

# **BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

## **EXPOSITORY SERMON**

**October 2018**

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### **WHAT.....A HOLY MAN OF GOD? ?**

**Scripture Reading – 2 Kings 4:1-9.**

#### **Introduction**

In this message we are pursuing this theme in the form of a question.

**“What....A Holy Man of God?”** “Is there such a thing in this evil world of ours?” Maybe the more important question should be “Can there be such an individual?” And since the scriptural answer is in the affirmative the next question is “Are we living the holy life? It is important as Christians that we ask this question because in our mission to reach the lost, how we live influences the impact of our witness on those we are trying to win. What is it about our lives that people observe? What do they see in our attitudes, actions and conversation? Do we exemplify the Lord Jesus Christ? It is vital we give attention to this because what we are speaks louder than what we say.

The selected passage describes a well known story in the Old Testament in the

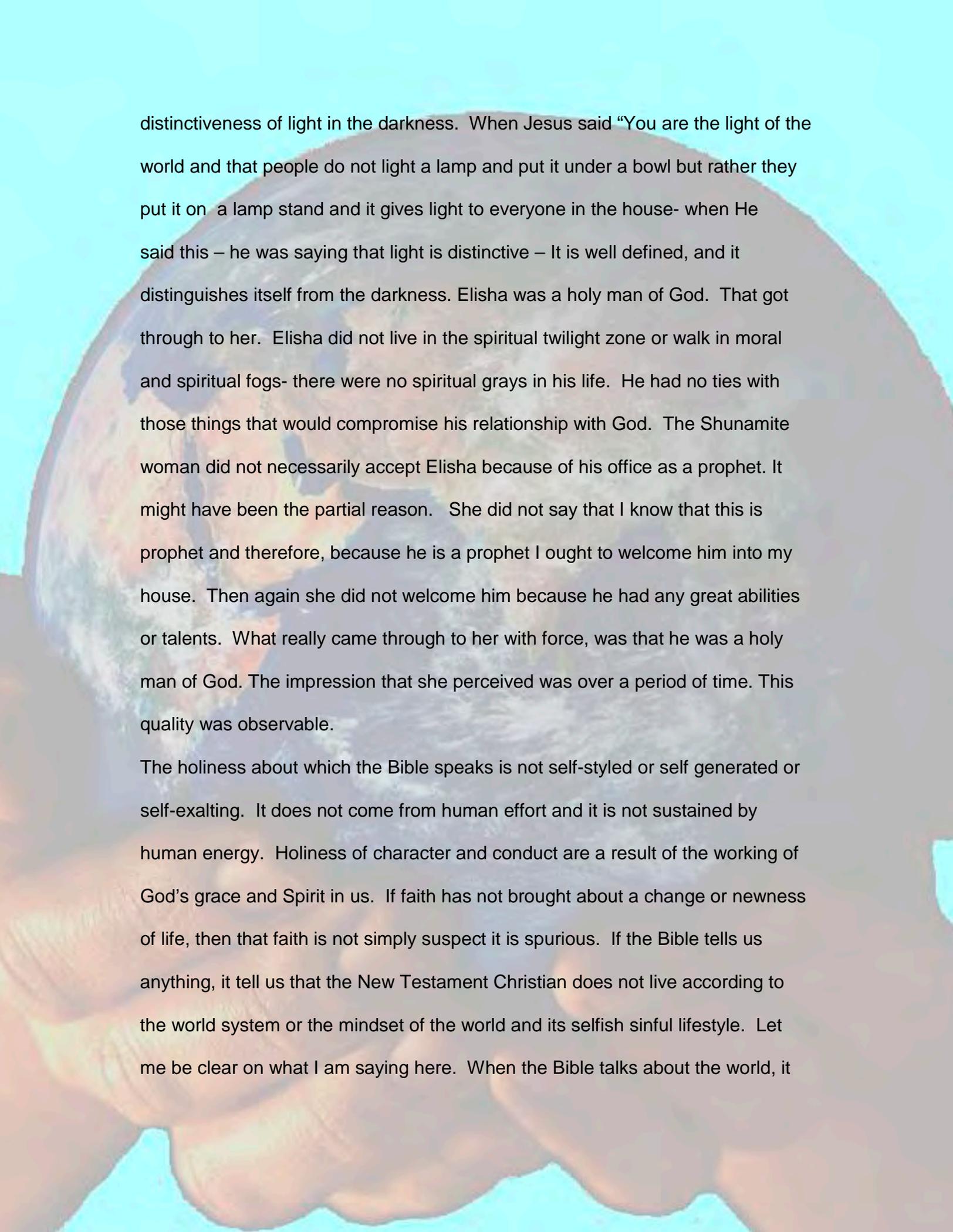
life of the prophet Elisha whose name means God is Savior. The prophet Elisha was the successor to the great Prophet of fire Elijah.

