

Chapter I

A Better Way to Live

The orphanage where I grew up was a place of dreams. To 550 other boys and girls, like me, with one or both parents dead, the power of faith came alive with energy every day. We had been delivered from unbelievable lives of pain and despair into the hands of wonderful people who lived each day to show us how to live. When their faith met our need they committed their talents, imaginations and creativeness to our dreams.

Naturally our philosophy of life became a Christian philosophy. A spark was stirred deep within our souls. We truly believed that the love of Jesus, transferred to the hearts of our teachers and matrons, was responsible for our rescue. This same love became ours as well.

In gratitude, we struck a bargain — our hearts in exchange for lives of destiny. When missionaries from Africa and China and other exotic lands broke their journeying in our chapel we were transformed into adventurers scaling the peaks of Kilimanjaro and crossing the burning sands of the Kalahari. In youthful exuberance we dreamed of the day when our turn would come.

Each year we went forth. Sometimes twenty, sometimes thirty, never in large numbers. We believed we could make the world a better place to live. We wanted to touch others in the special way we had been touched. We had a purpose for living. Our minds were equipped with self-confidence and compassion and competence to respond to life's variable challenges.

The tireless and sacrificial investment of love and labor by our matrons, teachers, supervisors, and administrators was freely given as bedrock convictions and became the foundation on which we built the superstructure of our lives. We followed many paths to fulfillment and usefulness: as business leaders, as publishers, nurses, lawyers, dentists, school principals, judges, high school and college educators, social workers, musicians, physicians, and as wives and mothers, each fulfilling his or her destiny.

Today in our nation we're searching anxiously for principles to live by. In view of the times, the answers must be fast answers . . . easy solutions . . . magic cures . . . quick fixes . . . free lunches . . . or be stairsteps to health, energy and power.

This futile search has blinded us to what has worked and always will work. Even though these principles are ancient, they're right under our noses, as close as the Bible on the kitchen table.

But, we no longer recognize Jesus' principles ... and so, they have become "secrets." These secrets are both common sense and mysterious. Some reach into our day to day understanding and others transcend all imagination. The secrets are shared only with the initiated. When we embrace the secrets we truly find a better way to live.

Jesus' Secrets

Jesus was, and is, concerned with your life and mine individually. Everything he taught mattered only from individual to individual. Collective groups belonged to

the devil and easily responded to his persuasion.

Jesus gave us truth carried on the wings of love, not slogans carried on the thrust of power. It's easy to see why people were drawn by the healing miracles, but did they truly relate to Jesus' words:

- to become pure in heart to see God?
- to forego laying up treasure on earth?
- to overlook wrongs and insults rather than seek revenge?

Surveying human nature, it's easy to conclude today that laziness, aggressive self-ambition, vanity, anger, and other manifestations of life are symptoms too strong to be overcome by Jesus' prescription of dynamic love. So, as Jesus' followers we live dangerously, as did the pharisees he so soundly chastised, when we say one thing and do another — a major offense.

Yet, Jesus' words live. Love does not die. Just by virtue of having been spoken by him, our lives have been enriched beyond imagining. When we prescribe a capsule of love, it permeates our beings, reversing the effects of greed, spite, resentment, self-will and self-love.

Just imagine, if you can, how many lives have been changed by the words uttered all that time ago? How many minds have been uplifted, hearts lightened, and souls fired, that would otherwise have been left to wallow in their world of lost hope? The number is sure to be truly staggering, but, of course, we will never know.

Jesus summarized all his teaching for us in two great propositions, which have provided Christendom with, as it were, its moral and spiritual axis. The first and great commandment, he said, was:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

And the second:

"Thy shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Jesus indicated their interdependence. We can't love our neighbor unless we love God. And correspondingly, unless we love our neighbor we can't love God. There has to be balance. Christianity is a system that will give you life balance if you weigh your obligations rightly:

- To God and Caesar.
- To flesh and spirit.
- To God and neighbor and so on.

Happy is the person who strikes the balance justly. Many of our miseries and misfortunes are due to imbalances we live under, individually as well as collectively.

There have been times when the obligation to God pulled too strongly, and the balance had to be swung to favor our neighbor more. Or, we may love our neighbor and forget God.

What Does Loving God Mean?

