

Let Me Help You

Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write
What You Think*

Lesson 9

THE ARTICLE OF PERSUASION

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AN ARTICLE TO PERSUADE WHEN YOU WANT OTHERS TO BELIEVE WHAT YOU BELIEVE

“Convince a man against his will and he’s of the same opinion still” reads an old couplet from generations past.

There’s no one we turn off faster than the telephone solicitor, the used car salesman or the television commercial—unless we see evidence or recognize authority or develop trust.

Television has it all over the other guys. A man in a white coat, looking for all the world like a dentist, can sell dental stain remover far faster than one in a business suit saying the same words.

A delightful child, singing a commercial, holds every eye. Why do we buy that brand? We go to bed singing that song.

The art of writing anything persuasive is to catch the reader’s interest. Once it’s caught, that interest

must be held. The skill comes in knowing how.

The technique has several parts:

- 1) Catch the reader’s attention.
- 2) Show him he has a need.
- 3) Offer evidence.
- 4) Support your line of reasoning with authority.
- 5) Provide examples.
- 6) Use statistics (if applicable and if necessary).
- 7) Drive for a decision.

Any given persuasive article need not include all seven parts; but all persuasion will include some. They need not necessarily come in this order.

One editorial in a Virginia newspaper (The Lynchburg “News and Daily Advance,”) at one point tried to persuade readers that a California murderer deserved the death penalty.

It caught the reader’s attention this way:

Gary Gilmore was the first to be executed in the United States under the death penalty statutes reinstated by the Supreme Court in 1976. Gilmore's death came at the hands of a firing squad in Utah in early 1977 for the pistol murder of a motel clerk.

Convicted murderer John Eldon Smith was the most recent resident of death row to die. He was killed in the Georgia electric chair last month for the 1974 slayings of two newlyweds. He was the first to die in Georgia's electric chair in 19 years.

In between those executions, nine other men have been killed by the state for crimes that carried the death penalty. One of them was in Virginia; Florida was the only state that executed two. They were all executed for killing at least one other human being.

The editorial writer caught the reader's interest by using the name of a notorious murderer, Gary Gilmore. He put Gilmore's execution in focus by telling when it occurred.

He began his second paragraph with the name of another convicted murderer and told when he was executed.

The third paragraph told of others executed in the same period of time.

The writer then makes three statements. He supports the first one—

We seem to be preoccupied lately

with life and death, but it's a subject that's constantly in the news—

with three instances:

1) Elizabeth Bouvia, the quadriplegic cerebral palsy victim, wants to die; but the state correctly won't let her.

2) A test-tube baby clinic in Sydney, Australia, has rejected requests to try to produce "spare parts" for humans from embryos.

3) The abortion issue continues to be debated.

The writer now simply puts in two statements and identifies his theme:

We are basically a humane society that places tremendous value on human life.

and

But, the rising population in death rows around the country makes it appear that we are too humane at times.

Then the writer asks two questions which state the problem:

What compassion should we have for a convicted killer?

Should we even ask whether he had any compassion for his victim or victims, many of whom were all too often children?

To answer his own questions, he brings up the case of a third murderer recently executed.

Robert Wayne Williams went to his death in the Louisiana electric chair last month only a day before John Eldon Smith. Williams insisted in his brief final statement that he never intended to kill the 67-year-old supermarket guard he shot in the face with a shotgun during a 1979 robbery. Intent may be an important legal point, but it doesn't change the fact that the victim he shot is dead.

The writer then makes two declarative statements:

The threat of the death penalty has been called an important deterrent to serious crime in this country.

And—

As such, it may prevent the wanton act—of murder on some occasions—not all, certainly, but once in a while.

He then begins to drive to his final point, hoping that you have stayed with him through his string of nefarious criminals:

If you have any reservations about sending a convicted killer to the gas chamber, the death device

used in California, listen to Robert Bloom Jr. of Los Angeles. He told a jury last month that recommended his death in the gas chamber that he had no remorse about murdering his father, stepmother and stepsister.

