

## **Suggestions on how to use Pastor Terry's article, "The Fourth Dimension"**

The attached article attributes many of the crushing problems in America to the fact that we are neglecting the spiritual dimension of our lives. It approaches the reader in a humble, reasonable manner, in much the same way Paul *"reasoned with Felix about righteousness, self-control and judgment"* (Acts 24:24,25).

Use this article as a way to reach your friends, family and co-workers, to get them thinking about their spiritual need and the value God will add to their lives. Here are some suggestions:

1. Read the article, and try to digest the basic "argument" for nurturing the spiritual dimension of our lives. Then invite an un-churched friend to have coffee with you and discuss this issue. Leave a copy of the article with them.
2. Make a few copies and give them to a few co-workers or close friends, along with a hand-written cover sheet (see suggested "cover sheet" below).
3. Make lots of copies and place one at the door of every house on your street, with a cover sheet.

(Regardless of which approach you use, be sure to "bathe" it in prayer.)

### **Suggested Cover Sheet:**

(For best results, hand-write the following and attach it to the article.)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

A friend of mine wrote the attached article about some of the problems people are struggling with today. After reading it, I felt it made a lot of sense, and wanted to share it with a few friends.

I offer it to you humbly, for your consideration, hoping it will resonate with your own thoughts in some positive way.

I welcome your opinion.

(Your Name)



# The Fourth Dimension

By Terry Roberts

**A**t the risk of sounding pessimistic let me begin this brief essay by saying that there is an unprecedented dysfunction in American life today. I don't need to bore you with statistics to prove the point. Just watch the evening news. People are doing things to other people we could not have imagined a generation ago. And they are doing it with such increasing regularity that we are becoming anesthetized to it. What used to shock us and pull us closer to the television screen, now gets little more than a passing glance.

Families are hurting. Relationships are often in disarray -- husbands and wives strangers to each other, fathers abdicating their role, children out of control. Some of our schools are war zones.

We keep hoping the government will do something about the problems. Some policy or program or prohibition. Or maybe a *change* of government -- getting the right person in the White House. But in our heart of hearts we know the problems go deeper than programs or politics can reach.

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## ***The Missing Ingredient***

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Before I lose you in the bad news, let me say I believe there is hope -- there is a solution. But in order to apply the solution we need to understand the problem. And the problem is that there is a missing ingredient in contemporary American life. Let me explain what I mean.

Every human being has (or should have) four dimensions to his life: 1) The body is the *physical* dimension. Through its five senses we are aware of the world around us -- the time-space-matter universe in which we live. 2) Contained within the body is the mind (or soul). This is the *mental/emotional* dimension of life -- one level deeper than the physical. Another word for this is personality. Your personality is as unique as your fingerprint -- it is what makes you *you*. 3) Together, the body and soul make it possible for us to interact with other people, giving us the *social* dimension of life.

But contained within each personality is a further,

deeper dimension -- 4) the fourth dimension. This is the kernel or essence of life -- the *moral/spiritual* dimension. The unique role of our spirit is to make us aware of a reality beyond the time-space-matter universe, a reality beyond ourselves and other people.

In order for a human being to be whole, each of these four dimensions must function, and in order for them to function, some measure of attention and care must be given to them. We care for our bodies when we feed, clothe, and exercise them. We care for our minds when we educate them or entertain them with music and art or other media. We nourish both body and soul when we interact with other people in a positive way -- especially in our family relationships. We care for our spirits when we worship. Worship is the act of acknowledging God and seeking his favor and his presence in our lives. It is getting in tune with him at the deepest part of our being. It is opening and exposing our personality to his influence.

To neglect any of these four dimensions is to court some form of dysfunction. And in America today, we are neglecting -- even ignoring -- the spiritual dimension of our lives. One evidence of this is the decline in church attendance. On a given Sunday only 18% of the American population is in a church of any kind. Religion has fallen on hard times. And the situation is even worse in Europe. Apparently, Western civilization has concluded that the spiritual dimension is irrelevant. Bill Gates, of Microsoft fame, (who is a good man with a big heart) has epitomized the American attitude about church. I read that he doesn't attend church because he has more important things to do with his time. How unfortunate.

"But wait," you say. "I don't have to go to church to nurture my spirituality! I can do it on my own -- I don't need the structure of the church." As I talk with folks today I am finding more and more people who feel that way. But, if we applied that same attitude to the other dimensions of our lives, we would not send our children to school or college. We would not attend a concert. We would not even go to a restaurant or a grocery store. All of these things imply *structure*. We send our children to school because they need the structure of a formatted learning approach. We go

to a restaurant or a grocery store because someone there has structured the food so that it is accessible to us. We go to a concert where a musician will put various sounds into a structure that entertains our minds and emotions. And all of these things require an investment of our time and attention.

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### ***“Spiritual Osmosis”***

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Why then, do we treat our spirits differently? We understand that every other dimension of our lives requires a certain amount of time, attention, *structure*. Why then, do we think we can nourish our spirits by “osmosis”?

