



## **The Need For An Adjustment In Attitudes** by Gerald Cowan

*All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.*

Are you OK the way you are, no changes, corrections, or improvements needed in anything? Are you satisfied with your religion or the lack thereof, with your way of life and your way of thinking? Are you satisfied with what you are, what you have, what you are doing, and how you respond to the world you live in? Would you want everyone to be just like you in every way? Would others want to be just like you in everything? Are you really OK just as you are now? Only some one who thinks he is perfect or does not care about his personal condition would make such a claim. No human is perfect – including you. Nobody but Jesus Christ ever was or is now perfect. Every human – including you – needs adjustment, correction, or improvement in some things, perhaps in many things. One may not know it or admit it, but that does not change the fact of it.

About 400 BC a wise man named Socrates counseled, "Know yourself. An unexamined life is not worth living." Jesus said, "Make righteous judgments" – about yourself, others, and everything (**John 7:24**). About 50 years after Christ the apostle Paul – a man taught by Christ and by his Holy Spirit (**Galatians 1:11** I was taught by revelation from Christ; and **1 Corinthians 2:13** "I (we) speak not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Holy Spirit" – commanded self examination, knowing oneself properly. He said, "Test (examine, prove) yourselves to see whether you are in the faith (the definite article is in the text: not to see if you have any faith or if you are true to what you believe, but rather to see if you are in the faith, the true faith of God and the Lord Jesus Christ), **2 Corinthians 13:5**). He also said we should test everything and hold fast to what is true, what is right and good, and avoid everything that even appears not to be so (**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**). The apostle John also encourages us to test even those who teach us – you've always wanted to do that, haven't you, give a test to the teacher who gives you a test? (**1 John 4:1**). If it isn't right according to God's word, give it up and let it go away from you – no matter how pleasing or gratifying it might be and no matter how much you might want to keep it, put it away from you.

We're going to spend several minutes here on the universal need for attitude and behavior adjustments. Nobody is perfect – no Christian is perfect. Everyone can improve, become more like Christ, developing more of the divine nature that God intends them to have (**2 Peter 3:18, 1:3-4**). I want to suggest five essential steps in becoming what God wants us to be. It would be easy to add seven more and have an effective "twelve step program," but we will not do it in this lesson. We will only discuss five essentials. You cannot really expect to succeed if you do not affirm and apply these steps.

**STEP 1. Decide who or what authority you will accept.** No human authority is acceptable (**Jeremiah 10:23, Proverbs 14:12** and **16:25**). Tradition, culture, and

society are human – not acceptable. Government is human – not acceptable. Your family, friends, social clubs, and even your church (if you belong to one) are human – not acceptable. Your friends, family, church, government, society may join with you in accepting you, but if God does not accept you nothing else can compensate for the lack (**2 Corinthians 10:12-18**). God will not ask you or any others for a testimonial or recommendation of you. You won't be able to call your preacher or others as character witnesses to offset or influence the judgment of God.

**STEP 2. Select the standard by which you and all others will be judged – which you will use to judge yourself and all others.** Again, no strictly human standard should be accepted. The Word of God is the only unquestionable authority, not the words of other religious books or perversions of the Bible. Only the New Testament of the Bible, accurately and honestly translated the gospel of God in Christ, is the proper standard.

**STEP 3. Do a personal investigation and inventory.** Find out exactly who, what, and where you are as measured to your chosen standard. Are you righteous and holy, according to God's Word? (**1 Peter 1:13-16**). You will not see Him or be in His kingdom if you are not (**Hebrews 12:14**).

**STEP 4. Set your purposes and goals, including your ultimate goal;** make your choices. You have to choose. When Joshua brought into the promised land the nation of people Moses had led from Egyptian slavery he urged them,

Choose this day whom you will serve. Will it be God, who delivered you from bondage and brought you into the land of promise? Will it be the gods of the Egyptians from whom you have now been delivered? Will it be the gods and the ways of the people of the land into which you have now come? Choose and declare what you intend to do (**Joshua 24:15**).

The people said they would serve God. But it was a stated choice they would not keep except sporadically and never long at a time. The history of the Jewish people is one of idolatry and false gods, debauchery, idolatry, and false promises – from entry into the promised land to the time of Jesus and the apostles and beyond. Even now they generally reject God, His Christ, His covenant, and His church.

Sometimes one is not given an actual choice. Paul said, in his letter to the **Philippians (1:22-24)**: "If I could choose whether to live on and serve with you and for you or die and go to be with Christ, which I believe would be better, I don't know which I would choose." The fact is, it was not his choice to make. So he said, "Whether I live or die I will try to glorify God."

Until you choose your ultimate goal and purpose your life will, for all practical purposes, be untoward (**Acts 2:40** KJV), aimless, directionless, drifting, not purposefully going anywhere. Like water, it will take the path of least resistance and end up puddling at the lowest possible level. The flow is always down, not up. Even if your goal is as simple and superficial as "to enjoy life and have a good time" you must define the terms enjoy and good time – you may find the definitions keep changing, what you enjoy and consider good are only temporary concepts.

The desire to achieve your ultimate goal and purpose will be a chief motivation for all your activities and endeavors. Of course intermediate goals are important, but the ultimate goal is most important. Your ultimate purpose and goal prompts and promotes the intermediate ones. Intermediate goals are steps along the way to

achieving the ultimate goal. For example, forgiveness of sin is an intermediate goal. It is not a permanent condition or unchangeable possession. If one's ultimate goal is to be with God in His eternal heaven it will motivate one to do all that is right and required while avoiding all that is wrong and forbidden. Initial salvation and becoming an authentic Christian are certainly necessary. But ongoing forgiveness and maintenance of fellowship are essential too (**Hebrews 5:9, Revelation 2:10**). Development of a truly Christian life style, with fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23, 2 Peter 1:5-11**) is mandatory if one wants to avoid failure and falling.

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**STEP 5. Declare your goals and purposes. Commit yourself to them.** The importance of such declaration should be self-evident. Declare them to yourself. The declaration and commitment will guide your way of life, your activities, attitudes, and relationships. Declare them to others who can monitor you, assist you in your progress, and encourage you to stay on you chosen path. Declare them to God. Seek His help in applying them and keeping them faithfully. God is concerned about your thoughts and intentions (**Hebrews 4:12-13**). He wants you to succeed, as long as you are taking His designated path (**Matthew 7:13-14**). Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him also, and He will bring it to pass (**Psalms 37:5**). He will guide and provide. He will retain and restrain. He will lift and assist you to become His true acceptable son or daughter.

What comes next? Is the goal achieved simply by desiring it and declaring it? No. Determine what and where you want to be – just be sure it is what God wants for you and not just what you want for yourself. Declare and complete the first five steps we have suggested. Here they are again, in summary, though not in the same order as given before. Find out who, what, and where you are. Decide who, what, and where you want to be. Commit to doing what you know is right for you, according to God's will. Do whatever is valid and justified to get the results you want.

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