We are members of the Oak Ridge church of Christ. We call ourselves Christians ([**Acts 11:26**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Acts%2011:26)) and we hold to the Bible as our one and only Truth. Church of Christ is a biblical description of Christians who work together for the cause of Christ ([**Ro. 16:16**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Romans%2016:16)). We are independent assemblies with no organization beyond our own number as described in [**Phil. 1:1**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Philippians%201:1). There are Christians across the world working with local congregations of God’s people such as described in [**Rev. 2**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Revelation%202)**-3**. Christians are members of Christ’s body, which is also known as His Church ([**Acts 2:47**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Acts%202:47)**,**[**Eph. 5:23**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Ephesians%205:23)). Our mission is to stand for God’s truth (the gospel) and teach it to all people ([**Matt. 28:18-20**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Matthew%2028:18-20)**,**[**Romans 1:16**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Romans%201:16)**,**[**1 Tim. 3:15**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=1%20Timothy%203:15)). We are accountable to our one and only Head Jesus Christ ([**Eph. 1:22-23**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Ephesians%201:22-23)**,**[**Col. 1:18**](http://oakridgechurch.lakesonline.com/passage.asp?v=Colossians%201:18)).

**Perspective:** A certain point of view in understanding or judging things or happenings

Carl Joseph lived in Florida. He lived in a four room house that had no air conditioning. He was poor, in a family with 10 children and no father. The first time I (Larry) saw Carl was on a film playing football. He was a defensive nose tackle. As the play unfolded, Carl was double teamed; the play called for the halfback to sweep the left end. Carl split the double team and caught the halfback from behind, just beyond the line of scrimmage. What made this play by Carl so extraordinary was that Carl hopped to catch the back, because he was born with just one leg.

A magazine writer once interviewed Carl’s mother and he asked how she felt about Carl being born with just one leg. She replied: “Seeing the end, it was better Carl had just one leg.” This was her perspective. Seeing the end, she said. She replied this way because Carl would go on to become a three-sport star (football, basketball and track and field) at Madison High School in Florida's Panhandle, a football player at Bethune-Cookman and the first disabled athlete ever inducted into the Florida High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame.

Upon his selection to the Hall of Fame, a famous college football coach Jackie Sherrill, who once recruited Joseph to Pitt, said: "Congratulations to the selection committee for recognizing a young man who is not in the record books for points, total yardage, sacks or tackles, but rather for his ability to inspire the sports world and motivate us to believe we can do anything if we never, ever give up."

Carl once recorded 11 solo tackles in a game. On the track team, he won the district championship in the high jump with a leap of 5 feet 10 inches and could throw a shot put 40 feet and hurl a discus 130 feet.

It's amazing what prosthetics can do these days, isn't it? What's even more amazing is that Joseph did not use a prosthetic leg. He sacked quarterbacks, blocked punts, batted down passes, recovered 15 fumbles, dunked basketballs, swatted shots, jumped hurdles, and sailed javelins while hopping on one foot. Back in those days, they called him "Sugarfoot".

"Back then [in the 1970s and 80s], artificial legs weren't what they are today," Joseph explains now. "They were hard and heavy and uncomfortable. I felt like the wooden leg slowed me down. I grew up hopping and that's how I felt the most comfortable." Besides, he would always end up shattering every prosthetic leg he ever owned. And when you're raised in poverty on a tobacco farm in the sticks of North Florida by a single mom with 10 kids, you don't get pampered or babied, and sometimes you just go without. You keep up —– no matter your situation — or you get left behind.”

When asked what if he had been born with two legs, he replied "Let me tell you something," says Joseph, now a middle school football coach in his hometown, who also coached High School football for 15 years, "there are two words that aren't in my vocabulary and those two words are, 'What if.' If I had been born with two legs, maybe I wouldn't have had the determination and work ethic I had to go out and prove something to the world." That was Carl’s perspective!

When I (Larry) first saw film on Carl, it evoked pity. I thought the picture was a bit unnatural. What Carl and his mother saw was an entirely different perspective.

The question is what is our perspective of life? Do we look at certain conditions and say: “Seeing the end it is better.” Turn with us to **Matthew 18:1-9**. The lesson Jesus teaches in these verses is one of perspective. And it is much the same as Carl’s and his mother’s perspective.

Jesus says in **verses 8 and 9**, “it is better”. Better means more valuable, it is worthier. His disciples asked the question, “Who is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?” Isn’t this better, Jesus, to be the greatest in the Kingdom? This was their perspective.

