

Please listen to us. This isn't a game to us. We don't get together afterwards to laugh at how you fell for what we said hook, line, and sinker. We are here because we believe in the church one hundred percent. We believe in Christ, and we believe in you. Please think about what we say.

First, I just want to say that you can be rude, if you want to, to me or Ray or Bennie or anyone else who stands before you, it is of no consequence, but when you are rude to God in the worship of him you will have to answer to him for it.

What I want to talk about tonight is what it really feels like to be a Christian. It is kind of like the song that says, 'It's a peaceful, easy feeling.' I believe with all of my heart, or I wouldn't be here, that the Happiest that we can be on this earth is when we are a true Christian. You cannot be truly happy, and I mean really happy until you can understand what Christianity means.

It is not an easy thing to grasp. First of all, you aren't expected to understand it all at once. Baptism is not a key that unlocks the door to complete understanding of the church, of which you become a part. Baptism is essential: But that is not all that it takes. Baptism cannot give you a lasting spiritual and mental high. But a proper understanding of Christ's action in our life can. Don't be discouraged when that "baptized" feeling goes away. It can be found again if you look for it.

But life in Christ is truly wonderful. I am totally serious. Do you remember the story of the Ugly Duckling? Where the ugly duckling becomes a beautiful swan at the end of the story? Our life before Christ enters in is full of sin and ugly, very similar to the ugly duckling. We are unsure of life, afraid of the future, and searching in vain for some kind of a new creature, a beautiful creature, like the pure white swan. He can remove guilt feelings in our life, he removes our sins, he creates in us a new heart and attitudes, he gives us purpose, hope and meaning to our life. In short, all of our cares are laid on him, and that means 100% of our troubles will be Christ's if we devote ourselves 100% to him. And if we give him only 50%, we will receive from Christ proportionally. Don't forget that Christ was a real man, and it is recorded in the Bible that he was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He knows what cares we have and how to deal with them, for He dealt with them himself.

Christ came to give peace on earth to all men. He can do for your soul and mind what he did for the sea of Galilee in the midst of a storm. He said "Peace, be still", and immediately the lake was mirror calm. He can give us this same peace, if we will accept it. Peace is what God will give you if you really have faith, if you really trust him. God gives you the kind of peace of mind that enables you to be unafraid to die, because you know that you will pass into a better life. God says that if we love in the right way, we will not be afraid, for perfect love overcomes fear.

But you never know how cold the water is until you get in. You'll never know the peace and happiness of being a Christian until you pursue it with all that you have. It is something like love, for you never know what love is really like, although you think that you will until you are deeply involved in it. I remember that when I was your age I wondered whether I had the capacity to love anyone deeply, but being "in love", by the way, is not something that can be defined and determined absolutely. Love is not something that is ever finished. Love must grow larger and larger every day. And so it is with our love for God. But we don't realize what true love for God is until we are truly loving him. It is something that we must reach for, something that we must study for. We must give all of our heart to God to find a real and concrete happiness.

But, understanding requires thought. You must think to really appreciate the blessings that God can give you. Do you ever think or concentrate on the beauty of the universe, or the infiniteness of God, or the way that he provides for you? If you ever really concentrate, if you ever think deeply about God and eternal life, you won't be the same, I guarantee it, you may get hooked on thinking, you may get high with only the Bible. You don't have to smoke it, shoot it, or eat it; one can last you a lifetime. So many times, however, we think only long enough to convince ourselves that what we are doing is right. We are only putting salve on our conscience. If we ever use our brain, we can really see what God wants us to do.

You as young people are beginning to shape your lives. You cannot reach physical, mental, or spiritual maturity instantly. Growth, though, is the key word. If you don't grow you stagnate. You are like clay that is molded and formed in your youth, and hardened as you reach maturity.

The question is this: Can a clay pot be remade? Can it be reshaped? If that pot is hardened, you can't remold it. But it is in your power to shape your life now as a Christian, so that you will be in that mold for life. The choice is yours to make.

Too many times popular opinion controls our lives. We become the mirror image or the echo of what the crowd is. But just as a mirror cannot comprehend the light it reflects, and just as a cave cannot understand the voice it hears, you lose your uniqueness as a thinking individual if you are only an echo of the crowd. I urge you to be a voice, and not an echo. Be someone who is tough enough to stand up and speak for God, and let your life stand out for God. I Guarantee you a happier life on earth and something fantastically wonderful after death.

© Copyright 1977, Heard Lowry