

I am a believer. As I sit and write this I can hear those words echoing in my head from the countless conversations I've had with other believers. I have gone back and forth for hours talking about my life before I was a believer and my life after I was a believer, how changed I became because I suddenly believed something now that was not all together different than what I believed before. And since that not-so-life-altering day the Church has done an absolutely wonderful job at affirming my believer-ship. It has succeeded in getting me to the point where I believe what they tell me I should. And it continues to succeed in shaping my beliefs and opinions so that I can become a "stronger believer."

It was not until recently that I began to wonder if simply believing in Jesus was all that was required of me to be a Christian. After all, the Scripture says, "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe- and shudder!"¹ If belief was all that was asked of us, then even Satan and his minions would be counted among God's righteous ones. Pastor Josh Loveless dealt with this issue in his article on spiritual formation. In it he writes:

My fundamental issue with being known as and labeled a "believer" is that it feels as though it sells our identity and mission short. It somehow has fooled some of us into thinking we are living the Jesus message simply by believing it or teaching it to others...What is messing me up right now is that the Jesus I read about in the scriptures made an invitation to some fisherman, a tax collector and others to follow him, not to believe in Him...It is my opinion that this "believe first" mentality has become a significant obstacle in the spiritual formation of Christians who get caught up year after year in emphasizing being right versus living a life of action and love that Jesus called us to.²

Popular opinion would seem to indicate that the Church's "believe in Jesus" agenda is not quite getting at the heart of the matter. After all, Loveless goes on to say, "...the Jesus who grew up in the Eastern world understood faith and religion to be intricately woven into the fibers of

¹ James 2:19 ESV

² Josh Loveless, "Converting the Christian: Discipling people into faith," *Relevant Leader*, Fall 2007, 48.

everyday life.”³ Believing and living were not separated from each other in the life and mind of Jesus. Being a Christian was and is not about believing the life, *it is about living the life*.

The Puritans were not believers. Of course, they did believe many “right things” about God and Jesus and the Church, but they could not and would not stop there. They sought to live after the example of Jesus. For the Puritans, too, belief and life went hand in hand. To separate the two was simply not an option, and they strove to live this reality by example in a world that had severed the ties between the two. Christ was their primary focus, and to know Him was their primary goal. They knew this required much more than mere belief in his existence. Instead, the Puritans faced head-on the implications of what they believed. And they lived every word of it.

The call before the Church today is to stop *believing* in Jesus. The call to the Church is the same as it was two thousand years ago on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The call to the Church is, “Come, follow me...”⁴ It is a call to action, *a call to life*. It is a call our Puritan fathers understood well four hundred years ago. We would do well to follow their example. After all, as Arthur Rouner, Jr. reminds us, “...the great fact for people of the Congregational Way is that Christ made a covenant with His people...His word was ‘Follow me. Come walk with Me. Live with Me, trust Me, learn My Way, be My disciple.’...What Jesus wanted was willingness to live the new life and to walk in faith with His band of brothers.”⁵ What Jesus wants is for His people to live the new life He has given them. He wants us to be his disciples, and the Puritans set the example of what this looks like.

In calling us to follow him, to be his disciples, what is it that God is calling us to? The answer is found throughout Scripture. Deuteronomy 10:12-13 reads, “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love

³ Loveless, 50.

⁴ Matt 4:19 NIV

⁵ Arthur A. Rouner, Jr., *The Congregational Way of Life* (Hammond Publishing Co., 1972), 43.

him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?”⁶

This expectation is echoed by the prophet Micah. He proclaims, “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”⁷ Jesus does not leave this call in the Old Testament. He declares, “... ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’”⁸ Following Jesus, being his disciple, requires a change in direction. It requires a commitment of the entire being, a complete change in “the order and frame of [the] soule.”⁹

Upon first look, this seems like a tall order. To completely deny ones self in exchange for following the statutes of and walking with God does not come naturally to humans. For that very reason God sent Jesus to the world. He was the only one who could perfectly follow the requirements of God, and he did so in his life, death, and resurrection. Our call, then, is simplified through him and in him. Disciples are, as Frank DeSiano puts it, “those who follow him in living out the relationship with God which alone expresses the depth of love between God and God’s people.”¹⁰ The journey towards becoming a disciple, or discipleship, is about living, living out our covenant relationship with God, and it is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

This process of discipleship involves the shaping of hearts, minds, instincts, actions, etc. after those of Christ. It involves loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. Discipleship involves the desire to know God fully and to

⁶ Deut 10:12-13 ESV

⁷ Micah 6:8 ESV

⁸ Mark 8:34 ESV

⁹ John Preston, *The Breast-Plate of Faith and Love*, 3 pts, 2nd ed (London: 1630), 1:103; quoted in John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press), 89.