Bloom, 19, who challenged the jurors to kill him “If you got the heart,” vowed to kill again in prison if he didn't get the death penalty. “I don't want to live in your society... I deserve to die; I want to die.”

The writer states his final point:

Bloom is right. He deserves to die. And the state of California shouldn't waste any time in arranging to carry out his request. He will be formally sentenced on Feb. 22.

The writer wrote simply. He caught the reader's attention at once (Point 1).

He offered evidence (Point 3).

He provided examples (Point 5).

He drove for a decision (Point 7).

More simply, he attracted attention, he stated the problem, he told the desired solution—as he (and the paper for which he writes) perceive it.

There is no melodrama here. It is underwritten; he is almost disinterested. But he gets his authority by using examples to build his case and then to answer his two questions.

How can you write like this? The language is easy, really easy. He uses

17 simple sentences, two compound sentences, eight complex sentences and three compound-complex sentences.

“Easy?” you ask.

Let’s look at it. A simple sentence, as we studied earlier, is one in which all of the subject does all of the verb:

Gilmore’s death came at the hands of a firing squad in Utah in early 1977 for the pistol murder of a motel clerk.

The verb is “came.” What came? “Death” came. All the rest of the sentence is a string of prepositional phrases.

Bloom is right.

He deserves to die.

These are simple sentences, but they’re short.

He now uses a compound sentence:

Elizabeth Bouvia, the quadriplegic cerebral palsy victim, wants to die; but the state correctly won’t let her.

“Bouvia wants” . . . “but the state won’t let”—you have a subject/verb on each side of the joint (the semicolon/but). You have connected two simple sentences together for greater fluency. But you also have internal commas that affect the punctuation at the joint.

Following **Elizabeth Bouvia**, you

have an appositive which is a noun that identifies who Eliza is. She’s a victim, but she’s a certain kind of victim. So that noun is preceded by adjectives that tell *what kind of* victim she is. (Adjectives tell *which, what kind of, how many, whose.*)

But the phrase, **the quadriplegic cerebral palsy victim**, is set off by commas that muddy the water and disguise where the joint is. To remedy this, we find the actual joint and turn that comma (after **die**) into a semicolon. Then we can keep the two simple sentences distinct.

The rule here is that when one of the simple sentences on either side of the joint has a comma in it, the comma at the joint becomes a semicolon.

He also uses complex sentences. This is a simple sentence that contains an adjective or adverbial or noun clause. A clause is a group of words containing a subject and verb that cannot stand alone as a sentence.

We are basically a humane society that places tremendous value on human life.

The main clause has “**we are**” for its subject/verb. The clause, **that places tremendous value on human life**, has “that” for its subject and “places” for its verb.

The clause cannot stand alone as a sentence. It is not a declarative fact that is a complete independent statement. This clause is an adjective

clause. It modifies the word “society” which it follows. Adjective clauses always do this. They always follow the word they modify.

Adverbial clauses are mobile and can be put either at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the sentence:

1) *If you have any reservations about sending a convicted killer to the gas chamber, listen to Robert Bloom Jr. of Los Angeles.*

2) *Listen, if you have any reservations about sending a convicted killer to the gas chamber, to Robert Bloom Jr. of Los Angeles.*

3) *Listen to Robert Bloom Jr. of Los Angeles if you have any reservations about sending a convicted killer to the gas chamber.*

You might note that an introductory adverbial clause is followed by a comma in sentence (1).

An internal adverbial clause is separated fore and aft by commas (2).

An ending adverbial clause does not need a comma to separate it from the main clause (3).

He uses compound-complex sentences. He will have two simple sentences and he will connect them with a comma + conjunction or with a semicolon, but one or both of the simple sentences may be complex.

One of them was in Virginia;

Florida was the only state that executed two.

We seem to be preoccupied lately with life and death, but it’s a subject that’s constantly in the news.

Both these samples have adjective clauses in the second sentence. Notice that the first sentence’s joint is a semicolon. We use a semicolon when there is no conjunction. The second sentence has a comma + conjunction at its joint.