There are various reasons.

Some people are turned off to the church because of the scandals that have been in the news -- priests and pastors doing terrible things. But the same kind of thing happens in our schools. It is common to hear of teachers who have molested students, not to mention students doing terrible things to other students – like shooting them! Yet we continue to send our children to school.

For other people, they just don’t like “organized religion”. They don’t mind organized school systems or restaurant chains or athletic competition, but in their minds, when you organize religion, you ruin it.

Some say they don’t go to church because they prefer to keep their spirituality “personal.” To be sure, church can never take the place of a personal relationship with God. But a relationship with God is strengthened and balanced through fellowship with other believers. And even if you feel you are strong enough to make it on your own (nobody really is) there are people who need the encouragement *you* can give *them* – at church.

Some people say they don’t like church because it is “boring”. Maybe the church they know is. But churches come in all varieties, and if you take the

trouble to look, you will find one that is not boring! Some churches use beautiful pageantry and formal liturgy in their worship. Others use contemporary praise bands with drums and guitars. Some are quite informal and allow for the “surprises” of the Holy Spirit – the charismatic gifts of tongues, prophecy and healing. Many pastors are using technology and drama to liven up their sermons. But the one ingredient that guarantees a worship service will not be boring is the presence of God. When God is present in a service, wonderful things happen – people are helped, marriages are restored, lives are changed for the better. The presence of God is more evident in some churches than others, but if you take the time and trouble to look, you will find that presence.

Some people don’t go to church because they are too busy. Sunday is their only “day of rest”. Yet, they manage to find time for a ball game or a TV show or a movie. And they *make* time for mowing the grass and cleaning house. Admittedly, it does take some effort to get up on Sunday morning and get the family off to church. But it gives you a good feeling when you do. After all, church is one of the few things the whole family can do together where there is something for everyone. And churches these days are bending over backwards to offer worship times that are convenient -- Saturday night or Sunday afternoon or Wednesday evening – or just about any time you want.

Still other people don’t go to church because they think they can meet their spiritual need in other ways, like recreation or family activities. But the spiritual need can only be met by a direct encounter with God. And worship is the best atmosphere for that to happen. No amount of physical exercise, education, or entertainment can satisfy the spirit. Not even our dearest family relationships can fulfill this deepest need in us.

Whatever the stated reason, the bottom line is, we just don’t think we *need* structured worship. “Why do I need to sing hymns or pray with other worshipers?” “Why do I need someone else telling me how to live?”

Well, like it or not, the simple fact is, we do. We *all* do. We need a setting where we take time to *think* about the One who is greater than ourselves. That is why we sing. We need a setting where we make time to talk to him in prayer. We need a regular time when we are reminded that we are accountable to him for our behavior.

Our children are educated in schools and entertained by TV for the better part of every day. Yet in none of that are they being taught the moral dimension of life. On the contrary, much of what they see and hear in the media contradicts any sense of morality. No wonder many of them are out of control. Shouldn't there be a time, at least once a week, when their *spirits* get attention? The truth is we all need structured worship to nurture our spiritual and moral dimension.

Could it be the real reason we don't feel we need the church is our *pride*? Self-sufficiency is good up to a point. But, Jesus said, "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup> Being "poor in spirit" simply means recognizing your spiritual need – that you can't make it on your own – that you need God and the *means* by which you encounter his presence. Jesus also said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>2</sup> A little child knows she *doesn't* know. She is willing to learn – eager to learn. And she receives because she asks. Again, Jesus said, "If you continue in my word... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."<sup>3</sup> *His word*. You get that at church!

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### **Add Value to Your Life**

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Statistics show that married couples who frequently pray together reduce the potential for divorce from 50% to less than 1%! Statistics also show that in areas where people attend church more, society fares better. The crime rate goes down. Families are stronger. Even the economy is better. In other words, by attending church you not only help

yourself and benefit your family, you improve society!

The most urgent need in America today is the fourth dimension. That is the missing ingredient that could restore sanity to an insane world. That is the factor that makes life function as intended by the Creator. That is the foundation for a happy home.

Let me encourage you to make time in your weekly schedule for structured worship. It will add value to your life and your family. And do it consistently – the same way you do anything else that's important to you, like work, school, eating! Your spirit is the essence of your life, and when it is whole, every other part of you is better. A wise man said, "Above all else guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."<sup>4</sup>

Find a place to worship where your thoughts are lifted to God. Where you are challenged to live life his way. Where you are reminded that some day you will give account to him. Find a place where *his word* is the topic. And when you leave the place of worship, take him with you – in your heart – to live inside you every moment of every day. That's the fourth dimension and it is the essential piece of life's puzzle that makes everything else make sense! Don't leave it out of your life!

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 5:3 <sup>2</sup>Matthew 18:3 <sup>3</sup>John 8:31,32

<sup>4</sup>Proverbs 4:23