

Partners In Courage, February 2014

# The Power of a Right Response

Sermon by Wes Daughenbaugh

**INTRODUCTION:** I heard about a young pastor who sat in his office waiting for the phone to ring. He was only waiting to respond and was not pro-active. He should have been out meeting people, inviting them, presenting Christ to them and building a church family. Without being pro-active, we fail. We need to have written goals, and set out to accomplish things. I'm a great believer in being efficient, effective, organized and achievement oriented.

I like to plan my day and work my plan, controlling what is possible to control, such as controlling my thoughts, attitudes, actions and words. Self-control is a wonderful fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). Success tends to come to those who are very self-controlled, to people who do not waste their time in trivial pursuits. That being said, about half of success in life comes when we respond correctly to what happens to us.

In other words, know what you want to make happen. Go for it. Do it! Achieve it. But unexpected things are also going to *happen* to you, and how you respond to those things will determine the other half of your life, perhaps even *more* than half.

## 1. CONSIDER THE BEAUTY OF A SLOW, CAREFULLY CHOSEN RESPONSE.

Pastor Tommy Barnett has a new book out called THE POWER OF A HALF HOUR. I recommend it. In the book he tells a story that greatly impressed me. He got this letter from a lady who visited his church.

"I came to your church last Sunday morning. I couldn't get out of there fast enough after the service was over. The singing was too fast. Your preaching was too fast. On the way out I saw all those wheelchairs in front of the auditorium and went up there. I tried to help one of the ladies push the wheelchair out, but she wouldn't let me. My morning at your church was an awful experience. I will not be returning."

This lady didn't know that the wheel chair assistants are specially trained and because of insurance regulations no one else is allowed to assist them. What she interpreted as cruelty was people doing their job by the rules. Pastor Barnett considered sending her a scathing letter in response. Instead, he thought about how to respond to her letter for two days.

The Apostle James writes, "**My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires**" (James 1:19-20).

Pastor Barnett slowed down and carefully considered the very best way to respond. Then he wrote this letter: "Dear so and so, I'm so sorry that I disappointed you on your visit to our church. I apologize that you were let down by the message and the music. To be honest with you, I don't like my preaching half the time. Sometimes I think to myself that I ought to resign and let a younger, more qualified man come that would do a better job. I'd appreciate it if you would pray for me because I too get discouraged about my preaching.

"As for the music, our choir and instrumentalists are volunteers and I think they do a wonderful job of helping us to worship God. But I know the music doesn't please everybody. It is hard to find just the right mix that will satisfy young people, parents, and seniors. We do our best, but obviously we do not satisfy everyone's expectations.

"Finding a great church can be a difficult task sometimes. I am grateful that you gave us a try. I hope that you will forgive me and our church for our failings. I hate to disappoint people who are seeking

God; it absolutely breaks my heart. I love you and wish you the best in your search for a great home church.”

Then Pastor Barnett went to his church bookstore and bought a really expensive bible, had her name embossed on it, and enclosed a handwritten card that said, “Please accept this as a token of my love and regret.” He writes, “We sent it off to her, and I expected that to be the end of the story.”

The following week, after the service, a well-groomed, sophisticated-looking lady approached him with tears. “I’m the woman who wrote you that letter.” She was clutching the gift Bible and said, “And this is the dearest thing to me.” Then she said, “Your preaching was wonderful. This service was wonderful. My husband beat me before I came to church tonight. He forbids me to attend church, he’s mean to me, and I’m a bitter woman.”

Pastor Barnett gave her a big hug, told her he loved her, and soon she got saved and became a church member. Her husband also came and accepted Christ. Pastor Barnett writes, “The lesson for me was the importance of responding in love, not anger, and waiting for the Lord to direct my response. What a difference it made in three lives.” (His, hers, and her husband’s lives.) (Pages 53-56)

\*\*\*\* I often wonder, what will be the greatest thing I ever do for God? What will God consider the greatest thing Pastor Barnett has ever done for God’s glory? We’ll only find out at the Judgment Seat of Christ, but I would think that this careful and loving response would be among what God would consider the *greatest* of Pastor Barnett’s many achievements.

