

## Living Means Christ - "Going Low" (Philippians 2:1-11)

God has determined that we will not grow up into the fullness of Christ all on our own. If we, in practice, remain self-for-self subjects - try to go "solo" - we will only lock ourselves into humanistic autonomy, egocentric thinking, self interested relations... all naturally contraceptive barriers to the free and full flow of Christ's life. In other words, if living means "me", I will be out of step with the intent and action of God, and, therefore, never really live.

Paul underscores this thought in Philippians 2 when he reminds his readers that since union with God is not an individual ethic, individualism - making life about "me" - is not really an option. Apparently at odds with each other over some issue or another, he challenges them to stay centered in Christ by appealing to them along the lines of their actual condition in Him. He encourages them to be mindful of certain inner realities consistent with God's life in them - certain inner imperatives of Christ - that will keep them moving toward, not away from on another. It's as if Paul is saying, "Who is Christ? Is He not encouraging? Does He not have a passion for oneness? Doesn't He readily share His life with others? Don't you yourself find warmth and compassion in Him? And, where is He... is He not in you? Then what does that make you? If these are "in Christ", and Christ is "in you", you have not yet used up all your "options"!"

Such a union with Christ necessitates action. It calls for a retreat from self-absorption and an abiding in the One Who is for others. To refuse to encourage, to refuse to be for others and share life with them, to refuse to treat them with warmth and tenderness is to MISS THE CENTER! It is to fail to live in the truth. It is to ignore the mind of Christ. Now we know why Paul would say in verse 3, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit" - from self-interest - "it's not the deepest place in you!" What is deepest in us is not self-interest, but Christ and His interests.

How to get to this "deepest place"? Humility! Humility is the antidote to most all carnal poisons, the antivenim for the snakebite of pride and arrogance. Humility is a non-demandness, a bowing to one will, a submission to Another and to others. Mostly, it's just a willingness to go low. Much of the time we want to ascend, to go high. The test of the spiritual life, of union with Christ is to descend, to go low. For the life of Christ to flow, we have to go low.



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## BITS & PIECES

December of 2013 marked our 25th year of ministry here in Florida. 25 years of teaching, counseling, and ministering the truth of “Christ in you, the hope of glory!” What a joyous ride its been! Not that there haven’t been bumps and bruises, ups and downs... yet overall, we never cease to be amazed at how God has woven it all together into a multi-colored fabric that truly expresses the multi-faceted dimensions of His grace. Thank you for your part, your “thread” that makes it so unique and beautiful.

Nevertheless, with Paul (Phil 3:12-14), we press on, reaching forward in childlike faith to a future God already knows. Will it be the same or very different? We don’t know, but we know Who knows! Our only “long range plan” is to daily trust the “Long Ranger” - the only One able to see into the Eternal Future and lovingly guide us into it. Our task is simply to listen, to trust, to obediently step into what God already knows.

Many of you have been a vital part of our past 25 years (and some of you even before that!). We are so grateful for your support, encouragement and unfailing love. Whether or not any of us has another 25 years... well, only the Long Ranger knows! And that is enough! May your new year be joyful as you behold Him in all things!

*Steve*

<b><u>JANUARY</u></b>	
5,12	CCF
14	Alachua Study
17-19	San Antonio, TX (210-478-0618)
24-26	Leesburg, FL (352-431-3935)
29	Ocala Study
<b><u>FEBRUARY</u></b>	
14-16	<b>**One In Christ Retreat, Alachua, FL**</b>
<b><u>APRIL</u></b>	
4-6	Titusville, FL

### ALACHUA, FLORIDA WINTER RETREAT "Shaped By The Cross" - Feb 14-16, 2014

\$280 couple (all inclusive)	Includes: lodging,
\$155 single (2 to a room)	conference fee
\$240 single (1 to a room)	& 5 meals
<u>Or</u>	
\$65 person conference fee & 3 meals	(no lodging
<u>Or</u>	or breakfast)
\$20 person conference fee	

**RESERVATIONS:**

**\$50 per person DUE BY JANUARY 14th**

No reservation fee necessary to attend meetings only