I am convinced that I have the greatest job in the world. And seeing the impact of Dallas Theological Seminary graduates like Chip Ingram across the globe does nothing but strengthen my conviction!

I appreciate Chip’s challenge to all of us to practice authentic Christianity as we become mature followers of our Lord. The kind of person Chip describes in this issue of Veritas is the profile of a servant-leader we are committed to equip at Dallas Theological Seminary.

I don’t know many people who are more passionate about the things of God than Chip Ingram. His heart comes through in both the quality of his teaching and the passion with which he presents it. He is excited about communicating truth to help see lives transformed by the Word and the Spirit of God.

As a former pastor myself, I am deeply burdened by the reality that, as Chip mentioned, 9 out of 10 people starting in ministry eventually leave. It caused me to ask the obvious question, How are DTS grads doing? I am humbled yet thrilled to tell you that by God’s grace, 80 percent of our alumni are still in the ministry today. We give God all the glory.

We couldn’t do this without friends like you who work shoulder to shoulder with us to complete God’s work in the lives of people like Chip Ingram . . . and ultimately, the millions who are touched by him and other graduates.

Your prayers and financial support for Dallas Theological Seminary are helping mold leaders for a world that is desperately short of true servant-leaders. Thank you for standing with us in this work.

Dr. Mark L. Bailey, President
Dallas Theological Seminary
**Distinguished Speaker**

**Chip Ingram** is senior pastor of the Venture Christian Church in Los Gatos, California, and the Bible teacher of *Living on the Edge*, an international teaching and discipleship ministry that provides practical help for everyday believers.

As a pastor for more than 25 years, Chip is passionate about helping Christians live like Christians by raising the bar of discipleship. He has pastored churches of 500 in Texas to 5,000 in California. He also served for five years as president of Walk Thru the Bible. Chip holds an M.S. degree from West Virginia University and a Th.M. degree from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Chip is the author of 12 books, including his latest release, *Living on the Edge: Dare to Experience True Spirituality*. *Living on the Edge* reaches more than a million people weekly via radio in the United States and TV in all the Arab and Russian-speaking countries in the world, as well as on the Internet. Chip and his wife, Theresa, have four adult children and eight grandchildren.

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**Veritas**

Veritas is a publication of Dallas Seminary for our valued friends and partners, designed to provide biblical encouragement and instruction in keeping with our strong commitment to minister to those who stand with us in prayer and financial support. We are pleased to present the messages of outstanding leaders and Bible teachers who speak during chapels and at other events, as a way of bringing you “on campus” with us and giving you the benefit of their insights. Veritas is also available online at our website, www.dts.edu/media/veritas.

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**Chip Ingram says** the Church was commissioned by its founder, the Lord Jesus, to make disciples who would obey all that He taught. Yet today, what we find too often is churches that are filled with fans, but few followers; making decisions, but not making disciples. Studies show that 9 out of 10 people who identify themselves as “evangelicals” reveal by their own answers that their lives differ little from those of nonbelievers in areas such as values, ethics, worldview, morality, fidelity, sexual practices, family issues, and adherence to historic Christian doctrines. In this powerful message delivered at a Dallas Theological Seminary Leader Board conference, Chip addresses the problem and offers solutions.

**start here:**

The ‘Romans 12’ Road to Spiritual Maturity

*By Chip Ingram*

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**Chip Ingram** says the Church was commissioned by its founder, the Lord Jesus, to make disciples who would obey all that He taught. Yet today, what we find too often is churches that are filled with fans, but few followers; making decisions, but not making disciples. Studies show that 9 out of 10 people who identify themselves as “evangelicals” reveal by their own answers that their lives differ little from those of nonbelievers in areas such as values, ethics, worldview, morality, fidelity, sexual practices, family issues, and adherence to historic Christian doctrines. In this powerful message delivered at a Dallas Theological Seminary Leader Board conference, Chip addresses the problem and offers solutions.
We have what I call a “quality control” problem today in the Church of Jesus Christ. Many people who say, “I am born again; I love God” reveal by their behavior that their lives do not match up with the teaching of the Bible.

There Is a Spiritual Disconnect
One reason for this disconnect on the subject of authentic, biblical spirituality is that many Christians believe that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is all about religious performance. A recent study on spiritual maturity suggests that most people customize their spirituality—yet they believe they are spiritually healthy and “good Christians.” In fact, 81 percent of born-again Christians believe that spiritual maturity is defined as “trying really hard to follow the rules of the Bible.”