Why, you ask, do you hammer on grammar in a book on ways to express opinions?

Once more, writers must be craftsmen. They should know their language. They should know how it’s put together. They should be able to analyze their own style and see why it is strong or weak. If they don’t know grammar, they should buy a text and study it out.

You can NOT write well if you don’t know your language. You have a grammar teacher writing here, you must recognize.

Now great thinkers and creative authors have written WELL because they have good secretaries or editors.

But you just have you. Until you are able to afford a secretary or have won the attention of a good editor who gladly edits your work so he can sell what you’ve written, you’ll have to write correctly and knowledgeably all by yourself.

Now, how can you write strong and

lean articles? Assuming you have the strong opinion to express, you need to be organized. You need either a file of articles you have clipped on a given topic or an almanac that will provide the information you need.

One writer I knew could not afford a two-drawer metal filing case. She used a spare dish drainer and a couple of dozen file folders. She had a category for each slot and let each folder be one facet of it. She put her research clippings and articles in there. Each subject she was researching had its own slot and several folders.

Libraries have a **World Almanac** or an **Information, Please** almanac at their reference desk.

Some writers determine they will become expert along certain lines and then they clip and file every article they can find. Soon they have enough strong, authoritarian references to make them sound like an expert—or like a writer who has experts for friends.

Now, the column above was persuasive because the writer wanted his readers to alter their attitude on capital punishment. He was providing proof that convicted killers are now dying in our nation's prisons. He used that information and the testimony of Robert Bloom Jr. of Los Angeles to show that they deserve to die.

They were all executed for killing at least one other human being.

That some people might not be convinced is not the writer's worry. He

believes he has enough proof to get the reader to reverse his opinion.

Persuasion wants the reader to believe something now he did not once believe. It wants him to learn a lesson. It wants his mind and heart to now hold a doctrine, a conviction, a position he once did not hold at all.

What has made the difference?

A line of argument?

A string of examples?

Force?

Reason?

Emotion?

Clarity of thought?

Logic?

Facts?

Probably any and all of the above. Actually, persuasion occurs when a reader finds that truths he had not considered before lead him to a different conclusion from the one he has previously held.

Or he realizes he now has a need for something he formerly did not know he needed. When what he reads or hears supplies that need, he will embrace it if his need is intense enough.

He may hear that good, deep breaths systematically taken will cure chronic bronchial attacks. If he doesn't have bronchitis, he'll say, "So what?" If he is crippled with bronchitis, he has a felt need.

Given examples and authoritative advice with statistics, he may well change his whole way of life to get the cure he wants.

Is he in trouble?

Discouraged?
Persecuted?
Confused?
Angry?
Fearful?
Outraged?
Chagrined?
Convicted?
Distressed?

Meet his need and you will have won a follower and a friend.

But how?

How do words meet needs?

Try these five steps as you put together an article of persuasion:

1) Commonality. Begin with what you and the reader have in common. Agree about the subject matter. Identify with what the reader already knows through what he has already learned or perceived or reasoned. State it factually, matter-of-factly.

2) Contradiction. Then present new information that contradicts those commonly held beliefs. This will lead to tension and confusion on the reader's part. As your logic is reasonable, your vocabulary full of nouns and strong verbs, your facts straight, your force and emotion present and working, you will win a hearing.

3) Congruity. But winning a hearing is not enough. You must apply pressure to reduce the tension and to end the confusion. Give the reader a reason to believe, a motive to support the new information you are giving as well as to bring him on into the new

conviction.

Will he derive personal good from the decision?

Tell him.

Will his wealth, pride, reputation, appearance, ability to achieve be enhanced?

Tell him.

Will he become more appealing to others?

Cleaner?

Healthier?

More loved?

More independent?

More powerful?

Tell him.

4) Trust. The reader must trust the writer.

Aristotle said, "There is no proof so effective as that of the character."

Your facts must be straight. Your logic must be sound. Your documentation and research must show you are fully knowledgeable and credible, honest, competent, trustworthy, sincere.