Let me remind you of the context in which this story is framed. The prophet Elisha went to Shunem where he met a wealthy woman. She urged him to have a meal with her family. From that moment on when ever he passed that way he stopped in to have a meal. It is clear from the story, that he was being carefully watched by this women and her family and the conclusion of her close observation is extremely telling in its importance for she said to her husband, “I know that this is a holy man of God.” While it is clear that he was a holy man of God because he was a prophet, it was evident that his life was also characterized by the quality and spirit of holiness. This is what impacted the Shunammite woman. It struck a chord in her heart, that moved her to open her heart and home to him?” It was as she said to her husband, “I know that this is a holy man of God.” The New Living Translation has it “I am sure this man who stops in from time to time is a holy man of God.” What were the marks or the characteristics of this mans witness. The first mark that I see in Elisha’s life was that it was,

**1. DISTINCTIVE. 2 Kings 4:9.**

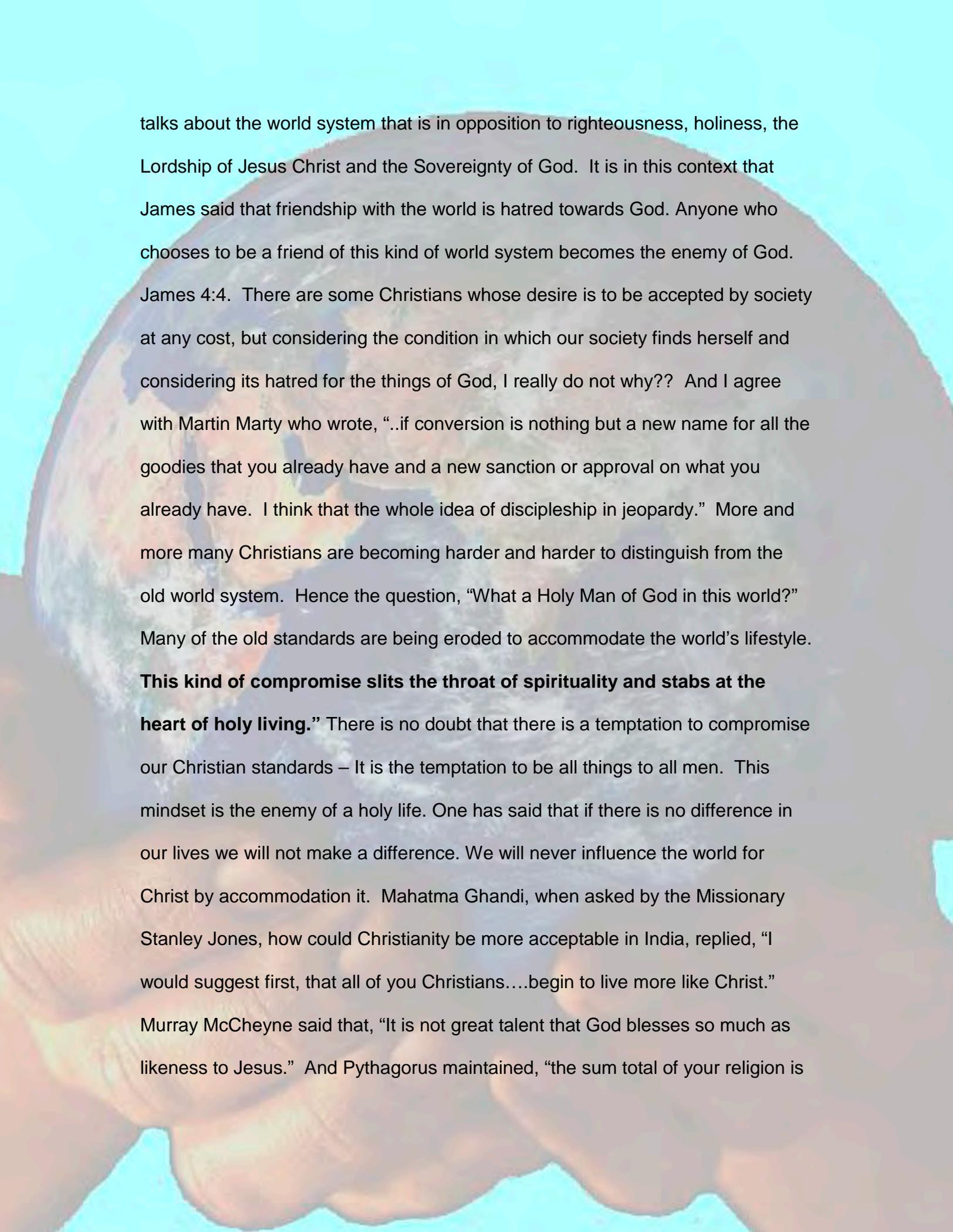
His life was different to those about him. He was a holy man of God in an ungodly sinful world. That made him distinctive. He was different because of who he was. The quality of a holy life shone through. What is clear here is that this quality in the prophet Elisha was

