:17). It is this branch of systematic theology which seeks to teach us who the God of the Bible is.

Anthropology: Since we are seeking to discover the difference between God and man, we need to understand just exactly who the Bible says man is. Fundamentally, man is created in the distinct image of God, having personality, will, intellect and emotions. He is different from God in that he is the creature, not the creator (Rom. 1:25). As a creature with a choice to obey or disobey God's absolutes, man chose, as related in the biblical account, to disobey, and thus to fall from a state of perfection to a state of no spiritual virility. The Triune God of the Scripture has provided a remedy for the depraved state of His creature.

Soteriology: "For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). The plan of God, on which climax (the resurrection) we rest all our hope, stands before us as a choice. We can either accept or reject the simple truth of the gospel. God loved the world in this way, that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life! The study of so great a salvation with all its aspects and ramifications is called "soteriology." It is the reason for systematic theology, for the basic message of the Bible is not only that man indeed is lost, but that man can be saved. It is and always has been (Rev. 13:8) God's plan that men, through believing in His method of atoning for our sin, can be restored in this life unto a living hope of eternal life. True soteriology is grounded only in biblical Christology. Christ came to bring man back to God. Discipleship rests on the foundation of soteriology.

Ecclesiology: God is not randomly saving people in the world and dealing with them only as individuals. While it is true that we have personal relationships with God on a strictly individual basis, He does have a corporate purpose in mind as revealed in Ephesians 4:11-16:

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

The whole number of God's elect shall, as a nation, be separated unto Him, as the people whose God dwells among them . . . shall not have need of the light of the camp light of the sun, because the Lord shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 21:3; 22:5). The Church is the body of God the Son, the Bride of the Bridegroom, and a study of what Scripture says of it is essential. In systematics, ecclesiology holds for us the truth of God's plans from Abraham and beyond, up to today for the elect as a whole.

Eschatology: As our futures are not in our hands, but in those of the Almighty, as they have been made hopeful through God's salvation purposes, so we need to avail ourselves to the study of biblical prophecy. If a subject exists in Scripture (which

prophecy does rather prominently), it is worthy of our study. The consummation of time and matter shall find God revealed, and the Son's exaltation evident. Then the difference between God and man, and those who have been reconciled, shall all be made plain. Then shall the plans of God be fulfilled in glorification. This final portion of what men call "Systematic Theology" provides hope, encouragement and eagerness as we anticipate being with Christ. For then we shall know fully, just as we have been fully known.

Evangelical systematic theology includes all those topics revealed in the Scripture which teach about the supernatural God, a created but fallen man, and the Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ. All biblical study can at least in a general sense be found under systematic theology. Therefore, it is here suggested that all born-again Christians are in the most literal definition of the term, "systematic theologians," but the awareness of the order, unity and specified nature of revealed subject matter is a lifelong task of conscientious and prayerful study. Jesus said, "If you abide in my Word, then you are truly disciples of mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 3:31,32). A growing awareness of the truths of God's special revelation is but the tool of following Jesus Christ.

WHAT WE MEAN BY DISCIPLESHIP

A purpose of this paper is to show the validity and necessity of a growing understanding of systematic theology in the head and in the heart. Today's Christians have too much left the realm of serious Bible study for the realm of personal experience. The following quote from the catalog of The School of Biblical Studies in Greenville, South Carolina clearly illustrates the needed relationship between doctrine and experience:

We receive with joy the Word of Christ: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." This word cuts against the deep skepticism, relativism, and subjectivism of our time and assures us that we can know the truth. Therefore, we have an important body of truth to teach which is eternal and certain. Thus this word gives us an answer to the old argument, "Which is more important - doctrine or experience?" Since it is the truth that makes us free, truth stands in "judgment over experience." If experience does not grow out of truth, it is not healthy experience. However, if truth does not produce fruit in the life, it has not been truly learned. Therefore, we teach sound doctrine with an eye on producing sound experience.