¹⁰ Frank DeSiano, *The Seven Commandments of Discipleship* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2003), 4.

place Him at the center of life. This being “taken over by God” leads to worship, adoration, and the handing over of self to God. In turn, this enables us to live out our relationship with Him, our Christian-ness, through our actions of humility and selflessness. It requires us to rely solely on Him as the resource of every action of our life. In abandoning ourselves in such a way we learn to love others the way Christ loves them. We begin to live in community with those on the same journey, supporting them and being supported by them.¹¹

To live with Christ in this way requires commitment. It requires conscious decisions on the ways we will, and will not live. To live with Christ requires us to commit to living in a way that reflects our love for God and our love for others. The question before us then is what does living in that way look like. Argentinean Pastor Juan Carlos Ortiz likens this commitment to life formation through submission. This is a submission to the commands of a God who holds authority to direct us in all matters of life.¹²

DeSiano takes this approach to the next step, detailing how it is we live in the submission Ortiz describes. His seven commandments of discipleship begin with dwelling in the Scripture in order to create a basis from which we understand ourselves and the world we live in. This dwelling provides meaning to our experiences, changes the way we see and act, and points us on our journey towards Jesus.¹³ It is taking seriously Jesus command to “abide in his word” in order to become his disciples.¹⁴ This dwelling on the Scriptures leads to the taking on of the mind of the disciple, which leads to worshipping God with all we are and have become. DeSiano identifies this life of worship with a life of prayer, both personal and communal. It serves as an expression of ones relationship with God and pulls the disciple beyond self so that he or she

¹¹ Preceding information taken from DeSiano, 6-7.

¹² Juan Carlos Ortiz, *Call to Discipleship* (New Jersey: Logos International, 1975), 73-77.

¹³ DeSiano, 16-21.

¹⁴ John 8:31

comes to a life of fidelity to God's Word.¹⁵ It is here, at the third commandment, that DeSiano gets at the heart of the message of Jesus. It is here that the disciple echoes within everything believed about God. It is here where the disciple lives in the Kingdom of God and the relationships found therein. Further, it is here that the disciple lives for the Kingdom and the relationship that exist there.¹⁶ God becomes central. It is from this conviction that the rest of the commandments fall into place. Up to this point it is a striving towards living the life, after this point it is the actual living the life Jesus calls us to. When God becomes central the disciple brings their faith into every aspect of their private and public life. There is no option but to share the new life with anyone and everyone encountered, no choice but to participate in the lives of others- their joys and their burdens, and no choice but to continue learning and growing both in exterior and interior behavior. This, DeSiano claims, is that it means to be a disciple.

As a leader in the Church, I echo the concerns of many who have gone before me. How do we, as spiritual guides, create the kind of environment where this kind of life is sought after and found? I begin the quest by affirming Pastor Loveless' image of the church committed to spiritual development. The emphasis begins not with gathering in large groups for teaching and inspiration, which in turn leads to the development of spiritual practices and Christ-like living through smaller community and conversation.¹⁷ Time has proven this method inadequate for spiritual growth. Loveless turns the model around. To achieve the development of disciples, the Church must start with the way we live. As Arthur Rouner, Jr. says, "Before it ever gets to what goes on in the church, it is what goes on in the life of each individual member that counts...Because with us the church *is* the people."¹⁸ To truly be the Church God has called us to

¹⁵ DeSiano, 42.

¹⁶ Ibid., 47, 49.

¹⁷ Loveless, 50.

