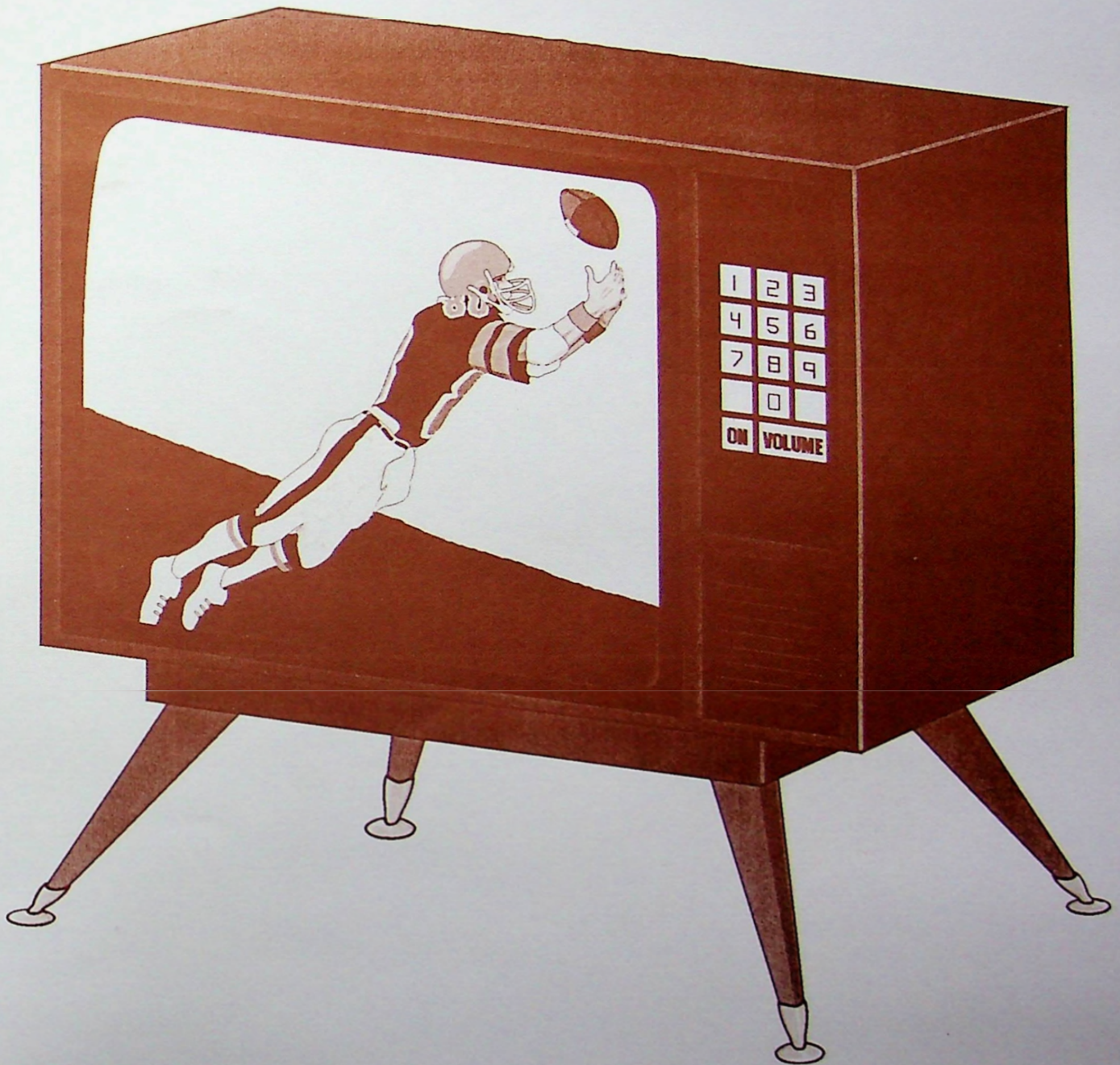


The Restitution Herald

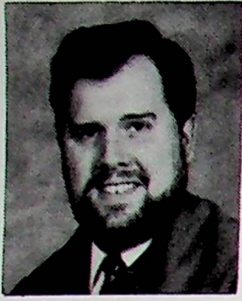
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Tackling the Tough Issues





UNPLUGGED!

For this issue's editorial I'd like to pass on a copy of a letter I recently wrote. It is self explanatory!

To: NBC Sports
CC: President of NBC; Victoria's Secret;
Walt Disney

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a huge baseball fan . . . but I won't be watching this year's playoffs and world series. I enjoy football and for years have hosted a superbowl party . . . but I won't be watching the superbowl this year. I like the NBA as much as any American man . . . but I won't be spending my Sunday afternoons watching NBA showtime this year . . . I thrill to Olympic competition . . . but I didn't see Marion Jones get those final two gold medals last week . . .

You see . . . I've pulled the plug on TV once and for all. The cable has been permanently disconnected . . . there's no antenna . . . there's no satellite dish . . . I'm officially unplugged from TV. And I have no intention of going back!!

I've become more and more disenchanted with TV with each passing season. The quality of programming has gotten decidedly worse each year. More and more programs pander to our baser interests.

I got really mad when my four-year-old daughter began wiggling around in a suggestive manner singing a song. I was ready to get after my teenagers for

watching MTV, which they are expressly forbidden to do . . . only to be told by my wife that it wasn't from MTV . . . it was from one of the videos that is shown on the Disney channel in the afternoons . . . when young kids come home from school . . .

The next day I watched . . . in disbelief as Britney Spears wiggled around in suggestive ways, wearing clothing that I would associate more with streetwalkers than teenage girls. So, the Disney Channel went on the list of forbidden channels, alongside MTV . . .

But, it turns out, that wasn't enough . . .

As our family thrilled to the Olympics, on NBC . . . (finally something we could watch together . . . wholesome entertainment for everyone). We had already taken to hitting the mute button — as we didn't want our children to hear some of the inappropriate dialogue included in the ads for your Fall programming. But, my wife and I were horrified beyond belief as we saw scores of nearly naked women cavorting on the screen during a commercial break. As the Victoria's Secret ad played before the eyes of our 13, 11, nine, eight, and six-year-old children, we scrambled around desperately searching for the remote to change over to the Weather Channel . . . but it was too late . . . everyone had already had an eyeful.

Now, please understand . . . I have nothing against ladies' underwear . . . and I have nothing against the lacy stuff that Victoria's Secret sells, but I find it outrageous that

this explicit and highly sensual stuff is shown on your network during a supposedly "family friendly" Olympics.

So, I'm here to say "I've had enough"! I Quit! We will be spending more time reading good books, playing family friendly games together . . . and when we really want to watch something . . . we'll rent a quality video of a classic movie.

Sure, I'll miss my sports . . . my wife will miss Home and Garden TV, and we'll be missing out on some educational programming from Discovery and the History channel . . . but the time has come when we can't get over the fact that where TV is concerned, the bad clearly outweighs the good. It probably has for some time . . . but like the proverbial "frog in the kettle" we hadn't fully realized how bad it's gotten.

So, thank you NBC . . . thank you Disney, for pushing the boundaries of taste and decorum to such an extreme that you've left us with no other choice. Thank you for the extra hours we'll have to talk, think, play and pray, to read, to visit friends and neighbors . . . to get true lives back.

We invite other thoughtful individuals to wake up and join us . . . It's time to say "enough is enough" and we're unplugging!!!

Reverend Jeffrey Fletcher
Hammond, LA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6).
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8).
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5).
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16).
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146:4).
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3).
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28).
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54).
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8).
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32).
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3).
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21)
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Planting Seeds

BY PASTOR JASON TURNER, BELOIT, WISCONSIN

Twelve years ago I was 18 years old and about to begin my freshman year at Oregon Bible College. Not too long into the school year I realized that my financial situation had drastically changed. I no longer had extra money to buy \$50 tennis shoes, in fact I no longer had extra money at all.

I remember one day I ran out of shampoo. I had no money, and I didn't want dirty hair, so I washed my hair with my bar of soap. Really no big deal, probably many of us here have had to do the same thing at one time or another. But a week later I still had no money for shampoo. That was okay. I was happy at the college. After a while, one Sunday morning my mother gave me five dollars and I thought, "This is great, now I can buy shampoo." So I went to the store, grabbed the cheapest shampoo they had, and went back to the men's dorm. The next morning I realized I had accidentally purchased conditioner and not shampoo. So, back to the bar of soap and at least I had some conditioner to put in my hair.

When my sophomore year began I was in a little bit better financial situation because I had found a good part-time job. But then I broke my ankle playing basketball — I couldn't work and my funds began to dwindle once again. Then tragedy struck. I lost my wallet, and my wallet had eight whole dollars in it!

At first I panicked. I really needed that eight dollars. One thing that you need to understand is that eight Bible college dollars back then was like 8,000 of today's dollars. Not only that but I had lost my driver's license, and that would cost me

another seven dollars to replace. For the next week or so I looked everywhere, but I couldn't find it. Then an idea began to creep into my mind: just pray about the wallet. Don't worry about it. God will get you your wallet back. So that's what I did. I prayed. I asked for prayer at church and chapel services. At prayer times and any time I prayed I asked God to get me my wallet back.

Weeks passed, then months passed, and still no wallet. I tried to stay positive about it. I hadn't gone out and gotten a new driver's license because God was going to give me my old one back. I hadn't bought a new wallet because I was going to have my old one back soon. Still no wallet. Finally I went and got a new driver's license and I got a new wallet for Christmas that year. All the while I was a little bit angry. I could imagine some jerk who had found my wallet, and my eight dollars, and was out having a good time with my money, living it up, buying shampoo. Not only that, but I was having a bit of a crisis of faith. I was disappointed with God. I felt like I had done everything I could have done, and still no wallet. I knew at the time it was just a little thing, but I wondered what had happened.

Last summer right before conference I was out in my yard mowing the lawn and I was feeling pretty good. Marcee and I had just bought a house in the country and I was thanking God for all of the good things He had given. I was pleased with the direction the church was going, I was glad that the church had just purchased a building to meet in and I could think of a lot of prayers that God had answered. And as I

was thanking God the thought came into my mind "But God, you sure left me hanging with that wallet situation. I sure wish you would have given me my wallet back."