**a. Observable. 2 Kings 4:9. It was stood out as distinctive.** It was the

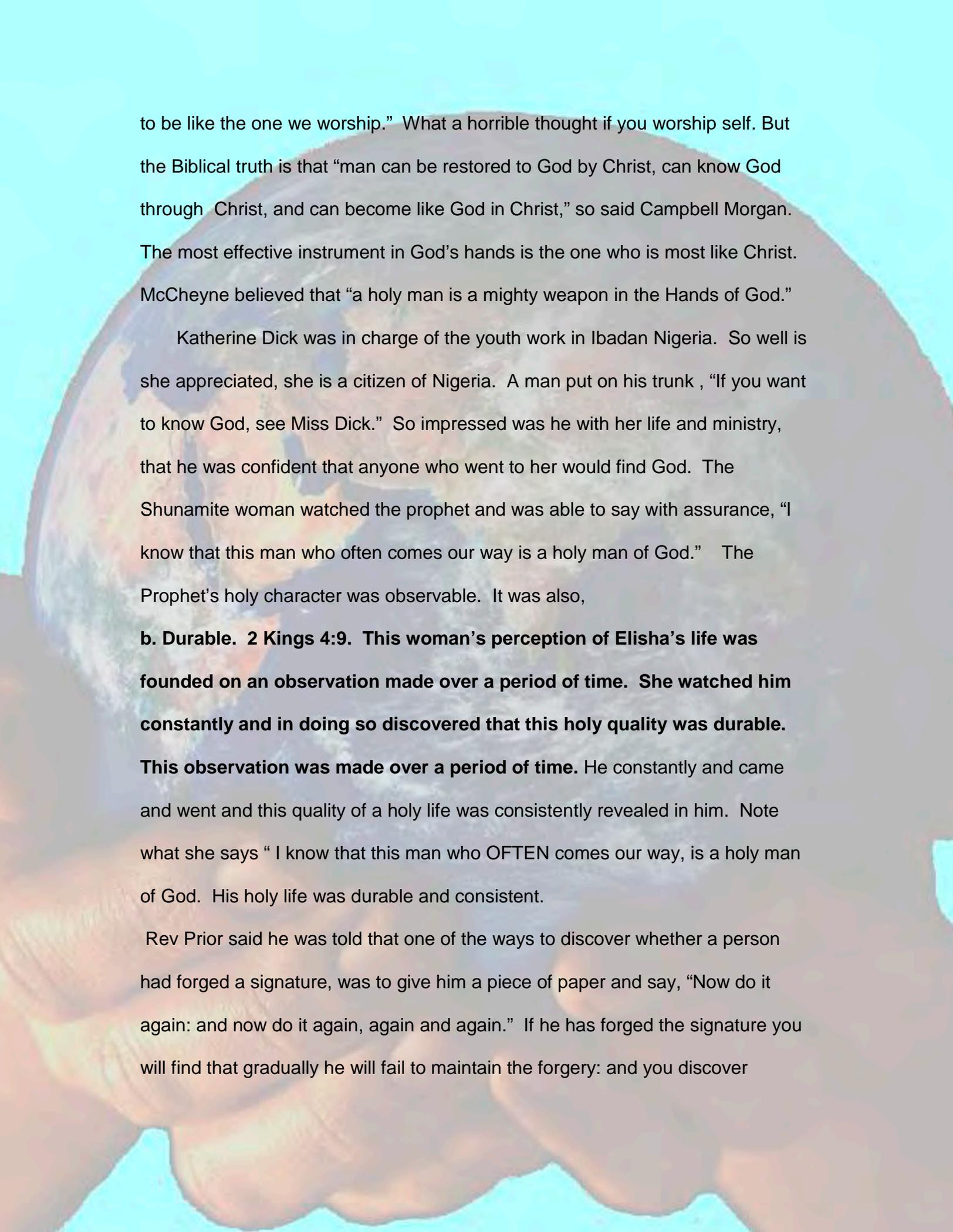


distinctiveness of light in the darkness. When Jesus said “You are the light of the world and that people do not light a lamp and put it under a bowl but rather they put it on a lamp stand and it gives light to everyone in the house- when He said this – he was saying that light is distinctive – It is well defined, and it distinguishes itself from the darkness. Elisha was a holy man of God. That got through to her. Elisha did not live in the spiritual twilight zone or walk in moral and spiritual fogs- there were no spiritual grays in his life. He had no ties with those things that would compromise his relationship with God. The Shunamite woman did not necessarily accept Elisha because of his office as a prophet. It might have been the partial reason. She did not say that I know that this is prophet and therefore, because he is a prophet I ought to welcome him into my house. Then again she did not welcome him because he had any great abilities or talents. What really came through to her with force, was that he was a holy man of God. The impression that she perceived was over a period of time. This quality was observable.

The holiness about which the Bible speaks is not self-styled or self generated or self-exalting. It does not come from human effort and it is not sustained by human energy. Holiness of character and conduct are a result of the working of God’s grace and Spirit in us. If faith has not brought about a change or newness of life, then that faith is not simply suspect it is spurious. If the Bible tells us anything, it tell us that the New Testament Christian does not live according to the world system or the mindset of the world and its selfish sinful lifestyle. Let me be clear on what I am saying here. When the Bible talks about the world, it



talks about the world system that is in opposition to righteousness, holiness, the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the Sovereignty of God. It is in this context that James said that friendship with the world is hatred towards God. Anyone who chooses to be a friend of this kind of world system becomes the enemy of God. James 4:4. There are some Christians whose desire is to be accepted by society at any cost, but considering the condition in which our society finds herself and considering its hatred for the things of God, I really do not why?? And I agree with Martin Marty who wrote, “..if conversion is nothing but a new name for all the goodies that you already have and a new sanction or approval on what you already have. I think that the whole idea of discipleship in jeopardy.” More and more many Christians are becoming harder and harder to distinguish from the old world system. Hence the question, “What a Holy Man of God in this world?” Many of the old standards are being eroded to accommodate the world’s lifestyle. **This kind of compromise slits the throat of spirituality and stabs at the heart of holy living.**” There is no doubt that there is a temptation to compromise our Christian standards – It is the temptation to be all things to all men. This mindset is the enemy of a holy life. One has said that if there is no difference in our lives we will not make a difference. We will never influence the world for Christ by accommodation it. Mahatma Ghandi, when asked by the Missionary Stanley Jones, how could Christianity be more acceptable in India, replied, “I would suggest first, that all of you Christians....begin to live more like Christ.” Murray McCheyne said that, “It is not great talent that God blesses so much as likeness to Jesus.” And Pythagorus maintained, “the sum total of your religion is



to be like the one we worship.” What a horrible thought if you worship self. But the Biblical truth is that “man can be restored to God by Christ, can know God through Christ, and can become like God in Christ,” so said Campbell Morgan. The most effective instrument in God’s hands is the one who is most like Christ. McCheyne believed that “a holy man is a mighty weapon in the Hands of God.”