And the problem is not just “in the pew.” Studies show that pastors are leaving the ministry in shocking numbers. Nine out of 10 pastors who start in the ministry do not finish in the ministry. An overwhelming 50 percent of pastors reported that if they could find another job and pay the bills, they would leave the ministry. Amazingly, 1,500 to 1,700 pastors leave the ministry every month due to a wide range of reasons.

Of course, these studies do not really tell us whether pastors are leaving their posts because they are discouraged by their members’ lack of spiritual growth or whether they themselves are not becoming spiritually mature Christians and leaders. But whether we look at the pew or the pulpit, it is clear that involvement in church programs, activities, and services does not necessarily produce spiritually mature Christians.

There Is Widespread Spiritual Confusion
I think a huge part of the problem is simply that many sincere believers who want to be true disciples of Jesus Christ are simply confused about what constitutes true spiritual maturity as defined in the Bible. Very rare is the church that has any means of measuring the qualitative growth of its members.

The problem is that if we cannot define what a disciple of Jesus should be like, how can we measure our progress toward maturity? The material I want to present in a very brief summary form here really grew out of a time I spent with about 8,000 pastors in Nigeria, during which we asked the questions, So what does it mean to be a follower of Jesus? What is a disciple?

Those questions led me to other important ones. For instance, where does the journey to true spirituality begin, and where does it lead? What does a disciple of Jesus look like, and how will we know when we have become one and/or helped someone else to become one? Many Christians search for the answers, but if they don’t know where they’re going, they may not even take the first step. Or they’ll start off in the wrong direction. Meeting people right where they are with clear direction for becoming fully mature disciples of Jesus Christ is one of the most significant roles I play as a pastor.

Here is my encouragement to you as we begin. Despite today’s confused, performance-driven spirituality, there is a proven pathway to true spirituality where any believer can start, or restart, the journey in the right direction. The early followers of Jesus took the world by storm because they clearly understood what God asked of them.

Based on the grace found in Romans 1–11, Romans 12 provides a
clear relational target for how Christians should “therefore” live as disciples. In this message, I want to share with you a few of the exciting discoveries the Lord has shown me in my study of Romans 12, which I believe is the “Start Here” arrow for the Christian life. In the 21 verses of this magnificent chapter, we find a measurable profile of an authentic disciple. The ‘Romans 12’ road map to spiritual maturity involves the 5 relationships and 5 biblical responses.

God—“Surrendered to God”—12:1

The timeless profile of authentic discipleship in Romans 12 provides this pathway to maturity for everyone, as I said earlier—whether you are a new Christian or have known the Lord for years. Someone has said that a big part of the solution to any problem is to ask the right questions about it. In this matter of attaining true spiritual maturity, the right questions are not how many times we go to church, how long or how often we read the Bible, or how much money we give to missions.

Based on what Paul teaches in Romans 12, here are some questions we need to ask ourselves if we want to move toward spiritual maturity: How do we give to God what He wants the most? How do we find God’s best for our lives? In terms of humility, how do we come to grips with who we really are? If Jesus said we are to love one another as He loved us and if the litmus test of all that He said and all that He did is how much we love one another, how do we experience authentic, heart-to-heart real relationships that are transformational? And finally, because we live in a fallen world, how do we supernaturally respond to evil with good?

What I have just given you in question form is an outline of Romans 12. What the apostle Paul did in Romans chapters 1–11 is present the longest, clearest explanation in the New Testament of the grace of God. Chapter 12 is the “executive summary” of what God wants based on His gift of grace. That’s why the “therefore” of 12:1 is there. This verse reads: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

Some translations say that this is our “reasonable” act of service. This is because the root word has the idea of logic in it; in other words, in light of God’s grace, nothing else makes sense except for us to offer ourselves to God. What God really wants from you and me, and from every Christian, is for us to bow our hearts and our knees and say to Him, “Here is my business, my family, my dreams, my future, my hobbies—everything I have, everything I am. I put all of it on the table and I step back, surrendering it all to You. Whatever You say in any area in any part of my life, on any day, I pre-decide that is what I will do.” That’s a spiritual sacrifice.