A couple of weeks later I was at General Conference in St. Charles, Missouri. Kent Ross walked up to me one night and said, "Hey Jason, I've got something for you. A couple of weeks ago we gave an old couch to Zach and Zuaquis. Zuaquis was looking through it and she found your old wallet. It's still got eight dollars in it."

I couldn't help but remember the parable that Jesus told of the unjust judge and the persistent widow. Remember how the widow received justice because she kept asking the judge for it?

I wonder if I just asked God for my wallet back so many times that He finally got sick of hearing about it?

As I talk to people from a lot of different churches, over and over again I hear about three things many churches wish they had, but don't have. I bet you can figure out the three things before I name them: many churches wish they had more people, more financial security, and some churches wish they had a pastor or a full-time pastor. Putting it simply, most churches suffer from a lack of numbers, lack of money, or lack of a pastor.

For many years our church in Beloit had low Sunday morning attendance and low offerings. It seemed like nothing we did helped the situation. Over the past couple of years, we have been learning a scriptural principle that has helped to turn things around for us, and I'd like to share that with you tonight.

I want us to consider Second Corinthians 9:6-15. Let's think about some natural principles of sowing and reaping. Have you ever had a garden?

The first principle of gardening is that you must have faith to plant a garden. You have to believe that it will rain. You have to believe that your crops will grow. You have to believe that some bug won't come along and eat your veggies. You plant your garden in faith that you will have a harvest.

The next thing that you need for a garden is patience. You can't plant a garden and harvest your crops later on that day. It'll probably be months before you eat your first piece of produce. You must have patience.

You have to nurture your garden. Fertilize here and there. Water it when it needs watering. Pull some weeds out. It will take work on your part.

Finally, you have to realize that the more you plant, the more you will harvest. Plant one seed of corn and hopefully you will reap two or three ears. Plant ten thousand seeds and you'd better really like corn.

The question is how we take this knowledge and apply it to the three major needs that I just mentioned (people, money, and pastors).

Our churches need more people. They should be filled to overflowing every Sunday morning. How do we get there?

When Marcee and I moved into Beloit we lived across from the Wincapaw family, and I really got to know them and their son Johnathan. He was smart, likable, and a natural leader — and he loved the Lord. I thought that some day he would make a great pastor somewhere, but our church was small and the thought of sending Johnathan off to Bible College kind of rubbed me the wrong way. I didn't want to send this guy off to Atlanta, I wanted to keep him in Beloit where he could keep going to my church and get married and raise his children.

I'm sure that no other pastors have ever felt that way, right? But that was how I felt.

But I have encouraged Johnathan to go, just as I would encourage anyone to go.

Just like faith is required for gardening, faith is also required to send off this young man and know that God is going to send ten people to take his place.

Whether we're sending our people off to the Bible College, the mission field, or into a new church work, we need to be careful not to be too tight-fisted with our people.

It is difficult, but I believe that God will bless our churches with greater numbers if we will do it, if we'll encourage people to sometimes go out instead of come in. It's difficult when we have a small congregation and we feel like if we lose one more person or family that might be the end of the church. We have to remember: sow generously, reap generously; sow sparingly, reap sparingly.

What is prayer?

*Well, it's talking to God,
but it is also a form of
planting a seed.*

.....

We can also see something very important in Matthew 9:35-38. Jesus sees that the harvest is plentiful, but then He doesn't say to His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, so get out there and roll up your sleeves and get to work." He doesn't say that. He says, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

Very often we read this passage as a call to work. It is really a call to prayer. We say "Let's get going." Jesus would say "Let's get praying." What is prayer? Well, it's talking to God, but it is also a form of planting a seed. There are lots of ways to plant seeds. Every time you pray, you plant a seed. It may take a while for that seed to bear fruit, but that's just the way seeds work.

I didn't realize that every time I prayed to get my wallet back I was actually planting a seed. I came to the point where I really didn't think I was ever going to get my wallet back at all. But if you plant enough seeds you'll get a harvest and if you pray enough prayers you'll get an answer.

If only I had a nickel for every time somebody has said to me, "Pastor, I've been praying and praying for something, and I just haven't gotten any answer." I ask, "How long have you been praying and praying?" They say, "For a long time, like two weeks."

What is two weeks to God? Isn't it strange how sometimes we want or need something, and we know that only God can give it to us, so we pray about it for a week or two, or maybe a month, and then we stop praying for it because we haven't gotten it yet? We don't expect overnight results when we sow a seed in our garden, why do we expect them with our prayers?

If we really wanted new people in our churches wouldn't we really pray without ceasing, in the sense that after a month or two we'd still be praying? And if you keep on praying for new people in your church, God will test you to see if you really want them.

You would like to see a nice family of four pull up in a mini-van. Is God going to send you them? Probably not at first. First it may be someone a little less lovely. God wants to see if you're willing to nurture and disciple someone.

In a garden if you grow flowers from seeds and water them and nurture them, and then someone tries to step on them, you're going to protect what you've sown. And in your church if you pray for new people, and you encourage and nurture them, and then someone comes along trying to step on your new people, how are you going to feel?

You have to be gentle with new people. You have to be careful not to over fertilize them. It will drive them away.

The text in 2 Corinthians 9 was originally written with reference to money.

(continued on page 6)

Many churches and many people struggle about finances. They don't have enough to do the things they would like to do and in some cases don't have enough to do the things they must do.

When we started the church in Beloit money was always an issue. Our offerings were always low. I've preached about giving, taught about giving, begged people to give. Nothing seemed to work. One Sunday morning after a particularly low offering I told the treasurer that I couldn't take it any more. He said, "What are we going to do about this?" I said, "Write out a check for \$200 and send it to one of the Bible College students," because we know there is no one poorer and more needy than a Bible College student. That moment represented a radical change in our church's philosophy of giving. We had been tithing already, almost from the start of the church, but not giving much if anything above the tithe. Since that time, we have given money generously to various needs, while still tithing. Our financial situation is in much better shape. I just checked the records today and our offerings in July of 2000 were three times the amount they were in July of 1999. The only thing we're doing differently is going out of our way to be generous to the needy.

You have probably observed in the past how often people don't have any money, but they won't give any money to the church because they're too poor. Other people have a lot of money and they give a lot to the church. We naturally think that the rich people give because they have money. Often the opposite is true. The rich people in the church have money because they give. They weren't always rich, but God has blessed them.

What is Second Corinthians 9:11 really saying to us today? What does it mean to be rich in every way? Does that mean spiritually rich but not materially rich? No, it says rich in EVERY way. Is God going to make us rich so we can tear down our barns and build bigger ones? No, God is going to make a generous person rich so

they can be generous on EVERY occasion. Once again, what does the word "every" mean? If you look up the word "every" in the dictionary, you'll find out that it means "every."

If you spend all of your money on things that you want and need, then it's easy for you to begin to think that you are the ultimate destination for money: God sends money along, and He's just trying to get it to you. But what God is really trying to do is send blessing through you. He wants you to act as a conduit for His blessing.

You can think of it this way: the blessing of God flows like a river. It flows from one person to another and eventually gets to you. The important thing is if the blessing flows to you like a river, don't dam the blessing. Let it flow. If you do dam it up, God will turn it into a trickle.

Have some churches been guilty of doing this? The money flows into them, and they never send a good part of it out. Then they can't figure out why they have no money. They're not generous in every situation like the Bible tells us to be.

Now why is it so important to God that you are generous on every occasion? Because it will result in praise and thanksgiving to Him. Look at the end of 2 Corinthians 9:11 through verse 13. God is into praise and worship and thanksgiving. If He sees an opportunity to receive it, He wants it. He'll be there for it. Ultimately God is seeking praise. When we are generous to God's people, God will get praised. Ever stop to think about why Jesus said, "When you give to the needy, don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing"? Because God should get the praise and the thanks, not us.

If you want to begin to turn the finances of your church around, start being generous in the way you give. You'll be praising God right along with the people you're helping out, because God will bless you.

I believe that the need for more pastors is a major concern of many people.

Some churches don't have a pastor and are having a hard time getting one. Some churches have older pastors and they are concerned whether they will be able to find one later on.

Why aren't more and more young people lining up to be pastors? I believe that the answer goes back to sowing and reaping. I believe that, in many cases, we have sown bad seeds among the children of the church. I remember hearing occasional comments such as, "Boy that sermon sure went on and on."

If you're a critical person, the pastor is about the easiest target. If he's too energetic, then he's just crazy. If he's too calm, then he's boring. I once heard it said that most kids don't want to grow up to be pastors because their family eats roasted pastor on the way home from church every Sunday.

I recently went to a Christian concert, and hardly anyone showed up for the concert. When it began I could tell that the young lady up on stage was a little bit disappointed. So after her show I was walking around a little bit and I saw her signing autographs, and I went up to her and I said: "I know that there weren't a lot of people here, but you did a good job and I was blessed by your concert." She said, "Oh, well I thank you for that little word of encouragement." I said, "I'm a pastor and I know it can be frustrating when people don't show up." In her eyes I could almost see fear. She said, "Oh, you're a pastor. I'm so sorry, Pastor. Thank you for taking the time to come and talk to me. I really appreciate it, Pastor. Thank-you."

Something told me that she didn't grow up in a Church of God church.

Hebrews 13:17 says "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

Could it be that we sometimes get so wrapped up in the verses in the Bible that we like that we forget that all Scripture is

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The Five Points of Calvinism

BY WILLIAM M. WACHTEL, KETTLE FALLS, WASHINGTON

A recent book by George L. Bryson is entitled *The Five Points of Calvinism*. It contains a brief but helpful study of John Calvin's views on how people are saved — his theology of salvation, or soteriology. John Calvin is regarded in church history as one of the fathers of the Protestant Reformation, and his theology has had a profound influence on religious thinkers ever since his time. Even today there are many who are proud to call themselves "Calvinists," although some of his views have been called into question by members of the Calvinist tradition itself.