## 2. SPIRITUAL GREATNESS AND PROMOTION COME TO THOSE WHO RESPOND CORRECTLY.

Daniel is one of the greatest persons in the Bible, a man whom the angels spoke of as “**Oh man, greatly beloved**” ([Daniel 10:19 KJV](#)). A quick review of his life shows that while his ability to plan and get things done made him a worthy administrator of whole kingdoms, his responses were usually the key to his promotions.

\*\*\*\* When as a young man he was tempted with an abundance of royal food and alcoholic drinks he responded by asking to be put on a diet of vegetables and water. Because of honoring God in this way God gave him the special spiritual gift of interpreting dreams.

\*\*\*\* When the King of Babylon was going to kill all the wise men of Babylon, Daniel responded to the soldier who arrested him with wisdom and tact. “Why is the king’s order so urgent?” Then he was taken to the king and appealed for time so they could pray and get an interpretation to the King’s dream. That night, God gave Daniel the same dream, and the interpretation. This resulted in his promotion.

\*\*\*\* When the young king of Babylon tried to give Daniel praise and worship, he declined to receive adulation. [Dan. 5:17](#) Then Daniel answered the king, “**You may keep your gifts for yourself and give your rewards to someone else. Nevertheless, I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means.**” His response showed that he habitually responded to the praise of men in a humble way that gave the glory to God. As a result, when the King and his officials were killed that night, Daniel was spared and became an administrator for the new Persian King.

\*\*\*\* When the Persian King was tricked into making a law that no one could pray to any god other than the King for 30 days, Daniel reacted in fearlessness. He kept right on praying, without any fear. His reaction got him thrown into the den of lions, but God’s angel delivered him. The result was, once again, a promotion in the new Persian Empire.

The Apostle Paul wrote, “**Stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God** ([Phil. 1:27-28](#)).

God always teaches us not to fear external problems, but only internal problems. The Lord coaches us not to respond in fear, but in calm faith and fearlessness. That’s why we want to be full of God’s word. It will help us respond correctly to the various things that unexpectedly happen to us.

\*\*\*\* Before Tommy Barnett was born, his father was an evangelist who traveled with his young wife. He was outgoing, she was shy. To help out, she sang in his meetings. One night, she lay down to

go to sleep and because the windows were open on a hot Texas night, she overheard visiting pastors talking. They were saying how the young evangelist would go far and have a successful national ministry. But one added, “But he does have one serious handicap. That wife of his...she’s so shy and backward. Mark my words; she’ll be a stumbling block to him. She could hold him back from being successful.”

Tears of sadness rolled down her checks. After she silently shut the window, she returned to bed and prayed, “God, I am not going to be a stumbling block. I am going to make something of myself. With Your help, I will be a blessing to him.” She knew there was some truth to the criticism, and she responded correctly. She became a great counselor. On numerous occasions people flew in from different parts of the world to seek her counsel. She developed expertise in handwriting analysis, which brought her international recognition and opportunities. She also directed all the pageants that were held in her husband’s church, pageants that were a big part of his outreach ministry. These in turn affected her young son, Tommy Barnett, who has used pageants and drama to win tens of thousands to Christ.

The critical words could have been a stumbling block to her, throwing her into depression and failure. But by a right response, those words turned into a stepping stone, motivation to make the most of herself and be a blessing to her husband’s ministry. Spiritual greatness results from right responses.

### 3. A LIFE CAN BE RUINED BY ONE WRONG RESPONSE.

Responding with a hard heart will get you in big trouble. I once prayed, “God, if you don’t do something about that woman, she is going to ruin my life and my ministry.” (The woman was a lady prophetess who was causing me a lot of trouble.) God spoke to me firmly, “The only thing that can ruin your life and ministry is your own hard heart!”

