CHAPTER THREE

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER: WHOLENESS

In the movie *Bridge Over the River Kwai*, a British colonel in a prisoner of war camp becomes totally preoccupied with his task of building a bridge across a river. He builds a magnificent bridge—a bridge that he hopes will last for hundreds of years and that the people will remember. He is focused on this small task. In the midst of the task, however, he loses the big picture and does not realize the effect of building this bridge. The bridge he built is used for the Japanese army to carry troops in order to fight the British. He becomes a traitor to his own cause because he is so preoccupied with one task that he cannot see the effect of his action on others.

This approach to life is typical of the modern world. The modern world divided everything up into specializations so that life became fragmented and disconnected. People lost a sense of the whole—of how everything related to everything else. We see this fragmentation in all levels of society. We experience it with the government, which we ridicule as the bureaucracy. Who has not had the experience of going first to one office and then another where they shuffle you around and pass the buck? You never get an answer because each office is dealing with one little specialization, and they tell us, "Well, I don't do that."

A similar thing has happened in medicine. When I was a little boy people had a family doctor, but as time passed everything became a specialization. Now we have doctors for skin and doctors for backs and doctors for just about everything. Now I go to an internist. An internist cannot, so far as I

can tell, really help you; but at least he knows which of his friends probably can. Everything's a specialization. The joke in education is that a Ph.D. is somebody who knows more and more about less and less. Dissertation titles reflect this pursuit of narrow expertise. My dissertation has the embarrassingly narrow title of *Evangelistic Fervency Among the Puritans in Stuart England, 1603–1688*. Even in high school students begin to experience the fragmentation of knowledge and experience. They study many subjects, but rarely do the subjects connect. They study English over here, and math over here, and history somewhere else; but students are left wondering, "What does this have to do with life?" Where does it come together? The standard answer to this question from my seminary professors was, "Well, I just give you the theory—I let you work it out." Great!

After school, the average American experiences fragmentation in the work place. The assembly line is perhaps one of the greatest representations of specialization, where people can spend thirty years just tightening one screw, and that's all they do. They specialize in that one piece, but they never have the opportunity of putting together the whole thing. No one has the sense of pride and accomplishment that comes from actually building the washing machine or the car. This is what sets Rolls Royce apart from all other cars, because a team gets together and builds a whole car. Each Rolls is a masterpiece of these people working together on the whole thing. They form a team, and they take pride in what they do.

The church in the United States, unfortunately, adopted the worldview of the modern age. We adopted the methodology, and we bought into the idea of specialization. I have spent my life as a Southern Baptist. The Southern Baptist Convention represents modernity at its most efficient. The Baptist Program could be found in virtually every Southern Baptist church. Southern Baptist churches had graded Sunday school from the cradle to the grave. They had graded choirs from preschool through adults. They had graded missions organizations for men and for women. They had a graded program of discipleship training separate from Sunday school. The Baptist Program represented all the different specializations of church life, but rarely did the pieces ever come together. For all of the activity, each church might have been running five or six entirely different, independent church programs. That fragmentation characterizes the modern age. Every denomination had its counterpart to the Southern Baptist Program.

The Baptist Program worked very well, and provided Southern Baptists with a structure that propelled them to unparalleled growth among American denominations. That experience represents another thing about the modern age. We concentrated on what works. But a lot of people, the postmodern people, have voted "no." They voted no because they no longer come. They

do not participate. The assembly-line approach to faith no longer meets their spiritual needs, so they stay home. The specialization mentality characterized the conflict between different divisions or agencies of the different denominations. There was tremendous turf fighting between agencies over who was in charge of important or popular ministries. Jealousy and power politics ensued if one agency started doing what the other one perceived as their area of specialization. This way of relating is typical of the modern age.

Now, the postmodern generation has cried out for things to be pooled together. They live lives strung apart. Their lives are hectic. The lives of the older, modern generation are hectic, too—but we came into it from an easier time, just like the frog in the pot of water, who, when the heat is turned on gradually, will stay there until it is cooked. Modern Christians have been in church from the time it was simple, and they have grown up cooked. The modern generation stayed with it. The difference with the postmodern generation is that they do not have the loyalty. They will not stick with it, because they do not like all the different pieces. They do not want to be pulled in different directions in their personal life. They want to see how all the pieces fit together.