When Jesus walked on the earth, called His disciples, taught them, and lived with them, his education system was very simple. He was the Master and they were the pupils. He was the embodiment of all history, walking around right there in their midst, and they were His devoted students. He was patient, longsuffering and loving to them, but He Himself was nonetheless all Truth in one person. Compromise of that which is indisputably true was absurd. His teaching ministry, in fact, included much correction of false ideas into truth. While the gospel message is very simple and requires little intellect to comprehend (I Cor. 1, II Cor. 11:3), and while we need to tenaciously guard that simplicity, still, following Jesus Christ in a personal relationship does not eventuate in an upper limit of knowing Him. Knowledge of the God-man Christ and of His plans and purposes should continue from salvation to glorification, and never stagnate. Truth to our depraved minds is, without discussion, invariably fresh. Truth by nature is not boring, idle or stale. In actuality, however, many churches, schools and fellowships today appear boring and seemingly lifeless. It is this state of lifelessness which we recoil from, and rightly so, for the Holy Spirit did not regenerate us only to watch us get crusty and rusty in some study chamber for forty years. This truly is NOT the discipleship program which Jesus instituted. His program was one of on-the-job training to do a task which is very exciting and which bears much fruit.

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35).

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:8).

Christ used His disciples for a very important purpose. He commanded them to go to all the earth making disciples, baptizing and teaching them (Matt. 28:19,20). The truths which He gave them over the course of His three year ministry were all for use in their lives at one point or another. All biblical truth for us today is for extensive use in our sanctification. There is no truth which falls from the workbench and then gathers dust on the floor. There are, however, many methods of men which do so, and we need not to confuse truth with these, though they may contain truth. When Jesus communicated to the disciples in Matthew 16:21 that He would suffer, die and rise from the dead, He knew that His Spirit would use this truth in Acts 3:15 in the mouth of Peter to the salvation of five thousand souls. When He stated the new commandment of love, and that all men will know His disciples by their love for one another, the very "goal of our instruction," the truth found its application for instance in Acts 20:

"And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they were accompanying him to the ship" (Acts. 20:36-38).

The Truth of God will itself always result in progressive sanctification. Systematic theology, as an ideal philosophical concept, is the system of revealed truth. We see reflections of systematic theology in nearly all present day writings on evangelical discipleship. Lorne C. Sanny in his booklet Marks of a Disciple, describes discipleship as three fold. Following Christ involves identifying with the person of Christ, obeying the Word of Christ and bearing fruit in the work of Christ. This popular booklet assumes and rests upon Bibliology and Soteriology. It promotes Theology, Christology and Pneumatology by using throughout the facts of these disciplines and its main thrust is in the area of progressive sanctification. The purpose of the Navigators organization is personal discipleship and the making of disciple makers, but there would be no Navigators, Campus Crusade or Inter-Varsity if the Lord hadn't provided a framework of absolute truth upon which to serve Him and in which to grow. That framework is all too often assumed and taken for granted. While serving Christ in the simple ways of following Him (See Addition C), we are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Him. If Charles Hodge, Lewis Chafer, John Calvin or Augustine were here with us today, surely they would emphasize first the necessity that a Christian cultivate a prayer life, a regular time in the Word, spreading the Good News and fellowship with the brethren. They would also teach the Christian of the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). That message would include the whole content of Scripture and everything which the Holy Spirit saw fit to say in it. In Volume One of his Systematic Theology, Chafer says,

As one might venture farther and farther on a shoreless sea with no hope of ever reaching its outer boundaries, so the theologian is ever confronted with limitless material in the realm of the doctrines of the Scriptures. It has been customary for the theologian to spend at least three years in classroom introduction to the science of Systematic Theology and under the instruction of those who through patient study and experience are able to guide him in this introductory research. However, the study of Bible doctrine is a life undertaking and ever makes its claims upon time and strength. Happy, indeed, is the student who secures a full rounded introduction to the vast science of Systematic Theology, but thrice blessed is he who with unrelenting purpose pursues his study to the end of his days on earth. Nothing need be said here of the tragedy which is

enacted by a student of Systematic Theology who, for one reason or another, has failed to be introduced to the field of his science, and who therefore continues to preach only on the lower plane of human conduct and never, for lack of requisite understanding, expounds a soul-transforming doctrine of the Scripture.
(Vol. 1, page 10)

Chafer's burden is for men to follow Christ, and nothing more. However, part of Bible study is the learning of the theology of the Word. Part of prayer includes asking God about and thanking him for various truths. Part of fellowship is healthy discussions on theology for the edification and encouragement of the brethren. Also, part of witnessing is the teaching of the nations all things that Christ has commanded us. There can be no justifiable separation of truth from practice. If we accept that what God has spoken is most definitely practical, then let us assume that the whole of the precious Book is for our use in discipleship. While different people need to be encouraged and taught in different biblical subjects at different times, as the Holy Spirit leads, still, we are never given the right to disregard any topic on which the Lord has spoken.

