

How Do We *DOOOO* It?

BY CHARLES MAHANEY

I left the conference convinced I was a different man. God's word, taught so movingly, now dwelt richly in my heart. Though my hand was in pain from hours of intense note-taking, just looking at my ream of scribbled pages filled me with satisfaction. A panicked thought crossed my mind as I approached the departure gate at the airport. Would the metal detector erase my newly purchased conference tapes? What would I do without them? The security agent assured me they were safe.

My meditations on the conference's effect on me continued on the plane. I was so different, so much more mature. Attending the conference and having my stack of notes and tapes assured me that I had progressed to a new level of maturity. "So far in so little time," I thought. "It's amazing. Why can't others grow at this pace?"

It didn't take long after arriving home to discover that my self-assessment was significantly wrong. Life isn't one big conference. Normal days don't consist of hearing hours of powerful teaching. It's so easy to confuse knowledge with character, particularly in the midst of a dynamic conference. I possessed new ideas, valuable ideas. But making them a part of me, the process of application, was another thing. A pressure-free conference provides no opportunity for this.

The enemy loves to pour condemnation and discouragement on people who don't understand that being present in a meeting doesn't guarantee an experiential possession of God's Word. I wish it did. I'd have a resurrected body by now with all the teaching I've heard.

No, we don't lack teaching. As a matter of fact there is probably an unprecedented amount of instruction available to the Church today. Our generation will not be able to claim ignorance if we fail to achieve God's purpose. What we lack is the ability to turn teaching into reality, desire into faith, knowledge into character. The consequences of this are serious. Without implementing God's Word to us, we will either end

It's one thing to listen to someone teach a message; it's another to watch him live it. Conferences, books and tapes cannot replace Jesus' method of building lives.

up in discouragement and unbelief or pride and deception. Having experienced both, I think I've discovered the difference between success and failure in my own life.

I've come to see that knowledge and character are not synonymous. In our culture there is a philosophy that says that education automatically produces growth, stability, and maturity. While not wanting to minimize the importance of instruction, teaching does have limitations. If reading books, listening to tapes, and hearing regular preaching equaled maturity, we'd all be further along.

As I look back over my life I have been greatly privileged to hear many outstanding men of God teach the Word. In no way am I trying to minimize the effect this has had on me.

Few things are as powerful as God's Word taught to responding hearts. But I'd have to say that an even greater impact has come from those individuals who, before my eyes, modeled God's Word in concrete ways in everyday situations.

Jesus used the same method. He constantly took his message out of his classroom into the streets and applied it—lived it for all, especially his close followers, to see. It's one thing to listen to someone teach a message; it's another to watch him live it. This is why conferences and books, audio and video tapes, as useful as they are, cannot replace Jesus' method of building lives.

The New Testament mind understood that teaching doesn't just involve speaking, but modeling—showing how

to work it out. People received more than doctrinal information—discipleship relationships helped ensure that teaching became experience. First-century disciples weren't simply taking notes; they put their knowledge into practice under supervision. Jesus didn't just tell the disciples what to do; he showed them how to do it. Paul told the Philippians that whatever they had, "learned or received or heard from me, or *seen* in me—put into practice" (Phil. 4:9, emphasis mine). The impartation that took place was the product of a God-ordained relationship.

This is different from so many seminary and church situations today. Knowledge is endlessly given without any attention to its incorporation into the learners' lives. "Always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of truth" (2 Timothy 3:7), is the appropriate phrase that all too often describes the situation.

Years ago during the worship at a large meeting I attended there were a number of moving prophecies spoken concerning the call of holiness on our lives. After two or three of these messages, there was a time of silence pierced by a broken, desperate plea from the back of the auditorium: "How do we *doooo* it?" That sad cry speaks for so many of us who don't lack teaching but haven't been able to integrate God's Word into our lives. Biblical discipleship is a means by which a person whose hope for maturity, deferred for too long, can now be fulfilled, and thus so can the call of God on their life. □



Charles (C.J.) Mahaney is the senior pastor of Covenant Life Church. He also serves in prophetic ministry on Larry Tomczak's apostolic team and is an associate editor of *People of Destiny Magazine*. He resides with his wife Carolyn and their three daughters in Silver Spring, Md.