The lady causing me trouble *was* a huge stumbling block. Responding in a hardhearted way would have caused me to stumble and fall. By responding correctly ANY stumbling block can be turned into a stepping-stone. We can’t blame our stumbling on the stumbling blocks! 1John 2:10 **Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.** It is what is inside of us that makes us stumble!

\*\*\*\* Pastor Tommy Barnett tells the story of how a wrong response almost cost him his life. Once he was driving a rental car to the LA airport and had to drive through the crime-ridden neighborhood of Watts. Suddenly, a car sped in front of him, cut him off, and forced him to stop. The driver jumped out and came toward him with a knife. He yelled, “Get out!”

Pastor Barnett backed up and drove off. The guy got in his car and followed him. They arrived at a light side by side, with their windows down. The man wasn’t looking at Barnett, but he had an angry expression on his face. Tommy could have looked away and prayed for the man, but instead yelled at him, “You’re really a big man with that knife, aren’t you? How big are you without it?”

Pastor Barnett writes, “Without saying anything, the guy pulled out a large handgun, pointed it at me, and pulled the trigger. The bullet missed me by about two inches and ended up shattering the back window of my car. This would have been a good time to turn the other cheek, but now I was really mad, so I followed him for several blocks. He stopped at a house and ran indoors. Soon after, he came out and took off again. I finally gave up my chase and called the police. I could have lost my life and surrendered my opportunity to see God do so many wonderful things in my life, including bringing to life our youngest son, Matthew, who had not been born yet.” (Page 14-15).

God knows this and wants us to be aware of the necessity of responding correctly. That’s why so much of the Bible is devoted to telling us how to respond in different situations. God wants us to memorize these responses, and to practice them until they become habitual. He doesn’t want us to ruin our lives by responding in anger, selfishness or any form of hardheartedness.

### 4. EXAMPLES OF CONDITIONING YOURSELF TO RESPOND CORRECTLY.

Winning sports teams are always in better physical condition than those who lose. They don't get tired as quickly, because they are used to grueling practices that have increased their stamina. With superior conditioning, they have an advantage in any sports contest.

God wants us to have the advantage in any battle with the forces of evil, and have the advantage in all of life. That's why He wants us to condition ourselves by memorizing right responses and then practicing them.

A coach tells his basketball players, "If you miss a shot, go for the rebound." The coach knows that teams that get second and third shots will always win. The response to go for the rebound needs to become reflexive. But responding like a champion all starts with receiving a championship thought.

\*\*\*\* My Dad taught me, "If you get bucked off, get right back on." That would be the right response in training a horse and not letting the horse control the rider. He also taught me, "Don't work like a boy. Work like a man. Look around and see what needs to be done and do it before you are told." He never had to tell me that twice. I've practiced that ever since. Responding to needs and meeting needs is key to success in career, in relationships, and life in general.

You've heard it said, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." We need a right response to failure. If we fail, it doesn't mean we are a failure. There is something to be learned. Whole books have been written on responding correctly to our own failures, such as John Maxwell's classic book, FAILING FORWARD. Always respond to your own failures as learning experiences.

\*\*\*\* JESUS WANTS YOU TO RESPOND CORRECTLY TO PERSECUTION. He said, **"Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets (Luke 6:22-23).** You will survive persecution and even thrive under it if you respond correctly. So NOW is the time to memorize responses like this and condition yourself to respond in joy, rather than fear, in the day when you encounter real persecution. Your *response* to what happens to you will trump what happens to you

## 5. RIGHT RESPONSES CAN BECOME HABITUAL AND REFLEXIVE.

Paul admonished his disciple Timothy, **"Train yourself to be godly," (1 Timothy 4:7).** A large part of training ourselves to be godly involves memorizing correct responses and then practicing them as we have opportunities.

\*\*\*\* For instance, what's the right response to good service at a restaurant? A generous tip! Giving generous tips is a very good habit. It is a right response that becomes something we don't even have to think about. It becomes automatic.