The World—“Separate from the World’s Values”—12:2

Romans 12:2 is the next step. Space limitations prevent me from quoting all the verses of this chapter, but you can follow me with your open Bible. Our surrender to God must be accompanied by a change in our relationship to the world. Instead of allowing (the verb here is passive) ourselves to be molded or controlled by this world, we allow ourselves to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
Notice how the change occurs. Paul does not say to stop being conformed to the world and start going to a lot of Christian activities and really try hard to be moral. The issue is our thinking, which is a much more profound level of change. We have to change our thinking—which means changing what goes into our minds. Transformation does not occur by willfully trying harder to be a better person. It happens when I say no to the world. When Christians live like Christians, they are surrendered to God. They are separate from the world’s values and then they discover God’s very best—His good and acceptable and perfect will.

My friend, Romans 12:2 is normal Christianity. Jesus said we cannot be His disciples unless we deny ourselves. We have to set the bar of discipleship high in our relationship with God, because that’s what Jesus and Paul and all the other writers of Scripture did. There is a downward drag on our lives called the world system. We have a flesh that is drawn to that system, and so it must be dealt with again and again on the road to genuine spiritual maturity.

Real spiritual transformation happens when I say no to the world.

Ourselves—“A Sober Self-Assessment”—12:3–8
In verses 3–8, we come to grips with an authentic assessment of ourselves. Some people spend their whole lives never figuring out who they really are. Maturing disciples of Jesus Christ have a sober view of themselves. That’s why Paul writes: “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment” (v. 3b). Basically, God is saying an authentic follower looks not just in the physical mirror, but also looks in the mirror of their soul and has an accurate sense of who God has made them to be.

At this point, Paul goes into a discussion of spiritual gifts, which can be used to the full blessing God intended when they are being practiced by growing believers who understand what God wants of them and who they are and who are ready to serve each other as part of their spiritual sacrifice of service to God.

Believers—“Serving in Love”—12:9–13
I hope you see the progression, that pathway to maturity I mentioned earlier, that Paul is laying out here. Romans 12:9–13 addresses the issue of how we as believers in the body of Christ can experience authentic community with one another. We do this by serving each other in sincere love, which means not wearing a mask. It means letting go of evil and clinging to what is good, being devoted to one another and giving preference to one another. Authentic community happens when the real you meets real needs for the right reason and in the right way.

That’s where life change occurs, because we love others when it hurts and we do it for the right reasons. We don’t love and serve others to get people to notice us or to praise us. We don’t do it to enhance our personality or increase our power. Rather, it’s a matter of taking the upward focus and resources of Christ.

Unbelievers—“ Supernaturally Responding to Evil with Good”—12:14–21
The last section of Romans 12 is verses 14–21. They follow logically in the progression because once we are moving
the right direction in our relationship with God and with our fellow believers, then we are ready to deal with the unbelieving world.

Verse 21 is really the capstone of what Paul is saying: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Verses 14–20 tell us how to do that. If your enemy is hungry, feed him. Retaliation is prohibited by God in personal relationships. Holding bitterness in my heart toward others is not an option if I want to be an authentic, maturing disciple of Jesus Christ.

In terms of the world, Christians today are known largely by what we are against and the things we disapprove of. Of course we have to take godly moral stands on crucial issues. But when we believers stop complaining on talk radio about how terrible everything is and how it’s all Hollywood’s fault or the media’s fault and when we start living Christlike lives that are surrendered to God and separate from the world, understanding who we are in true humility, radically serving and loving one another, then I’ll tell you what is going to happen. People are going to start beating a path to our doors and the doors of our churches just as they did in the early days of the Church.

Holding bitterness in my heart toward others is not an option if I want to be a maturing disciple of Jesus Christ.

In this issue of *Veritas*, you have had an exciting “taste” of Chip Ingram’s powerful, Romans 12–based study to help every believer achieve the Christ-honoring life He wants us to live.

Now you can enjoy the full “meal” by requesting Chip’s book *Living on the Edge*. Chip’s own description of this unique resource says it best:

“Romans 12 is the START HERE for the Christian life. What most Christians sadly misunderstand is that God isn’t into religious activities or performance-based Christianity. Instead, Romans 12 reveals to us a relational profile of what it means to be a disciple, as well as a proven pathway to becoming more like Jesus every day.”

No matter where you are in your Christian life and your church experience, Chip Ingram invites you to “start here,” with Paul’s challenge in Romans 12:1 to offer our lives as living sacrifices to Christ. Join thousands of other believers who are taking up this challenge today!