

*No
Little
People*

FRANCIS A.
SCHAEFFER

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FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

No Little People

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Introduction

THIS COLLECTION OF SIXTEEN sermons bears the title of a central biblical theme that has encouraged people in every generation around the world. In God's view, man is distinguished from all things and animals around him as the coronation of creation. He is made a little lower than the angels. He has been given a mandate to subdue the earth, to "household" it, to have dominion, and to create. There are no little people in the perspective of the Bible.

All religions of the world, outside of the Old and New Testaments, have as a final purpose for human life a peaceful surrender to the status quo of a normal life. The faithful learns to submit and to accept, to abandon his personality and mind, to become united with others in a fellowship of the humble and the dying. Acceptance of history, the will of God, nature, or the wisdom of the ancients is part of the way to become detached from the moral challenges of each day.

Only the Jew and the Christian know of a calling from God to be human, to create, to make individual choices, and to seek justice in a world in which two central realities are affirmed: The human being is made essentially different from all else; and God is not identified or satisfied with the now really fallen, damaged, broken world of nature and of man.

Man, male and female, is a person. Man thinks, feels, acts, and speaks; he has emotions and is able to love. No other part of creation shares these distinctives. Man is in the image of God. He was not brought forth from nature, the stars, or any form of mere energy or matter. There is more than life here, for there is speech, reflection, transcendence, and self-awareness. But there are no little people.

In the world we also see lies, ideology, deception, and make-believe, which only persons can advance. These are the roots of the problem of a world out of joint, fallen, and full of problems such as hate, envy, anguish, selfishness, and death. It is no longer the world God had made “in the beginning.” Adam rejoiced over Eve, but then Cain killed his brother Abel. God distinguishes people as good and evil, not great and small, recognized or overlooked, struggling or accomplished, strong or fragile like a flower stuck into an old garden wall and blown roughly by the wind.

While all religious and secular standards judge a person by his or her accomplishments toward the end of life, the God of the Bible gives value to the person from the beginning. Man not only becomes someone but is a person from conception on, forever. It matters who you are, not what you have produced, earned, or been noticed for.

Francis Schaeffer sees in the Bible the description of real life, of “true truth.” It is a series of letters from the Creator to the creature, when other forms of knowing God had become flawed in consequence of the rebellious fall of Adam and Eve in real history. They were evicted from the presence of God in Eden. But the Word of God carries the information needed to understand what is different about our being, our life, and our calling.

On this basis Schaeffer deeply admired human accomplishment in the arts and in life, among craftsmen and inventors, poets and musicians, as well as in intimate human relationships. His affirmation of human beings was not concerned so much about humanity as an abstract but was expressed to all of the many thousands of individuals who came to talk, listen, and argue with him through the years. They found a person who honored them even when they disagreed with his ideas and told him so. The human being was to Schaeffer both glorious as the crown of God's creation and flawed by foolish, evil, and sinful choices. Observing him or her in the street, in museums, and in science gave Schaeffer a taste of the life of man in history. All conversations, whether over tea in his chalet, in the elevator in some Italian hotel, or on the occasion of a Washington dinner, brought to life the biblical picture of people.

Schaeffer would marvel at the movement of a farmer loading hay with a pitchfork on his wagon or the owner of a vineyard binding up the vines. He watched with fascination a small child struggling for control over a crayon to finish a drawing. He admired Clara Haskill's hands on the piano and the Renaissance frescoes on the wall above the sick in a Sienna hospital. But he also did not ignore the cruelty in personal choices, individual acts, and wicked ideas in the inhuman twentieth century, in which he was born and lived on both sides of the Atlantic.

Schaeffer saw people in their valuable humanity that is so much the center of biblical teaching. The Word of God, the promise of salvation by Christ's finished work on the cross, the prophetic words calling us to repentance all—focus on the central affirmation of God's real existence as an infinite-personal God. By that Schaeffer understood that while we have a material body not totally unlike

other things and beings in nature, we are not neighbors to the tree or ox. We are people. Man and woman were made to complement each other. And both were made by a loving, personal God to live as persons in the image of God.

There are “no little people,” for this biblical perspective confirms real life, where we are all choice-makers, creators for better or for worse. “Little” people see themselves as insignificant, close to the earth, easily forgotten, and replaceable by someone else. For Schaeffer, as for all Christians, each person is unique by virtue of his unique personality. Each individual has a name and a face and through his life adds to the shape and flow of history.