\*\*\*\* When someone does anything nice for you, a right response is to say, "Thank you." I read once in a book called 'YOU, INC.' that to thank someone in an unforgettable way would set you apart from the crowd and promote great relationships plus success in business. It's the finest way to market yourself. After a Revival/Seminar I'm in the habit of expressing my gratitude in a thank you card, and a memorable one, at that. I have to go to BED, BATH AND BEYOND to find these particular cards that say on the outside, YOU ARE SO NICE and on the inside, AND I AM SO GRATEFUL. I'd write every donor a thank you card if I could. I made a \$50 donation the benchmark for writing individually, and try to express my gratitude to every donor of any amount in my newsletter.

When someone says, "God bless you," I always say, "Thank you. I receive that."

Responding with thanksgiving is good for just about any situation. Paul wrote, **"Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20).**

If it's a problem, thank God for it being raw material for a miracle. Thank God for His grace that mixed with the problem, will turn it into a miracle.

If it's a trial, thank God for it. In this case, God will mix grace into you and make you an overcomer, greater than the trial. 1Th. 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

If it's a person who blesses you, give thanks. **"I thank my God every time I remember you"** (Phil. 1:3)

When you read good books by some Christians you don't know personally, thank God for their lives. Thank God for raising them up and making them a unique blessing to the Body of Christ. **Rom. 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world.**

What if someone is preaching Christ from wrong motives? **Phil. 1:15-18 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.**

Are you weak and inadequate for the task at hand? Then thank God that His power is made perfect in weakness! Thank God that you can depend upon Him and ask Him to take you over. **2Cor. 12:9-10 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

\*\*\*\* HOW DO WE RESPOND TO THE GREATNESS IN OTHERS? I love that greeting from Tibet, "Tashi deley" which means, "I honor the greatness in you." We don't want to have a wrong response to the greatness in others, allowing ourselves to feel small because they are great. We should rejoice in the wonderful living stones we are being built together with. **1Pet. 2:5 You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.**

I have developed a new habitual response to the greatness I see in other dear brothers and sisters. I say to them, "I'm so glad we are being build together as living stones." In my heart and mind I'm glad to be included among the greats, among the dear ones.

Jesus gives us a recommended response when we see the greatness in others. Memorize it, practice it, and you will reflexively honor others and be blessed. **Matt. 10:41 Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward.**

The Apostle Paul believed that everyone was better than him in some area. He also recommended a right response to the greatness in others. **Phil. 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.**

\*\*\*\* A right response to others is to always be ready to give to them, but honor them in that you are also ready to receive from them as people who have something they can add to your life. **Rom. 1:11-12 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.**

I've been thinking that I should take the time to write a letter or card to the author of every book I read and enjoy. It would take some effort to get an address for them personally, but I bet they don't get many such letters. What a nice response that would be to the greatness in others. I've been thinking of sending these people one of my books with a letter of thanks for their book, and their life example. That sounds like a GOD IDEA to me. I must do that. I believe it will promote friendships with wonderful people.

\*\*\*\* I sure enjoy it when I get a letter from someone who has benefited from one of my books or sermons. Recently a dear sister told me that she has a whole drawer of my sermons and notes, dating back from the late 1990's. She says she often uses them in counseling sessions and there are so many on so many topics that they are a good resource for her counseling ministry. What an encouragement!

**6. WE SHOULD PREPARE FOR TO RESPOND CORRECTLY. IT'S IMPORTANT!**

I've been in full time ministry for over 40 years and until this last week, I've never been aware of just how many verses in the Bible are telling us how to RESPOND in a godly way to various things. My eyes have been opened. Now every time I see another admonition of how to respond I say, "There's another one!" We need to become aware of the need to respond correctly, and then prepare ourselves to do so by memorizing God's wise advice! Here's a little list to get you thinking, and to help you start observing those verses in the Bible that are training you to respond in godly ways.