Katherine Dick was in charge of the youth work in Ibadan Nigeria. So well is she appreciated, she is a citizen of Nigeria. A man put on his trunk , “If you want to know God, see Miss Dick.” So impressed was he with her life and ministry, that he was confident that anyone who went to her would find God. The Shunamite woman watched the prophet and was able to say with assurance, “I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God.” The Prophet’s holy character was observable. It was also,

**b. Durable. 2 Kings 4:9. This woman’s perception of Elisha’s life was founded on an observation made over a period of time. She watched him constantly and in doing so discovered that this holy quality was durable. This observation was made over a period of time.** He constantly and came and went and this quality of a holy life was consistently revealed in him. Note what she says “ I know that this man who OFTEN comes our way, is a holy man of God. His holy life was durable and consistent.

Rev Prior said he was told that one of the ways to discover whether a person had forged a signature, was to give him a piece of paper and say, “Now do it again: and now do it again, again and again.” If he has forged the signature you will find that gradually he will fail to maintain the forgery: and you discover

whether it was genuine or not. When someone puts on a show of holiness and sanctity the real test of its genuineness is whether it maintains its' consistency all day and everyday and in all situations. Does it reveal its self wherever you are and in whatever you do? Elisha's holy life stood the test of daily routine. In the **day by day rub if life the Shunamite woman said, "I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. His Holy life was distinctive but it was also**

## **2. DOMINANT. 2 Kings 4:9.**

**It was not sham or pretense or an intentional display to impress the onlooker. The fact he is considered to be holy is most telling because it was the way Elisha was in himself. He was holy man of God. He did not have to prove it. That quality in Elisha was dominant. I suggest that it was dominant because it was a**

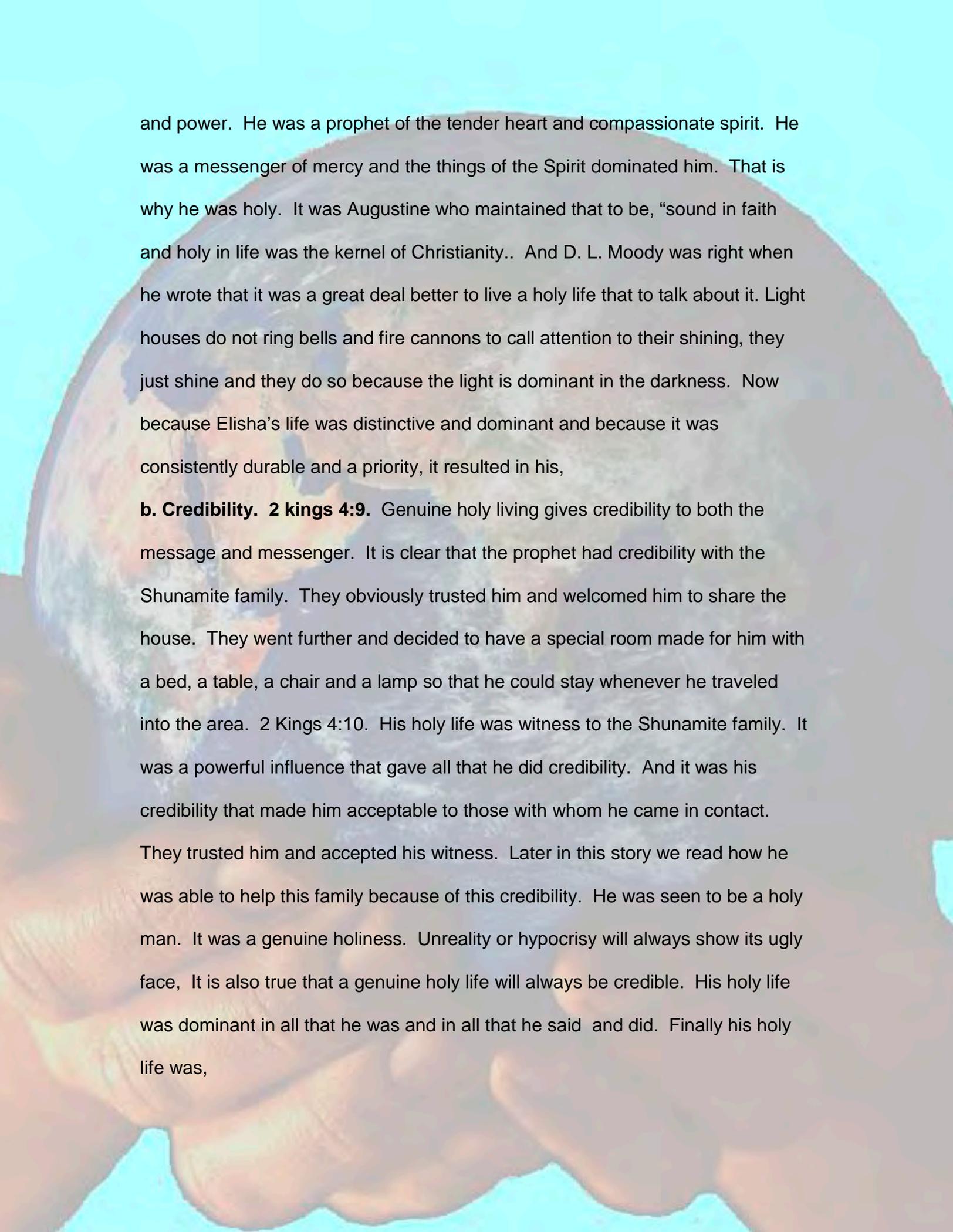
**a.Priority to him.. 2 Kings 4:9. It is significant that the quality of Holiness is not considered an option. This is of prime importance to a Holy God. While the world looks for human qualities and attributes in a person, God looks for holy life. This is where He begins. In His call to service in His kingdom, holiness of heart and life are indispensable. His directive is always "be clean you who bear the vessels of the Lord." Paul urged the Christians at Ephesus to "live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Ephesians 4:1. This was so important to him that he aggressively pursued this challenge with them and in verse 17 and 24, he writes "I tell you this, and I insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the gentiles(or as**