The heart of his soteriology has been summarized in five points: total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. A word that uses the first letter of each of these points has provided an easy way to remember them: TULIP.

In Calvinist thinking, total depravity means that humans are, because of our sinful nature, unable to believe in Christ or accept the gospel. Our inability is such that God must regenerate us first, before we can believe. This places regeneration as the *cause* of belief. The Scriptures, on the contrary, make regeneration the *result* of belief. "As many as received him [Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13).

Unconditional election means that God chose, from all eternity, those who were to be saved. His choice was made arbitrarily,

that is, without basis on any foreseen response on the part of His elect. He chose those who would be saved, and all others (those not chosen) would be lost. There was no "condition" of salvation on the part of human beings. It was strictly a matter of God's own sovereign decision. Scripture, however, bases election on the condition which depends on a person's decision to believe the gospel, to put his faith in Christ as Savior. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). "By grace

*A dark blot is cast
upon God's character
from all of this.*

are ye saved, through faith" (Eph. 2:8). "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). The Golden Text of the Bible, John 3:16, is the inspired answer to this false teaching of Calvinism.

Limited atonement means that Christ died only for the elect, and for none besides. This doctrine, in Calvin's logic, follows from the preceding premise that God's election is unconditional. But if this premise is false — as we have shown that it is — then his conclusion is not valid. Scripture, in fact, declares that Christ died for all men, not just for the elect. "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). If this text alone does not disprove Calvin's third point, it is hard to imagine what it would take to do so!

Irresistible grace means that God will cause His elect to believe and be saved. They really have no choice in the matter. God's grace is not extended to those who are not elect, those who are not among the ones chosen from all eternity. But God's grace *can be resisted* and despised by those who have experienced it, according to Hebrews 10:29. It is, therefore, not irresistible!

Perseverance of the saints means that those who have been elected to be saved will remain faithful to God until the end. If a professing Christian does fall away and give up his faith, Calvinists say this proves that he never was saved in the first place, never was truly among the elect. The consistent New Testament admonitions to persevere seem rather pointless if the elect cannot help but persevere!

A dark blot is cast upon God's character from all of this. Calvinism believes in a hell of eternal conscious torments, a hell which God has created to receive the lost. In this view, those not elected to salvation will be consigned to this hell forever and ever, without any hope or possibility of repentance or change on their part. In effect, God is made to appear as a monster planning the horrors and agonies of hell for all those He does not choose to elect to salvation, those He does not cause to accept His salvation. This, in fact, makes God responsible for their presence in hell for all eternity! Such a doctrine has led many to the opposite error of believing that hell is a place of correction and conversion, and those who go to hell will ultimately turn to God and be saved. This doctrine is called Universalism, because it teaches

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Big Things Small Churches Can Do

BY PASTOR MICHAEL P. BROWN, MACOMB, ILLINOIS

Over many years as a member and minister in the Church of God, I've observed a tendency for people to react to our small size in two different ways. Some say it doesn't matter how small we are, just so we preach Truth. Others wonder why we aren't bigger if we do have the Truth. Some take pride that we are small; others are so dissatisfied with our size that they leave our churches seeking larger congregations to join. Apparently there are members who look at our smallness and feel a sense of inferiority. Because our numbers do not run into millions, or even the hundreds of thousands, they feel guilty, like we're not fulfilling the Great Commission.

To compensate for our inferiority and guilt over our smallness, we strongly emphasize the need to grow. We imitate bigger churches, hoping that it will make us grow big too. If we don't grow like them we feel like we're failing. Meanwhile, some are resigned to the idea that we're not meant to be like the big churches. They rationalize that size isn't everything. Besides, having the doctrinal Truth is what really counts and "few there be that find it," (borrowing from Matt. 7:13, 14). In essence, we find ourselves struggling with church growth while dealing with the reality of our small size. This dilemma is one reason why our conference is re-examining itself in terms of organization, philosophy, and goals. Given this situation, I think we need to consider what it really means to be big and small.

Two years ago I had the opportunity to hear Ron Klassen (executive director of Rural Home Missionary Association, and co-author with John Koessler of *No Little*

Places: The Untapped Potential of the Small-Town Church [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996]) address the subject of smaller churches. I learned some enriching ideas that I believe can help us view our small church size in a different and constructive way. It led me to think that even though most of our churches are small, we don't need to make excuses or feel like we're not quite as good as the big ones. There are still some big things we can do. Before we look at some of these thoughts, I would like to make two disclaimers that Klassen also stated.

Disclaimer one: *We should not be anti-megachurch or against big churches.* The purpose here is not to put down churches that are large. I believe God has a purpose for churches that number in the thousands or more. There is nothing biblically wrong with big churches. God is able to use them in great ways for reaching the masses of people who need Jesus as Lord and Savior of their lives. Since they have a larger pool of resources to tap, there are many more innovative things larger churches can do to reach out to people and help them grow spiritually.

Disclaimer two: *We should not be anti-growth.* Some have the mistaken notion that if we say it's not wrong for churches to be small that we're against church growth. I agree with the idea that growth is a neutral condition. For example, when I hear that a church is growing this doesn't necessarily cause me to say, "Wow! This must be a good church." At the same time, if I hear that a church has plateaued or is in decline this doesn't always tell me it's a bad church. A church can grow for good reasons or not-so-good reasons. In the United States 85

percent of the churches have either plateaued or are in decline. This statistic is used to imply that 85 percent of the churches are not good churches. But the fact that a church's size has plateaued or is in decline does not always make it a bad church, for there are understandable reasons why this can happen. If you are living in a declining community or declining demographic situation, church growth will be affected.

So as we get into our discussion, keep in mind that when we speak of small churches, we are not necessarily against large-sized churches or churches that are growing. In fact, we can take the principles we are sharing today and actually use them for church growth purposes. And if that happens, so much the better.

Myths and Truths About "Big" & "Small"

In their book Klassen and Koessler list five myths relating to the concept of "big." I have summarized them as follows:

MYTH #1: *The Numbers Myth* — *To be significant, a ministry must be big.* If people ask about one's church and want to know, "How many members does your church have?" one might naturally tend to feel like a failure if the congregation is small. But the size of one's ministry doesn't mean it is an ineffective ministry. We are not failures just because we minister to a small group compared to one that is large.

MYTH #2: *The Big Place Myth* — *To be significant, my ministry must be in a big place.* Naturally, churches in small towns are not going to have as many people and resources as large cities. Therefore,

small-church programs and facilities are not going to be as impressive as their megachurch counterparts. The potential for growth is not going to be as great in small towns, either. Even when small churches grow, somehow the statistics do not look as good as in the city. But this doesn't mean that small churches cannot constructively minister to those in less-populated areas, as well.

MYTH #3: The Recognition Myth — One measure of the significance of my ministry is how much recognition I receive for it. If a person bases significance upon the recognition one receives from ministry, then it will be difficult to accept responsibilities that are less glamorous yet still important for the service we're called to do. Ministry in a small church need not make one feel small.

When Klassen left his pastorate and began working with the Rural Home Missionary Association, Morton, Illinois, he found himself in a new church and a new situation. He says, "I was no longer preaching to my own congregation every Sunday, no longer was a church following my leadership, no longer was I constantly receiving attention and strokes. Instead I was directing my ministry known only to a few people."

He said the only opportunity for regular ministry at his new church that his travel schedule allowed was working with the children's program on Wednesday evenings. Part of his responsibility was to set up chairs and tables and vacuum the floor. Although he'd done those sort of things as a pastor, it was seldom expected of him.

He said, "These were things, I felt, that 'less important' people did, so doing them made me feel less important." One day he found himself reluctantly working in the church nursery, tending one- and two-year-olds. He cried, "Lord, what are you doing to me? I am gifted to do bigger and better things but here I am changing diapers."

But then he soon realized something. He confessed, "My response to taking on menial jobs in the church shows me that my

ministry had not been motivated as purely by a desire to serve the Lord as I had thought. Far more than I had known, I had been motivated by the recognition it brought."

Myth #4: The Career Myth — Career advances are signs of a significant ministry. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the focus of pastoral ministry changed from calling to profession. This has not been good news to small congregations who want their pastors to be just that, pastors not professionals. When pastors see their ministry as a profession, the pattern is that they view their first pastorates as "starter churches" — places to learn the ropes before moving to bigger and better and greener pastures. The congregation of the

*They view their
first pastorates as
"starter churches"*

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small church which sees its pastor accept a call to a bigger church feels used. They may also feel a little guilty because they can't afford to pay a competitive salary, yet also frustrated and a bit resentful that their pastor refuses to be content with a small salary. "Pastors are supposed to serve God," they reason. "More money shouldn't be a reason to leave." Klassen comments, "To the extent that we are motivated by career advancement, we undermine our own ministries. Rather than giving our whole hearts to serving the people God has called us to, we end up trying to use the people to advance our own careers. By definition, that is exploitation, not ministry" (pp. 22-23).

Myth #5: The Cure-for-Inferiority Myth — If I can just succeed professionally, I'll no longer feel inferior. Because of past failures or unfulfilled circumstances, some may have a feeling of inferiority. In hopes of proving their self worth, they expect professional success to provide a

cure for this feeling of smallness. But when a person is driven by a need to prove one's worth, he sabotages his own ministry because his work is motivated by what's in it for himself rather than out of desire to serve — and that's not ministry.

As we consider these five myths, it's important to understand that we don't have to measure effectiveness by these false standards. In fact, Klassen and Koessler list five basic truth principles to counteract these myths:

Truth #1: The Quality Principle — God judges my ministry not by its size, but its quality. There are passages in the Bible that place quality over quantity. First Corinthians 3:13 says that God will judge our ministries by "the quality of each man's work." This is not to say that numerical growth is not important. But even where numerical growth is recorded in the scriptures, it is always attributed to God, not credited to the people (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 3:6). Furthermore, numerical growth, or lack thereof, is never used to evaluate whether one's ministry has been a success or a failure. Scripture calls us to servanthood, humility, and faithfulness but does not call us to produce big numbers. We are to carry out our ministries in faithful service but the results are left up to Him. "God gives the increase," Paul says (1 Cor. 3:5, 6).

