

Know How



Oh! Let's cut out the religious stuff— "being saved" and all that! What do I want to be saved for? I've got all I want, decent job, good money, holidays abroad if I want them. Or there's always the holiday camps. Little car, nice girl friend—I'm all right, don't you worry about me!

So you've got everything!

Have you?

No niggling doubts, no tensions? No failures, no disappointments? No bewilderment?

No awful moments when you say or do the wrong thing and would like to die—temporarily of course!

No wanting something you can't put a name to except that it's bigger than you are, and the lack of it is painful?

You must be superhuman! And if you are, don't bother to read any further. This booklet is not for you.

But don't kid yourself either. Because the more this page has infuriated or bored you, the more you need the rest of this booklet.

But still, it's up to you. You don't have to read it.

But for the ordinary, reasonable types, the honest ones who know quite well that they have problems and aren't afraid to admit that they could do with an answer or two,

this booklet could be useful.

Not that it has all the answers. That would be too easy. All the answers in a seven-page booklet!

No, all this booklet does is to open a door for you. And if you go through that door you will find the answers, slowly and, possibly, painfully, and over the years, for this is no “easy-come, easy-go” affair. There are no “six short cuts to perfect peace of mind” and whatever the squares say about you, you have minds and you have guts. You’re game to get your teeth into something big and worry the truth out of it.

That’s why we must be honest with you and tell you that this booklet is a challenge. Whether you’re weak or strong, straight or crooked, satisfied with life or looking for something different, there always comes that moment of challenge when you realise that the sweet life doesn’t go on indefinitely and that you won’t be under twenty-one for ever.



The challenge is the challenge of Jesus.

Most people your age are about fed up with “gentle Jesus, meek and mild.” Suppose he wasn’t really like that? Or suppose that’s only part of the picture? What is the rest?

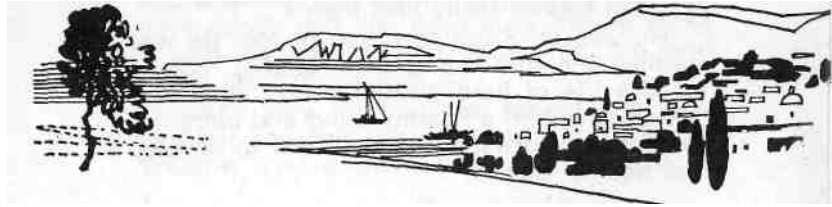
You only have to use your imagination a little, and you begin to get a picture that makes the white-robed figure on the Sunday School or Primary School wall look hopelessly over-exposed. No colour in it, no life.

What was he really like, then?

He was fit. Fitter than you or me. He was neither a hermit nor a food faddist, but he lived a life of hard discipline and toughness which gave him a healthy mind and body. He needed no Outward Bound school to develop the best in him.

Have you ever thought how many miles he walked in his journeys up and down the country, in heat and dust, on rough, unmade roads? Or how many hours of patient standing he spent in talk, argument and healing? It wasn’t just a matter of straightforward physical effort either, because, hated as he was by the national leaders and the key men of his religion, he was hunted from pillar to post, in constant danger of his life. And all the time he was wearing himself out with caring for the helpless the hopeless and the down-and-outs. So much so that at times he and his friends had no time to snatch even a hasty meal.

The crowds milling round him in the hot eastern sun, the constant pouring out of power and strength into the sick, the dying and the dead, was an exhausting business. If he went indoors they packed the rooms to suffocation and filled the doors and



windows. Some listened with excitement, some with rage, feelings ran high and the stale air became thick with heat and emotion.

Yet he never gave in. Dog-weary he might be, but he was never too tired to talk to them, he never refused to help. He never said “Come and see me on Thursday, I’m full up till then.” He went steadily on, meeting their needs and answering their calls, and snatching every opportunity to preach the Gospel. At night, when the crowds went home to sleep the sleep of exhaustion, he often climbed the nearest hill and spent the night in prayer.

He gave his life in two ways: in life by giving all his time and energy to them, keeping nothing back for himself; and this meant giving up so much that we take for granted. Spare time hobbies, family life, holidays, home-making, all were thrown overboard to make room for the one over-riding purpose. That purpose was to lead men back to God by his life, and to make their poor, limping efforts to return to God possible by his death.

Yes, he had to be fit, very fit. Dying wasn’t easy.

Have you ever thought of Jesus looking at you? Not crowds, not people, just you?