the ungodly do), ... but we are to put off the old self and put on the new self,.....created to be like God in the in true righteousness and holiness.”

It is in and through the power of the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ we are “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” When God has purified the heart it then must become a priority. This is always priority with Him. This sanctifying grace of God must be cultivated and nurtured moment by moment. Purity is gift of God and maturity is a

**growth.** It follows then that if a holy life and character was a distinctive quality in Elisha then he must have taken time to nurture and give attention to spiritual growth in holiness. To do this, holiness must have been a priority. It was dominant in his thinking. Note that the Shunamite woman did not comment on his popularity, prophetic power, position or brilliance or talent. She did not highlight his success as a prophet or even his distinction as a man of God. What caught her attention was that which was dominant in his life..

Before the prophet Elijah was caught up in the chariot of fire and a whirlwind, he asked Elisha what he could do for him. and Elisha replied, “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit. 2 Kings 2;9. The subsequent events, deeds and spirit of this man Elijah testified to that prayer being answered. After the unique departure of Elijah to heaven, Elisha’s peers declared that the spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha. A study of his life reveals that he performed twice as many miracles, but his spiritual power went beyond the miracles to those inward qualities, which made up his holy character. He was a man of invincible faith under girded by dauntless courage and anointed by incredible spiritual authority



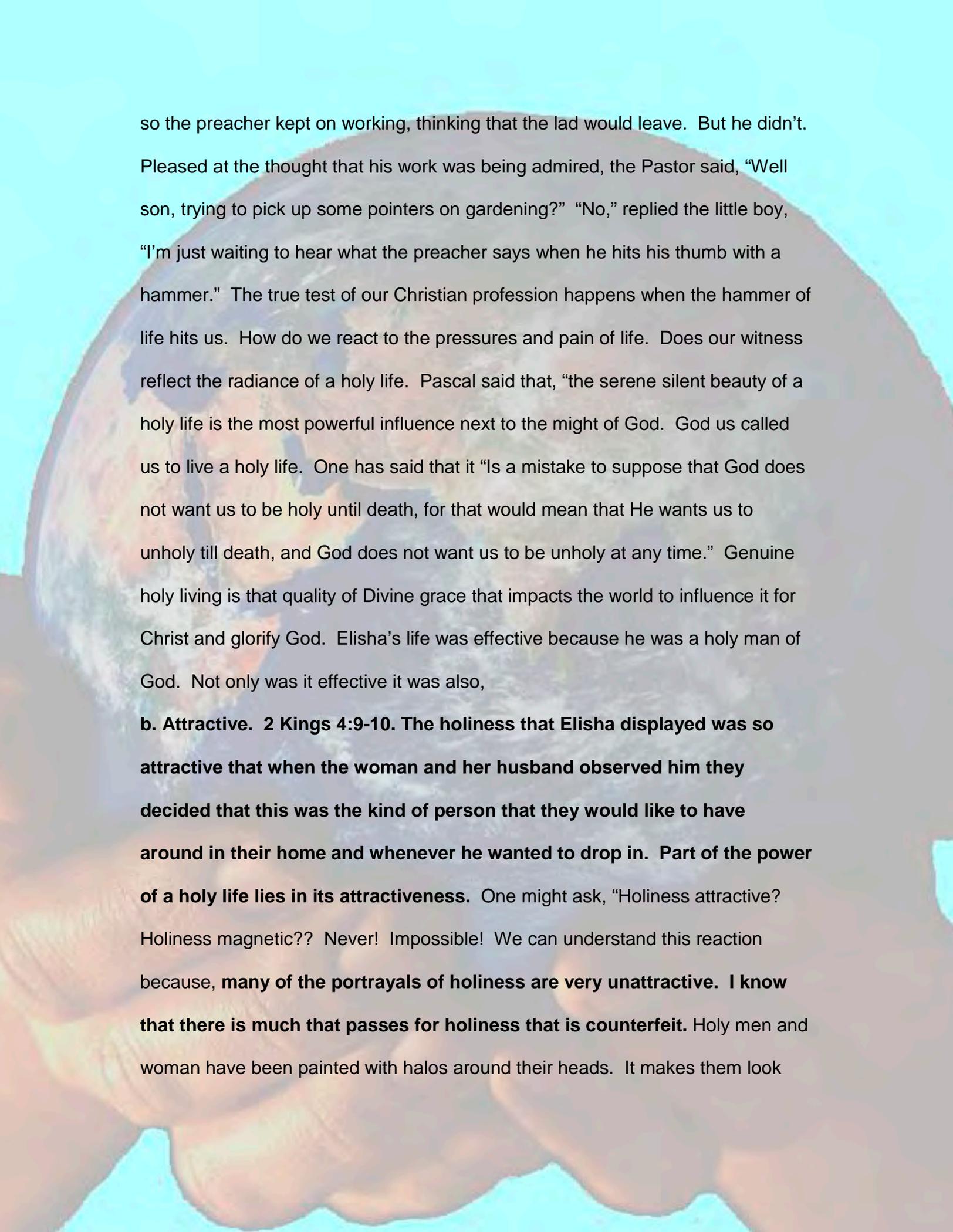
and power. He was a prophet of the tender heart and compassionate spirit. He was a messenger of mercy and the things of the Spirit dominated him. That is why he was holy. It was Augustine who maintained that to be, “sound in faith and holy in life was the kernel of Christianity.. And D. L. Moody was right when he wrote that it was a great deal better to live a holy life than to talk about it. Light houses do not ring bells and fire cannons to call attention to their shining, they just shine and they do so because the light is dominant in the darkness. Now because Elisha’s life was distinctive and dominant and because it was consistently durable and a priority, it resulted in his,