Schaeffer does not arrive at this view through singling out great models for life. He does not encourage someone’s vanity or false self-image. He does not speak to favor or even mark out celebrities. He did not believe that anyone needed that in order to know how to live as a human being. He saw no reason for the more recent fads that suggest a girl can discover her own potential only from a successful woman or that celebrities deserve attention when all they are known for is “being known by a multitude of people” (from Latin *celebritas* for “multitude,” “fame” and *celeber* meaning “frequented,” “populous”) until they are replaced by more recent stars.

There are no little people in the Bible. Beyond all statistics of chemical elements in our body, all skill in our physical abilities, and all refined social interaction lies the affirmation that human beings are different. We alone are persons, actors, and creators through the choices in our lives. Human beings have been made in the image of the eternal person of God. Here and in all the rest of what the Bible teaches about God and man in history, Schaeffer found the

only possible intellectually and practically satisfying explanation for human uniqueness.

Francis Schaeffer preached his sermons first of all to himself. Sixteen of them are published in this volume. Schaeffer had become a Christian when he read through the Bible at the end of high school and discovered in it the coherent and reasonable answers to the basic questions raised by human beings anywhere. They are the questions about life and death, reality and imagination, good and evil, fate and freedom, and the individual and the group. They are raised by anyone in all kinds of settings. At the time he had studied Greek philosophers (a subject then being taught in public schools of working-class Germantown, Pennsylvania). Later, after college and seminary, as a pastor he would prepare men going off to World War II and shipbuilders at home to work well and to live rightly. University students were encouraged to conquer existentialist doubt as well as the fascination with the ideologies on the right and the attractions of the left, which strongly influenced the thought forms of a new generation. He addressed the moral and military questions of Vietnam but also the consumer culture and materialism of the West and the search for exotic religious experiences of the East.

In Europe he preached in the International Presbyterian Church, which he started when people became believers through his work and others joined. Schaeffer was very much a church person, and though he became perhaps better known through his work with students and his writing, he understood the church with a membership of the wise and ignorant, the young and old, lonely individuals and whole families to be a part of the bride of Christ around the world. He did not merely have chapel services. There was, until his death, a community of believers with baptisms, weddings, and

funerals. They all came to listen, to learn, and to live. They often discussed over dinner Schaeffer's emphasis in the sermon on the true truth of God's Word, the historic death and resurrection of Christ, and a life in the power of God's Spirit.

Some of them knew firsthand about trips on psychedelic drugs. All had experienced relativistic morality and had "done their own thing" in search of their personal alternative, "god" or otherwise. They discovered what it was like to be constantly afloat and without satisfactory answers to the most important questions about the Whence? What? Whither? of man's existence. After more than three generations of being exposed to Nietzsche, Darwin, and irrational religions, in which the human being is always crushed to near nothingness, the clarity of the intellectually honest and morally coherent appeal of biblical Christianity is surprising and an enormous gift.

Schaeffer had earlier been pastor in two churches in Pennsylvania and one in Missouri. When he moved to work in Europe after World War II, people from all kinds of backgrounds and many nationalities heard these sermons. Most carried the scars from real battles and now reached for the solid anchor Schaeffer had himself previously discovered in historic Christianity. The God of the Bible and the Son of God in history are, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the sole starting point and continuing base of true and comprehensible answers, well-founded hope, and a meaningful life.

The gathering of believers and others in church was in Schaeffer's mind and prayer always something unique. Here we came not to discuss but to worship, to listen, and to take our stand in the stream of the people of God through history.

Most of us had scars from earlier battles. They had been physical in the experienced destruction in war and the displacement of lives, homes, and goods. On a deeper level, intellectual battles had taken their toll when the inherited order and certainties had been displaced in politics and law, in commerce and the arts. Instead of providing a corrective to the intellectual explorations and cultural risks, the churches had abandoned their foundation and had then increasingly supported both national goals and humanist manifestos. Certain knowledge from God about man, meaning, and morals was made impossible due to the embrace of the so-called scientific theology of liberalism with its kinship to Darwinism and idealism. The twentieth century gave birth to horribly evil consequences of the humanistic beliefs about the progressive goodness of man and nurtured a belief in the absence, or death, of God. We were left with the presence of mere matter, but without meaning. Plays, films, but also the lives and opinions of many exhibited this, before the cultural climate would replace the resulting pessimism about God with a blind optimism about personal, privatized, and privileged pursuits. Having more and more things, embracing bizarre ideas about life, health and beauty, and youth, exploiting greater opportunities to travel for distraction, and legalizing easy ways to abandon the unborn child and the unwanted mate characterize the new market to which the liberal church adjusted its appeal.