Jesus uses an illustration to tell His disciples that greatness is not defined from their perspective. What He wants them to understand is that greatness in the Kingdom may demand that you take action that will leave you in an unnatural state, even a pitiful state, to the world around you. The ordinary perspective would consider a person who is maimed or lame to be at a disadvantage. If we are told by a doctor that we must have a hand or a foot or a leg or an eye removed, we think this to be a traumatic experience. And in the days of Jesus, to cut these away was radical and received with horror. The illustration from Jesus, however, is not to be taken literally. This is a metaphor. A metaphor is a figure of speech that is regarded as something symbolic or representative of something else. The context suggests an occasion of stumbling. This was the problem with the disciples. They were stumbling with a perspective that was contrary to the true meaning of Kingdom living. When Jesus says it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame, He is not referencing physical life. He is referencing life in the Kingdom, a spiritual life.

Jesus is saying in **Matthew 18** that life in the Kingdom will require more radical removal of habits, affections, attitudes, values, relationships that cause you to stumble. Taking such action as this, the world may consider you to be radical and leave you a pitiful member of society in their eyes.

The real heart displayed by his disciples was that of self-interest. Jesus says this perspective is not that of a Kingdom disciple. It must be removed from your life. The apostle Paul gives his perspective in **Colossians 3:5-11**. He says to put to death your members which are of the earth. Jesus says it is better to get rid of these offenses, those members which cause you to stumble, regardless of how pitiful you may look to the world. Jesus says it is not easy. It is painful and radical. Your friends in this world may think you are pitiful.

Many people today are concerned about how they look to their friends. The world teaches that the passion of life is to possess things. We are being taught that the real purpose of life is self-interest. We can pay all the lip service we want to being a Christian, but we can’t fool anyone. People see what drives us. Notice what Jesus says in **Luke 12:13-21**. Jesus says we must apply the gospel knife. We must cut off and gouge out the lifestyle habits that are not part of the Kingdom. We must cast them away. The separation is to be final and complete. “It is better” He says!

To those in our audience tonight, we can see the end. It is better that we go through life pitiful objects to the rest of the world. For an example of this, look at **Philippians 3:1-10**. Paul says beware. Put your confidence in Christ, not in the flesh. And He says that if anyone has or had any reason to put their confidence in a purpose that was contrary to Kingdom living, it was him. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, one of the two tribes that came out of captivity. He was a Pharisee, who persecuted the church and was blameless in the OT law. Consider what Paul had: fleshly honor, noble ancestry, education equivalent of a PhD today, respective official of the Pharisees, and highly regarded by all. Paul cut these out of his life and cast them away. Paul gave up the great Jewish way of life of his day. It is equivalent to giving up the great American way of life today. Notice how Paul talks about this in **verses 8-10**. He counted these things as rubbish that he may gain Christ! Seeing the end, Paul knows it is better to give all this up.

What do you think the Jews of his day thought? There goes that crazy Paul. At times He barely has enough to live on. He works at night, by candlelight, sewing tents together, so he can work by day to talk with people about this Jesus. Paul had it made and now look at him! He’s a pitiful sight.

Other examples:

* **Noah** building an Ark and did not give into the worldliness around him
* **Job** losing everything but kept his faith in God
* **Daniel** taken into captivity but refused to be defiled by those who took him and his friends captive
* **Jesus** and how he lived. Sometimes not even having a place to stay in. Gave up more than Paul or any other ever has. The Creator gave up Heaven to be thought of as useless as a robber and murdered that way. But He could see the end, and knew it was better.

They all had the same perspective. **Seeing the end, it was better!**

***How about you? How about me? Do we have the proper perspective?*** Or do we say:

* I do not see anything wrong with claiming to be a Christian and then taking part in the worldliness all around me.
* Why can’t I go to parties with my friends? Sure, there may be alcohol there and bad language.
* Why can’t I dress immodestly like most of the folks in our society?

The fact is that today these and more are part of the lifestyle. They are as natural as our hand and foot and eye are to our body. It is difficult to imagine depriving ourselves or our young people of this way of life. We don’t want them or us to be embarrassed or considered strange by their friends or our friends.

But Jesus says, it is better for us to aim for a higher plane than this world’s lifestyle. It is better to aim for eternal life, not worldly life (**Matthew 7:13-14**). If you are not a Christian, you need to become one, because the end is better!

Our last passage tonight will be **Philippians 3:17-4:1**.

Please check the scriptures we have covered tonight. We want to help you in any way we can. Contact us for Bible studies by telephone, e-mail, or simply come to one of our assemblies. Contact: We assemble at 225 North Purdue Ave. in Oak Ridge at 9am on Sundays and 7pm on Wednesdays; **oakridgechurch.com**; **larry.paden@oakridgechurch.com****,** **murray.wade@oakridgechurch.com****;** (865) 693-1416.

In two weeks, on **August 16, 2021**, we plan to air a rerun. We will also plan a rerun for the Labor Day holiday on **September 6, 2021.** For our next live program on **September 20, 2021** we hope to study, **"The Model Prayer – John Chapter 17.”** We hope to see you next time on "**Speaking The Truth In Love**".