Christians who have been around for a long time absorbed how one area of church life relates to the rest of the church, and how discipleship training prepares church leaders by giving them an understanding of doctrine, methodology, missions, and polity. The postmodern generation has no reason to understand or appreciate any of the denominational program. They do not like the conflict of competing specializations and departments, and they do not like turf warfare. For them, church often looks like just another organization, and they do not want to belong to an organization that adds another specialization to their lives.

DEPTH OF FRAGMENTATION

Modernity destroyed something about the human possibility of even understanding how the varied pieces of life fit together. In an agrarian culture, people understood the relationships of life. They did not necessarily understand the relationships as a result of thinking about it. They experienced the process. Over time they knew that having wheat for bread meant plowing, disking, sowing, cultivating, and harvesting. Having clothes to wear involved these processes for cotton and flax, plus another set of related experiences in caring for animals that finally resulted in wool. With the raw cotton, wool, or flax, a person could then begin yet another set of related experiences involving cleaning, dying, carding, spinning, and weaving. Modern urban people only see the finished product. Modern people depend

upon instant satisfaction. We have lost the sense of time, work, and relationship involved in the ordinary processes of life.

During the earlier part of the twentieth century, an expression arose to indicate the significance of something. If it was truly grand, it was said to be "the greatest thing since sliced bread." Modernity praised the separation of people from the basic process of life. At the end of the twentieth century, one of the growing fads of urban dwellers involved the making of homemade bread. People did not grow the wheat, but they combined all the ingredients themselves and took the time to bake the bread. A Vietnam veteran told me that he bakes bread every Saturday and regards it as a mystical experience that involves the essence of life. One might say that it functioned as a sacrament for him.

The postmodern people feel that something is missing, but they are not sure what. Note that they *feel* something is missing. They did not arrive at this view necessarily from thought. When our bodies do not feel right, we go to a doctor to find out what is wrong. Feelings give us information, but they do not tell the whole story. Part of the tragedy of the fragmentation of modernity involves the separation of thought and emotion. Both are important, but neither by itself tells the whole story.

The modern world blossomed in an atmosphere that exalted reason and ridiculed emotion. Such terms as "the Enlightenment" and "the Age of Reason" described the dawning of the modern age. This attitude toward reason set heart and mind against each other. This fragmentation appears most graphically in the career of that most excellent literary character, Sherlock Holmes. In explaining why he had no room for love and romance in his life, Holmes explained to his friend Watson, "But love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgment."[1]

Sherlock Holmes went further in his fragmentation. Not only did he not want to deal with the emotional dimension of life, he wanted only the kind of rational knowledge that pertained to his work. For Holmes, knowledge was utilitarian and pragmatic. He further explained to Watson:

> I consider that a man's brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. A fool takes in all the lumber of every sort that he comes across, so that the knowledge which might be useful to him gets crowded out, or at least is jumbled up with a lot of other things, so that he has difficulty in laying his hands upon it.[2]

The specialist Holmes describes seems not unreasonable, especially when he devotes himself to ridding London of the basest criminals. Of course, most fragmented modernists are not Sherlock Holmes. They do not spend

their mental energies outwitting the criminal element. Instead, they know all about their job, which bores them and everyone else.

In this state of boredom, the postmodern generation has turned to Thomas Jefferson's ideal: the pursuit of happiness. As a child of the Enlightenment, however, Jefferson represents fragmentation at its most colorful. The fundamental flow in his rhetoric is the notion that happiness can be pursued. It suggests that a person can find happiness outside themselves. My Constitutional History professor in college taught that Jefferson meant "property" when he spoke of the pursuit of happiness. Either way the flow remains. People have the notion that happiness or the missing ingredient of life lies outside them in either some activity or some object. They are in pursuit of the secular sacrament.

In recent years as the postmodern generation has grown increasingly aware that something is missing, a variety of approaches or techniques have arisen to satisfy the feeling. Within the field of counseling and therapy, in particular, several terms have emerged. One approach was to "get in touch with your feelings." This approach acknowledges the modern tendency to deaden the emotions and the ability to deal with emotions. Another approach would have us "get in touch with the child within." This approach suggests that something was lost a long time ago and that somehow it can be reclaimed from childhood. This approach reflects the yearning for something lost or missing, like Citizen Kane whispering "Rosebud."