Schaeffer's sixteen sermons in this volume cut through all this with a content that does not invite you to another world, a new community, and more happy experiences by an embrace of irrational feelings. Instead the focus is on the lasting truth of the Bible, the faithfulness of God, the sufficiency of the work of Christ, and

the reality of God's Spirit in history. Edith Schaeffer remembers that often parishioners in churches would complain that Schaeffer never gave an invitation to believe or to "come forward" at the end of a sermon. You won't find one here either. Nor will you find concerns about church growth, fund drives, or attractive programs. Even denominational particulars or the testimonies of famous converts are absent. Schaeffer thought any way to manipulate people was wrong, even when it was to help them recognize the truth of historic Christianity.

The only reason to become a Christian was and is that Christianity is true: true to the real world, to real people, and to real history. Schaeffer said, "It is a special annoyance of mine that men try to separate philosophy from religion. This is a false separation, because both ultimately seek the meaning of life." The thirst of man can only be satisfied when he has answers to these two questions: What is the meaning of life? How are we to address the basic dilemma of man that he is great and wonderful and at the same time evil against an absolute, not merely a cultural, moral standard? Only the Bible gives an answer to these two questions in establishing man's guilt by choice before his Creator and then offering the solution of Christ's substitutionary death for sin and the bodily resurrection for eternal life.

The one way a person can discern truth from falsehood and god words from knowing God is to apply the content that God has given of himself in space-and-time history by revelation. We then believe what can be truly and reasonably comprehended from Scripture.

This confidence that Schaeffer expressed in such terms to answer serious questions and not only personal emotional needs made him an interesting person. It was not a gimmick, a model, or a method

but a deep conviction. He was not slick. He revolted against false appearances of leadership, growth statistics, and any show, in which he saw the dangers of pretense, performance, and praise of men. He had been there and found it dishonest, dangerous, and finally condemning. Instead he urged us to pray for those “extruded” by God to leadership and importance in the church almost against their desires and gifts.

You will find here sermons that take you through the Old and New Testaments. They will introduce you to the man David, for better and for worse: king of Israel, mighty warrior, sensitive poet, and great sinner. You will discover the shepherds’ response to the angels on Christmas night in a new light. Joseph, who was sold into Egypt by his brothers, will stand in a wider context of David and Christ. The wonder of the events on the Mount of Transfiguration will become clearer in its broad historic significance after tying Moses, who had died, and Elijah, who had ascended to heaven and is alive, to Jesus in glory. In this way the disciples could understand the promise of the work of Christ at the second coming for both the dead and the living.

The whole Bible, that verbalized prepositional truth from God to man, in its correspondence with reality is the basis for the confidence Schaeffer had in the truth of Christianity. He understood it all to be from the same author, God, and therefore compared Scripture with Scripture, established links between the Testaments, and explored the meaning of words in their continued use and imagery. He saw a similar continuity between creation and redemption, between life now and after death and then after the resurrection. He said, “The same meaning to life exists at this tick of the clock as in eternity.” For truth is true to both God

and man, in history now and later. There are no separate worlds or separate truths.

Schaeffer understood that for truth to have any say or claim it must be very different from merely personal truth or religious truth, which are ideological. The latter are ideas about truth but do not relate to the world of facts, data, the miracles in the Bible, and the resurrection in time and space. They pretend, much like Hinduism pretends, that reality is an illusion, or like Islam pretends, without historic evidence, that Allah is merciful and just in a world where pain, death, and cruelty really exist.

The truth of Christianity is rooted in God's existence; our faith and our performance do not make it so. And yet, after the fall of Adam and during this time of faith and waiting, the temptation is always to turn this around. God becomes our private interest and source of pleasure, while man becomes the performing artist, the manager, the leader, the visible symbol of power. In God's kingdom there are "no little people" when God calls us to greater things. Yet there can only be "one good fighter for Jesus Christ: the person who does not like to fight."