¹⁸ Rouner, Jr., 110

be, we must begin with developing spiritual practices and selfless living and then share our experiences in community, both small and large. It is a starting with “Follow Me,” not “Believe in me.” We must understand ourselves and teach others that “...all awareness, activity, and enjoyment, all ‘use of the creatures’ and development of personal powers and creativity, was integrated in the single purpose of honouring God by appreciating all his gifts and making everything ‘holiness to the Lord.’”¹⁹ The Puritan fathers understood this, for “There was for them no disjunction between the sacred and secular...”²⁰

This is the kind of faith the Puritans sought in the late 16th and early 17th century. When Elizabeth began establishing a new kind of faith in which she was in control of the Church, the people started asking questions. These men and women, these puritans, were concerned primarily for Christ and His presence among them. There was not, they felt, place for any authority but that of Christ in the Church. Considered “spiritual and social outcasts”²¹, they desired to purify the Church of England in *all* matters of faith- theology, ethics, worship, government, discipline, etc. They were concerned above all else with God and godliness, and this passion led them to leave behind the comforts of home in order that they might be free to follow Christ. Their quest is best summed up in the words of Arthur Rouner, Jr. He writes,

Congregationalism [i.e. Puritans] came to America with a dream of creating in this wilderness, a new way of Church life that would be at its heart the forming of “the beloved community” –the 2 or 3 gathered together in Jesus’ Name, with Christ the Holy Spirit’s presence in power (according to His Promise) in their midst.

Their care was to create not only the true Church as they had discovered it in the intimate, praying, powerful, healing, serving, world-proclaiming, life of the new, experimental church described in the post-Pentecostal days of the Book of Acts, but also

¹⁹ J.I. Packer, *The Quest for Godliness : The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), 23.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Rouner, 1.

to create civil communities of honorable, caring relationships that would give a character of concern to human society that would be marked by humane compassion and care.²²

These early Puritans were “zealous of heart religion manifested in transformation of life and manners,”²³ and their aim was to develop a new way of living that destroyed the boundaries between sacred and secular.

The Puritans were covenant people. They lived under the reign of the covenant of grace established by God after the failure of the covenant of works. The Puritans understood this covenant to be both conditional and absolute. Although it was God who took the initiative in establishing the covenant, the Puritans understood the place of human responsibility. This responsibility was understood to start with the acknowledgment and regret of sin, which is revealed by the Law of God. For this reason, among many others, the Bible played a central role in the life of the Puritan. It acted to reveal sins to the people. The repentance of sins prepared the way for faith, which is the only way one can enter the covenant relationship with God. As von Rohr states, this faith is “faith as confidence in God, not faith as confidence in one’s own salvation.”²⁴ The Puritans lived this faith out through their trust in Christ and His promises. But they also knew that they were not responsible for entrance into the covenant relationship. It is God who must enable one to come to faith. It is only by God’s grace that humans are able to keep our part of the covenant, for the distinguishing mark of the covenant of grace as absolute is “that it becomes God’s means of bringing to completion the covenant as conditional.”²⁵

It is seen in the Puritan understanding of the covenant of grace that God truly was central in the lives of the Puritans, and it was their desire to live out their faith in this God. Von Rohr

²² Arthur A. Rouner, Jr., *Congregational Freedom: The Spirit’s Presence and the Spirit’s Power For a New Century Ministry*, in *A Past with a Future: Continuing Congregationalism Into the Next Millennium*, ed. Rev. Steven A. Peay, Ph.D. (Wauwatosa, WI: The Congregational Press, 1998), 59.

²³ E. Glenn Hinson, *Puritan Spirituality*, in *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*, ed. Frank C. Senn (Paulist Press, 1986), 165.

²⁴ John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* (Atlanta: Scholars Press), 66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

writes, “So God is honored and served and loved for God’s sake, rather than one’s own, that is, because God is God...On the whole, then, the commitments of the covenanted Christians are to be for the doing of whatever is God’s will. The proper question to be asked of oneself by a Christian believer is not, ‘What will God give to me?’ -but rather, ‘What shall I give to God?’”²⁶ They truly desired to live for God in every aspect of their lives. They wanted to start, as Pastor Loveless suggested in his article, with following God through the development of spiritual practices and Christ-like living so that they could be an example to the communities they lived in, as well as to the Church of England who they continued to identify with.