### **RIGHT RESPONSES TO:**

**INSULTS: 1Cor. 4:12-13 When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly.**

Prov. 12:16 **A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.**

1Pet. 4:14 **If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.**

So how will you respond the next time you are insulted? Will you overlook it? Will you consider yourself blessed because the Spirit of glory rests on you? Will you answer back kindly and with blessing instead of cursing? Condition yourself. Train yourself to be godly. A right response to an insult will make it a stepping-stone into Christ-like character and victory.

**TO FEARFUL REPORTS: Matthew 24:6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Luke 21:28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Luke 21:36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man."**

I am determined to only fear internal problems and NOT to fear "devil on the outside" problems, no matter how large. God is in control of them all. He has grace big enough to mix with any problem, no matter how huge and earth shaking, grace that will turn it into a miracle for me. I am determined to respond in joy to what makes others faint in fear. I am determined to watch and pray, trusting God to deliver me.

**TO DISCOURAGEMENT: Psalms. 42:5 Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.**

Is. 40:31 **Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.**

I know that from time to time, no matter how well I discipline myself spiritually to avoid discouragement, yet it will happen. Down times will come and the temptation to despair, to give up, to wish life would just end, will once again try to envelop me in a fog of death. But I will respond to discouragement by finding strength in God, by renewing my strength.

\*\*\*\* Think of David coming back to his town of Ziklag to find it burned, his possessions stolen, his family kidnapped by terrorists and thieves. His first response was to weep and wail. Finally he got the correct response and encouraged himself in the Lord. He found hope again as he heard God speak, "Pursue them. You will overtake them and succeed in the rescue." The problem was so big, yet it turned into a huge miracle as God mixed grace into David and into the situation, making an overcomer and a miracle at the same time! (See 1 Samuel 30) Are you conditioned to resist discouragement? Will you doubt the thoughts of despair, take them captive and find God's thoughts? Determine NOW to respond in a way that will pull you up and out of discouragement. Never trust a mad, bad or sad thought!

**TO TEMPTATION: 2Tim. 2:22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

Prov. 5:1 **My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-**

edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not. Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man's house.

**Matt. 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.**

So what is my response to a culture awash in a tsunami of sexual perversion? I will run from it, I will avoid it when possible, I will stay far away from the channels, magazine counters, web sites and books that promote immorality, and I will pray that God will keep me from overpowering situations of temptation. I will admit my weaknesses in advance and pray that God does not give me over to them.

**TO NEEDS GREATER THAN OUR RESOURCES:** Recently I held a meeting at First Assembly of God in Las Cruces, New Mexico. A staff pastor named George gave me a ride to and from the airport. He had only accepted Christ five years ago, yet God had so directed him that he was on staff at this very large and significant church. On the way back to the El Paso airport he told me that one day God spoke to him and said, "Stop praying!" He asked God, "Why?" God said, "Your prayers are making me sick." Now it would be good if I had George's exact words on this, but what God was saying to him was that his prayers were only within a small scope of what he thought God could do and the scope was so small it was offensive to God.

Then God told him that He wanted prayers that were big—that stretched the limits of his belief and faith. He wanted George to pray to the border of faith and then press a little bit beyond, and ask God to do things that would boggle the mind.

This made me wonder if I was praying small prayers or prayers within a common boundary of what I was used to seeing God do. What God said to Brother George is advice on how He wants us to respond to great needs and challenges. He wants us to respond with great big prayers that come to God in humility and transparency, admitting that we are crossing an old boundary of what was common place to believe for, and coming to God not sure of ourselves, but only sure that He wants to do bigger things. God wants our hearts to take us into prayers that our minds fear to pray!

I see myself as a little kid putting things in the grocery cart that I can't pay for, and believing my Father will empty the prayer cart and pay with the debit card of Jesus Christ. But God wants me to push the boundary—to put bigger things in the cart, things my rational mind is afraid to ask.