He “looked at” an eager young man, and loved him for the obvious desire he had for personal goodness. But he also looked deep into the young man’s mind, to the love of money which corrupted him. And his steady gaze fitted his straight-from-the-shoulder words — “Get rid of your money. Give it to the poor, and follow me.” The money wasn’t wrong, the love of it was a dead load — like driving with the brakes on.

He “looked at” Peter in the moment of Peter’s denial, and when the big, confident, self-assertive fisherman saw that look he went out and “wept bitterly”.

He looked with compassion on the leper who pleaded with him for good health. The compassion of Jesus was so strong that it pushed aside his early training in the rigid law which said no man must touch a leper. He leaned forward, put his hands on the revoltingly diseased man and healed him. Most of us would be scared of infection, and repelled by the horrible sight, but the law of love in Jesus was stronger than these things, and stronger also than the law of Moses.

He looked with cool eyes at the Pharisees and Sadducees who spent all their spare time thinking up trick questions to catch him out. Don’t run away with the idea that this was just a mental argy-bargy. Jesus was well aware of the risks. These questions were difficult to answer and though he was well able to floor his attackers, he knew that the price of doing so was to double their hatred and fury and increase his own danger. Not that this rated very highly with him but he had work to do and he had to stay alive long enough to do it.



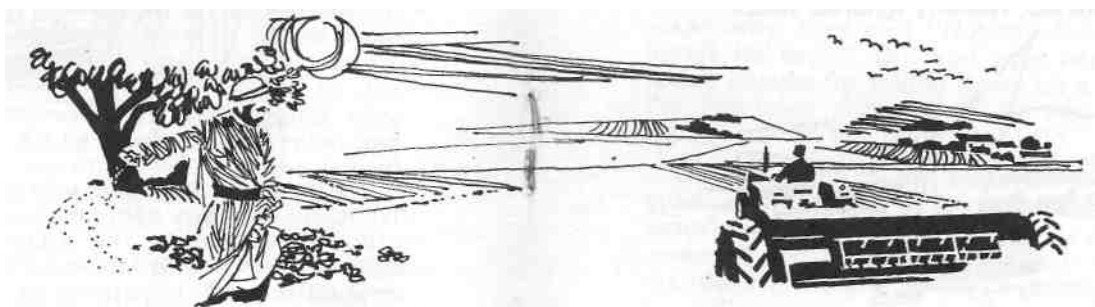
Yet he could no more overlook sham and hypocrisy than you can, and he hated it more strongly than you do. The 'Squares' of his day were full of it and wherever he met it he stripped it away, regardless of the danger to himself. He could not bear the kind of religion which led men to stand at street corners, praying aloud so that passers-by could look with awe upon their holiness. Men who, all the time were soaking the poor and the widows while the Temple coffers were doing very nicely, thank you. He loathed the kind of mind that split hairs over some trivial detail of the law and then made everybody else split the same hairs in the same way, till religion became a dead thing, with all the joy wrung out of it.

He not only looked at people, he saw through them.

If he looked at you, what would you have to alter, or throw away? How much would you need his compassion?

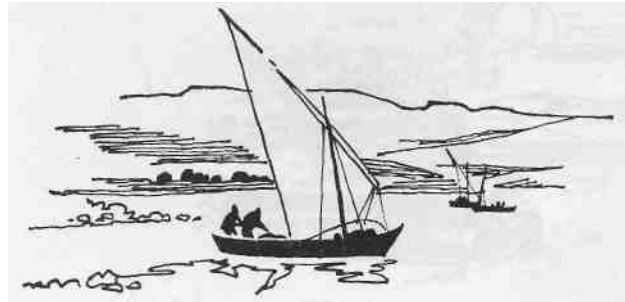
He spoke simply and clearly in a powerful voice which carried to the very edge of the huge crowds that flocked to hear him.

He made word pictures which stayed in his listeners' minds, to be thought out and puzzled over later. He drew his pictures from the everyday lives of ordinary people. Today he would have used the factory, the office, the university. The sower would have driven a tractor, the sensible bridesmaids would have taken spare batteries for their torches, and the man who built a tower would have estimated the cost of hiring tower cranes and bulldozers.



We forget that Jesus was a modern, the most advanced thinker of all time, and that he was an intensely practical man who had followed a skilled craft from school days. City and Guilds or Higher National would have given him no trouble. He knew the workers' point of view, yet he, more than anyone, expected a good day's work for a good day's pay and thought of service in terms of the maximum, not the minimum. "If a man requires you to carry for him one mile go with him two!"