So the Puritans asked the question, “What shall I give to God?” And their answer was everything. They desired to live out faith in God in every aspect of their lives, be it spiritual or secular. The simple, everyday tasks were done in accordance with their faith. Charles Hambrick-Stowe wrote of this in *The Practice of Piety* saying, “More than just the establishment of purity of worship, the essence of the new order was individual union with Christ, achieved through participation in a whole range of private and public devotional disciplines.”²⁷ Just what that looked like has been the topic of conversation for many years. It is commonly assumed that the Puritans lived out their faith in hyper-conservative ways, swearing off all “pleasures of the flesh.” They are often understood to be boring workaholics who have no emotions and follow a long list of do’s and don’ts. Certainly, there would not be much to take away from this kind of living that would be beneficial to the process of discipleship today. But, as was asserted earlier in this paper, there is much that today’s Church leaders can learn from Puritan spirituality that will contribute to the spiritual growth of each person encountered.

²⁶ Ibid., 79-80.

²⁷ Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 23.

Life for the Puritan began with the Bible. They regarded it as the “supreme and final authority.”²⁸ It was through the reading and interpreting of the Bible that the Spirit of God spoke to the people. The availability of the Bible to the laity, as a result of the Reformation, allowed each person to read the Scriptures on their own, and such behavior was expected. Leaders of early American Puritan settlements, such as John Cotton and Richard Baxter, are documented encouraging and commanding their hearers to feed upon the Word, and they obeyed. The Puritans are known to have a solid and all-encompassing knowledge of the Scriptures. Their knowledge was not for naught. They took their knowledge and applied it to government, the church, marriage and family, education, recreation, and any other aspect of life. They believed in the affective power of the Word and engaged in daily reading as a “springboard to action.”²⁹ As Leland Ryken comments, “Their practice, as well as their theory, made Scripture the rule for all of life.”³⁰

When it came to the church, the Puritans sought to establish churches that were founded on the Word of God. They understood it to be the gathering of believers under the headship of Christ, disassociated from any building, place, or institution. The Puritans desired for all Christians to be able to worship “wherever they might happen to be during the course of a day.”³¹ This worship was lived out in the visible signs of the church- relationships and activities. The sign of relationships consisted of the interaction of Christians with each other, viewed primarily in terms of church membership. The Puritans viewed mandatory membership to a state church as a misinterpretation of Scripture and established a system of voluntary membership in which membership was granted to those professed faith in Christ and manifested their faith in

²⁸ Gordon S. Wakefield, *Puritan Devotion* (London: The Epworth Press, 1957), 12.

²⁹ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1986), 152.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 143.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 116.

their life. As von Rohr says of the Puritan idea of the church, “If the church expresses the life of Christ, it must be composed of those whose personal lives embody that reality.”³²

The church was also defined in terms of its’ activities. Preaching served as the foundation of the church. It was emphasized, also, that this preaching was to expose the listener to the meaning of the Scriptures, not just discuss a topic of interest. It was the opinion of many early Puritan preachers that if the Bible were removed from the pulpit than all means of salvation would be removed with it.³³ Further, the sermons were to affect transformation in the lives of the hearers. Obedience and faithfulness to God were emphasized regularly. In conjunction with their preaching, the Puritans placed an emphasis on the Sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper as they served as seals of the covenant and signs of entrance into the covenant community. Gordon Wakefield explains these seals as taking on the character of the thing conveyed. Thus the sacraments of the church are “of the most august and numinous quality.”³⁴ Baptism, in Puritan thought, served to signify the washing away of sin and the rising of the person to new life in Jesus. The Lord’s Supper was celebrated as a sign of the redemption by God to people of faith. In it, the people “grow into one body, the church, in one communion of graces, whereof Christ is the head.”³⁵ The final activity that was characteristic of the church was the practice of public prayer. Each service opened with prayer modeled after 1 Timothy 2:1, but they were offered extemporaneously as expression of the heart of the individual.³⁶ In these ways, and many others, the Puritans pushed the boundaries on what the church was to be, focusing in on the fostering of spiritual growth and action in each individual.