Today, "church growth" is used almost exclusively to refer to numerical growth. But numerical growth can take place for wrong reasons. When Jesus ministered on earth multitudes followed Him. But they followed Him more for the miracles He performed than for His message (John 6:26). Churches can have large numbers but if the people are not getting the message of Christ and His Kingdom, they are growing for the wrong reasons.

Usually when a church plateaus it is considered to be a bad sign. But that may not always be a bad sign. When a church has a growth spurt, it can often benefit from a

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time of rest and consolidation to adjust to the changes made necessary by growth.

Even numerical decline can be a sign of health. It may help a church to clear away any of those who are causing problems in the church or are only using the church for their own interests, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:13). In the long run the church is strengthened for service, not weakened.

Klassen and Koessler say in their book that a healthier understanding of growth will focus on the quality of the life of the church more than on quantity. Are the members growing in spiritual maturity? Are they using their spiritual gifts? Are they reaching out to more people with the gospel? These are the criteria that ought to be used to identify growth but these are not as quantifiable as numerical growth. This does not mean, however, that spiritual development can't be measured. They explain,

One way a church can measure its spiritual development is to set behavioral objectives for itself. One year the missions department at Valley Chapel set a goal of seeing 10 percent of the congregation's families praying for world missions on a regular basis. That same year one of the objectives of the Sunday school department was to see its young people showing practical concern for the elderly by writing to them.

. . . Along with its numerical goals, a church can set qualitative goals and define how and when they will be measured. (26)

Truth #2: The No-Little Places Principle — *Wherever God has called me to minister is an important place.* Being in a small place does not necessarily mean one's ministry is small. John the Baptist's ministry was out in the desert in no-man's land. Clearly, his "church-strategy" would not connect with today's criteria for growth.

The Apostle Paul was gifted to speak before masses of people, yet time after time he was holed up in prison cells. Interestingly, he said his confinements actually helped to spread the gospel (Phil. 1:12, 13). How much God can use us does not depend on whether he sends us to a large metropolis, a small town, or a prison cell.

Truth #3: The Glory-of-God Principle — *God calls me to seek His glory, not mine.* I am to seek to inspire others to think more highly of God, not more highly of myself. In Jeremiah 45:5, God challenges Jeremiah's scribe, Baruch, "Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not." One must ask, "Am I trying to build up my own ecclesiastical kingdom? If I crave recognition from my peers, who am I really trying to please?" The Bible says "whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God," (1 Cor. 10:31). No matter the size of ministry, one is to work for His glory, not our own.

Truth #4: The Vocation Principle — *I am to approach my ministry as a calling, not as a career.* Klassen said when he first considered moving to rural Nebraska his greatest concern was that he would be lost out there. He wondered if anyone would ever find him again, stuck in the middle of nowhere. He was also afraid that if he moved, his career would be headed in the same direction — nowhere! He was left facing the bottom-line question: *Do I want to serve the Lord or do I want to serve my ego?*

He states, "Until we put behind us the motives of career advancement — and even professional survival — and give ourselves fully to obeying God and serving the people he has called us to serve, we're not truly serving God, we're serving ourselves."

Truth #5: The Unconditional Love Principle — *God loves me because He is love, not because of anything I do for Him.* Our significance to God is not based on our accomplishments but on the fact He loves us as His children. His love does not increase as our accomplishments increase.

Wherever one serves, or to whatever degree, God will never love that person more or less than He does right now. This liberates us from striving for a ministry where we earn more of God's admiration and allows us to be content where we are.

A Key Concept

Klassen and Koessler say that once we come to grips with these principles, we can begin to get a different perspective on the way churches can be effective regardless of their small size. One key concept to remember is this: **Small is neutral. It is not a plus or a minus. Small can be as effective as big when we capitalize upon its strengths while minimizing its weaknesses.**

The fact that small can be as effective as big is comparable to tractors. Most farmers have two sizes of tractors. The smaller one can do certain jobs larger ones cannot do and the larger one can do certain jobs the smaller one cannot do. You cannot mow a ditch along the road with a big tractor very handily. Yet a small tractor is not as practical as a big one for plowing a large field since it would waste many hours, and so forth. Both, therefore, have their places and can work effectively where they can be most useful. So it is with small churches and large churches.

Note that a small church can be as effective as a big one *when we capitalize upon its strengths while minimizing its weaknesses.* Many small churches fail to capitalize upon their strengths because they make the mistake of trying to copy the large church by simply scaling down its programs. Most large churches, for example, have choirs, so the small church may decide to have a choir, even if it only has five people in it and four can't carry a tune in a bucket. (One small-church pastor fondly described his church's five-member choir as "one flat, one sharp, and three undecided.") Even if all five members can sing well, they cannot do the job of a large-church choir. Imagine that two ads appear in your paper at Christmastime.

One reads, "Come hear our five-voice choir sing." The other says, "Come hear our one-hundred-voice choir and full orchestra." Which do you think you would want to hear?

Just as it would be foolish to use a small tractor to do a big tractor's job, it is counterproductive to imitate large-church programs in small churches. The small church that tries to be a scaled-down version of a big church will become a pale imitation of a large church. The church will feel — and be — inferior to the larger church it is copying. Why would anyone want to attend a second-rate imitation of a large church?

Just as the small tractor is most effective when it does the work it's designed to do, the small church has the greatest impact when it doesn't try to act like a big church but focuses on doing those things small churches do best.

Using Your Two I's

Authors Klassen and Koessler assert that small churches can capitalize on their strengths while minimizing their weaknesses by using their two I's — *intimacy* and *involvement*:

I — Intimacy: Unlike the mega-size churches, a small church doesn't have to create small-group ministries for encouraging warmth and personal relationships. A small church that is spiritually healthy has a natural, warm, family atmosphere already built in. Big churches have to pass out cards to guests and assign persons to visit them each week. But most small churches already have people who spontaneously greet visitors and, due to the smallness of the community, probably see them from time to time while going about their daily business. In a large church faces are unfamiliar; in a small church, everyone knows everyone else.

Small churches have the advantage of offering personal attention to the members. When someone leaves his car lights on in the parking lot, the pastor of a small church looks out the window and says,

"Jim, you left your lights on." If someone leaves his car lights on at a large church an usher passes a note to the pastor who then announces over the public address system, "A brown Ford, license number TM3527, has its lights on." If someone leaves his car window down at a small church, a member can give his keys to the deacon and he'll go out and shut the windows for him. But in a large church the owner will probably have to go out into the rain himself. And since it's a pretty big parking lot in which to find his car, he'll get more drenched than if the church were parked in a small-church parking lot.

A healthy small church is able to provide personal support and warmth that touches everyone. For example, in one Minnesota church the elementary-age girl who was providing the special music forgot the words to the song she was singing. At first, the congregation chuckled sympathetically. As she struggled to remember and start again, the people began to hum softly, adding their voices to hers. Reassured by the sound of friends and family, she finished the hymn and was rewarded by the beaming smiles and sincere applause of the congregation.

Klassen tells of a personal experience he had once when he and his wife awoke one holiday to find themselves snowed in and with no electricity or phone due to the storm. Church friends had invited them to spend the day at their home, but with the roads buried under knee-deep snow, they resigned themselves to spending a lonely day at home.

They were feeling disappointed and depressed when, about noon, they were surprised to hear a knock at their back door. There stood the twenty-one-year-old son of their friends. He and his dad had spent the last four hours on two tractors, clearing the way from the ranch to the main road so they could get to Klassen's house.

This warm friendliness is what big churches want to recreate when they try to cultivate a small-church atmosphere. But the healthy small church does not have to do this.

I — Involvement: While many in the large churches are spectators, in the small church more active participation is a given. As the number of an organization goes up there's a natural tendency for the level of participation to go down. According to Klassen, it's not unusual for 80 percent or more of the members of a small church to have specific ministry responsibilities. Most larger churches feel fortunate to have 30 or 40 percent of their members accept specific ministry assignments.

It's suggested that **one important key to the small church's effectiveness is in resisting the temptation to become a scaled-down imitation of the large church.** As we've stated, the emphasis should be capitalizing on the small church's greatest strengths — intimacy and involvement. Two areas in which this can be done is **interactive preaching and participatory worship.**

Interactive Preaching

Klassen says the very physical structure of a large-church sanctuary usually prohibits closeness between the pastor and his congregation. Although church facilities vary from place to place, the usual picture of a large-church sanctuary includes an elevated platform, massive pulpit, and a one-way formal delivery of sermons. When pastors of small churches try to imitate this style they create distance between themselves and the people and, therefore, undermine the quality of intimacy.

To consider how small-church ministers can communicate more effectively and build better intimacy with their people, Klassen and Koessler ask,

In the small church, why promote separation by elevating the pastor? Why can't the pastor speak on the same level as the congregation or elevated only slightly if necessary for visibility?

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Why should the preacher use a preachy tone of voice, a practice that sets the preacher apart from the people? Why not use the same conversational voice used between friends? Wouldn't that do more to create an atmosphere of friendliness? Why be limited to a one-way delivery? Why not open up the community to include the kind of dialogue typical of the healthy family?

In all these ways, preaching in the small church can be tailored to enhance the small-church strengths of intimacy and involvement. (80)

The authors list various ways delivery styles can be used to promote the two I's:

1. *Use object lessons.* For example, Matthew 5:39 says, "If someone strikes you in the right cheek turn to him the other also." Ask, "Have you ever wondered why Jesus says 'right cheek'? Why not 'left cheek'? Or why not just 'cheek'?"

Then ask a child to come up. (Do you remember when Jesus did this?) Ask the child which is his or her right cheek, then show how a right-handed person would have to slap a person to slap the right cheek — backhanded. A backhand slap in that culture was an insult. So what Christ is teaching here is how to respond to an insult.

That's interactive preaching. The informality (intimacy) and involvement make it more powerful than just talking about it.

