

## Death Of A Scorekeeper

by Bruce Johnson

I was preparing to leave on business in November, 1980, when I first realized that union-life teachings had begun to radically affect the way I live.

My wife and I had arranged for a young couple to come in to care for our five children while we were away. The sitters have an infant of their own, and we agreed to set up our old crib for their baby before we left. I was rushing around to set it up before the airport limousine arrived, and I had allowed no time for mistakes or delays in the setup routine. I should have, because I discovered that I was all thumbs. Betsy was scurrying around making her own preparations as I slowly stumbled through one step after another in the assembly of the crib.

Finally, in exasperation, I began to say to her, or the walls, or whoever would listen, "This is going to be ..." But I interrupted myself. It was a gentle interruption, and I doubt if Betsy even noticed the change in the rhythm of my speech. I had planned to finish the sentence by saying "... a terrible day." But I surprised myself. What I did say was "... one of the most interesting challenges of the day." And I didn't even have to work hard to think up those words or to get them out of my mouth. They just came out very naturally.

That moment is firmly etched in my memory, because I was so surprised by the difference between what I *thought* I was *going* to say and what I *did* say. I had never had an experience quite like that in my life. I am one of those people who always wants to be in control of things—to know what is coming next.

The moment is fixed in my memory for another reason, too. This little experience—ordinary though it may have been—was the first outward indication that my new awareness of myself as a continuous expression of Christ was making a difference in my life. My thought processes had been changing for months and now were beginning to produce changes in the way I spoke and acted. "And about time!" I might have said.

During the past year I had been closely studying *Union Life* magazine and related literature. It was time for all of that study to bear some fruit. I had received the magazine for years and had always at least glanced through it. I looked for that glimmer of truth which would make the difference in my Christian life and take me off the spiritual roller coaster which I had been on for over ten years. I had always needed some new "how to be a more effective Christian" gimmick to pump me up and get me back to doing what I "should" do for God.

The December, 1980, issue of the magazine somehow opened my eyes, though I still can't say exactly what caught and held my attention. The difference was not in the magazine—it was in me. Now I saw my stumbling block—me! To paraphrase a line from the Pogo comic strip, "I had met the enemy, and he was me."

My attitude had always been that *I* was going to live the Christian life. *I* was going to develop a better prayer life. *I* would share my faith more often and more effectively. *My* giving would set new records. *I* would be a spiritual beacon for my family. Somehow, no matter how difficult the struggle, I was determined to improve my "spiritual life."

I know now what foolishness all of that was—how ridiculous to *strive* for life instead of just *being* the Life who has been within me since the moment of my regeneration almost twelve years ago. But for me, that knowledge did not come without years of setting up goals and vainly striving after them. Many goals were missed—leading, initially, to more frustration and then to greater determination to do better. Other goals were reached—leading only to

the realization that they were not the ultimate calling in life, and that it was necessary to establish still higher goals.

So, by the time I picked up that issue of *Union Life* I had tried every form of Christian self-help imaginable—all without success. I was a living example of that oft-heard pastoral prayer, “Oh, God, we are a needy people.” My biggest need was a paradox: I *needed*, at that time in my life, to know that I *have no needs*, because Christ is my sufficiency. As that *one* is met, the absence of all other needs becomes increasingly obvious.

But it didn’t all become clear overnight. As 1981 progressed, I did what I could to find out more about myself as an expression of the living Christ. I acquired and studied a copy of *Infinite Supply, Volume 1*. I attended teaching and fellowship meetings in Glen Ellyn. And, I “hired” my own theologian.

This last step was necessary because I just wasn’t sure of the Scriptural soundness of these teachings. I didn’t want to commit myself to a view of life which could not be reconciled with the Scriptures. My own background was deficient for making this determination, so I asked a trusted friend and business associate—formally trained in theology, possessed of a keen mind and very articulate—to read some of the literature and accompany me to the meetings.