Unfortunately, these cures are as much a part of the problem as fragmentation. Fragmentation is just one of the many plagues of modernity. Reductionism is another. Reductionism reduces an explanation to just one cause. Thus, if we get in touch with the child within, we solve the problem. If we get in touch with our feelings, we solve the problem. Part of the problem with ever finding a way out of the fragmentation rests in the reductionist assumption. Life is more complicated than that. Like baking bread or making a shirt, life can bog down at any one of many different steps along the way.

Why do some people feel torn apart in a life situation in which someone else seems to function fine? Part of the answer lies in the extent to which people are "whole" or complete. Since Charles Darwin, the modern world has tended to view people as purely physical in nature with a collection of assorted body parts that serve different functions. In this view, reason and emotion are nothing more than chemical reactions. "Bad" emotions and thoughts arise as a result of a chemical imbalance. The logical fallacy arises from concluding that all of emotion and thought can be explained as a chemical reaction because a chemical imbalance in the body affects emotion and reason.

As postmodern people have grown increasingly aware of the failure of reductionism in general and of naturalism in particular, they have grown aware of the spiritual dimension of people. Eastern religions offer a perspective on wholeness that liberal Christianity had cast aside. At a seminar on science and faith in Toronto sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, I met a sociologist from Canada who was studying the approach of a Hindu doctor to holistic medicine. When I asked her if she had explored any of the Christian tradition of healing, she said that she did not know much about Christianity. She had not rejected the traditional religion of her culture. She simply did not know about it.

Deeply embodied in the biblical understanding of people lies the understanding of the unity of body and spirit, even though the two are quite different. A body without a spirit is a corpse, and a spirit without a body is a ghost. Neither is fully itself apart from the dynamic relationship that exists between the two. In Genesis 2, we find a graphic picture of this relationship as God breathes into a clay statue and it becomes a "breathing being" or soul. People do not have a soul; they are a soul. In the language of Zion, when God saves our soul, he saves all of us. The idea of resurrection that lies at the heart of the Christian faith emphasizes this totality of body and spirit as the human soul.

The Greeks had an entirely different concept of body and soul. They believed that the soul was eternal, that it existed prior to being imprisoned in a body, and that it would escape to the spiritual realm once the body died. They viewed the soul as good and the body as bad. This concept of the two as opposed to one another is referred to as dualism. Hebrew thought insisted that the physical and spiritual dimensions of a person exist as a unity and that they were originally conceived and created by God as good. Just as sin destroys a person's relationship with God, it also destroys the unity of body and spirit. The appropriate relationship fragments. The apostle Paul described this breakdown in Galatians where he spoke of it as a war between the flesh and the spirit.

While Eastern religions aim at wholeness or completion, they do so in a different way than Christianity. While Hinduism advocates an essential unity, it achieves this unity by denying the true reality of the particulars. In Hindu thought, all is one. A body is an aspect of everything, not just of one particular person. In fact, no one actually exists as a particular person. Only the unity is real. Buddhism also advocates a unity of all things, but it denies the true reality of the physical. The illusion of the physical world creates the experience of fragmentation for the soul, which has not lost itself in the unconscious unity of all reality. In contrast to these views, the Hebrew understanding of the person regards the physical body as a real and human personality, unique and distinct from God and other people.

THE BODY/SPIRIT UNITY

The Hebrew scriptures describe people as souls composed of a personal, unique spirit that is intimately, uniquely, and inseparably related to a real physical body. Modern scientific naturalism denies the spirit while Eastern monism denies the body and particularity of individual people.

The apostle Paul spoke at length on this fundamental understanding and its relationship to everyday life. Fragmentation has occurred in some way in every society that provides for any kind of social structure. Paul used the metaphor of the body to describe human corporate relationships within the church and the relationship of individuals to Christ. People relate to themselves in their uniqueness and difference from other people like the organs or "members" of a body.

This metaphor represents an objective view of the universe and the existence of particular things. It assumes that at a basic level we can have some confidence that our sense of perception can be relied upon for a practical knowledge of the world. In contrast to monism, which views everything as actually one thing, this view believes in distinctions between things. The eyes really exist, and they do something different from the ears or the lungs.