2. *Ask a question and invite responses.* In Colossians 3:20 it says children should obey their parents in everything. Ask, "Does 'everything' really mean everything? Are there exceptions?" Leviticus 19:18 says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Ask your congregation, "What are some specific ways we can do this?"

3. *Allow time for the congregation to ask questions.* Following the sermon, invite the congregation to ask questions. This puts intimacy and involvement center stage and guarantees spontaneous variety. If the question is too difficult to answer, ask the congregation to assist in answering it. If no one can answer it, promise to work on it for the coming week and be prepared to talk about it the following Sunday.

4. *Ask a member to prepare a testimony that shows how the biblical principle you are preaching on has worked in real life.* When a woman shared her testimony of how God sustained her during her husband's cancer treatments, her testimony was far more powerful than any abstract teaching on it.

5. *Call in the experts in advance to help you prepare your sermon.* Ask a member to meet with you a couple of weeks before the sermon is presented. Tell him or her your text and the principle you are preaching on and ask how it relates to them. Probe for specific applications. Many times members can give anecdotes or key ideas that will explain biblical principles much better than a book and they will have taken part in the sermon, as well.

6. *Invite spontaneous sharing in response to the sermon.* After one Sunday's message, a middle-aged divorced man gave a tearful testimony of his experience and encouraged the teenagers of his church to apply the principles the minister presented so that their marriages wouldn't end like his did. Afterwards, a hush fell over the congregation and eyes everywhere were moist. That sermon was cemented in the hearts of the young people.

7. *Creatively involve others in delivering the sermon.* Use puppets, drama, send someone to the library

to research a topic and make a report to the congregation. In one congregation, a member with excellent photography skills used her photography to introduce and enhance sermons or even give an entire "sermon with slides."

Participatory Worship

Klassen and Koessler observe that in no other area is the small church tempted to feel inferior to the large church more frequently than in the area of music. We look at megachurches and see their large choirs, keyboard artists, and great talent, and we think, "If only we had just a little bit of that in our church."

One of the characteristics of a big church is that it often ends up entertaining, and the audience thinks of worship as something you sit back and enjoy. Under conditions where performance has to be on the professional level it is difficult to truly worship. The small church, however, can be more conducive to authentic worship if it feels it doesn't have to imitate large churches. Here are some practical applications listed for a small church to promote worship:

1. *Choirs or ensembles.* As has been stated, small churches do not have to be scaled-down versions of large churches. So, if they do not have the people to make up a choir like the large churches, do they necessarily have to have a choir? Instead of a choir, what about having a smaller singing group such as an ensemble; perhaps giving the group a name. One small church singing group calls itself the Amazing Grace Singers.

2. *Special vocal music.* The big church only lets people on the stage if they can sing well. If most small churches adopted this policy, they would rarely have special music. If the players and singers are doing their best, it doesn't matter if their

presentation is not as professional as larger churches can produce. The Lord is not honored any less. Involvement in worship is the aim.

3. *Special music by children.* The small church should invite children to play instruments or sing, even if their music is less than perfect. Everyone forgives children when they make mistakes. Plus, parents will think, "If our family was in a large church they would not let my daughter play a piano solo."

4. *Special music by families.* Small churches have the advantage of connecting powerfully with the congregation when families present special music together, although their music may be full of imperfections. A small church tends to be more interested in giving people opportunities to participate than it is in judging those who participate.

5. *Congregational singing.* The small church should have frequent informal times of singing. The small church isn't able to have a mass choir but the large church can't sing around the piano, either. The small church should try to get out of the rut of always announcing a hymn then asking everyone to stand to sing it. This may work well with large churches, but it works against the informal atmosphere of the church.

Consider singing with more spontaneity, perhaps in blocks of time, instead of one song at a time. Choose the most "singable" songs. For some churches, this might be hymns; for others, contemporary choruses. If you have variety in your congregation, sing a variety of songs. Slides or overhead projectors can make songs more singable since people are looking up instead of burying their heads in hymn books. Singing ought to be conducted in ways that promote intimacy and involvement.

6. *Instrumental music.* The small church should avoid trying to imitate the large church's use of musical instruments. In many large churches, for example, the piano is isolated and the accompanist's back is to the audience. This may work for large churches, but to do the same thing in small ones works against the feeling of warmth and intimacy you want in worship.

Because a big church has a big organ, it doesn't mean a small church has to have a small one. Small organs may not have the quality of sound to enhance worship and tend to encourage formality rather than the informality that ought to strengthen the small church.

The small church usually can't afford and doesn't need a large organ. But most can afford an electronic keyboard. It can be set to sound like a full organ, a piano, and a host of other instruments.

I would like to add another suggestion to the book. The church I pastor in Macomb has purchased a Digital Hymnal, a small electronic, portable device about the size of a lap-top computer that is programmed to play over 1,000 hymns and contemporary songs. At the push of a button it produces many different instrumental sounds and even a choir of voices that hum or "aah" in the background. It cost us under \$1,000 and is available in most church supply catalogs. We use it on occasions when our regular pianist is out of town, during our midweek Bible studies, and I've recorded music on it for graveside services and outdoor events. At times I'll use my Karaoke machine to tape music from it, then sing special music from my Karaoke.

7. *Leading worship.* A worship team of several people who share in leading worship is useful in a small church. A small church should encourage broad participation in all

parts of the service such as Scripture reading, praying, and taking the offering. Young people should especially be encouraged to take part. Constantly remind your church, "Our church is a place that trains young people."

8. *Sharing times.* Small churches can easily include testimonies and sharing times in their services. In the small church, personal sharing in the service can sometimes lead to powerful ministry.

9. *Order of service.* The church bulletin includes a formal listing of the order of service. This works well in a church that promotes formality but it hinders the church that is trying to cultivate more spontaneity and informality. Is the order of service necessary?

10. *Advance planning.* Encouraging spontaneity doesn't mean no planning should go into the services. If the sermon and the music are totally unrelated or if the music is in a minor key and the sermon is on positive thinking, the service may not go over very well. To maximize the limited resources of a small congregation is to plan worship services well in advance. Develop a calendar of services several months ahead. With advance planning, the music, prayers, readings, and drama can all relate to a single theme. This creates more uniformity and direction for bringing intimacy and involvement.

Concluding Thoughts

The ideas presented here are proven to be most effective for small churches to apply. In fact, many of our own churches are already applying these concepts or tailoring them according to their needs. The main idea I believe is important is that small churches should not feel inferior just because they are not able to do what they see the big churches doing. Small

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churches can do big things in their own unique ways. They are no less special or gifted than the larger churches are.

In their book, Klassen and Koessler go on to discuss further how small churches can capitalize on their strengths by utilizing their spiritual gifts. While church programs are often used to promote growth, the authors suggest that small churches

start with spiritual gifts first, then build programs around those gifts.

They also agree with experts like Lyle Schaller that a small church should identify needs in the community and ask to which of those needs could they best respond if they made the effort. A small church should find what it is able to specialize in and use this strength to reach

those who are unchurched. For example, if its niche ministry is toward children this area ought to be pursued, reaching out to unchurched children in the community. Tapping into our strengths is what keeps a church from feeling inferior and ineffective and enables small churches to do greater things than they ever imagined. □

Planting Seeds *(continued from page 6)*

God-breathed? Some of the pastors I talk to sound like their work is more of a burden than a joy. It's of no advantage to anyone in the church for their pastor to feel that way, is it? When we plant seeds of cynicism and criticism against our pastor we grow a harvest of kids that want to grow up to be anything but a pastor. Not only that, but those same kids probably will have little use for the church once they grow up.

While we're on the subject, some churches really need to reexamine what they are paying their pastors. If you couldn't live on that wage, why do you

think your pastor can? Some churches are not honoring God by the way they pay their pastors.

A year from now what will you say about your church? Will you say, "It's all pretty much the same as it has always been"? Or will you say, "I began to pray for new people to come into the church. I convinced several others to join me. We prayed and prayed and finally someone came in. Now we've had three new families join the church in the last year"? Or will you say, "I was pretty sick and tired of our church finances being low all the time, so I lobbied for us to start being

more generous to those who are in need. Now our offerings are up and finances really aren't a problem anymore"? Then five or ten years from now you could be saying: "I sure don't know what we're going to do with all these young preachers. I remember back when our churches didn't have enough of them. What are we going to do with them all?"

I guarantee you that whatever harvest you are reaping in the future will be a result of the seeds you are planting today. Take the time to think about what seeds you're going to plant. □

The Five Points of Calvinism *(continued from page 7)*

that all human beings will ultimately be saved and be received into God's presence.

The truth of Scripture is that the real "hell," properly called the Second Death or Gehenna, is neither a place of torment nor a place of correction. It is total destruction without hope of resurrection. The lost will meet their end, and become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Mal. 4:1-3). They will be "as though they had not been" (Obad. 16). The celebrated Greek scholar Richard Francis Weymouth, translator of the New Testament, once declared his amazement at the fact that the strongest words in the Greek language that mean total destruction

and that are used in the New Testament to describe the end of the wicked, are misinterpreted by many to teach instead their continuation alive in conscious torment or else their continuation alive for the purpose of correction. Neither of these two ideas can find any support in those words themselves nor in the context in which they are found in Scripture!

We conclude that although Calvin was one of the fathers of the Reformation and must be respected for helping to free people from the bondage of Rome and for turning them to the Bible as the final au-

thority in spiritual matters, nevertheless he taught some serious errors that need to be corrected. The Reformation that started in the 1500's must be a continuing process, as believers study the Scriptures with every linguistic, hermeneutical and historical tool available to them, and as they let the Holy Spirit illumine the Sacred Text. We must preserve from the past whatever is good and true, but we must also be willing to accept further light and truth, no matter where this may lead and no matter how this may challenge our cherished traditions! □

Capital Punishment and the Christian View of War

BY PASTOR HOLLIS PARTLOWE, OREGON, ILLINOIS

Capital punishment is the judicial taking of the life of criminals for some crimes, such as murder. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). This commandment has never been canceled. Capital punishment is both a religious and political issue. It needs to be addressed.

