

My Almost for His Highest

by [John Barber](#), Ph.D.

A Book Review

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I had the pleasure of serving in the military. While I was in military college, I went to something called boot camp. Boot camp was a series of daily chapters in training which: (1) initially broke me down, (2) but also built me up. It trained me to survive in combat situations—and life! My Drill Sergeant saved my life!

Barber's book is structured much like a reading in boot camp. It breaks the church down and exposes some of its sins, but weaved throughout its chapters is a spiritual building-up process. We, the Church, need both—a breaking down and a building up. To be unbalanced in either will not build a good Kingdom Army or make us good individual soldiers of the Cross. Barber is a good Drill Sergeant and maintains a biblical solution that will save your life—and that of the Church! ¹

If you desire a complicated academic book on true Church sanctification then *My Almost for His Highest* is not it. If you desire to read a book on true Christian sanctification that only stimulates your brain and not your heart then this is not it. This is a rather simplistic book, written in such a way as to reach the common man. It speaks volumes on our personal sanctification, but also diagnoses the Church as a community to reach this individual goal.

The work speaks the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). It speaks it matter-a-factly. Be warned: God may use it to correct your heart and that of the life of your Church. It does not play

¹ Life, in respect to daily living and sanctification, etc. As a secondary means the Holy Spirit uses to mature us.

games; but like a heavy weight boxer,² it hits hard. As Barber states, it is not “written in a literary or sophisticated style. ... [but simply] for people who wish to get to the point” (Page xiii, Introduction). John Barber’s holy punch in this book attempts to knock out our “Almost” and replace it with the Spirit’s heart of “Utmost.” To God be the glory!

What are some of our “Almosts”? Barber states:

Rather than preferring to be absent from the body and present with the Lord, far too many of us prefer to be present with the body and with our future plans. We attend church. But mainly our interest is to learn how to improve our own lots in life. We’re repeating the error of the impenitent thief on the cross to whom Jesus was only a matter of convenience... What has become of the spirit of brokenness and humility in our churches? We are forgetting to bow the knee. What has happened to the cry of the penitent thief who, in unassuming contrition, cried from the depths of his sin-sick soul, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” We are forgetting we are thieves. Daily repentance and walking in true faith and holiness before God are being pushed aside to make room for the idols of personal relevance and the settled life. What has become of our commitment to the crucified life? Have we forgotten His promise that we’ll be persecuted for the sake of righteousness? (page 1)

While depravity is true of all, some Christians act as if they are dead in Christ – but alive only in the world. Some individual saints are looking for a gospel that promotes “me,” “myself,” and “I” as instilled by the Church’s own “me,” “myself,” and “I” example! Many in the Church today are saluting the multi-colored flag of worldliness. Some fly it all the way to the top of the pole, and others only at half-mask, thinking that either is true Christianity. The Church itself at times appears to be assisting by mass producing these flags—and at times even supplying the poles to fly them. They assist the sinner/saint to pledge allegiance to “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). This should not be.

This attitude infects every venue of life. Yes, the usual suspects: marriage, money, morals, and others. But how? As Barber states:

The covenantal life of ancient Israel that Ezekiel and all of the other prophets address was broken almost beyond repair—idolatry, the worship of false gods, fornication, adultery, rank corruption at the highest levels of

² Think of the hits of Mike Tyson, Sonny Liston, Joe Louis, George Foreman, Rocky Marciano, Earnie Shavers, Jack Dempsey, Joe Frazier, Lennox Lewis, and Max Baer all combined and delivering one good theological punch! A much-needed punch.

political, social, and religious life, lawlessness, and much more (Page xiv , Introduction).

Later, Barber asks, “What is the cause of our sickness?” He answers, “Evangelical leaders, and their followers, are relinquishing their commitment to the fundamentals of the Bible in order to induce church growth, regardless of the cost to the purity of the Church” (page 2). “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,” where art thou? (Matt.23:37).

As the reader can see, Barber gives us not only an accurate a diagnosis of personal sanctification, but also looks at the church’s health as a total community. He includes: the worship wars, popularization in the church, Christian service, the protection of the peace and purity of the Church through church discipline, postmodernity, pulpit manipulation, and more. He asks the Church, “do we need innovation or reform”? (page 21 ff). As Barber later states, “Why have many evangelical pastors abandoned the message of the cross in favor of innovation in ministry? They no longer believe in the power of the Gospel” (page 28). Barber also deals with the “easy pulpit” and some of the so-called Kevorkian’s³ in them. As Barber puts it:

The minister who says, “We never say anything about sin” is the same minister who never says anything about the gospel. How can people know the extent of the answer, which is the grace of God in salvation, unless they are told the extent of the problem, which is sin?

While Barber covers numerous other topics concerning the Church, many are already wondering, “What is the solution(s)”? I will simply say, read the book, *My Almost for His Highest*. Barber enlightens the reader with the medicine of the Great Physician—Jesus Christ. It will reveal the Church’s sin, your sin, and reveal God’s solution.

Get ready to be hit hard—but to be hit with the purpose of building you to be all you can be for Christ!

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³ an Armenian-American pathologist and right-to-die activist.

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