At the same time, the example of the body demonstrates the interdependent nature of reality. This view represents a relational model rather than a naturalistic cause-and-effect model. If I injure my foot, the pain is not felt merely in my foot. It may be localized there, but the whole of me experiences pain. It affects my ability to think about other things. If my kidney begins to malfunction, it affects my whole body. Illness tends to always be localized, yet it affects the whole body. I can lose some body parts without dying, yet the whole of me is diminished. I can lose other body parts and all of me will die. The parts are real, unique, and functionally different, yet belong to a larger whole. The Christian faith affirms both the value of the individual and corporate responsibility and belonging. The fragmentation of modernity has continually forced the false issue that would press Christians to opt for one or the other of these modes of expression.

Before leaving the metaphor of the body and its members to explore the relationship between body and spirit, we can see that this basic understanding of human nature has an application to social relationships. The Bible assumes the unity in diversity of the human body. This same unity in diversity applies to the ideal social relationship known as the church, or the Body of Christ.

Just as a human body with ailing parts results in a sick person, a social relationship's health depends upon the completeness of those who make up the relationship. It only takes one incomplete person to make an ailing social

group. The old saying "One rotten apple spoils the lot" refers to this condition.

Just as a lung cannot really be a healthy lung apart from its relationship to the rest of the human body, a Christian cannot really be a growing, vital Christian apart from his or her relationship to the other members of the Body of Christ. The problem of fragmentation of social relationships goes back to the beginning of human experience, and Christ offers a solution to the problem of fragmented relationships in society based on relationship to him.

As the opening of Genesis paints a picture of human nature, God declares that it is not good for people to be alone. People are meant for relationship, yet human history is the sad story of the failure of human relationships. In praying for his disciples, however, Jesus presented the model for wholeness in human relationship. He prayed for human unity based on relationship to him rooted in the unity of the Father and the Son. In the Father and the Son we see the intrinsic relationship between spirit and body modeled. Though the Father and the Son are real, separate persons, they belong to each other as one God.

Returning to the model of the human body, we see that the physical unity has diverse and unique parts. The biblical understanding of the human spirit has an equal complexity. It does not do simply to reduce the conflict of the human spirit to the difference between heart and mind. In the Hebrew understanding of people, the mind belongs to the heart! In the Psalms and throughout the Old Testament the heart serves as a poetic metaphor for the human spirit.

When King David sang, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10 KJV), he was not referring to two things: heart and spirit. Instead of rhyming, Hebrew poetry makes its mark by saying one thing in two ways. The Hebrew correlation of the human spirit with a physical part of the body, however, suggests the strong relationship between body and spirit.

A number of biblical references point up the fact that a weakened body diminishes the spirit and a weakened spirit diminishes the body. When Jacob *heard* the news that Joseph his beloved son was still alive, and *saw* the wagons loaded with food that Joseph had sent, his spirit revived (Gen. 45:27). News that the Jordan River had dried up to allow the Israelites to enter the promised land caused the Canaanite kings to lose heart (Josh. 5:1). The spirit of Samson revived when he drank (Judg. 15:19). The spirit of an Egyptian slave revived when he ate (1 Sam. 30:12). The spirit of the Queen of Sheba faded when she saw that Solomon could answer all of her questions (1 Kings 10:5, 2 Chron. 9:4). A Hebrew proverb states this idea simply:

> A man's spirit sustains him in sickness,
> but a crushed spirit who can bear? (Prov. 18:14)

When the disciples could not stay awake to watch for him while he prayed on the night he was arrested, Jesus observed, "The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matt. 26:41). In other words, the weakness (tiredness) of the body affected the exercise of the will.

How multidimensional is the human spirit that can so easily feel torn and fragmented? It is probably not possible to give an absolute answer. An examination of the kinds of words that describe the human spirit in the Bible provides a basis for grouping dimensions of the spirit into broad categories. This method may seem frustrating because categories tend to overlap, which is precisely the point. One dimension of the spirit has an impact on another. The modern desire to have neat, discrete categories does not correspond to the mess of the human spirit.