"Any man who murders shall be killed; for to kill a man is to kill one made like God" (Gen. 9:6 LB). Endorsement of the penalty is clear and emphatic. This is not the law of Moses given to Israel, but is God's law given to all mankind through Noah. It predates the law covenant and spills over into subsequent dispensations.

The authority to execute this judgment of God on a murderer was delegated to man. Before the flood there was evidently no formal arrangement of human government save perhaps the patriarchal authority of a father. There was no formal mechanism for the punishment of crime, even for the capital crime of murder. Apparently, each person was able to act independently of all restraints except those of his own conscience and self-interest, which led to a universal state of violence and anarchy. To prevent similar conditions after the flood, God established the institution of human government including especially the authority for capital punishment.

The instruction here in no way refers to vengeance; the emphasis rather is on justice and the careful recognition of the sacredness of the divine image in man, though marred by sin. Seen from God's viewpoint, capital punishment is pro-life. In Bible times people built walls around their cities for protection. Apparently it's

appropriate for God's people to protect themselves.

ABRAHAM – Genesis 14:14-16

Abraham selected 318 of his *trained* servants, attacked a bunch of heathen kings and rescued his relative, Lot. Here we see Abraham, the general, in charge and responsible for those under his care. Was Abraham doing God's will or was he disobeying God? Observe, he had "trained" servants. What were they "trained" for?

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT UNDER THE LAW – Exodus 21-22

At least nine crimes are listed here for which God says capital punishment is appropriate.

- Premeditated murder; 21:14. Protection was provided for the defendant in case of accidental killing (21:13 LB). Cities of refuge were available for this purpose — Numbers 35.

- Physical violence against parents; Ex. 21:15

- Kidnapping 21:16

- Verbal abuse of parents 21:17

- Bestiality 22:19;

- Idolatry 22:20

- Breaking the Sabbath law; Num. 15:32-35

- A false prophet was to be put to death Deut. 13:5

- Achan was put to death for stealing; Josh. 7:25.

Law must be enforced if there is to be protection for human life and property.

DAVID, THE GREAT KING (1 Samuel 17:40-47)

When David went after Goliath, he said: "I come against you in the name of the

LORD Almighty the God of the armies of Israel . . . the battle is the LORD's!" Was David doing God's will or disobeying Him?

Israel's Draft Law (Deut. 24:5): A newly married man was exempt from military service. Note: Israel, God's people, had a regular, standing army for their protection. It was maintained by drafting young men. I understand this principle is in place in Israel today.

Other exemptions are found in Deuteronomy 20:5ff., but *conscientious objection is not one of them*. When Israel went to war God told them not to be afraid. He would go before them and fight for them (Deut. 20:1-4). In war they were to leave nothing alive that breathes (Deut. 20:16).

Under Joshua God commanded the Israelites to destroy the seven heathen nations which inhabited the land that belonged to them. God gave it to Abraham and his descendants. They were to go take it. Under Joshua's leadership they did. It was through these people the Messiah would come, through whom redemption would come to a fallen race. God had a lot at stake here!

Joshua was a military genius and also spiritual giant — both in one man. Smaller wonder that God selected him to replace Moses and take the land from the seven heathen tribes and divide it among the 12 tribes to whom God had given it in the Abrahamic Covenant.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT (Romans 13)

Here is clear evidence that God has ordained force (the sword) to maintain law

(continued on page 1)

and order and prevent anarchy in our time. A civil leader is God's servant, a concept often overlooked today.

This is governmental judgment not personal vengeance. Upon his confession of faith the murderer can receive pardon from sin and eternal life in the age to come, but God does deny him the right to continue in this age.

After Noah and his family came out of the ark, God instituted something new — human government. God put government into the world to restrain sin (Rom. 13:4). Murder had gone unpunished before the flood. After the flood God said: "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed. For in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6, NASB). The highest function of government is the judicial execution of murderers and other criminals.

Christians are not called to execute criminals. God has assigned that responsibility to civil government. We are to preach the gospel and fulfill the *Great Commission* in our generation under the umbrella of civil government which God has put in place for our protection. Our prayers are to be offered for this purpose. It's "good and acceptable in the sight of God" (1 Tim. 2:1-3). Let's do our job and let the civil government do its job. Romans 13:1-4 teaches that it is government's duty to punish lawbreakers. Some seem to confuse the function of government with the ministry of the church. They are two separate entities. **DON'T CONFUSE THEM!** We are to obey the law for two reasons: to have a clear conscience and to avoid punishment. Paul reminded the believers in Rome that the soldier didn't carry the sword for nothing. He might run it through them for breaking the law.

Capital punishment does not belong to any particular dispensation but is applicable to all — patriarchal, Jewish, Christian, etc. It is reaffirmed and reinforced in each. Genesis 9:5-6 has never been repealed. It is applicable today. In Romans 13 Paul makes clear that governments are

God's agents to execute wrath upon evil-doers. "He beareth not the sword in vain." He is an "avenger to execute wrath." There is no valid Biblical argument against the death penalty for murder. By the way, capital punishment and battle casualties are never seen as murder in the Bible. Scripture says, "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13), but that has nothing to do with capital punishment or battle casualties. Scripture makes a clear distinction between murder and the lawful and judicial taking of human life. In fact Mosaic laws established the death penalty not only for murder but also for breaking the other commandments (Heb. 10:28).

The Christian dispensation in no way sets aside the provisions of the Noachic Covenant. The authority of the governmental sword (Rom. 13:4) is reaffirmed in the New Testament as a part of God's original covenant with all men. In fact, Jesus seems to echo God's Word to Noah: "For all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (Matt. 26:52). If you murder someone it is appropriate that your life be taken.

Personal vengeance is always wrong, but the death penalty by authorized agents is clearly taught in God's Word. When civil government fails to carry out its responsibility and protect the lives of its citizens, the land becomes polluted and unclean in God's eyes (Num. 35:33).

Contrary to some, the death penalty is not barbarous when carried out in the right way. It is God's method of deterring crime and protecting the innocent. **MURDER IS BARBAROUS!**

Paul was willing to suffer the death penalty if he was convicted of wrongdoing. The death penalty, however, had to be inflicted by the Romans; it could not be imposed by the Jews. Hence Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12). Jesus taught us to, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (Matt. 22:21). Apparently one can be obedient to the powers that be and a follower of the Lord Jesus at the same time, even serving in the military. *Remember Joshua!*

1 Peter 2:13-17: believers are to submit to the civil authorities. They are God's tool to punish and restrain those who do wrong and also "commend those who do right." We are to honor the king, the one God has placed in authority. Paul told Titus to, "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient" (Titus 3:1-2). Christians are to obey the law of the land as long as it doesn't conflict with the Scriptures.

The victim of murder has no one to speak for him but God. God speaks through His servant, the state, which has authority to administer the death penalty for those convicted of murder.

IS CAPITAL PUNISHMENT A DETERRENT TO CRIME?

It depends on who you ask. Our judicial system has a miserable record of rendering justice promptly, but the problem is not with the concept, but in the administration of it. Often the system is unfair and slow as molasses in January, but that is not the point. Capital punishment is biblical, but civil government is often slow, corrupt and unfair in carrying it out. Some cases seem to lag on forever. Our society says life is cheap. God says life is precious. Whoever kills should be killed (Gen. 9:6).

I believe the Bible endorses capital punishment to underscore the worth of human life. I believe in it because God does, and "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Anyone who commits a murder today knows that he might escape detection, might get off on some technicality, can appeal after conviction for many years, can live at taxpayers' expense in air conditioned quarters with an exercise court, and access to a law library, etc. We seem to wink at criminals, excuse them, blame someone or society for their behavior. "When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong" (Eccl. 8:11).

The death penalty works. I've never seen a dead person kill again. *Capital Punishment is Pro-Life*. It was ordained by God for that very purpose! He commanded it for all dispensations to maintain law and order, keep the peace, and protect the innocent. I'd rather see a dozen criminals executed than one little girl kidnapped, raped and left dead by the side of the road. That's where I stand!

This is the way society maintains a high view of human life. Society does not take revenge on those it puts to death by due process. The sword of divine retribution was placed in the hand of man to attempt control of natural lawlessness of the human heart. The principle of human government introduced in Genesis 9:1-6 is reiterated in Romans 13:7 and reinforced throughout Scripture. (The ultimate in government is Christ Himself ruling in the millennium.) God gave man the right to govern himself, a part of which was capital punishment for some crimes. Man has authority to govern others. Unless government has the right to the highest form of punishment its basic authority is insufficient to protect those whom it governs. The highest function of government is the judicial execution of murderers and other rebels.

The principal reason our nation needs to maintain and promptly carry out the penalty is to place the highest possible value on innocent human life. It says life was endowed by our Creator and cannot be taken without due process based on the standards and codes given by Him. In our society, sometimes cop killers get more sympathy than the murdered cop, his wife and children. In the United States it appears that we recycle criminals in place of carrying out God's law. According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 44% of inmates were on parole or probation when arrested and 60% had been behind bars before. A recent study in Pennsylvania found that about 6% of criminals commit nearly 70% of violent crimes.

A professor at Western Illinois University suggests that each execution may deter 156 murders as a round number. He estimated that a single execution would be likely to deter somewhere between 50 and 200 murders. A University of Chicago economist who examined data for many years concluded that every execution prevents 17 murders. One law professor estimates that 28,000 violent offenders escape justice every year. If these conclusions are valid, they give credence to the death penalty. Capital punishment is pro-life.

The Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to all Americans "to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects." How can this be accomplished?

One major case against capital punishment is that it is possible to execute an innocent person. *It sometimes happens!* No system of this world is perfect, but we have to use the one God has given us as best we can.

God said concerning the leaders of Israel: "The sentence he imposes is to be fully executed. If the defendant refuses to accept the decision of the priest or judge appointed by God for this purpose, the penalty is death. Such sinners must be purged from Israel. Then everyone will hear about what happened to the man who refused God's verdict, and they will be afraid to defy the court's judgment a second time" (Deut. 17:11-13, LB).