**Psa. 50:14-15 Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me."**

**Jer. 33:3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'**

### **TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.**

Jesus told us to respond to the needs of others like the Good Samaritan did when he saw a wounded man left to die in the ditch. He got involved in the messy struggle to save the man's life and restore him. Jesus said, "**Go and do likewise**" (Luke 10:37).

**Gal. 6:10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**

I want to love Jesus. I want to see Jesus. I want to see Him high and lifted up, shining in the light of His glory. But I also want to be able to recognize him when he is hurting, hungry, without clothes—that is, I want to see Jesus in people! What I do for the least of His family will be considered as if I did it just for Him.

### **TO THE WORSENING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF OUR NATION AND WORLD.**

I've become aware that God wants me to give with a new boldness, as if the size of the pie is without limit. When Jesus was faced with a crowd of 5,000 hungry men plus their women and children he didn't faint at the need. Instead, he found one small lunch, and used it to feed them all. They ended up with 12 baskets full of left over bread and fish.

Two kingdoms operate superimposed over one another—THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD and THE KINGDOM OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. The disciples were looking at the situation from the viewpoint of an earthly kingdom where there isn't enough to go around, where the difficulties of meeting the needs are impossible. Jesus looked at it from the viewpoint of His kingdom, where there is always enough, and where people don't run out if they give in generosity. The little boy who gave all he had didn't go without lunch!

Jesus appeared to Heidi Baker and told her repeatedly, "I died that there would always be enough." There is always more than enough in God's kingdom. He wants us to give like we are in that Kingdom, and not like we are in an earthly kingdom. He doesn't want us to see the economy as a pie where the rich have most of the slices and where the poor must covet what the rich have. He wants us to know that He can make thousands of pies from the tiniest slice that is left.

**Is. 1:16-17 Stop doing wrong. Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.**

**Luke 6:38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."**

I illustrated this in a sermon recently. I had four five gallon buckets, labeled YOU, OTHERS, GOD, and LOST ENCOURAGEMENT. I had a teaspoon, a tablespoon, and three silver dippers, one small, one medium and one large. I explained that God fills us only so full. So I poured water from the bucket labeled GOD into the bucket labeled YOU. I only filled it about 1/8<sup>th</sup> full. Then I explained that God gives us a way to get progressively more filled. We have to give out of our bucket. So I took a teaspoon out of the YOU bucket and put it in the OTHERS bucket. Then I took TWO teaspoons out of the GOD bucket and put them back in the YOU bucket.

I explained that when you give love, encouragement, service, money, and positive encouragement God will add it back to you and then add one more measure so that you are a little bit more full. If you'd like to get full quicker, then use a dipper instead of a spoon when you give and you'll get one dipper back to replace what you gave and another dipper to add to it. God will use the measure you use.

I explained that if you discourage others, and take from their bucket and put it in the LOST ENCOURAGEMENT bucket, God will take double that amount out of your bucket. Finally, I showed that if you want to speed up the filling process, forget the dippers and just POUR OUT EVERYTHING IN YOUR BUCKET. Then God will use a bucket to pour back into you—filling you up to where you were, and going beyond so that now instead of 1/8<sup>th</sup> full you would be 1/4 full. If you pour that all out again and God measures it back, you'll be 1/2 half full. Eph. 5:18 says in the Greek "**Be being filled with the Spirit.**" This happens as we give encouragement and love. God adds to our fullness when we do that. We do not run out of encouragement when we give it, rather, we get more than we had.

## 7. ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO COACH YOU IN RIGHT RESPONSES.

Be pro-active, of course. Plan your day, your week, your year, and make your five-year plan. Know where you want to go, what you want to do, and set out to achieve it. But half of your life will be in RESPONSES to what happens that you don't expect. A right response will accelerate your growth, achievement and joy.

Desire to respond correctly, train yourself to be godly, and condition yourself through practicing right responses. Stay open to the moment-by-moment coaching of the Holy Spirit. Be enthused at what great things can happen as you respond in a Jesus-style way.

I LOVE YOU. GOD BLESS YOU.