He "lifted up his voice" and the crowds heard and listened. Most of them loved what he had to say but some hated it, because it showed up their hypocrisy, sham religion, mean-mindedness. But loving it or hating it, they all listened. Nobody ignored Jesus.



There was an attraction in him which drew people of all ages. It made men down tools and follow him. They gave up worthwhile jobs, the small fishing fleet, the profitable "perks" of the tax collector. They "left all" and followed him. It sounds sheer madness in this materialistic age. But it wasn't only the attraction of his personality that drew them. You don't throw away a fleet of fishing boats because someone is charming to you. Along with the charm was a compelling power, and men answered to the power because they caught a glimpse of glory too.

His enemies felt the power on many occasions. The Pharisees turned out the Temple Guard with instructions to go and bring him in. They came back without him, and when asked why, they said "Nobody ever said the things he says." Did you ever hear such a feeble excuse for falling down on a job? But the Pharisees accepted it — they had had experience of the things he said.

On the night of his betrayal, the temple-guard and servants went out in full strength, armed with swords and staves. He met them, unarmed and unresisting, and acknowledged his identity without hesitation, asking only for safe conduct for his friends. And the armed guard fell back before him and grovelled, unnerved by the power in him that condemned the sin in themselves.

So much power was concentrated in him and as he said, twelve legions of angels were at hand if he wanted them. Seventy-two thousand immortal, indestructible beings, ready to come at his call.

But he didn't call up the reinforcements.

Why?

Because he willingly, knowingly, purposely died for your sake.

This is the man, so different from the white-robed figure on the Primary School wall, who is willing to stand friend to you now, who was willing to die then, a beastly, sweaty, agonising death rather than let *you* die permanently. For make no mistake about it, without Christ, death is the end of you. Maybe you can't understand why he should have had to die for you; none of us can really understand it, and we all have to take a leap in the dark in faith in order to accept the fact. But it is the king-pin of religion, and without it the whole structure falls apart.

And why you should find faith so difficult is surely strange. For you are making acts of faith every day in routine matters. You don't demand an advanced driving certificate before you board your homeward bus each evening. You don't ask your new friend for a couple of references before you lend her your hair dryer. You don't put your girl friend on six months' probation before you let yourself fall for her. You are prepared to take risks. Why should you demand different rules with Jesus, who is a great deal more dependable?

Is it because you think he'll ask a lot of you? So do your friends, and you of them for that matter. It's a two-way traffic, this friendship business. Of course, it's easier with friends. You can see their reactions and hear them say "Cheers, mate" or "That's lovely!" and it makes a difference.

But this is sheer idleness, and you're not generally idle. Just because it takes more effort to "see" Jesus you're going to pass by the chance of a lifetime. And don't give me that old stuff about wanting to please yourself what you do with your life, because you know as well as I do that only about 0.0001% of the total world population is in a position to do that, and even then it's doubtful if they manage it. We don't come into that fraction anyway. We have to work, we have to live with people, we take on responsibilities. Look at the tearing hurry most of us are in to get married and have families. And that, my friend, is the end of all hope *you* ever had of pleasing yourself how you spend your time. Actually, you know without being told that when you stop pleasing yourself and start thinking of someone else, or caring for a small family, life becomes far more satisfying.



Service to others may be a nuisance, it often gets in the way of personal projects, but just the same it is the door to sense and sanity, and, in the end, to peace.

Don't get it wrong though! This isn't an insurance policy. There is no simple equation:— "Do good" equals "All will go well with you." The equation is much more complicated. "Do good" equals "God's care" and in practical life this may, often enough, mean trials and troubles; but that is how we grow and develop into real, mature people.

Or did you want to stay at a spiritual age of eleven?

“God’s care” means quite simply that you will never have to endure anything that is too much for you, though you may be pushed very close to the limit. Jesus, who has trodden the path before you, knows the difficulties and the dangers and is there, all the time, to help you.

It is, after all, a matter of getting to know Jesus, and the way to know him is through the Bible.

If you bought a car you wouldn’t refuse to get a manual on car maintenance, you might even attend classes for it.

If you take up dressmaking you at least buy a paper pattern and read the instructions before you begin.

The Bible is your blue-print for living. Like the challenge of Jesus it isn’t always easy, but as we’ve said before, nothing worth having is.

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Published by the



Christadelphian Auxiliary Lecturing Society
<http://www.godsaves.co.uk>