Three central things constantly stand out in reading through these sermons. *First*, there is the love of God, who through the text of the Bible gives revelation to shed light on our lives. God's holiness, grace, and power, his compassion and abundant grace are recognized in the flow of people's lives. God works always with weak servants. The greats of faith are people like drunk Noah, lying Abraham and Isaac, idolatrous Aaron, frustrated Moses, but also Rahab the converted harlot and Nicodemus the parliamentarian, who comes only under cover of darkness to find the light.

Second, there is a deep awareness of what a mess the fall of Adam and Eve created. Separation from God is very real. Most of us have not seen God, for man was evicted from Eden. The fall of Adam has shattered all harmony and left broken vessels, for we are also separated from ourselves and from nature. We are at a considerable loss to understand what this thing called “life” is all about. Yet we are called to lean against such fractures through compassion, watchfulness, and generosity. The Bible reveals to us that what we have or are in the present is not final but is part of a process to be completed later. There are encouragements to the weak and warnings to those strong in their own eyes. Temptation pulls at our hearts and minds and lingers at our feet.

Third, many of the sermons integrate God’s Word with surrounding and daily realities of life. Here lies their practical application to confront the uncertainties of our life as well. For we continue the dilemma of being people in a real history that none of us has made, but to which we all contribute. The discussion of the benefits and limits of democracy to encourage what is good and to limit what is evil flows from a broad understanding of biblical reality. But such uncertainty and required responsibility rarely create moral character; they rather lay it open.

Schaeffer often saw the extremes of many sides and the dangers of leaning, as a rider on a horse, too far against a problem until he falls off the horse on the other side. In the account of God’s miraculous deliverance from certain death of the three men in a fiery furnace, he reminds us of the unique event, which contains no promise from God of a life free from problems, hardships, and even death. A miracle is not the normal event in the lives of believers. A miracle is a special act of God in the context of many other

actors who may stand in the way for the time being. Texts such as Hebrews 11 show that there are no general promises of safety for God's children outside of being kept by God in his family.

Yet this should never lead to a sense of resignation and acceptance of evil. History is not our master. Circumstances should not determine our choices. We are not called to go with the flow, to embrace the average or the convenient or the smooth. David's lawful and unlawful vindications distinguish between the need for justice on moral grounds and King David's own failures as a man. Both have continuing consequences in the life of the nation and in the lives of members of his family. A broad tapestry is spun in the Bible to show how complex reality becomes and how unfair much of it is "under the sun" for everybody when it is measured merely between birth and death.

By contrast, a fatalistic religion sees everything as resolved or already as God's perfect plan. Like any utopian temptation it avoids dealing with reality and focuses with a blind faith on unreality. Only a romantic perspective can suggest that life is fair and that all problems are of our own making. Most religions suggest this as an explanation. On the other hand, when reality is more honestly observed, a cynical perspective remains: There is no justice anywhere, and everyone must swim or sink.

Schaeffer shows that the Bible does not promote either of these two reactions. Instead God promises real justice in history when Christ's reign commences with the second coming. Schaeffer avoids the loss of compassion inherent in the utopian faith of the first and the loss of moral orientation suggested in the second.

Most interestingly, Schaeffer treats intellectual and moral problems of any age in the context of biblical answers, yet without either

merely citing biblical texts or condemning those who are wrestling with real existential problems and have come tentatively to alternative answers. His description of the problems of communism is in no way outdated by the collapse of the Soviet state. Theological liberalism, Roman Catholicism, and secular rationalism are also each unveiled to show their flaws in the central concern to understand human life in a flawed, often raw, and unfinished history.

Amos addressed the hollow religious institutions of the northern tribes, which disregarded the law, the prophets, and the covenant of God, and Schaeffer points out in several sermons the dangerous neglect of practiced Christianity in the church. He wonders where humility is practiced and experienced within the church on the basis of confident certainty about God, people as individuals, and a broader understanding of the difficulties of life in a fallen world.

With the fitting insight from the Bible into the human condition we must be willing and able to serve a needy world, to bind up her wounds, and to offer real material, intellectual, artistic, and spiritual help. We can pray for wisdom to do that and to carry it out faithfully, for in God's mind and hand we are "no little people."