This is where you refer to experts and bring in the quotes from authorities. This is where you bring your statistics to bear.

5) The kill. All the information in the world won't of itself change a person's mind. A string of short declarative sentences ending in a kind of "do it now" decision will bring things home.

Some writers choose to do that softly. Others will practically stamp

their feet and shout. This is the problem with the printed page: You yourself are not there to shake some sense into the reader.

But it's amazing what powerful prose can do. And psychology.

All advertising, all appeals for funds use psychology. So do clever column writers.

Some people have developed their understanding of the human heart into an art form.

Like the man who inserted this classified ad in a metropolitan newspaper:

Last chance to send your dollar.

He added only his address and he amassed a fortune before the law put a stop to what it called "fraud."

But many clever readers recognize psychology and shy away from any reading matter that seems to include it. Certain tips, however, have been reported by people who have studied the psychology of persuasion.

When the reader is already convinced that your point of view is correct, give him only the arguments supporting and fortifying your what-you-believe.

When you know the reader will oppose the viewpoint, present both sides of the argument. These studies have found that antagonistic readers, who were given both sides of an argument and then were convinced by that argument, will hold their new convictions longer and stronger than those

given only one side.

Besides, when people get both sides, they know the writer is not propagandizing them. They respond to the fair play. And they don't spend their time building arguments against the point while they read.

To sum it up, the most natural order of persuasive writing is to attract the reader's attention by presenting a problem or a dilemma or a contradiction that needs solving.

Create a felt need.

Show something has to be done.

Someone has to make a decision.

Something is at stake.

Something bad will happen if something isn't done.

Present solutions that attempt to solve the problem.

Satisfy the reader that a solution is at hand and there is a way to satisfy the felt need.

Help the reader visualize that all this is pertinent to him personally, that he'll get some good out of this if he does such and such.

End the article with a direction that tells the reader what to do about it all. You've made the topic important to him and, now, **he** must put on the shoe.

What do you think about this following article?

Write a persuasive column convincing people that it is right or wrong, appropriate or blasphemous.

Female Christ Statue Draws Praise, Protest

NEW YORK (AP) - A statue depicting the crucified Jesus Christ as a woman drew both praise and howls of outrage when it was displayed behind the altar at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the church's dean said Tuesday.

The Very Rev. James Park Morton, who referred to the bronze work as "Christa," said reaction to the statue at the Episcopal cathedral has been "overwhelmingly positive."

He said some people are "scandalized" by the 4-foot, 250-pound statue, "but the negative stuff is on the same level as the reaction to ordination of women as priests."

The statue, in the form of a crucifix but without a cross behind it, was sculpted by Edwina Sandys, a granddaughter of Winston Churchill. It was put on temporary display behind the cathedral's main altar during Holy Week, the week before Easter.

One of those scandalized is Morton's superior, the Right Rev. Walter Dennis, Episcopal Suffragan Bishop of New York and deputy to Bishop Paul Moore.

At a pre-Easter service in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin,

Dennis said he felt forced to speak out against the work as "theologically and historically indefensible.

"I ask you to visit the cathedral," Dennis told the congregation. "If it shocks you as much as it did me, then write to Bishop (Paul) Moore and tell him so."

The text of Dennis's remarks were released by his office Tuesday. Moore is on leave and not available for comment, his office said.

While church officials aren't sure how long the "Christa" will be displayed, the artist hopes it will stay in the cathedral through Pentecost, a feast on the seventh Sunday after Easter which celebrates the descent of the Holy Spirit on Christ's apostles.

Ms. Sandys said Morton agreed to display the sculpture after she told him of the work and asked, "How go-ahead are you?"

Sandys said Morton replied, "How wicked are you?"

"Not wicked, but I have a female Jesus Christ," Sandys said.

Morton said he accepted the sculpture because it fit with other events planned for Easter Week at the cathedral.

He said Christ always has been portrayed in a form comfortable for worshipers, citing black Christs in Africa, Oriental Christs in China and chubby Christs in Italy.