**b. Credibility. 2 kings 4:9.** Genuine holy living gives credibility to both the message and messenger. It is clear that the prophet had credibility with the Shunamite family. They obviously trusted him and welcomed him to share the house. They went further and decided to have a special room made for him with a bed, a table, a chair and a lamp so that he could stay whenever he traveled into the area. 2 Kings 4:10. His holy life was witness to the Shunamite family. It was a powerful influence that gave all that he did credibility. And it was his credibility that made him acceptable to those with whom he came in contact. They trusted him and accepted his witness. Later in this story we read how he was able to help this family because of this credibility. He was seen to be a holy man. It was a genuine holiness. Unreality or hypocrisy will always show its ugly face, It is also true that a genuine holy life will always be credible. His holy life was dominant in all that he was and in all that he said and did. Finally his holy life was,

### **3. DYNAMIC. 2 Kings 4:9.**

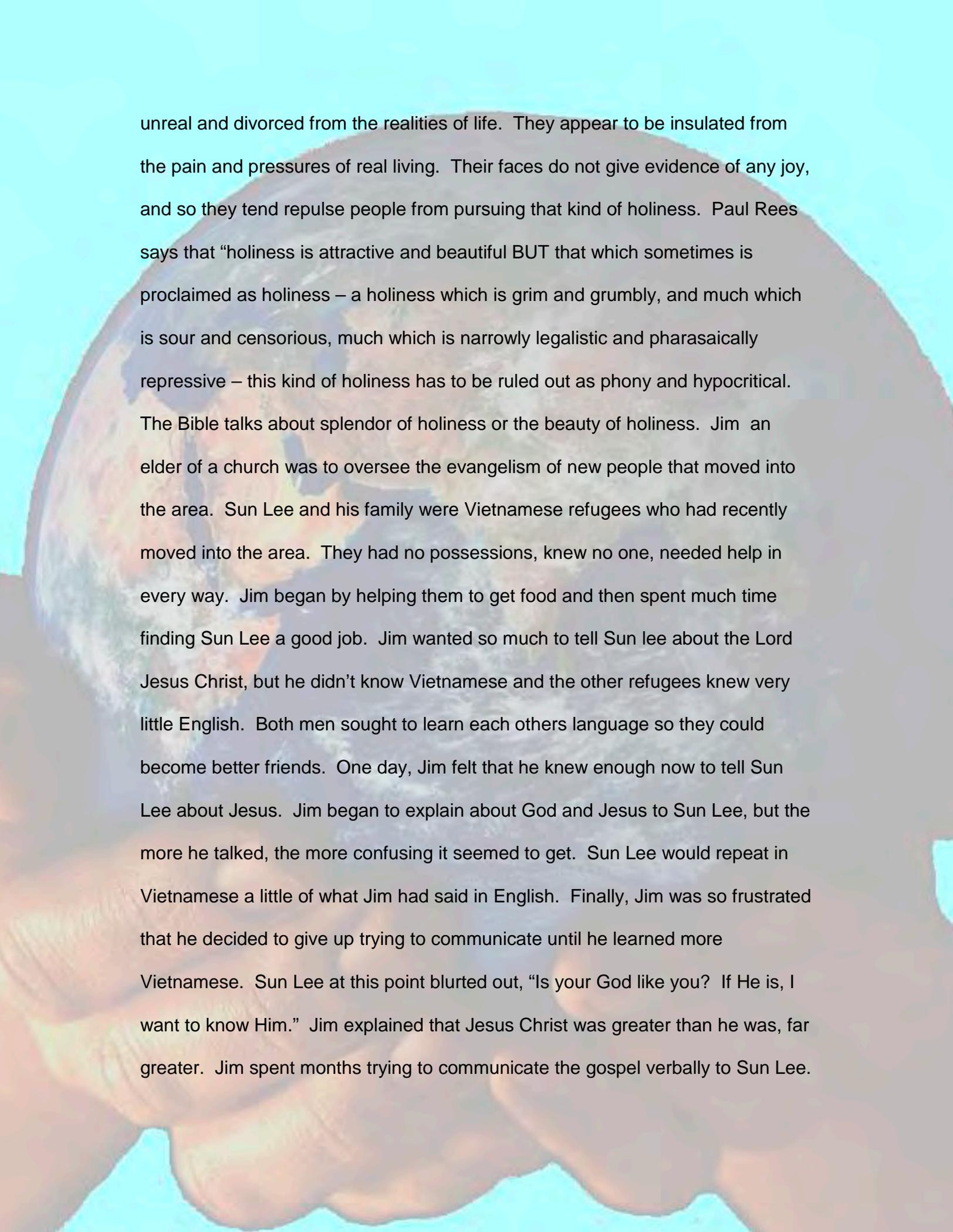
**There is no doubt that his holy life was marked by power.** It was distinctive. It was dominant. and most certainly it was dynamic. What was it that impressed the Shunamite woman? What was it that impacted her life? Why was she so convinced and so touched by the prophet. Was it because he was the prophet of miracles or because he of his spiritual authority, tender compassion or his office as a prophet of God. I am sure that all of this was part of that which spoke to her. But It was the discernment of the woman herself who picked out that which got her attention above all else in the character and conduct of his life. He was a holy man of God. It was as clear and simple as that. It is well to remember that he asked for a double portion of the spirit of the powerful prophet of Elijah. And after Elijah had been carried to heaven in a fiery chariot, the prophets testified that the spirit of Elijah was upon Elisha. His life radiated with a dynamic holiness. He was a holy man of God. The Shunamite woman was in no doubt of it. This tells me that his holy life was,