Some references suggest that the spirit represents the domain of the intellect and the will:

willing understanding	Exodus 35:21, Job 20:3
inquiry	Psalm 77:6
enlightenment	Proverbs 20:27
discernment	Proverbs 18:15
self-control	Proverbs 25:28

Some references suggest that the spirit represents the domain of vitality and life:

revive	Genesis 45:27
preserve	Job 10:12
breaks	Psalm 76:12
fails	Psalm 143:7
faint and melt	Ezekiel 21:7

Some references suggest that the spirit represents the domain of the emotions:

troubled	Genesis 41:8
anguished	Exodus 6:9 (KJV)
sullen	1 Kings 21:5
bitter	Ezekiel 3:14
distressed	Isaiah 54:6

Some references suggest that the spirit represents the domain of character and attitude:

obstinate	Deuteronomy 2:30
deceit	Psalm 32:2
unfaithful	Psalm 78:8
quick-tempered	Proverbs 14:29
haughty	Proverbs 16:18
humble	Proverbs 16:19
patient	Ecclesiastes 7:8
proud	Ecclesiastes 7:8
innocent	Proverbs 16:2
trustworthy	Proverbs 11:13

These lists represent just a brief selection of references to the human spirit. They are not presented in any organized, systematic way in the Bible. They merely appear in the stories about certain people who have encountered God.

I have made reference to these domains of the human spirit in other books. Here I speak of only four basic domains, but I have spoken of five and six. I have even drawn diagrams to illustrate how the discrete domains influence one another, but these are modern rather than postmodern attempts to describe scientifically something that cannot be known by the scientific method.[3] Rather than circles and lines, it may be more helpful to think of a big plate of spaghetti. All the different strands of spiritual existence are too tangled to say that intellect and character can be neatly isolated. Stubbornness affects one's ability to make reasonable decisions. Depression affects the exercise of the will. Pride can distort understanding. Poor discernment can create grief.

The sense of fragmentation within a person comes when we lose the equilibrium necessary to keep the fullness of the soul in balance. By ignoring one aspect of what it means to be human while indulging another aspect, the basis for unity loses its impact. This loss of equilibrium looks different in all people. Like Sherlock Holmes, we may indulge the intellect and ignore the capacity for love, which leaves a person emotionally immature. Like Casanova, we may indulge the physical sensations of sex and ignore the emotional capacity for intimacy and commitment, which leaves a person emotionally retarded. Like Falstaff, we may indulge the physical appetite for food and drink and ignore the character capacity for self-control, which leaves a person physically unhealthy. Literature has chronicled this universal problem of disequilibrium and refers to it as the "tragic flaw." An other-

wise commendable person always has a fault, perhaps known only to the self or to a small few, which damages the person and his or her most important relationships.

The problem of fragmentation during modernity has seemed more intense than in the past perhaps because the normal constraints that a culture devises to protect us from ourselves and minimize the effects of fragmentation have all but disappeared. Society has destroyed most of the old restraints in the West. The entertainment industry has replaced school, church, and home as the primary institution for teaching and preserving values in society. For pure entertainment value, the focus of movies, television, and music recording tends toward a narrow range of dimensions of the soul. The themes relate to sex, violence, vanity, and pride. Such themes as self-control, patience, humility, and sacrifice rarely make it because they do not have the same entertainment value. In most cultures the institutions for teaching and preserving the values also serve to help people restrain the tendency toward disequilibrium. In the West, however, the new institution of entertainment exists to encourage overindulgence and abandonment of restraint. The entertainment industry exists to cater to the fantasies of the public.

Without wholeness at the personal level, societies quickly fall into disequilibrium. They tend to allow one or two dimensions of the soul to define them. The city-states of ancient Greece illustrate this tendency. The harsh, military outlook of Sparta has given us the term "spartan." Corinth was noted in ancient times for its sensuality and sexual overindulgence. Athens gained a reputation as an intellectual center. These differences inevitably led to the Peloponnesian War, which effectively destroyed the autonomous existence of the city-states involved. Left weakened and dissipated, they were easily conquered by the Macedonians.

In modern times, the growth of fragmentation in American society can be observed in the difference between how we conducted World War II and the Vietnam War. Whether at the personal level of the soul or the social level of a nation, people need some basis for integration. People tend to fragment. Society tends to fragment; therefore, some focus must serve as a basis for pulling the pieces together into a whole. In World War II, the Allies had a clear mission. Churchill and Roosevelt articulated more than slogans and propaganda. They clearly laid out the mission of the war, and in so doing they provided people with a sense of purpose that bound the people together. The Vietnam War did not have the same sense of mission and purpose. Instead of uniting the nation, the Vietnam War tore the nation apart. The presence or absence of a sense of mission and purpose had a profound impact on the course of the two wars.