"What hasn't been done visually is the female sexuality incarnate," Morton said.

A Roman Catholic theologian, the Rev. Richard Dillon, chairman of the department of theology at Fordham University, said the statue would be fine if placed outside the church as a work of art. But he said displaying it as an object of devotion in “sacred precincts violates the traditions and feelings of too many.”

Here, following, are two news articles on television violence. Write a column of persuasion to convince people either that nothing is wrong and the public is over-reacting or that something is profoundly wrong and needs correcting.

Critics say Disney characters too violent

WASHINGTON (AP) Walt Disney Productions is treating criticism of its television programming like water running off Donald Duck's back. The company says it isn't going to change anything in response to the National Coalition of Television Violence, which thinks shows on the Disney Channel are too violent.

Donald Duck, in fact, comes in for chastisement by the coalition, which cited Donald's use of clothes-pins to silence his three rambunctious nephews in the cartoon “Donald's

Golf Game.”

The nephews, equally violence prone, get back by sinking Donald's boat, tying him up and stuffing a golf ball into his mouth.

All told, the coalition said it found 18 incidents of violence in each hour of cartoon programming on the Disney Channel and nine per hour of non-cartoon programming. In 43 hours of prime time, the coalition recorded 55 murders and 57 attempted murders.

“I was shocked at how violence was shown as the only way to deal with problems,” said Dr. Thomas Radecki, who says 27 studies have shown that violent cartoons increase violent attitudes and behavior in children.

But in Burbank, Calif., Disney Productions said in its first year on the air the channel got only six complaints of violence in 30,000 letters from viewers.

“Programming decisions will continue to be based on the preference of our audience,” said the channel, noting that it has been endorsed by both the National Education Association and the National Parent-Teachers Association.

David Hostetter, Washington director of the coalition, said the group wasn't singling Disney out for criticism. He said the network was the 31st it has monitored in a systematic sampling of all television aimed at children.

Husband charged with burning wife after TV show

MILWAUKEE (AP) – A 39-year-old man who wanted to “scare” his wife was being held Tuesday on suspicion of setting fire to her shortly after he watched a TV movie about a woman who burned her abusive husband to death, police said.

Sharon Brandt, 37, was hospitalized in critical condition with burns over 95 percent of her body after she was splashed with gasoline and set afire with a cigarette lighter at her home Monday night, said Police Capt. Dan Koprowski.

Assistant District Attorney Gerald Falk said her husband, wearing Army fatigues, was arrested on suspicion of attempted murder after the incident and was being held in the city jail. Bail was set at \$60,000.

Falk said authorities would decide on formal charges by today. Under Wisconsin law, his name was not released pending charges.

Mrs. Brandt’s mother, Margaret Fuhrer of Milwaukee, said her daughter was not expected to live.

Police said the husband told them he had watched the NBC movie “The Burning Bed,” starring Fawcett in the true story of a battered Michigan wife who killed her husband by setting fire to his

bed while he slept. She was acquitted after a jury found her temporarily insane.

“He told us he watched the show and decided to scare his wife with fire,” an arresting officer reported in a police complaint.

Police said the husband waited in an alley beside the house for his wife to return from work and threw the gasoline on her when she stepped from her car.

Witnesses said they saw Mrs. Brandt ablaze in her yard about 10:30 p.m., a half-hour after the movie ended.

The woman’s two sons said they had just gone to bed when they heard screams from the yard.

Christopher, 11, said he looked outside and saw a fire in his backyard. He tried to call his mother at her job as a beautician, but received no answer, he said.

“At first I thought it was some garbage on fire. And then I saw Mom,” Christopher said.

The Fear of God

By Dave Hunt

The Berean Call, August 1992

(Used by permission)

Signed by Peter Peters and Vasilij Ryzhuk, leaders in the “unregistered Union of Churches,” a desperate plea has just come out of Russia: “For thirty years we have suffered intense persecution, and now freedom is bringing another

great harm to our churches ... (American) evangelists accompanied by rock bands...