**a. Effective. 2 Kings 4:9.** There was an indefinable unexplainable power in the life of the Prophet Elisha. This is always true of a holy life. Henry Stanley commenting on the life and witness of David Livingstone said, "If I had been with him any longer, I would have been compelled to be a Christian, and he never spoke to me about it at all. Such is the effectiveness of a holy life. The truth is that the world is looking to see if the faith we profess really works. A pastor was making a wooden trellis to support a climbing vine. As he was pounding away, he noticed that a little boy was watching him. The youngster didn't say a word,

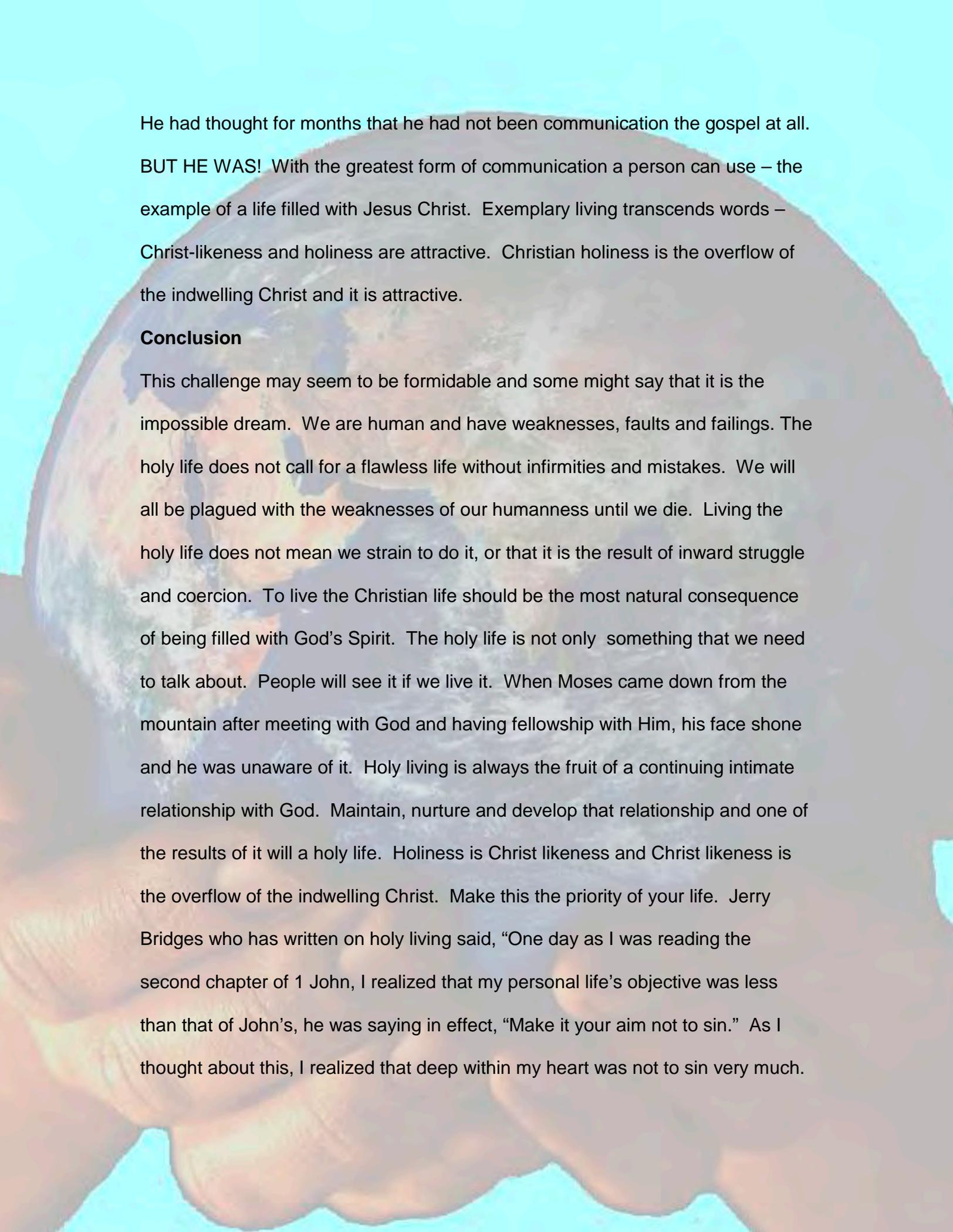


so the preacher kept on working, thinking that the lad would leave. But he didn't. Pleased at the thought that his work was being admired, the Pastor said, "Well son, trying to pick up some pointers on gardening?" "No," replied the little boy, "I'm just waiting to hear what the preacher says when he hits his thumb with a hammer." The true test of our Christian profession happens when the hammer of life hits us. How do we react to the pressures and pain of life. Does our witness reflect the radiance of a holy life. Pascal said that, "the serene silent beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence next to the might of God. God us called us to live a holy life. One has said that it "Is a mistake to suppose that God does not want us to be holy until death, for that would mean that He wants us to unholy till death, and God does not want us to be unholy at any time." Genuine holy living is that quality of Divine grace that impacts the world to influence it for Christ and glorify God. Elisha's life was effective because he was a holy man of God. Not only was it effective it was also,

**b. Attractive. 2 Kings 4:9-10. The holiness that Elisha displayed was so attractive that when the woman and her husband observed him they decided that this was the kind of person that they would like to have around in their home and whenever he wanted to drop in. Part of the power of a holy life lies in its attractiveness.** One might ask, "Holiness attractive? Holiness magnetic?? Never! Impossible! We can understand this reaction because, **many of the portrayals of holiness are very unattractive. I know that there is much that passes for holiness that is counterfeit.** Holy men and woman have been painted with halos around their heads. It makes them look



unreal and divorced from the realities of life. They appear to be insulated from the pain and pressures of real living. Their faces do not give evidence of any joy, and so they tend to repulse people from pursuing that kind of holiness. Paul Rees says that “holiness is attractive and beautiful BUT that which sometimes is proclaimed as holiness – a holiness which is grim and grumbly, and much which is sour and censorious, much which is narrowly legalistic and pharasaically repressive – this kind of holiness has to be ruled out as phony and hypocritical. The Bible talks about the splendor of holiness or the beauty of holiness. Jim an elder of a church was to oversee the evangelism of new people that moved into the area. Sun Lee and his