The country which protects and allows murderers is defiled and society will suffer, but the death penalty properly administered serves as a warning and deterrent to others. "In this way the land will not be polluted, for murder pollutes the land and no atonement can be made for murder except by the execution of the murderer" (Num. 35:11 LB).

What is said in this article is not to suggest that there is *NEVER* to be an exception for murder. With God justice may be tempered with mercy especially in response to genuine repentance. Though

David, for example, was guilty of adultery and murder, God forgave him when he repented. So David rather than dying by the sword or by stoning as he may have strictly deserved, "died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honor" (1 Chr. 29:28).

Likewise a judge today is no doubt warranted in taking such mitigating factors as may exist in a given situation in determining a sentence, even though he would also be fully warranted in carrying out the strict legal penalty of capital punishment. The essential point is that man is given the responsibility of human government which entails all the recognition of the sacredness of human life and the recognition of capital punishment as the just and legal penalty for murder. Submission to authority is Submission to God. It was He who put the authorities in power.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS EVER GO TO WAR?

This writer spent two years in the army in a combat zone in the South Pacific during World War II as an amphibian, operating an LCM, moving troops and supplies from ship to shore on this flat bottom landing craft. I hate war! I hate war with a purple passion, but sometimes it is the lesser of two evils. *I'm neither pacifist nor militant!* In this imperfect age, we often have to choose the lesser of two unfortunate situations. *We are not in the kingdom yet!*

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in a sneak attack, we had two choices: defend ourselves or commit national suicide. It seems clear now that we made the right decision, although we hate to think of the destruction and lives lost.

God said to Israel regarding the Promised Land, "It's yours, but you have to go and take it." "The LORD is a man of war" (Ex. 15:3). Hezekiah, going to war said: "With us is the LORD our God to help us" (2 Chr. 32:8). An angel came to lead Joshua in battle against the enemies of God (Josh.

(continued on page 19)

Establishing Traditions

BY J. OTIS LEDBETTER AND TIM SMITH

Our days are filled with anxiety, activity, and work. We parents feel pulled in a variety of directions at once. We may feel uncertain of what to teach our child, or how to do it. There won't be an ideal time to teach anything. There won't be an ideal child to learn. We won't be an ideal parent to discipline and guide the child. All we have is the reality of this day, this child, and who we are as parents.

A wise parent makes the most of every moment. The Apostle Paul wrote: "So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. *Don't act thoughtlessly*, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do" (Eph. 5:15-17NLT).

Making memories will take initiative that requires openness to risk and failure. To be the kind of parent who passes on a favorable impression, we must be courageous. Tim Kimmel writes:

As I observe the eroding foundations of the American family, I am convinced that most of the devastation can be traced to a fundamental shortage of parental courage. The cracks in the walls of a typical family might appear to stem from a spiritual, moral, intellectual, emotional, or physical problem, but the majority might have been prevented if parents had been willing to exercise courage.

- What do we need? We need:
- The courage to say *no*.
 - The courage to set boundaries.
 - The courage to build a close relationship with our child.
 - The courage to be intentional about building family traditions.
 - The courage to parent differently than we may have been parented.
 - The courage to pass along a godly heritage.

Do you have this kind of courage?

A courageous and wise parent will look at the calendar of the new year and see twelve gifts from God. Each month is an opportunity to shape and mold your child into a person reflecting the character of Christ. You don't have to wait for Christmas or Easter to develop meaningful family traditions. You can do it year round. But it will take some time. It will require you to slow down and make the most of doing good with your kids.

You can start this month. Make November the month of Gratitude. Teach your children Gratitude to God and others by making a Thanks Gift that illustrates how someone has encouraged your child. Make an outline of the child's hands by using construction paper or plaster of paris. Then make the hands look as if they are applauding. Add a photo of the child and a symbol like a basketball, Bible, or anything that indicates the connection between your child and the person being thanked. Write his name at the top and a heading like, "My thanks to Coach Jim from Sally."

To express Gratitude to God, make a Family Collage with clippings from magazine ads for all the things your family is grateful for: health, pet, car, Bible, food, family, furniture, fun together. Place the collage in a prominent spot for your Thanksgiving meal. Have one or two of the children explain the collage and why you are grateful for these things.

Create a Family Time Line of Big Events. Make a time line on poster board beginning with your wedding. Record significant events that you are grateful for: "Our first vacation as a married couple." "When we first found out we were expecting." Ask children to suggest things they are thankful for and then list them on the time line. When you have completed it, post in a prominent place. Prior to the Thanksgiving meal, read portions of Psalm 136. Note that there is a responsive reading in the chapter; adapt this to your Family Time Line. Have each family member read (those who can read) a big event in sequential order. The reader might say, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!" Then respond as a family, "His faithful love endures forever." Repeat the process. □

Excerpted by permission from *Heritage Builders: Family Traditions*.



A Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Although it was gratifying to see the reprint of an important article co-authored by Janet Stilson, David Graham, and myself in the April-May issue of *The Restitution Herald* ("A Brief History of the Formation of the Church of God General Conference"), nevertheless for the sake of accuracy I feel it's important to reiterate an important correction.

As David and I studied the relationships between the Church of God pioneer Joseph Marsh, Advent Christian Nathaniel Field, and Christadelphian founder John Thomas, it seemed to us that Thomas was significantly influenced by Marsh on the question of the "Age to Come," i.e., the

restoration of national Israel in the millennium. However, subsequent research disproved that theory.

Part of the problem is that we misunderstood Thomas' testimony in the first issue of *Herald of the Kingdom and Age to Come* in 1851. Thomas was rebaptized in 1847 (months before meeting Marsh), not into the belief of the Age to Come (which he apparently held since at least the 1830's), but into the belief that the age to Come was necessary for salvation and therefore required rebaptism (which neither Marsh nor Field believed). Furthermore, we were able to determine that Marsh himself held to the Millerite view of the millennium (denying the restoration of national Israel) through 1849, when he published *The Bible*

Doctrine or True Gospel Faith. It was sometime between 1849 and January 5, 1850, that Marsh was persuaded, partly through the correspondence of Charles Beecher, of the Age to Come.

These findings were published in the article "Joseph Marsh's Doctrinal Development and Conflicts with Christadelphianism" in the Winter 1993 edition of *A Journal from the Radical Reformation*, Vol. 2, No. 2. This is an important retraction that should be kept in mind when using the article co-authored by Jan, David, and myself, which gave the erroneous perception that the Christadelphians are indebted to the Church of God for their central doctrinal conviction.

Sincerely,

Mark M. Mattison

Capital Punishment and the Christian View of War (continued from page 17)

5:13-14). Elijah slew the prophets of Baal. Not one was to escape (1 Kings 18:40). Was Elijah in God's will?

Physical force and war are sometimes necessary in our "present evil age" (Gal. 1:4), but this should always be the last and final choice. The Old Testament draft law (Deut. 20) has several exemptions as we have seen, but none for conscientious objectors. It could hardly be seen as un-Christian to defend our country against the Hitlers, Stalins and Husseins of this world. An ancient Jewish proverb says: "He who wants peace will do well by preparing for war." War is an act of government not of

individuals, although the individual suffers. Nations declare war, not individuals.

But what about the sermon on the mount? In this famous sermon (Matt. 5, 6, 7), Jesus shows how kingdom citizens today should respond to *personal injury*. He is not discussing governments' obligation to maintain law order.

I'm neither militant nor pacifist. I hate war with a purple passion, but sometimes it is the lesser of two evils. World War II may be a good example.

CONCLUSION

I believe in capital punishment and this view of war for these reasons:

1. It helps maintain law and order
2. It helps keep the peace
3. It protects the innocent from the criminal elements of the world. God ordained civil government for these reasons.

In contrast the pacifist's view is no answer at all. It leaves the whole issue unresolved and the innocent open to the criminal elements of the world. They fail to distinguish between God's message to civil governments and His message to His church. *Herein lies their confusion.* □

Church Football Definitions

SUBMITTED BY CHARLES BOTTOLFS, HAMMOND, LOUISIANA

Quarterback Sneak — Church members quietly leaving during the invitation.

Draw Play — What many children do with the bulletin during worship.

Halftime — The period between Sunday School and worship when many choose to leave.

Benchwarmer — Those who do not sing, pray, work, or apparently do anything but sit.

Backfield-in-Motion — Making a trip to the back (restroom or water fountain) during the service.

Staying in the Pocket — What happens to a lot of money that should be given to the Lord's work.

Two-minute Warning — The point at which you realize the sermon is almost over and begin to gather up your children and belongings.

Instant Replay — The preacher loses his notes and falls back on last week's illustrations.

Sudden Death — What happens to the attention span of the congregation if the preacher goes "overtime."

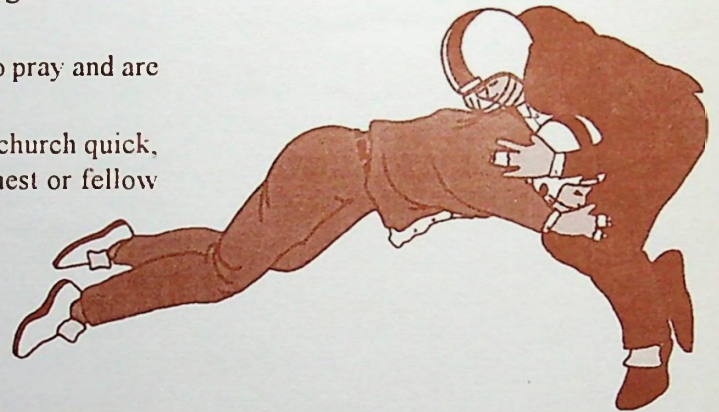
Trap — You're called on to pray and are asleep.

End Run — Getting out of church quick, without speaking to any guest or fellow member.

Flex Defense — The ability to allow absolutely nothing said during the sermon to affect your life.

Halfback Option — The decision of 50% of the congregation not to return for the evening service.

Blitz — The rush for the restaurants following the closing prayer.



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Merry Christmas!



Don't lose Jesus in the clutter.