Udo W. Middelman
The Francis A. Schaeffer Foundation
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Foreword

THE MINISTRY OF L'ABRI FELLOWSHIP in Switzerland, where I lived and worked for twenty-seven years, is multi-faceted. There are lectures in the evenings, discussions (both scheduled and unscheduled throughout each day), times specially set aside for prayer and waiting on the Lord, and times for working. It is a full-orbed life of men and women, families and guests, students and travelers living together, sharing and learning and working—and worshipping the Lord.

Out of this experience come the sixteen sermons of this book. All of them were delivered in the chapel which serves as the worship and study center of L'Abri. Many have also been given during speaking engagements which in recent years have taken me throughout Europe and to many countries around the world.

These sermons represent a wide variety of styles. Some, like the title sermon, are topical; some expound Old Testament passages, some New Testament passages. Some are weighted toward theology and doctrine, others toward daily life and the practice of Christian faith. Each of these messages is for the twentieth century.

Each sermon is a unit written to be read at a single sitting. In fact, I suggest that no more than one be read at a time.

FOREWORD

And try reading them aloud. Some are especially useful for reading to families or other groups gathered for Bible study and worship. A church without a pastor may find the sermons a real help in morning worship.

To eat, to breathe
to beget
Is this all there is
Chance configuration of atom against atom
of god against god
I cannot believe it.
Come, Christian Triune God who lives,
Here am I
Shake the world again.¹

Francis A. Schaeffer
L'Abri Fellowship
Huemoz, Switzerland
1974

No Little People, No Little Places

AS A CHRISTIAN CONSIDERS the possibility of being *the Christian glorified* (a topic I discuss in *True Spirituality*), often his reaction is, “I am so limited. Surely it does not matter much whether I am walking as a creature glorified or not.” Or, to put it in another way, “It is wonderful to be a Christian, but I am such a small person, so limited in talents—or energy or psychological strength or knowledge—that what I do is not really important.”

The Bible, however, has quite a different emphasis: with God there are no little people.

Moses’s Rod

One thing that has encouraged me, as I have wrestled with such questions in my own life, is the way God used Moses’s rod, a stick of wood. Many years ago, when I was a young pastor just out of seminary, this study of the use of Moses’s rod, which I called “God So Used a Stick of Wood,” was a crucial factor in giving me the courage to press on.

The story of Moses’s rod began when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, telling him to go and challenge Egypt, the

greatest power of his day. Moses reacted, “Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3:11), and he raised several specific objections: “They will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod” (Exodus 4:1–2). God directed Moses’s attention to the simplest thing imaginable—the staff in his own hand, a shepherd’s rod, a stick of wood somewhere between three and six feet long.

Shepherds are notorious for hanging onto their staves as long as they can, just as some of us enjoy keeping walking sticks. Moses probably had carried this same staff for years. Since he had been a shepherd in the wilderness for forty years, it is entirely possible that this wood had been dead that long. Just a stick of wood—but when Moses obeyed God’s command to toss it to the ground, it became a serpent, and Moses himself fled from it. God next ordered him to take it by the tail and when he did so, it became a rod again. Then God told him to go and confront the power of Egypt and meet Pharaoh face-to-face with this rod in his hand.

Exodus 4:20 tells us the secret of all that followed: *the rod of Moses had become the rod of God.*

Standing in front of Pharaoh, Aaron cast down this rod and it became a serpent. As God spoke to Moses and as Aaron was the spokesman of Moses (Exodus 4:16), so it would seem that Aaron used the rod of Moses which had become the rod of God. The wizards of Egypt, performing real magic through the power of the Devil (not just a stage trick through sleight of hand), matched this. Here was demonic power. But the rod of God swallowed up the other rods. This was not merely a victory of Moses over Pharaoh,

but of Moses's God over Pharaoh's god and the power of the Devil behind that god.

This rod appeared frequently in the ensuing events:

Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness; and, behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. (Exodus 7:15–17)

The rod of God indeed was in Aaron's hand (Exodus 7:17, 19–20), and the water was putrefied, an amazing use for a mere stick of wood. In the days that followed, Moses "stretched forth his rod" and successive plagues came upon the land. After the waters no longer were blood, after seven days, there came frogs, then lice, then thunder and hail and great balls of lightning running along the ground, and then locusts (Exodus 8:1–10:15). Watch the destruction of judgment which came from a dead stick of wood that had become the rod of God.