³² John von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism: 1620-1957* (Cleveland: The Pilgrims Press, 1992), 36.

³³ Allen Carden, *Puritan Christianity in America: Religion and Life in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), 117.

³⁴ Wakefield, 37.

³⁵ Von Rohr, *American Congregationalism*, 48.

³⁶ Hambrick-Stowe, 105-106.

More important, perhaps, than what went on in the churches of the early Puritans was what was going on in the lives of the Christians. Intimate practices of devotion were at the heart of spirituality and were viewed as “the most powerful channels through which grace might flow...”³⁷ Reading and study of the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer comprised the most important practices the Christian was expected to engage in. John Cotton taught that this task of study and meditation was to be a daily part of the holy life in order to bring about a changed heart.³⁸ One of the foremost writers of the day, John White, wrote of the topic, “The reading of Scripture is nothing else but a kind of holy conference with God, wherein we enquire after, and he reveals unto us himself, and his will.”³⁹ This task, engaged in regularly, would in turn bring about both emotional and spiritual fruit in the life of the Christian. Through meditation and self-examination, the Puritan could see the fruit, or lack of, in the living of life.

Considered the most powerful means by which God brought people into relationship with himself was through the practice of prayer. It served as the primary means by which grace was given. Cotton Mather “prodded his congregation to their knees by emphasizing the duty of prayer,”⁴⁰ certain that the prayers of the obedient asked for humbly and in faith would be answered by God according to his will. Prayers were offered for daily needs and for spiritual progress, with the warning to not let them become ritual. They were given at established times throughout the week as well as sporadically in various settings, all with the goal of leading a more righteous and holy life.

The practice of such devotions was not limited to the spiritual life. As the Christian engaged in the disciplines, they were challenged to be transformed in the ways they lived and

³⁷ Ibid., 156.

³⁸ Ibid., 157-158.

³⁹ Ibid., 159.

⁴⁰ Carden, 130.

interacted with their families and communities. The practice of the disciplines of faith was to yield works in their everyday life, for it was by their works that their faith was known. The Puritans viewed family life as the main arena in which they could live out their faith. Marriage and family were meant, they felt, for spiritual and physical reasons. They acted as means of procreation and companionship, but also to bring them nearer to God and to be better fitted for service to Him. The father, as the head of the family, was responsible for ensuring that all important matters were taken care of, especially the spiritual direction and growth of the family.

Puritan spirituality also had significant effects on the education and work life of the Christians. Education was essential for the growth of religious knowledge which led to salvation. As Carden states, "From their perspective, all of life and learning was worth exploring; true knowledge possessed unity and meaning since it was a creation of God."⁴¹ Following education came, the Puritan engaged in work as a means of glorifying God. They would not make divisions between sacred and secular work, but instead affirmed the legitimacy of all types of work as integrated with the spiritual life. Whatever the work was, it was believed that it was dependent on God's calling, which should be approached "with diligence born of the realization that every action was under the watchful eye of God."⁴²

The purpose of coming to America was not simply for the purification of the church. They also desired to create a community that brought glory to God. Like the rest of life, political and religious spheres were inseparable. The church and government were in partnership with one another in order to preserve and further truth and justice. Puritan theology provided an absolute standard and law of right and wrong as was found in the Bible.⁴³ This standard further led to the necessity of social responsibility. The Puritans had a heart-felt concern for the poor and

⁴¹ Carden, 185.

⁴² Ibid., 150.

⁴³ Ibid., 159-160.

unemployed and fought to alleviate their misery. They fought against high prices, economic abuse, and social sin, and were driven by the conviction of responsibility for those in need that they saw in the Scriptures. It was their desire to affirm the dignity of every human, believing that “A truly Christian society...consisted of individuals voluntarily sacrificing their own concerns for the good of the whole.”⁴⁴

Indeed the Puritans understood the necessity to follow first. They asked the question everyday, “What shall I give to God?” and responded by getting down to the life of the individual. They focused first and foremost on developing the spiritual practices of study, meditation, and prayer and the selfless living exemplified by their daily living and involvement in social justice. They took seriously the command of Jesus to follow, walk with, live with, and trust Him and be His disciples. The relationships and activities that are seen in the lives of the Puritans are affirmed and echoed by DeSiano and many others in their treatments of what it means to be a disciple