family were Vietnamese refugees who had recently moved into the area. They had no possessions, knew no one, needed help in every way. Jim began by helping them to get food and then spent much time finding Sun Lee a good job. Jim wanted so much to tell Sun Lee about the Lord Jesus Christ, but he didn't know Vietnamese and the other refugees knew very little English. Both men sought to learn each other's language so they could become better friends. One day, Jim felt that he knew enough now to tell Sun Lee about Jesus. Jim began to explain about God and Jesus to Sun Lee, but the more he talked, the more confusing it seemed to get. Sun Lee would repeat in Vietnamese a little of what Jim had said in English. Finally, Jim was so frustrated that he decided to give up trying to communicate until he learned more Vietnamese. Sun Lee at this point blurted out, “Is your God like you? If He is, I want to know Him.” Jim explained that Jesus Christ was greater than he was, far greater. Jim spent months trying to communicate the gospel verbally to Sun Lee.



He had thought for months that he had not been communicating the gospel at all. BUT HE WAS! With the greatest form of communication a person can use – the example of a life filled with Jesus Christ. Exemplary living transcends words – Christ-likeness and holiness are attractive. Christian holiness is the overflow of the indwelling Christ and it is attractive.

### **Conclusion**

This challenge may seem to be formidable and some might say that it is the impossible dream. We are human and have weaknesses, faults and failings. The holy life does not call for a flawless life without infirmities and mistakes. We will all be plagued with the weaknesses of our humanness until we die. Living the holy life does not mean we strain to do it, or that it is the result of inward struggle and coercion. To live the Christian life should be the most natural consequence of being filled with God's Spirit. The holy life is not only something that we need to talk about. People will see it if we live it. When Moses came down from the mountain after meeting with God and having fellowship with Him, his face shone and he was unaware of it. Holy living is always the fruit of a continuing intimate relationship with God. Maintain, nurture and develop that relationship and one of the results of it will be a holy life. Holiness is Christ likeness and Christ likeness is the overflow of the indwelling Christ. Make this the priority of your life. Jerry Bridges who has written on holy living said, "One day as I was reading the second chapter of 1 John, I realized that my personal life's objective was less than that of John's, he was saying in effect, "Make it your aim not to sin." As I thought about this, I realized that deep within my heart was not to sin very much.

–can you imagine a soldier going into battle with the aim of 'not getting hit very much.'" Sangster said that the "purpose of God for man was to be holy. Not happiness first an holiness if possible. But holiness first and bliss as the result of it." The Shunamite woman saw Elisha one day and said "I know that this is a holy man of God. Make holiness of heart and life your aim.