Pharaoh's grip on the Hebrews was shaken loose, and he let the people go. But then he changed his mind and ordered his armies to pursue them. When the armies came upon them, the Hebrews were caught in a narrow place with mountains on one side of them and the sea on the other. And God said to Moses, "Lift thou up thy rod" (Exodus 14:16). What good is it to lift up a rod when one is

caught in a cul-de-sac between mountains and a great body of water with the mightiest army in the world at his heels? Much good, if the rod is the rod of God. The waters divided, and the people passed through. Up to this point, the rod had been used for judgment and destruction, but now it was as much a rod of healing for the Jews as it had been a rod of judgment for the Egyptians. That which is in the hand of God can be used in either way.

Later, the rod of judgment also became a rod of supply. In Rephidim the people desperately needed water.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Exodus 17:5–6)

It must have been an amazing sight to stand before a great rock (not a small pebble, but a face of rock such as we see here in Switzerland in the mountains) and to see a rod struck against it, and then to watch torrents of life-giving water flow out to satisfy thousands upon thousands of people and their livestock. The giver of judgment became the giver of life. It was not magic. There was nothing in the rod itself. The rod of Moses had simply become the rod of God. We too are not only to speak a word of judgment to our lost world, but are also to be a source of life.

The rod also brought military victory as it was held up. It was more powerful than the swords of either the Jews or their enemy (Exodus 17:9). In a much later incident the people revolted against

Moses, and a test was established to see whom God had indeed chosen. The rod was placed before God and it budded (Numbers 17:8). Incidentally, we find out what kind of tree it had come from so long ago because it now brought forth almond blossoms.

The final use of the rod occurred when the wilderness wandering was almost over. Moses's sister Miriam had already died. Forty years had passed since the people had left Egypt; so now the rod may have been almost eighty years old. The people again needed water, and though they were now in a different place, the desert of Zin, they were still murmuring against God. So God told Moses,

Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth its water . . . so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him. (Numbers 20:8–9)

Moses took the rod (which verse 9 with Numbers 17:10 shows was the same one which had been kept with the ark since it had budded), and he struck the rock twice. He should have done what God had told him and only spoken with the rod in his hand, but that is another study. In spite of this, however, “water came out abundantly” (Numbers 20:11).

Consider the mighty ways in which God used a dead stick of wood. “God so used a stick of wood” can be a banner cry for each of us. Though we are limited and weak in talent, physical energy, and psychological strength, we are not less than a stick of wood. But as the rod of Moses had to become the rod of God, so that which is *me* must become the *me* of God. Then I can become useful in God's hands. The Scripture emphasizes that much can

come from little if the little is truly consecrated to God. There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people. The problem for each of us is applying this truth to ourselves: Is Francis Schaeffer the Francis Schaeffer of God?

No Little Places

But if a Christian is consecrated, does this mean he will be in a big place instead of a little place? The answer, the next step, is very important: as there are no little people in God's sight, so there are no little places. To be wholly committed to God in the place where God wants him—this is the creature glorified. In my writing and lecturing I put much emphasis on God's being the infinite reference point which integrates the intellectual problems of life. He is to be this, but He must be the reference point not only in our thinking, but in our living. This means being what He wants me to be, where He wants me to be.

Nowhere more than in America are Christians caught in the twentieth-century syndrome of size. Size will show success. If I am consecrated, there will necessarily be large quantities of people, dollars, etc. This is not so. Not only does God not say that size and spiritual power go together, but He even reverses this (especially in the teaching of Jesus) and tells us to be deliberately careful not to choose a place too big for us. We all tend to emphasize big works and big places, but all such emphasis is of the flesh. To think in such terms is simply to hearken back to the old, unconverted, egoist, self-centered *Me*. This attitude, taken from the world, is more dangerous to the Christian than fleshly amusement or practice. It is the flesh.