Like those early American faithfuls, we too engage what it means to live the life of faith in God. We must stop asking and teaching what it takes to believe, and start talking about and taking action on what it means to truly follow Jesus as he calls us. We must begin asking the question, like our Puritan predecessors, “what shall we give to God?” This not only for ourselves, but as leaders in the church we must examine this question with our congregations to learn together what it means to live the life of faith in Jesus. We do not walk this journey of discovery alone, however. We have the example of the lives of the Puritans to follow. We are able to use their example to shape the hearts, minds, instincts, and actions of ourselves and those we teach.

⁴⁴ Carden, 133.

In discussing the task of following Jesus, Frank DeSiano wrote of the charge of the disciple to be in the Word of God. The Puritans placed this discipline at the heart of their lives—both personally and publicly. It became a daily necessity for them to study the Scriptures and meditate on them to inform the rest of their lives. Though it seems like a simple task, it is one that is often neglected in the lives of today’s “believers.” Like the Puritans, we must bring the reading and study of Scripture back to the center of the life of all who would follow Christ. Further, meditation on the Scripture is required in order for there to be effect in the life of the Christian. By doing this, fruit is developed and the Christian learns how to apply his newfound knowledge to all of life. Though God does not require a certain amount of time spent or passages read, He does desire for us to get to know Him personally and the only way to do this is to engage Him in His word to us. To do anything less than disciplined, daily interaction with his Word is to fail to discover who He is and what He desires for each of us individually.

This devotion to the Word will lead us to the worship of God through prayer. This, the Puritans believed, was the way in which God most powerfully brought people into the covenant relationship. Consequently they developed a strong prayer life that was both regimented and free. In following their example, we must look beyond ourselves and devote ourselves to the same discipline. With the extensive amount of structured prayers developed by the Puritans and many other people of faith, we have a wealth of prayers to look to for encouragement in spiritual growth. All we need to do is take advantage of these resources in developing a regimented life of prayer. We must follow the advice of leaders like Cotton Mather to keep our prayer life alive by not neglecting the free prayers lifted out of the concerns of our hearts. We would do well to both set aside specific times throughout each day to devote to prayer, as well as allow our hearts and

lives to dictate boundless interaction with God as we seek the righteous life given by our gracious God.

DeSiano and the Puritans both affirm that the practicing of such disciplines leads to the living out of the principles of the Kingdom of God. God becomes central in the life of the Christian and the rest of the commandments begin to fall into place. It is when we journey through the process of committing ourselves to God through the practice of piety that we begin to see the fruits of our faith come into view. We begin to “become perfect...as [our] heavenly Father is perfect.”⁴⁵ This is where our faith meets the road, where the barriers between what is sacred and what is secular begin to crumble. Our lives start looking like those of the early Puritans who viewed all things and did all things for the glory of God, be it education, work, marriage and family life, or the interaction with society. There is no need here to go into the specifics of what the life of a disciple should look like, for when the Christian reaches this point their life is so informed by their dedication to and commitment to God that the rest of life is directed by Him.

I end this study with the words of Leland Ryken. He writes, “Puritans lived and dreamed with a spirit of expectancy even as they sounded a moral alarm about the degeneracy of their own society...the life of the Puritan was in one sense a continuous act of worship, pursued under an unremitting and lively sense of God’s providential purposes and constantly refreshed by religious activity, personal, domestic and public.”⁴⁶ This is truly what it means to stop simply believing in Jesus and to start following Him and living with Him. The task is grand, but the end

⁴⁵ Matt 5:48 NIV

⁴⁶ Leland Ryken, *A Past with a Future: The Puritans, the Congregational Way, and the New Millennium*, in *A Past with a Future: Continuing Congregationalism Into the Next Millennium*, ed. Rev. Steven A. Peay, Ph.D. (Wauwatosa, WI: The Congregational Press, 1998), 123-124.

is glorious union with our Creator and Savior. Is anything too much to ask for this faith and freedom?