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by Jeff Reich

The True Object of Life

As a Christian, have you ever wondered what the true object of life is? I found it one day while reading one of my favorite books, *Christ's Object Lessons*.

It says on page 326: "Christ's followers are re-deemed for service. Our Lord teaches us that *the true object of life is service*. Christ Himself was a worker, and to all his followers He gives the law of service—service to God and to their fellow man."

OH, IT'S JIM!

My wife, Christy, answered our office telephone one morning and the following conversation ensued: "How do I get to your office?!" yelled a male voice. "Who is this?" Christy asked. "Jim! How do I get to your Ministry's office?" the man yelled again. My wife gave Jim directions.

"Do you know a man by the name of Jim?" Christy asked me. "Yes, as a matter of fact, I know a lot of Jims," I answered with a touch of sarcasm. "Well, this Jim was talking really loud on the phone and was asking for directions on how to get to the Ministry," she explained.

"Do you know how many Jims I know..." I started to say, then paused. "Oh, I think I know who this Jim is." I smiled and asked, "Is he coming today?"

Let me tell you a little bit about Jim. He is an older man, a bachelor, who lived in the mountains here in North Idaho by himself in a small travel trailer. He did not have electricity or running water, so he did not always have access to a shower. Jim could not hear very well, so he speaks very loudly, which annoys some people. He was also an Adventist. This is Jim, and that day he never showed up.

The next day was one of those days! Have you ever had one of those days? You know, Murphy's law—if

anything can go wrong, it will go wrong! Our office was pushing to get our magazine files off to our designer so we could meet our print deadline—then the computer crashed. A few days before, we had problems with our website which was not working and needed to be fixed ASAP! On top of that, we were short of office workers. Our missionaries were sending in their budgets by emails, and two were asking for counsel and help. Moreover, there was a board meeting coming up the next week, and all the accounting papers and agenda items needed to be pulled together. But the way things were going there was not going to be enough time to be ready for that board meeting. Do I need to say more? We were all under a lot of pressure.

Suddenly one of our workers came running up the stairs to my office. "Guess who's here!" he declared with a grin on his face. "Jim!" He went on, "And you should see his car!" Yes, Jim's car—what a sight!

My immediate thought was, "Oh no, not now. Any day but today!" I was just about to say, "Tell Jim I'm too busy today." But then my memory took me back to all the times I told people: "There is no such thing as coincidence! If the Lord sends someone across your path, there is a reason." Then I also remembered, more than that, "Christ died for Jim." Have you ever had arguments with the Holy Spirit? "Ok, ok," I thought to myself. I put on a big plastic smile as if everything was great and headed downstairs into the bookstore.

Now, I want to pause here and ask you a question. Does the Holy Spirit ever ask you to do something you

God has given us the privilege of being coworkers with Him in saving souls.

don't want to do? It happens to me quite often. That is why Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Following Jesus means we need to deny our selfish feelings and desires and choose to do what is right.

I went downstairs and greeted Jim with a smile and shook his hand. Then I set out to give him a tour of our Ministry, just as if he was one of the largest contributors to the Ministry. (Side note: Doesn't God hate partiality? James 2:9 states, "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin." In Christ's sight, we are all of equal importance. I praise God that He does not judge as man judges!)

I took Jim to our studio and showed him around. On the way back to the main office, we walked through a section of forest that lies between the buildings. Passing an old dead log, I paused, "Let's sit here and talk awhile, Jim. How are things going for you?" I asked.

Jim looked reflectively at the ground and started to explain, "Jeff, I know I sometimes come across a little different. I can't hear very well and I talk loudly, and I know that bothers some people, but that shouldn't have caused the elders at a church I was visiting last Sabbath to tell me I was not welcome." Then Jim went on to explain how in many churches people ostracize him. When church is over, the people form their different little "cliques" and go home together, leaving Jim by himself.

He told me about how he went to a Bible campmeeting being held at a rented campground along with a main building where the meetings were held. As he was entering, he was asked at the door, "Jim, where are you going to take your showers?" Then he was told, "Oh, and there is no camping allowed on the grounds." On Sabbath he returned to see people camping all over the grounds!

As Jim talked, I began thinking about the thoughts I'd had shortly before as I stood upstairs in my office. "What if," I thought to myself, "I would have followed through on my feelings and did not make time for Jim?" I would have just added to the list of bitter memories that he already has from his dealing with supposed "Christians." I asked Jim if he would like to pray. We knelt down right there and talked to God together.

After we prayed, Jim said he wanted to donate to one of our mission projects. He reached into his flannel coat

pocket and pulled out a small roll of \$100 bills. He carefully counted out \$1000 and said, "I hope this can help others overseas a little bit." Then he smiled. Years later I found out he was a man of some means, so one never knows, and you can't always judge a book by its cover.