People in the world naturally want to boss others. Imagine a boy beginning work with a firm. He has a lowly place and is ordered around by everyone: *Do this! Do that!* Every dirty job is his. He is the last man on the totem pole, merely one of Rabbit's friends-and-relations, in Christopher Robin's terms. So one day when the boss is out, he enters the boss's office, looks around carefully to see that no one is there, and then sits down in the boss's big chair. "Some-day," he says, "I'll say 'run' and they'll run." This is man. And let us say with tears that a person does not automatically abandon this mentality when he becomes a Christian. In every one of us there remains a seed of wanting to be boss, of wanting to be in control and have the word of power over our fellows.

But the Word of God teaches us that we are to have a very different mentality:

But Jesus called them [His disciples] to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles [lord it] over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:42–45)

Every Christian, without exception, is called into the place where Jesus stood. To the extent that we are called to leadership, we are called to ministry, even costly ministry. The greater the leadership, the greater is to be the ministry. The word *minister* is not a title of power, but a designation of servanthood. There is to be no Christian guru. We must reject this constantly and

carefully. A minister, a man who is a leader in the church of God (and never more needed than in a day like ours when the battle is so great), *must* make plain to the men, women, boys, and girls who come to places of leadership that instead of lording their authority over others and allowing it to become an ego trip, they are to serve in humility.

Again, Jesus said, “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren” (Matthew 23:8). This does not mean there is to be no order in the church. It does mean that the *basic* relationship between Christians is not that of elder and people, or pastor and people, but that of brothers and sisters in Christ. This denotes that there is one Father in the family and that his offspring are equal. There are different jobs to be done, different offices to be filled, but we as Christians are equal before one Master. We are not to seek a great title; we are to have the places together as brethren.

When Jesus said, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11), He was not speaking in hyperbole or uttering a romantic idiom. Jesus Christ is the realist of all realists, and when He says this to us, He is telling us something specific we are to do.

Our attitude toward all men should be that of equality because we are common creatures. We are of one blood and kind. As I look across all the world, I must see every man as a fellow-creature, and I must be careful to have a sense of our equality on the basis of this common status. We must be careful in our thinking not to try to stand in the place of God to other men. We are fellow-creatures. And when I step from the creature-to-creature relationship into the brothers-and-sisters-in-Christ relationship within the church,

how much more important to be a brother or sister to all who have the same Father. Orthodoxy, to be a Bible-believing Christian, always has two faces. It has a creedal face and a practicing face, and Christ emphasizes that that is to be the case here. Dead orthodoxy is always a contradiction in terms, and clearly that is so here; to be a Bible-believing Christian demands humility regarding others in the body of Christ.

Jesus gave us a tremendous example:

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. . . . Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. (John 13:3–5, 13–17)

Note that Jesus says that if we do these things, there will be happiness. It is not just knowing these things that brings happiness; it is doing them. Throughout Jesus's teaching these two words *know* and *do* occur constantly and always in that order. We cannot do until we know, but we can know without doing. The house built on the rock is the house of the man who knows and does. The house built on the sand is the house of the man who knows but does not do.

Christ washed the disciples' feet and dried them with the towel with which He was girded—that is, with his own clothing. He intended this to be a practical example of the mentality and action that should be seen in the midst of the people of God.

Taking the Lowest Place

Yet another statement of Jesus bears on our discussion:

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 14:7–11)

Jesus commands Christians to seek consciously the lowest room. All of us—pastors, teachers, professional religious workers and nonprofessionals included—are tempted to say, “I will take the larger place because it will give me more influence for Jesus Christ.” Both individual Christians and Christian organizations fall prey to the temptation of rationalizing this way as we build bigger and bigger empires. But according to the Scripture this is backwards: we should consciously take the lowest place unless the Lord Himself extrudes us into a greater one.

The word *extrude* is important here. To be extruded is to be forced out under pressure into a desired shape. Picture a huge press jamming soft metal at high pressure through a die, so that the metal comes out in a certain shape. This is the way of the Christian: he should choose the lesser place until God extrudes him into a position of more responsibility and authority.

Let me suggest two reasons why we ought not grasp the larger place. First, we should seek the lowest place because there it is easier to be quiet before the face of the Lord. I did not say easy; in no place, no matter how small or humble, is it easy to be quiet before God. But it is certainly easier in some places than in others. And the little places, where I can more easily be close to God, should be my preference. I am not saying that it is impossible to be quiet before God in a greater place, but God must be allowed to choose when a Christian is ready to be extruded into such a place, for only He knows when a person will be able to have some quietness before Him in the midst of increased pressure and responsibility.