In World War II, the presence of a clear, commonly held mission led to

a grand and historic expression of strategy. Strategy represents the military concept of typing together all of the pieces on a grand scale. For instance, the Allied invasion of Normandy stands out as one of the greatest strategic initiatives in military history. It involved the largest armada ever assembled and included the navies of many nations. For it to work, however, all the pieces had to work together. The meteorologists had to identify the time when the weather would be best for the operation. The airborne divisions had to parachute behind enemy lines during the night and disrupt communications. The navies had to transport troops from England to France. The mine sweepers had to clear the mines so the troop ships could approach land. The combat engineers had to clear the mines on land for the advancing land troops. The quartermaster corps had to assemble sufficient supplies and transportation to sustain the operation. The signal corps had to establish communication links for the whole operation. The strategy required that all the pieces do what they were intended to do in the proportion in which they were intended to do it. Napoleon learned the hard way that it does no good to focus all one's energies on advancing with the finest troops if the supply lines are not maintained.

In Vietnam the absence of a clear, commonly held mission led to a war without strategy. The war involved all of the same components: Navy, Air Force, Army, Marines. The components included the same functions: combat, supplies, communications. In Vietnam, however, none of it had a purpose. The air force bombed Hanoi, but for no apparent reason other than a show of force. Troops were ordered to take a village, then go and take a crossroads, then go and take a bridge, then go and take a hill, and finally go and take the village again before starting all over. All the pieces were present. All the activity of war went on, but nothing had a purpose to hold it together and give it a direction. Nothing held the pieces in balance.

It only took one generation for the fragmentation to become complete. A sense of national purpose has disappeared. On the personal level individuals struggle with the issue of purpose, meaning, and identity. Without these matters resolved, it is virtually impossible to deal with the tornness that arises from living in a fragmented world. Without an integrating purpose, people have no basis for pulling the pieces together in their own soul or dealing with the many forces that would pull them apart.

PULLING THE PIECES TOGETHER AGAIN

In that context, what opportunity do Christians have for reaching the postmodern generation? The gospel brought the stinging critique to fragmentation long before the postmodern generation thought of it. The last night

Jesus was with his disciples, gathered together in the room, he said, "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world gives, give I thee." Jesus offers a basis for having wholeness in a fragmented world.

The postmodern generation's distaste for fragmentation and their longing for wholeness will not make the fragmentation of an increasingly complex society go away, nor will it lead to wholeness. Part of the charm of pluralism lies in the possibility that it can end the experience of fragmentation. Pluralism rejects the idea of differences in an effort to make people one. At the same time, it accepts all the differences by denying the differences. In order to do this, however, it requires that we disregard the aspect of people that makes critical judgments and assigns value. In this sense pluralism actually heightens the experience of fragmentation by ignoring the distinction between the equality of people and the equality of behavior. All people are acceptable, but not all behavior is acceptable. By denying moral judgment and its intrinsic relationship to the human spirit, we remove the restraints on individual behavior and the social fabric. By not allowing for moral judgment, people become alienated within themselves. The error of postmodern people has been to think that wholeness comes through the avoidance of conflict. Wholeness only shows itself in strength in the process of conflict. The conflict provides the heat that melds us together.

When Jesus spoke of peace, he used an ancient term. That ancient Hebrew word *Shalom*, which we translate peace, expresses the idea of "wholeness." A modern-day person might use a term like "Get your act together. Pull yourself together." It's the idea of having all the pieces back where they're supposed to be no matter what's coming at you. And Jesus says, "That's what I will do for you." The world's idea of peace is "We're not actually killing each other right now." This worldly approach to peace characterizes what peaceful coexistence was like with the Soviet Union back in the sixties when we were all building bomb shelters. We were not killing each other, but we were ready for war at any moment. That was "peace." Jesus says, "That's the way the world gives you peace." Worrying if somebody is going to break into your house or mug you represents an absence of peace. Maybe you have not been robbed, but the anxiety is there. Jesus says, "I'm not going to give you that kind of peace." In the midst of the conflict and the strife coming from every direction with all of the pieces of life pulling in a thousand directions, Jesus said "I'm going to give you peace. I will be your peace."

