

If we would rise into that region of light and power plainly beckoning us through the Scriptures of truth, we must break the evil habit of ignoring the spiritual. We must shift our interest from the seen to the unseen. For the great unseen Reality is God. If we truly want to follow God, we must seek to be other-worldly. We must avoid the common fault of pushing the “other world” into the future. It is not future, but present. It parallels our familiar physical world, and the doors between the two worlds are open.

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TOTAL IMMERSION

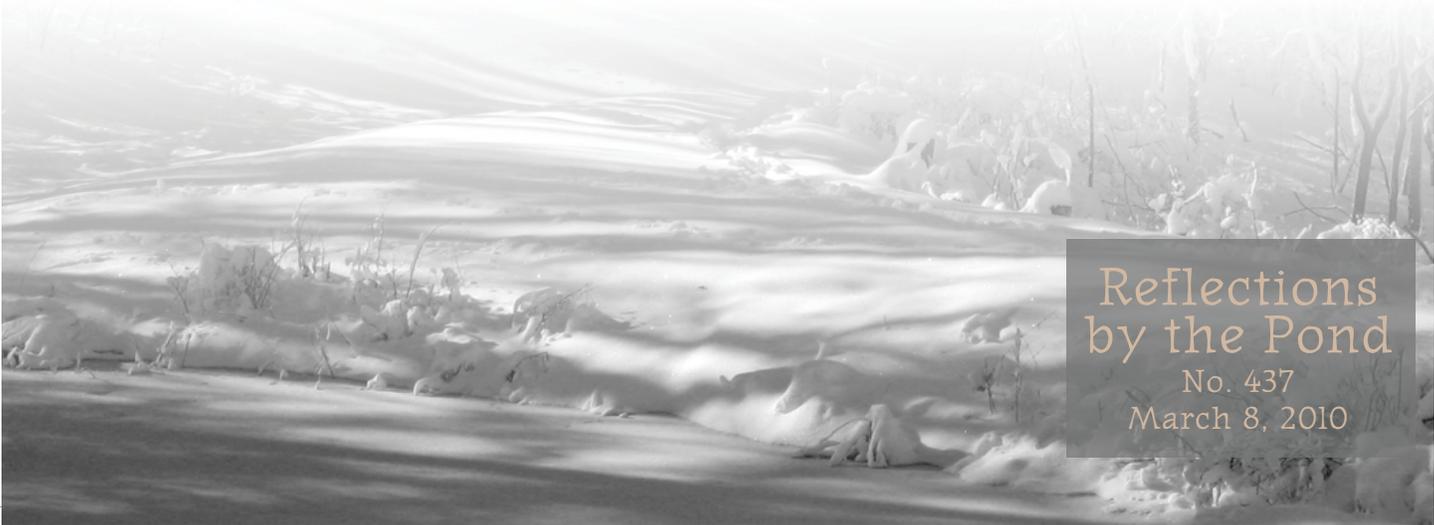
6 THE REASON IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO NIBBLE AROUND THE EDGES OF THIS is that the only way it works—the only way to truly “gain Christ” and “be found in Him”—is to give oneself wholly to it. One cannot buy only five cents worth of Christ and expect to “know Him.” Further, the entirety of the concept, from beginning to end, is utterly, and unapologetically, other-worldly.

To the world system this business of gaining Christ is simply bizarre, ridiculous, nonsensical, and just a bit creepy, because (as any good Baptist will point out), it requires total immersion. It is something *beyond* lordship, which, at its root, is essentially obedience. Anyone owned by a lord, is to obey what his lord tells him to do. And believe it: Christians are owned.

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Even so, it is possible for a believer to obey in ignorance, to obey blindly, without understanding. Take, for example, something Jesus said during His sermon on the mount:



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“But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.”

Matthew 6:6

The response from the believer who knows only raw, uninformed obedience might be, *Yes Lord, I will obey. Every time I pray I will make sure I am in an inside room of my house. I will make sure I have closed the door behind me, and that no one hears a word I say. Then I will wait for my reward.*

When one has gained Christ, however—or, stated more accurately, when one is committed to the ongoing process of gaining Christ—the believer does not just obey, but *obeys with understanding*:

Yes Lord, I will obey. When I pray I will not do it for show, or to impress others. My communion with You is a sweet and intimate thing that is not to be abased by making it into a hypocritical performance. And if I am rewarded, it will be by God—not man.

A MATURING DEVOTION

Recognizing Jesus as one’s Lord involves more than mechanical obedience. The believer’s obedience to Christ is rooted in his love for Him, and one cannot truly love what one does not know.

Forty-one years ago I met my future wife during an evening outing of mischief with some mutual high school friends. In those early days I was becoming interested in her, but I did not yet *love* her. Over the course of the next year, as we dated, I learned more about her—how she thought, how she reacted to circumstances and events, her intelligence and charm. As a result, my interest matured into love. But the love itself was still immature. This love, nonetheless, was sufficient to ask for her hand in marriage. With each passing year of our marriage my love for her grew and matured further, until, now beginning our fortieth year as husband and wife, my love for Linda has matured into something so deep and profound as to be something unimaginable to a teenager. I truly *know* her. And, if one is to learn anything from history and experience, in another forty years my love for her will be of such depth as to be unimaginable to a man of a mere fifty-eight years.

This is the template for the process of “gaining Christ.” The future believer meets Jesus for the first time and is *interested* in Him—sufficiently interested to begin “courting” Him (though, in actuality, it is Jesus doing the courting). After “dating” for a while, the “marriage” takes place, a moment in which the once-future believer becomes a believer indeed, and is irrevocably united to the Bridegroom.

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

2 Corinthians 11:2

But the love that is sufficient for marriage is not the same love that is developed over the years and decades of living together. Over time, the believer who has determinedly set himself on the path of gaining Christ learns more and more about the object of his love and devotion, and his love matures and deepens—until he can say that he truly *knows* Jesus.

Sadly, for some peculiar reason, there are believers who want to get “married” to Christ, but have no interest in getting to know the One to whom they have been united. They love Jesus enough to take Him as their Savior, but then, after the rings have been exchanged, they lose all interest in Him. They give no opportunity for that initial, immature love to deepen and mature, but steadfastly insist that they are quite content, thank you very much, with things as they are—which is very much like a man marrying a woman, then living apart from her, in a separate house.

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