Finally, we note that all that God has revealed in His Word needs to be believed. The intrinsic truth of the Word remains intact whether we believe it or not, but what becomes heart-knowledge to us only becomes so by our consciously trusting that it is so. Without faith, there can be no pleasing of God. Let us follow Christ with at least the same diligence and simple faith with which we pursue so many other activities.

DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY - A DEPENDENT RELATIONSHIP

A prime purpose of this paper is to show that the study of systematic theology, ordered knowledge of the Holy, is conducive to and is necessary to following the person of Jesus Christ. We have considered a definition for this term "systematic theology" and we have suggested a meaning for the idea of discipleship. We now move to our own conclusion and main point, that being that growing in the knowledge of revealed truth, and following Jesus Christ are mutually dependent and not mutually exclusive as is thought by some. A genuine growth in the "science" of systematic theology is valueless without a vital walk with Jesus Christ. There are many so called theologians today who may know much religious fact, but be very dead and lost in their own depravity. Likewise, a genuine growth in discipleship comes only if grounded in and borne along by biblical truths. A Christian grows little if he restrains his Bible study to one or two books or chapters of Scripture. A hungry man has only himself to blame should he remain in his famished state by partaking only of the glass of ice water when a feast is laid before him, a feast integrated in nutrition, variety, taste and color.

The illustration of sanctification stated by the need for FACT-FAITH-FEELING, in that order, is of primary importance. Having faith in something in which there is little or no fact is superfluous. Having feelings about something in which there is little belief or trust is deception. Having raw facts about something in which there is no emotion or trust is useless. The illustration holds equally for the relationship between the biblical system of truth revealed, and the experiential process of sanctification - discipleship. One without the other is equally bad.

Jesus said to those who trusted in their religious works, "I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23). That might also be translated, "I was never aware of you." Christ is interested in our obedience to him (Matt. 7:21, I John 2:4). There must be a commitment of the will to follow Him, no compromising, no slothfulness. Systematic theology, in its ideal, is to be the tool of the disciple who with simple faith and obedience to the Lord and Savior desires to become intimately acquainted with the workings of his Master. If we understand discipleship to mean growing in a knowledgeable devotion to the Savior, then the fruit of his study should be always to conform his own person to those working plans. A conscious, continuous and prayerful effort should be made to ask God to bless all study of the Word. Study should be undertaken by all, always, and never without the hopeful expectation that the Holy Spirit will confirm the truth of the matter at hand in one's heart. Study is not

to be left to the pastor-teachers or elders alone. It is the very doorstep to heart-knowledge, and should no more be exclusive to the "clergy" than should be prayer or witnessing.

Systematic theology is for everyone. It is understandable by all, and should never be thought of as optional. The systematic theologies of men are but imperfect reflections of the true system of truth given so freely to us in the Word of God. All Christians should be hammering out their own theologies before God, and struggling together as they seek to know Him more. The Lamb that was slain is worthy of our hearts; He is also worthy of our minds. Let us then seek together to become men more of the Book, never in pride, always in love.

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

- (1) In what order, or priority, should I study "ologies?"
- (2) Of what use is systematic theology to one discipling a new Christian?
- (3) Why are most written Systematic Theologies so hard to read?
- (4) How might a Discipleship Bible Study incorporate either directly or indirectly systematic theology?
- (5) How can we explain the existence of seemingly equally devoted and learned evangelical systematic theologians who disagree over doctrine?
- (6) Which aspects of what "ologies" are open to discussion and which are dogma?
- (7) What are some good Systematic Theologies?

ADDITION A

TOPICS IN SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Louis Berkhof

The Doctrine of God
The Doctrine of Man in Relation to God
The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ
The Doctrine of the Application of the Work of Redemption
The Doctrine of the Church and Means of Grace
The Doctrine of the Last Things

Lorraine Boettner (Studies)

The Scripture
Supernaturalism (Christian)
The Trinity
The Person of Christ
The Atonement

J. Oliver Buswell

Theism
Biblical Anthropology
Soteriology
Eschatology

John Calvin (Institutes)

The Knowledge of God the Creator
The Knowledge of God the Redeemer
The Way in Which We Receive the Grace of Christ
The Eternal Means or Aids by Which God Invites Us into the Society of Christ and Holds Us Therein

Lewis Sperry Chafer

Bibliology
Theology Proper
Angelology
Anthropology
Hamartiology
Soteriology
Ecclesiology
Eschatology
Christology
Pneumatology

Robert L. Dabney (Lectures)

Thought
God
Acts of God
Man's Condition
Redemption
Faith
Repentance
Doctrines of Grace
Other Issues