For the soul to have peace, all of the aspects of the spirit need to work together in harmony with one another and in relation to the body. Jesus Christ offers a relational solution to the dilemma. The fragmentation that people experience represents one dimension of the absence of a relationship

with God. Fragmentation represents one of the aspects of the experience of sin in a person's life. The experience does not exhaust the meaning of sin, but on a day-to-day basis it provides the best gauge for realizing that something is out of balance in a relationship with God.

Peace for the soul begins with peace with God. Another way to think of fragmentation is alienation. The act of bringing together what has been alienated is called *reconciliation*. Accountants perform this act every day. They search columns of numbers to find why they are out of balance. One of the columns has an error and the error must be corrected. Accountants refer to the act of correcting the error and changing it to conform to the right figure as *reconciling* the error. Jesus Christ came into the world to reconcile us to God. People have fragmented lives, alienated from themselves and others, because they are out of balance with God. They are alienated from God and need to be reconciled to God.

In writing to the Romans, Paul explained that "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1) and that this peace works to bring wholeness to our life experiences. He observed that "we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom. 5:3-5). The peace of God works to fit all of life's experiences together. This peace comes as a by-product of the primary relationship to God.

As the prophet Isaiah declared more than twenty-five hundred years ago,

> You will keep in perfect peace
> him whose mind is steadfast,
> because he trusts in you. (Isa. 26:3)

The pressures of life that pull people, families, and society apart will never go away. The problem of fragmentation lies at the very heart of people and it multiplies at the social level. Yet, we can have peace in the presence of the pressures. Peace has to do with how we respond to the fragmentation of life. Isaiah described a situation in which trust has an impact on the mind which results in peace. An alternative to trust might be anxiety and worry, which lead to fragmentation. Isaiah does not commend generic trust. He would be the last one to encourage generic trust. He had a low view of human behavior. Peace comes from trusting God.

Peace represents an intrinsic characteristic of God. Just as people have skin and hair, God has peace. Peace is an essential aspect of his nature. God has his act together. He is in perfect balance. He tempers justice with mercy, love with holiness. The apostle Paul came to understand how the nature of

God himself affects those who have a relationship to God. Paul experienced all of the wide swings of success and failure, wealth and poverty, sickness and health, popularity and notoriety. Writing from prison as he awaited his inevitable execution, Paul wrote to the Philippians about how they could experience peace in their lives instead of the gnawing anxiety we often face. He said, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

He does not promise that God will take away the problems. Instead, he explains that the experience of communication and relationship with God will affect how we experience the tornness of life. The peace of God guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Paul does not speak of peace in generic terms as an independent quality. Instead, he speaks specifically of the peace of God which has the power to hold our reason and emotions together during times of stress. The nature of God holds us together in Christ Jesus.

The phrase "in Christ Jesus" almost looks like a throwaway line. It appears so often in the New Testament we learn to ignore it, like the introductions to Paul letters, or the long genealogical tables in Matthew and Luke. Yet, in the New Testament this little phrase explains it all. All of the seeming benefits of what Christians call salvation come as a by-product of the relationship to Christ. Those in Christ have the capacity for experiencing the peace of God because of the relationship to God by Christ. Just before he left his disciples to go and pray in the garden before the guards came to take him away to his execution, Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In the hours that followed, Jesus modeled the meaning and source of peace. As he prayed in the garden, he experienced the tornness that comes from conflict. He did not want to experience the horrible death by crucifixion that awaited him. On the other hand, he wanted to fulfill his mission. Often in life we do not want to deal with the consequences of free moral choice, arguing that if choice has a consequence, then it cannot be free. In the course of prayer, however, Jesus experienced the peace of God which transcends all understanding.

The postmodern person hopes that by avoiding conflict, moral judgment, and decisions, he or she can experience peace. Yet, the underlying causes of fragmentation will remain. The reasons we have the capacity for moral decision remain in the human nature and express themselves in social relationships. People lie. People gossip. People manipulate. Until the underlying

problem disappears, the pressures for alienation and fragmentation will continue.

We have nothing to offer the postmodern world in terms of organizations, programs, institutions, and structures. What we have to offer is a concrete basis for peace in a fragmented world. We have a Savior to offer, not a tradition. We must never be confused about what it is that we offer and what it is they need. They never need another demand. They need a Savior who will put their house in order. Then they will be in a position to deal with all the demands, all the conflicts, and all the fragmenting issues of life that are going to come.