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

Yes, sometimes it seems we can't see the forest for the trees! We believe in outreach and claim to be Christians, but sometimes it seems the plainest "Christian" opportunities pass us by without a thought. What is the true description of a Christian? In 2 Corinthians 1:12 we are told that, "our rejoicing is this," that "the testimony of our conscience," is held "in simplicity and godly sincerity." What is godly sincerity? Godly means to be like God, right? That's easy to understand—we should emulate the character of God in our lives. But how about "godly sincerity?" What does that mean? To be sincere is to be genuine and true. In the Greek text it means: "found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun's light." A common test used by beekeepers in the old days was to strain raw honey over and over until, holding the honey up to the sunlight, it was found to be "sine-cera,"—"without wax," no trace of *cera* to be seen floating in it. That is what Paul says you and I are to be like as Christians. God cleanses us in the blood of Christ and holds us up in the light of the Lord. We are to be transparent in all that we do, as tested by the Son of Righteousness. We are to be the transparent medium that the light of God's love can shine through. "Ye are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14.

IT MIGHT BE ME

A friend called one day and told me about a dilemma he had. He had some rental properties, and on one he had a couple of trailer houses. He had reluctantly rented one to a single young man who had hair down to his shoulders.

My friend told me that one day he had gone to check on things and thought the smell of pot smoke was coming from the rental. Sometime later he stopped by and saw a strange girl coming out of that same rental. He asked me, "What should I do? I am renting to a guy who is not a Christian, who might be smoking pot and having a girlfriend coming by. Should I evict him?"

I told him, “Well, I can’t tell you what you should do in a situation like this, but one thing you might do is just remember when you see that young man, *it might be me.*”

“What?” he questioned, “What do you mean by that?” I then proceed to share with him that at one time I had hair down to my shoulders, smoked pot and lived with a girlfriend. But some non-judgmental Christians accepted me as I was, took the time to get to know me, and helped lead me to a study of the Bible and then brought me to a relationship with Christ. May we ever be the tools in the hands of Christ to be used and to be useful for His work.

A BOOK AND A COVER

An on-fire layman was handing out books door-to-door. He stopped at a trailer house where a man by the name of Steve lived. Steve came to the door with a cup of coffee in one hand and cigarette in the other and asked what this stranger at the door wanted. The stranger held out a small book and explained it was about Bible prophecy and about God’s true Sabbath. Steve took one of the books.

Each night after work, Steve would drink beer, smoke some marijuana, followed by lighting up a cigarette and would read a few pages of the book. That next Friday, conviction came home, and Steve made up his mind—he was going to start keeping the Sabbath! He smoked his last cigarette, dumped out the rest of his pot, and then finished his last beer. Sabbath morning, he got out the phone book to find a church that worshipped God on the “Sabbath Day.” He soon spotted the address of the

local Adventist Church, hopped in his truck, and drove off to find where the people of God worshipped on the Holy Sabbath day!

“There it is,” he thought to himself as he drove around the church for the third time. “This is where I am supposed to go to church.” He parked his truck and headed in, arriving between Sabbath School and the main church service. He nervously sat down in the sanctuary and waited for church to begin.

After the sermon he made his way to the foyer, where he noticed all the nicely dressed people formed into their little groups, visiting and joking with each other. No one came up and shook his hand or even greeted him. Feeling out of place, he decided to leave. As he turned to find the door an older gentleman approached. “Hello,” he said with a friendly smile. “You must be visiting here?” “Yes,” Steve answered nervously. The old man smiled at him and said, “So am I!”

WHAT ABOUT THE STEVES AND THE JIMS?

Steve could have easily slipped through the cracks at church that day, but by the workings of the Holy Spirit, he didn’t. I had an opportunity to meet Steve some months later at a campmeeting I was speaking at, and he told me this story. We began building a friendship, and later a dear pastor friend of mine gave him Bible studies and nurtured him into the truth. Steve later came and worked at *Laymen Ministries* for a couple of years.

The question is: What about the Steves or the Jims that cross your path? There are more of them than we realize. We talk about evangelism. We talk about “the caring church.” But do we sometimes miss the forest for the trees? Opportunities abound all around us for making friends for Christ. God has given us the privilege of being coworkers with Him in saving souls. It is the personal, one-on-one caring for people—all people; the showing of a warm, genuine interest in others that is sometimes lacking in us as church members. We talk about church planting and church growth. We hold seminars to train people in various methodologies, but one key element is often missing—the simple love shown in everyday life to those around us. Our mission is to bond with people, to win their trust and confidence. And then as they learn to trust us, we can begin to share with them what is closest to our hearts—Jesus Christ! 

