

### **Addictive Spirituality**

*You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it's obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough. Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it? Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up! Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you? Galatians 3:1–5, The Message*

*Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?" He answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?" He said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself." "Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live." Looking for a loophole, he asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?" Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man. "A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds.*

*"Believe me: I am in my Father and my Father is in me. If you can't believe that, believe what you see – these works. The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing...A loveless world," said Jesus, "is a sightless world. If anyone loves me, he will carefully keep my word and my Father will love him – we'll move right into the neighborhood!" The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish.*

*John 14:11-12, John 1:14, The Message*

*Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I'll pay you on my way back.' "What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?" "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, "Go and do the same." Luke 10:25–31, The Message*

### **Pausing to Prepare**

*"In the twisted logic of addiction we live as if God accepts me because I do the right thing (addictive doing), God accepts me because I feel so bad about myself (addictive feeling), or God accepts me because I know my bible inside and out and can take any wrong-thinking person down in an argument (addictive thinking). This hoped-for closeness to God, because it is based on our performance, is fragile and tentative. People who are spiritually addicted live with a constant anxiety about whether they have done enough, felt enough or believed enough." Soul Repair, p.65.*

Notice how Paul calls the Galatians crazy for their self-efforts at strenuous moral striving. Then pay attention to Jesus's call to "Do it and you'll live." Our motivation for why we go and do will determine whether or not we're crazy like the Galatians or loving God.

### **Food for thought**

1. What spiritual disciplines would you enjoy adding to your daily living that might help you regain and retain your sanity? How would trusting God rather than trying to please him change how you serve him?