Quietness and peace before God are more important than any influence a position may seem to give, for we must stay in step with God to have the power of the Holy Spirit. If by taking a bigger place our quietness with God is lost, then to that extent our fellowship with Him is broken and we are living in the flesh, and the final result will not be as great, no matter how important the larger place may look in the eyes of other men or in our own eyes. Always there will be a battle, always we will be less than perfect, but if a place is too big and too active for our present spiritual condition, then it is too big.

We see this happen over and over again, and perhaps it has happened at some time to us: someone whom God has been using

marvelously in a certain place takes it upon himself to move into a larger place and loses his quietness with God. Ten years later he may have a huge organization, but the power has gone, and he is no longer a real part of the battle in his generation. The final result of not being quiet before God is that less will be done, not more—no matter how much Christendom may be beating its drums or playing its trumpets for a particular activity.

So we must not go out beyond our depth. Take the smaller place so you have quietness before God. I am not talking about laziness; let me make that clear. That is something else, something too which God hates. I am not talking about copping out or dropping out. God's people are to be active, not seeking, on account of some false mystical concept, to sit constantly in the shade of a rock. There is no monasticism in Christianity. We will not be lazy in our relationship with God, because when the Holy Spirit burns, a man is consumed. We can expect to become physically tired in the midst of battle for our King and Lord; we should not expect all of life to be a vacation. We are talking about quietness before God as we are in His place for us. The size of the place is not important, but the consecration in that place is.

It must be noted that all these things which are true for an individual are true also for a group. A group can become activist and take on responsibilities God has not laid upon it. For both the individual and the group, the first reason we are not to grasp (and the emphasis is on *grasp*) the larger place is that we must not lose our quietness with God.

The second reason why we should not seek the larger place is that if we deliberately and egotistically lay hold on leadership, wanting the drums to beat and the trumpets to blow, then we are not quali-

fied for Christian leadership. Why? Because we have forgotten that we are brothers and sisters in Christ with other Christians. I have said on occasion that there is only one good kind of fighter for Jesus Christ—the man who does not like to fight. The belligerent man is never the one to be belligerent for Jesus. And it is exactly the same with leadership. The Christian leader should be a quiet man of God who is extruded by God’s grace into some place of leadership.

We all have egoistic pressures inside us. We may have substantial victories over them and we may grow, but we never completely escape them in this life. The pressure is always there deep in my heart and soul, needing to be faced with honesty. These pressures are evident in the smallest of things as well as the greatest. I have seen fights over who was going to be the president of a Sunday school class composed of three members. The temptation has nothing to do with size. It comes from a spirit, a mentality, inside us. The person in leadership for leadership’s sake is returning to the way of the world, like the boy dusting off the boss’s chair and saying, “Someday I’ll sit in it, and I’ll make people jump.”

One of the loveliest incidents in the early church occurred when Barnabas concluded that Paul was the man of the hour and then had to seek him out because Paul had gone back to Tarsus, his own little place. Paul was not up there nominating himself; he was back in Tarsus, even out of communication as far as we can tell. When Paul called himself “the chief of sinners, . . . not meet to be an apostle” (see 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Corinthians 15:9), he was not speaking just for outward form’s sake. From what he said elsewhere and from his actions we can see that this was Paul’s mentality. Paul, the man of leadership for the whole Gentile world, was perfectly willing to be in Tarsus until God said to him, “This is the moment.”

Being a Rod of God

The people who receive praise from the Lord Jesus will not in every case be the people who hold leadership in this life. There will be many persons who were sticks of wood that stayed close to God and were quiet before Him, and were used in power by Him in a place which looks small to men.

Each Christian is to be a rod of God in the place of God for him. We must remember throughout our lives that in God's sight there are no little people and no little places. Only one thing is important: to be consecrated persons in God's place for us, at each moment. Those who think of themselves as little people in little places, if committed to Christ and living under His Lordship in the whole of life, may, by God's grace, change the flow of our generation. And as we get on a bit in our lives, knowing how weak we are, if we look back and see we have been somewhat used of God, then we should be the rod "surprised by joy."

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FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER

CHRISTIAN LIVING