Charles Hodge

Introduction
Theology Proper
Anthropology
Soteriology

Archibald A. Hodge (Outlines)

God
Acts of God
Man's Condition
Christ
Acts of Christ
Redemption
Faith
Repentance
Other Issues

Augustus Strong

The Existence of God
The Scriptures a Revelation from God
The Nature, Decrees and Works of God
The Doctrine of Man
The Doctrine of Salvation
The Doctrine of Ecclesiology
The Doctrine of Final Things

Cornelius Van Til (Lectures)

Christian Epistemology
Revelation
Scripture
God

(Apologetics)

Theology
Anthropology
Christology
Soteriology
Ecclesiology
Eschatology

The Attributes of God As Expounded Upon By Ten Theologians

Attribute	L. Berkhof	L. Boettner	Dabney	AA Hodge	C. Hodge	J.I. Packer	AW Pink	Shedd	Strong	Van Til
Solitariness	X						X	X	X	X
Decreases							X	X	X	X
Knowledge	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Foreknowledge							X	X	X	X
Supremacy							X	X	X	X
Sovereignty							X	X	X	X
Immutability	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Holiness	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Power	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Faithfulness			X		X		X	X	X	X
Goodness	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Patience							X	X	X	X
Grace	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
Mercy	X	X				X	X	X	X	X
Love	X					X	X	X	X	X
Wrath						X	X	X	X	X
Contemplation							X	X	X	X
Unity	X		X	X	X					
Will	X		X	X	X					
Triune										
Personal										
Majesty										
Wisdom			X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Truth	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Justice	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Jealous	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Infinite	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Spiritual	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Longsuffering	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Righteous	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Free Will	X				X	X	X	X	X	X
Immensities				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Omnipresence		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eternal		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Simplicity			X		X		X	X	X	X
Benevolence					X		X	X	X	X
Life					X		X	X	X	X
Creator					X		X	X	X	X
Forgiver of Sins					X		X	X	X	X
Author of Salvation					X		X	X	X	X

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, c.1939, Eerdman's
- Loraine Boettner, Studies In Theology, c.1947, Presbyterian and Reformed
- Robert L. Dabney, Lectures In Systematic Theology, c.1878, Zondervan
- A.A. Hodge, Outlines Of Theology, c.1860, Zondervan
- Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, c. 1830s, Eerdman's
- J.I. Packer, Knowing God, c.1973, Inter-Varsity Press
- A.W. Pink, The Attributes Of God, c.1950, Baker
- W.G.T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology, c.1888, Zondervan
- Augustus H. Strong, Systematic Theology, c.1907, Revell
- Cornelius Van Til, Apologetics, c.1965?, Presbyterian and Reformed





The key to living a victorious, Spirit-filled Christian life is Jesus Christ as the Center and Lord of all we do. With Christ in control, life is balanced and effective. The Wheel illustrates this Christ-centered life.

Christ the Center Galatians 2:20; John 15:5; Colossians 1:27

Obedience to Christ John 14:21; Romans 12:1, 2; Luke 6:46

The Word I Peter 2:2; II Timothy 3:16, 17; Joshua 1:8

Prayer Matthew 7:7; Philippians 4:6, 7; John 15:7

Fellowship Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:24, 25; I John 1:3

Witnessing Matthew 4:19; Romans 1:16; I Peter 3:15

Just as the driving force in a wheel comes from the hub; so the power to live the Christian life comes from Jesus Christ the Center. He lives in us in the Person of the Holy Spirit, whose expressed purpose is to glorify Christ. The rim represents the Christian responding to Christ's Lordship through wholehearted, day-by-day obedience to Him.

The spokes show the means by which Christ's power becomes operative in our lives. We maintain personal contact with God through the vertical spokes—the Word and prayer. **The Word** is our spiritual food as well as our sword for spiritual battle. It is the foundational spoke for effective Christian living.

Opposite this is the spoke representing **Prayer**. Through prayer we have direct communication with our heavenly Father and receive provision for our needs. As we pray we show our dependence upon and trust in Him.

The horizontal spokes concern our relationship to people—believers, through Christian fellowship; and unbelievers, through witnessing. **Fellowship** centered around the Lord Jesus Christ provides the mutual encouragement, admonition and stimulation we all need.

The first three spokes prepare us for passing on to others all that we have received from the Lord. This is accomplished through **Witnessing**, sharing our own experience of Christ and declaring and explaining the Gospel, God's power to save.