We can love the world God created, and the universe which is its setting. We can love all God's creatures, including man, who sees himself as the Lord of Creation. We can love the seasons, the twilight, the dawn, the body at work, the mind at thought, the sweet relaxation of rest. All this we can love as pertaining to God, but still it isn't loving God.

Then, again, we can love the godly works of man:

- The melodies he composes.
- The words he utters.
- The laughter he provokes.
- The explorations, microscopic and universal.
- The motorways, subways, and high-rises he builds. The wide range of quests and curiosity seeking he satisfies.

All this can be loved as emanating from God, and yet even this isn't God.

Yet, again, you and I have private loves, all of which partake of God's love in some degree as out of man and woman

a new creature is blended in such a way to give hints of each in gestures and ways.

Is not this chain, stretching from the first days to the last, something to be loved as God? Certainly, yet, still not God.

The consummation of the two commandments was on Golgotha and the cross is, at once, their image and their fulfillment.

"It is in affliction itself," wrote Simone Weil, "that the splendor of God's mercy shines from its very depths, in the heart of its inconsolable bitterness."

At last, triumphantly, we can know what it is to love God when we accept Jesus into our hearts and, looking outward from the love he gives, we see our fellow men and women, all of them, the sick and the well, the beautiful and the plain, the stupid and the clever, the athletic and the clumsy, every variety and culture and category of humankind, and we see them as brothers and sisters, members of one family, at once enfolded into God's love and chained together by it as though we were all Jesus' slaves. Through Jesus' affliction and our own we find the better way. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is this: through servitude we find perfect freedom.

As a physician I have known hundreds if not thousands of Christians who once had a spark of destiny only to have the fire quenched by the frustrations and routines of daily life. For far too many their dreams became fleeting, nostalgic moments of regret.

I don't know you personally, but I do know this:

about 55,000 new books are published each year and, yet, you are holding a copy of *Secrets of Christian Health*.

Fate? Coincidence? Luck? Chance? I don't think so. I am convinced that many times in the course of our lives, God challenges us with a golden opportunity, a seemingly impossible hurdle, or a terrible tragedy . . . and how we react -- or fail to react — determines not only the state of our health, but the course of our future. During such times our destiny is always in the balance. Perhaps this is such a time for you.

Is this only a chance meeting between you and me? I don't believe so. I believe we have been brought together for some special reasons, we two. Let's make the most of it. To begin, here are 7 rules I've personally found helpful in my own journey.

Rule #1 – Count your blessings.

Even if you're feeling defeated by your circumstances at the moment, you are as valuable as ever to the Lord. Sit down with a pad and pen or pencil and list your assets. #1, You're living in America. #2, Your experience. #3, Your family #4, Your health, hands, feet, eyes, heart. #5, Your freedom, and so on.

Rule #2 – Deliver each day more than you are paid for.

Make yourself valuable by working on yourself. Then, make yourself indispensable by going the extra mile every day.

Rule #3 – Begin each day with a sense of destiny.

As you ride to work, don't listen to the news. Go on a news diet. Listen to a stirring rendition of Destiny music, such as Phil Coulter's misnamed tape called "Scottish Tranquility" by Shenachie Record Corp.

Rule #4 – Build each day on a foundation of joy.

Don't fret imperfections that nag at you. Remind

yourself often during the day that you are a creature of God's and that you can lift up your thoughts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, you will never wear the cloak of self-pity nor will the sound of whining frighten opportunities away.

Rule #5 – Clear your days and nights of menial and unimportant things.

Let no day be a day you merely survive. Don't fritter away precious minutes or hours with busy work. Leave time and leave space to grow. Now, not tomorrow.

Rule #6 – Laugh at yourself and at life.

Not as a fool would, but to free your mind of tense moments to allow the solutions freedom to enter.

Rule #7 – Welcome each day with a smile.

The Lord has given you another day to complete what you left undone yesterday. Set the theme for today that will echo throughout the day. Don't waste one day with a false start or no thought at all. And when the day is ended, sleep well, don't worry about tomorrow.

Now, let's get started on the journey of learning the secrets. Let me ask a favor of you as we go. If a passage or portion is unclear or if you think other information could be added for your benefit or if you've been helped by these ideas, please drop me a note. The Address:

E. Ted Chandler, MD
110 Pilot Drive
Thomasville, NC 27360