We are not yet able to pronounce final judgment on all aspects of union-life teachings—we don’t even know all aspects of those teachings—but I now know some of the practical, daily implications of what I only suspected a year ago. I know that I have been crucified with Christ; that I no longer live, but Christ lives in me; that the life I live—as an expression of Christ in this body—I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loves me and gave Himself for me.

Let me assure you that my discovery of this truth—that I am an expression of Christ—is more than just another Christian self-help program. If that’s all it were, by now I would have lost the glow which comes with discovery; I would be burned out, looking for another gimmick to get me fired up again. But I am not, and the miracle of re-discovery frequently brightens up my life. Not every day, to be sure, but I don’t *need* a miracle like that every day.

Looking at life now from the perspective of my union with Christ, I see that as long as I was still seeking a *closer* relationship with God through some self-help program, I needed a regular injection of spiritual adrenalin. As long as I was seeking and thinking in terms of a closer relationship, I was bound to be frustrated. Union is the very heart of the matter, and it is an established, though often unrecognized, fact in the life of each believer. How can two who are in union become *closer*? God is to be praised for allowing the seekers after Him to travel the wasteland of separation, because once they discover their union with Him, they will live it out and treasure it all the more.

This discovery is not immediately followed by full maturity. I also learned that in 1981. In the process of pressing on to maturity, I have continued to stumble from time to time. I often have worried about cash flow in my business; my business partner would have been entitled to wonder, at those times, about my faith. I have lost patience with my children more than once; they may have wondered what this “union life” I often talk about really means. Surely my wife must doubt at times that Christ Himself would have acted as I do.

Before I discovered my identity in Christ, such failures were devastating. They caused me to question or reject the particular self-help program I was on, and to wander off in search of another. I had always needed to *act* in accordance with what I believed in order to be sure of what I believed. Now that I know that in Him I live and move and have my being, my confidence is not shaken by what I do.

Being freed from condemnation means I no longer must keep score on myself. “Scorekeeping” led me to a pathological desire to always be on time—among other things. Setting and meeting deadlines gave me value as a person, value which I didn’t always find otherwise. Yet, I missed more deadlines in 1981 than I had missed in the five previous years combined. It seemed impossible to maintain my “Deadline-Meeter Extraordinaire” image last year. If I had not gone through that difficulty, I might have settled for this image as a significant part of my true identity. How much more gratifying to understand that I am the expression of Christ in His Bruce Johnson form—not merely a deadline-meeter!

I still have more demands on my time than I have time to spare. I don’t expect that to change, but then, I don’t *need* to have it change, either. I still make lists to remind me of what I need to do; still proceed as systematically as I can through each list; and still consider effective time-management to be important. But I know now that God will manage each day’s overload, and that knowledge has freed me from slavery to the clock. After all, I live in my little world as an expression of the Eternal One to whom one day is as a thousand years. I should worry about time?

Being freed from condemnation means I no longer have to keep score on others either. For example, I remember coming home, from the office one day when one of our daughters was home from school because of illness. She loves to read, whether sick or healthy, and she believes in always having lights burning wherever she might conceivably want to read.

When I saw Gail’s trail of lights burning everywhere, I prepared to unload to my wife about our daughter’s wasteful habits. Again, as in the previous November, I knew what I *intended* to say: “It sure is great having kids who have no appreciation of what it costs to keep the family running!” But, I *did* say, “It sure is great having kids for whom you can light up the house when they want it lit up!”

Are Gail’s habits wasteful? Sure. Will I still train her to be more prudent? Of course. But her burning extra lights is no longer an attack on me, because *I* am not my *wallet*. Realizing that, of course, will probably make me more effective in teaching her. That is only the frosting on the cake, though. Realizing that I am one of the living expressions of Christ in her life frees me to love her without reproach, even as I now can accept myself.

Have I “arrived”? Is continuous victory assured? I don’t know, but through my experiences I have confidence in the validity of my conclusion: He *is* my sufficiency. This is a present-tense word, which I can always speak. The word I cannot always speak is that which would tell *how* He will be my sufficiency in the future. I do know that, when the future becomes the present, then I will boldly say, “He *is* my sufficiency.”