We are embarrassed by this image of Christianity...

We need spiritual food. Please give us true bread, not false cakes. It is true that rock music attracts people to the church, but not to godly living....

We urge you...do not bring it to our country. Do not desecrate our teenagers with it. Even the unbelievers recognize it is unholy music and they cannot understand how American Christians can be so much like the world...and (are) disillusioned with Christianity.”

Surely these brethren who have suffered so much for Christ have much to teach us.

Yes, but—someone suggests—these long-persecuted believers have been isolated so long that they’re behind the times. And, of course, music is a matter of taste and not defined in Scripture. “Rock music” is too vague a term. There are different kinds, and who is to judge? So the rationale goes.

We need not enter into such arguments. There are at least two biblical criteria that indict most of the contemporary Christian music scene and much of the Sunday morning worship in evangelical churches as well. These two criteria are:

1) *mood*: Is it befitting the presence of God; and

2) *message*: Is there moral, spiritual and doctrinal content that convicts sinners, edifies the worshipers and exalts our Lord?

Check out your own church next Sunday; and if these criteria are not met, pray about what you should do. Don’t succumb to a critical spirit.

Try lovingly to bring some understanding to bear. Let your desire be to build up, to instruct and help rather than to condemn and tear down. And be patient. After all, there was perhaps a time when you, too, lacked discernment in these matters.

Let us deal with point 2 first. As I visit churches, I am often saddened by the singing and can scarcely bring myself to participate in what passes for “worship.”

The old hymns, with their profound doctrinal content, have largely been replaced with empty, repetitive choruses.

The melodies may be catchy and appealing, but the words are shallow, careless and sometimes unbiblical.

The beat may be stirring and the hand-clapping enthusiastic, but the often-trite lyrics lack challenge for the heart and nourishment for the spirit.

Let’s take “worship” as an example. It’s largely a matter of singing

in most churches.

Yet too often the songs are a hindrance rather than a help.

Why do we worship our Lord?

What would cause us genuinely, from the heart, to worship the Father “*in spirit and in TRUTH*” (John 4:23)?

Ah, there’s that word again. Yes, even when it comes to worship, we encounter once more that all-important ingredient, TRUTH.

Truth has meaning, doctrinal content; it is not a feeling or emotion (though it does stir emotions), but a conviction that grips heart, soul, spirit—and, yes, *mind*.

To sing repeatedly “worship *Him*, worship *Him*” is not enough. Worship is more than formula. It cannot be achieved in the abstract and with an empty head. Something must be going on in the *mind*, or the heart is not meaningfully stirred.

Worship is not a sacrament or ceremony; it arises in the heart from awed recognition of who God is—*knowing Him*, His infinite love, holiness, power, mercy. Worship is not mindless emotionalism.

The songs we sing can’t just set a *mood* for worship, but must give us some *reason* for worshiping as well. All too many of the modern choruses fail right there. Their appeal is more in their beat and tune than in their lyrics.

Yet *words* are far more important than melody. There is no worship

without understanding and the deeper the understanding, the deeper the worship.

Right here is where the old hymns shine—in their words and the understanding they bring:

Son of God, ‘twas love that made
Thee,
Die our ruined souls to save;
‘Twas our sins’ vast load that laid
Thee,
Lord of life, within the grave.
What a debt of love we owe Thee!

There’s sound doctrinal content that does not just say that we should love Him or that we do love Him, but reminds us *why*.

Consider a well-known hymn by Charles Wesley:

And can it be that I should gain,
An interest in the Savior’s blood?
Died He for me who caused His
pain,
For me who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love, how can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die
for me!

Not only the melody, but the words stir the heart—and teach truth that bears repeating and meditating upon.

Let’s consider one more example:

By weakness and defeat,
He won the Victor’s crown;

Trod all our foes beneath His feet,
By being trodden down.
He Satan's power laid low.
Made sin, He sin o'erthrew.
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so;
And Death, by dying, slew!

