

PRODUCTS AND BY-PRODUCTS

In a previous chapter I talked a little about what I called products and by-products. By-products are not found by seeking them. They come from developing other virtues, habits, and characteristics. I will give you some of these by-products in this chapter and I hope that you will understand what I mean. Bear in mind that I am not attempting to give an exhaustive list, but rather draw your attention to a new way of looking at some of your desires and how best to attain them.

CONTENTMENT Many people search in vain for contentment because they don't understand that it is not found by seeking for it. The truth is that a dog could sooner catch its tail than a man or woman find contentment by seeking it. Contentment is what I am calling a by-product. It is found when we develop other characteristics. In this case, thankfulness. When people seek contentment, they usually strive for the things that they think will make them contented. Usually this involves more money and the things that it will buy. Some think that contentment will come when they reach the top of their profession. Some think that power and influence will make them content, so they work hard for that. If they would only stop and think for a minute, they would realize that it is impossible to be content while they are struggling for these things because struggling is the antithesis of contentment. The secret is to be thankful for what you have, and out of that thankfulness will grow contentment. As long as you are seeking for something to give you contentment, you will never find it because the faster you run after the thing that you think will make you contented, the faster contentment will move away. So be thankful for what you have. Don't dwell on what you do not have and you will be surprised at how soon you will become more contented. If you are just naturally negative and can't sustain a thankful heart, try this. Get a small note book just for this project. The first day, list one thing that you have that you are thankful for. The next day read what you wrote the day before and thank God for that and then add another. Keep adding and thanking God for what you have in this way until it becomes habit. This same technique works well for improving relationships with other family members. When we are at odds with our spouse or children we begin to see only the negatives. If we will

start to keep a list of things about that person for which we can truly thank God, we will begin to see that person in a different light and our relationship will begin to change and so will the other person.

MINISTRY I know a lot of people that are continually looking for "a ministry". They are constantly asking God to lead them. They usually have in mind, some great thing where they are greatly appreciated; and where there is a high profile. Year in and year out they search for this great thing that God is going to do through them and then the world will recognize what a spiritual giant they are. They have times of prayer and maybe, even fasting, but still no voice from Heaven, no sign in the sky, not even a phone call. Don't other people realize that they have a lot to say? They could be great if they were asked to speak to the youth at camp. The youth would be held spellbound by the wisdom that would flow from their lips. But ministry is for those who are prepared; not for those who simply seek it. You can run after "ministry" all of your life and never find it because it is not found by seeking it. Ministry is a by-product. It comes to those who work to prepare themselves. Sometimes it arises out of something that has happened to you. You loose a loved one and God deals with you in a way that you gain great insights through that experience. That gives you an opportunity to talk to others who are going through a similar circumstance. If you really want a "ministry", stop looking for one and start to look to Jesus more and more. Study the Word of God. If you see something that needs doing, do it. It doesn't have to be some "big and important" thing. Does the grass need mowing at the church? Can you do it? Do it with the heart of a servant. That is ministry. As you continue to read and study your Bible, you will begin to come across passages that will begin to speak to you like Matthew 23:11+12; "***But the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.***" Maybe you will read Matthew 20:25-28 which says; "***But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, `You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.***" You must come to Jesus and let Him make you what He wants you to be, and then you will be ready to do what

He wants you to do. Then ministry will come to you as a by-product of what you have become. God prepares you to minister and then brings people along for you to minister to.

FRIENDSHIPS Some people are so desperate to have friends that they do things that actually drive potential friends away. They become "clingy", or overbearing. Friends are not found by pursuit of them, but by being one. ***"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."*** (Proverbs 18:24 K.J.V.) To find friends, become the kind of friend that you would like to have.

RESPECT Many people confuse respect and authority. They think that if they have a position of authority that people will respect them. That isn't true! No one can create respect for another person. No one can demand respect. It must be earned, and it is not earned by trying to earn it but by being consistently honorable in your dealings with other people. If you make mistakes, and you will, don't try to deny them or to try to escape the consequences of them. No one can take respect from you in the long run. Only you can do that. Consistency will win in the end.

FAITH A lot is said about faith but few seem to understand how to obtain it. For that matter, not many people even know exactly what it is. Faith, by itself is not of much use. It must have an object. You may have faith that you can fly, but you shouldn't be very far off the ground when you tried to exercise that faith. There are many in the new age that think that faith is all that you need. They say, "Anything that you can conceive and believe you can receive." So what is faith? The definition found in Hebrews 11:1 reads like this, ***"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."*** The Paul Ziegler definition of faith is, "Believing God in spite of the evidence." When Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was 89, God said that they would have their first and only son. They had been trying to have a child for many years and never could. The evidence said, "If Sarah couldn't have a baby in her twenties, or her thirties, or her forties, she certainly wouldn't have one when she was ninety." But God said she would, and Abraham believed it, and she did. Abraham's faith didn't reside in his prowess as a man, it didn't depend on the evidence because the evidence said that there would be no baby. His faith was in the God that created the universe. The God of Abraham was the almighty one, the all knowing one. The God of Abraham was the prayer answering, miracle working, all powerful,

all knowing, all wise, sovereign God of the universe and there is nothing too hard for Him. Answer to prayer does not depend on the size of your **faith**, it depends on the size of your **God**. You can have a whole lot of faith in a wooden god and you can pray to that wooden god day and night and it will never have the ability to answer your prayers. When the disciples could not cast out a demon from a man's son, the man brought him to Jesus and He cast him out. The disciples then asked why they were unable to cast him out ;Jesus replied, "***Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you.***" (Matthew 17:20) Jesus said that faith the size of a mustard seed could move a mountain. there are some today that brag about their mountain of faith and can't move a mustard seed. You may ask; "How do I get faith?" The Bible says; "***So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.***" (Romans 10:17) The more you hear and read the Bible, the more your faith will grow. Faith then, is a by-product of your study of the word of God. The more you learn of Christ, the more your faith is strengthened. The more time you spend in His presence, the more you will be convinced of His omnipotence and as you learn that, you will find it easier to believe Him for larger things.

There are many things that fall under the heading of by-products. You will save yourself a lot of trouble if you know the difference between products and by-products.

Paul Ziegler