Great poetry, great teaching, and so powerfully presented! How tragic when such hymns are exchanged for the shallow, repetitive choruses that have become the mainstay in so many churches!

So much for message. What about mood? Without the right message the mood is meaningless, leaving one with a good "feeling" in the flesh but an emptiness in the spirit. Christian rock fails on both counts.

The impudent, irreverent beat and raucous sound overwhelm one's perceptive faculties so that the words, even if they are excellent, can scarcely be heard, much less contemplated.

Add to this the pitiful posturing, the contrived aura of glamor, the raw bid for audience adulation. Try to imagine a rock concert in God's presence!

Would mere creatures, redeemed by grace, dare to "perform" before the throne of the thrice-holy Lord of the universe, the righteous Judge of men and angels? The mood generated is anything but awed reverence and the fear of God.

One could level the same criticism at most contemporary Christian music.

The *mood* is often reflective of a heedless, we've-got-the-world-by-the-tail spirit, rather than authentic Christian joy.

Tunes are designed to arouse emotion without content and the words are more often self-centered than God-centered. Here the disease becomes extremely serious and could even be fatal.

In diagnosing the problem, we must take great care that we follow God's Word.

What's wrong with joyful singing? Nothing inspired of the Holy Spirit.

David wrote: "*In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore*" (Psalm 16:11).

Ah, yes, but what is meant by "joy" and "pleasure"?

Surely the Psalmist is not referring to the "happy hour" joy of a bar or to the transitory pleasure found in amusement parks.

The joy and pleasure around God's throne are not of this world.

And there is one essential ingredient of which we may be certain: *the fear of God*.

How could *fear* be a fountain of peace, joy and worship?

That question may indicate that we are strangers to God and to His joy!

Watch a little Christian television, the strutting performance of some “evangelists” and “healers,” the irreverent throwing around of “the anointing of the Holy Spirit,” and listen to the boasting bravado.

One has the distinct impression that these “servants of God” know nothing of His fear.

Listen to their tongues with the repetition of favorite words, their giddy laughfests supposedly with the Holy Spirit, weep at the spectacle and ask yourself again, “Where is the fear of God?!”

Honesty compels us to point the finger at ourselves as well.

An unbiased, heavenly observer watching our lives, sitting in our “worship services,” listening to our conversations, would be compelled to say of most Christians today what the Psalmist said of the ungodly in his time: “*There is no fear of God before their eyes*” (Psalm 36:1, Romans 3:18).

When did you last hear a sermon preached on the fear of God?

When did you last attend a church service where the awesome sense of God’s holy presence brought weeping and repentance?

When did you, or I, in our daily devotions, last fall on our faces before Him in awestruck wonder and worship and godly fear?

Take your concordance and follow “the fear of God/the Lord”

through the Bible and receive much-needed instruction.

Israel was told to “*fear the Lord thy God*” (Deuteronomy 6:2) before she was commanded to “*love the Lord thy God with all thine heart*” (Deut. 6:5).

In a summation of His will for Israel, God declared: “*What does the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul*” (Deut. 10:12).

That the fear of God, the awesome reverence that comes from knowing Him and being in His presence, is foundational and essential to our relationship with Him and His blessing upon our lives is clear.

“*The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him*” (Psalm 103:17).

“*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*” (Ps. 25:14).

The instruction, “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom/knowledge*,” is found repeatedly (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 9:10). Solomon exhorted, “*The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death*” (Proverbs 14:27).

And again: “*Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of*

the world stand in awe of him” (Ps. 33:8).

Such a sense of God’s awesome holiness is virtually unknown among Christians!

Why is that fear of God, that holy reverence and overwhelming wonder so lacking in our lives and in our churches and in Christian media?

How can men be so blind as to treat God as though He were their servant instead of falling on their faces before Him?

For many, He’s a cosmic bellhop who exists simply to give them what they want. Apparently they don’t yet know God!

See John falling as dead at the feet of His resurrected Lord (Rev. 1:17) and the reason for the lack of the fear of God among today’s Christians becomes clear.

Surely there would be profound reverence, awe and godly fear were we suddenly to find ourselves in God’s presence.

Obviously, then, the absence of that fear which the Bible extols betrays how far we are from Him and explains the lack of passionate love for our Lord.

Let us seek His face (Psalm 27:8, 105:4).

So much that passes for Christianity would be exposed as false were it displayed before the throne of God. The selfism teaching that Christian psychology has brought into the church is one flagrant example.

It is not just ludicrous, but grotesque to imagine anyone being concerned about his “self-identity,” his “authentic personhood,” his “self-image,” or feeling good about himself in the brilliant light of God’s presence!

All mutterings of “positive self-talk” and concern about one’s “significance” are silenced before His throne.

Any thought of self-esteem or self-worth would suddenly be revealed in the brilliance of God’s glory as an evil from hell—and instantly be consumed by His splendor.

Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471) knew something of that revealing and consuming Presence:

“I will speak unto my Lord who am but dust and ashes. If I count myself more, behold Thou standest against me, and my iniquities bear true testimony and I cannot gainsay it.

“But if I abase myself, and bring myself to nought, and shrink from all self-esteem, and grind myself to dust, which I am, Thy grace will be favourable unto me, and Thy light will be near unto my heart; and all self-esteem, how little soever it be, shall be swallowed up in the depths of my nothingness, and shall perish for ever.”

Self is our problem.

Do you long to be delivered of self?

Spend time in the presence of God!

How far are they from God whose only communion with Him is in attempts to get Him to bless their plans!

Most Christians are so taken up with themselves and their own ambitions that they are strangers to God and His will for their lives. And yet they remain self-satisfied.

What a contradiction! How can it be? God reveals the answer in His Word.

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

What a devastating indictment of mankind! What a humbling revelation of the human heart—the heart of each one of us! No encouragement for esteeming self here.

The selfist teachings that “Christian psychology” has brought into the Church contradict God’s Word, mock His fear, deceive those who are seeking a solution to their ungodly behavior, and, though sometimes seeming to work for a season, in the end leave one worse off than before.

It is not the traumas or abuse one may have suffered, whether in childhood or later in life, real as those may have been, that make us what we are.

It is our hearts which are by our very nature self-centered, self-

exalting, self-seeking, yes, evil, as Jesus said: *“for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man” (Mat. 15:19-20).*

Is there any hope?

Yes. Repentance and coming to the cross to embrace Christ’s death as the crucifixion of self and out of that death to become partakers of His resurrection life.

Anything else is but a rationalization to avoid the Cross and salvage something for self, be it esteem, image, worth, significance, authentic personhood or any of the other slogans that are deceiving millions.

It is not therapy we need, but God! The answer lies not in looking within but in turning to Him, as Jeremiah confessed: *“O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (10:23).*

David knew God was his only hope to heal his wicked heart. *“Search me, O God,”* he cried, *“and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24).*

We need to put ourselves entirely in God’s hands!

The fear of God, largely missing in today’s Christianity, is not just an Old Testament doctrine. Spiritual cleansing and holiness can only be perfected *“in the fear of God” (2*

Cor. 7:1).

Even loving Christian fellowship can only be “*in the fear of God*” (Eph. 5:21). This godly fear characterized the early churches: they “*were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied*” (Acts 9:31).

That fear, that awesome reverence which comes from knowing God, must be restored in each of our lives if we are to be what He desires.

May it be so, to His glory!

Where many points people the article, your business is to identify the most dominant ones.

I expect you to come away with an

opinion concerning the focus of the article. It is your business to persuade your readers that your view is the view they should accept.

Know that there will be those who will disagree with you. Write with them in mind because you must cope with their perspective as you go along.

I’ve presented articles that take strong positions, articles that divide the nation.

Plant your foot, declare the essential point, back it up and build your case.

In the next lesson we will look at the testimonial and at book reviews. Both are kinds of articles where you, the perceptive writer, can write what you think.

Professor Dick