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- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8).
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5).
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16).
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17, PSA. 146:4).
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- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8).
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32).
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3).
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Old Story Made NEW

BY RALPH BAXTER, PRINCETON, WEST VIRGINIA

During the 1998 Christmas season, Jimmy Dean did a reading on The Nashville Network (TNN). I was impressed with it at the time, but there is no way I can remember what he said. So I borrowed from the idea and have made my own version. I give this credit to Jimmy Dean in case there is any similarity to his story.

I'll say that there was an old man who had been a member of a little church for many years. In fact, he had been a Sunday School teacher for nearly forty years. He was well liked by all and was always ready for a friendly conversation or could be counted on for a good story. When you were in his Sunday School class you could tell that here was a man who had spent a lot of time in the study of God's Word.

Christmas Sunday was coming up and here he was, the class would again be looking to him for the lesson. What would he do this year? It seemed to him that for as long as he could remember he had used the same scriptures at Christmas time. What could he come up with that would be different? What could he do to give it a new look and make Christmas "come alive" to them?

As he sat in his old comfortable rocker his eyes began to become heavy with sleep, but he reached to get his Bible from the table beside his chair and began to thumb through its worn pages. Almost automatically, it seemed, it opened to the gospel of Luke, chapter one. Clem thought of many things as he read. What a surprise it must have been to Mary when the angel appeared to her, telling her that she had found favor

in God's sight and had been chosen to bear a son who would be the promised Messiah and Savior of the world. Not that she doubted the message, but she just didn't understand. This was all so sudden. How could it be when she was not yet married to her espoused Joseph? But then when the angel explained how the Holy Ghost would come upon her, and she would conceive, Mary seemed to have no doubts at all as she

*He tried to read quickly
the long list of "begats"
in his King James.
As he finished the list
he realized there was
a reason for it.*

.....
exclaimed: "Behold thy handmaid. Be it unto me according to thy word."

But then how would Joseph feel about all this? Clem began to think about Joseph as he turned to the start of the book of Matthew. But first of all in this chapter, he knew, was the genealogy of Jesus. Matthew called it the book of the generation of Jesus Christ. Clem wouldn't just skip over it, but he tried to read quickly the long list of "begats" in his King James — having trouble with the pronunciation of some. But as he finished the list he realized that although

this wasn't the most interesting part of the story there was a reason for it. This, he thought, was the historical record that proved Jesus to be of the proper ancestry to meet the prophecies in Old Testament scriptures.

Then he read on into verse 18, which said: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise" ("or," Clem thought to himself, "this was the way it happened"). "When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

This certainly complicated things for Joseph, mused Clem. What an unusual situation, to say the least. In fact, something unheard of heretofore. But, yes, Joseph was a just man and didn't want to make a public example of Mary, so maybe he would just ask for a divorcement from this engagement and end it quietly. But then the angel assured him (verse 20): "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." That did it; Joseph knew then that this was God's doing, and he was willing to take the role of being the earthly father of the long awaited Messiah.

Clem turned again to Luke and began to read in chapter two. How familiar it sounded: "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed." How many Christmases had he read it, he wondered, and he thought about how most every year the children stood up in the Christmas program and read this scripture.



(continued on page 4)

He was deep in thought now — how far was that trip to Bethlehem, and how long did it take? Didn't they get awfully tired? Did Mary really ride on a donkey as he had so many times seen in pictures? Yes, he thought, Mary must have ridden, and Joseph must have led the donkey, just as he had seen in pictures and as he pictured it in his mind.

Verse six said: "And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered." And verse seven: "And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." That's all it said: "There was no room for them in the inn." But Clem couldn't help recalling all the things he had heard about the crowded city at this busy time, and how they had been turned away from the inn. Had the innkeeper been harsh or heartless in turning them away? And just how did they come about finding this manger? Could it have been housed, as some say, in a cave? No, Clem thought, he would rather think of it as a stable more like our barns, which would provide a little more warmth. And, he wondered, just what was it like in the stable? Perhaps there were some animals around, and some hay or straw for making beds.

At any rate, she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger. What a beautiful scene. He had his bed, a cradle, even if it was a feeding trough in a stable.

But then one of Clem's favorite memories of the Christmas story unfolded as he read on in verses 8 and 9: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid."

What a glorious sight — the hills must have been illuminated by this light, and

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid."

then came the sound of the multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying; "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." Were they



singing this message, this praise to God? Clem had always thought they sang, and if so it must have been the most harmonious sound the shepherds had ever heard. And did it have special meaning that God chose to make the first announcement of the Savior's birth to lowly shepherds in the field?

Again Clem shook off the coming of sleep, because something else had occurred to his mind: the thought of the coming of the wise men. So he turned back to Matthew chapter 2. Now Clem knew the scriptures well enough to know that the wise men didn't come at the same time as the shepherds, or even while they were in the stable in Bethlehem, but still he liked to include them in the Christmas story. In fact, he liked seeing them pictured along with the shepherds in the nativity scenes he had seen, because it seemed like such a good example that they brought gifts and worshipped the Christ child. How appropriate that we give gifts, and above all worship him, especially at this season.

Clem was about to drop off into sleep when suddenly it occurred to him that he had just read the same old Christmas story he had read every year for so long, but even though it was the old, old story, yet it was new, and he realized that no matter how many times he had read it, each time it became new again.

Now he knew what he would do for class on Sunday. He would have the Christmas story that never grows old. □

Angels Watching Over God's People

BY ZUAQUIS ROSS, 2000 AFRICA MISSION TRIP

It was early August, 2000, in Mozambique, and we had preached all day. We had handed out many Bibles in a Chechewa translation for the people to read and learn the Word of God. The previous day had been filled with so many miraculous signs and wonders from God that we knew that God was not yet finished with displaying His power to us.

This particular night we asked God to protect us while we slept at the church in Mozambique. We had to sleep in the church because there literally was no room for us in the town's inns. (Apparently a big conference was meeting in town.) Mozambique had only recently cancelled a long standing Civil War and this made us feel a little bit apprehensive to stay in a Church with no locks and, worse than that, no doors. Margaret (the coordinator for our churches in Africa) had told us the previous night that we needed to be careful because the people in Mozambique are poor and some if they saw a *zungu* (white person) would be liable to shoot the person so they could steal anything that person possessed. Of course I would be considered an *akuda* (black person), so I had nothing to worry about (just kidding).

My husband Zack, Jon Welch, Travis Hamilton and I finished our nightly stargazing and decided to call it a night. Joe and Rebekah Martin and Jim Mattison had already gone to bed hours ago (you know how older adults need their sleep). We

went through our usual preparations for going to bed, like turning on our night lights (flashlights), removing our contact lenses, unrolling our sleeping bags, and checking for bugs and snakes by our heads (just kidding) before we laid down to rest.

Pastor Bango (the pastor to one of the churches in Mozambique, and overseer of all the churches in Mozambique) had sent us a lantern to use throughout the night. We all stretched out on the ground in our sleeping bags side by side at the front of the church. Ten minutes later we were all drifting into deep sleep.

Once during the night I raised my head to look around, to make sure we were all safe from harm. With my head raised and half blind, I looked all over to make sure nothing was being disturbed. I glanced over at Jim sleeping very peacefully and it was then I discovered we had a "visitor." The person looked unmistakably like Daud (one of our translators for the trip, and a pastor in Malawi). I did nothing, but laid my head back down and thought to myself, "what is he doing?" Out of curiosity I raised my head again. I squinted my eyes really tight to see, because before I went to bed I had taken out my contacts. It looked like he was there to guard

and protect us. He did not say a word and neither did I. Rather I slowly laid my head back down and prayed softly, thanking God for sending Daud to protect us through the night. Minutes later I drifted back into a deep and peaceful sleep.

The next morning, when we were all awake, of course I had to ask the question "did anyone else see that Daud was protecting us last night?" Everyone turned to me and said, "huh?" I confirmed to them that Daud had been protecting us the previous night, but no one else knew that he was there all night.

Just seconds after this conversation, Daud walked in. My joy over his actions compelled me, and I went up to him and asked the question: "Daud, was that you protecting us last night?" I didn't get the answer I had anticipated. "Why, no," he said, "I slept in the van the entire night." "Stop joking" I said, "no, really, I saw you last night protecting us." I asked the question again, "was that you protecting us last night?" But again he replied, "no." "So, Daud, if that wasn't you last night, then who was he?" I replied.

No one knew the answer, and I am certain that someone was in that church protecting us that night. So, in conclusion, all of us on the team believe that God had sent one of His angels to protect us while we were in Mozambique ministering to His people. □



Sorting Out Matthew 24

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

A glance at the commentaries shows that there has been little agreement about what Jesus said in Matthew 24. What he intended to convey was information about events destined to happen in Judea: "Behold, I have told you in advance" (Matt. 24:25). But how well has he been understood? The radical skeptic thinks the Church made up the whole story *after* the fall of Jerusalem and put it on the lips of Jesus to give the impression that Jesus had made a prediction! But such a prediction would not have the authority of Jesus behind it — just the enthusiastic guesses of his followers!

Some are persuaded that Jesus did not see beyond A.D. 70, and that the end of the age and even the second coming happened then. Others sense that there is more to the description of his "coming with power and great glory" than can possibly be squared with events in A.D. 70. But the problem is: Jesus speaks of a terrible time of distress *in connection with Jerusalem*, to be followed *immediately* (v. 29) by his appearance in glory. How can Jesus have spoken of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and of his coming *immediately* after that? One reaction has been to accuse Jesus of being mistaken about the time of his coming. Another is that Matthew wrongly edited the words of Jesus and thus misrepresented Jesus' mind.

All this is unsatisfactory and confusing. How shall we resolve the difficulties?

Quite simply: by following the sequence Jesus gave and believing it! Truth is often simple, and there is a straightforward structure to Jesus' prediction of the future. It looks like this:

When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in the holy place flee to the mountains . . . For then shall be great tribulation . . . *Immediately after* the tribulation of those days [Mark 13:24, "In those days, after *that* tribulation"] the sun will be darkened . . . and *then* they will see the Son of man coming in power . . . And he shall send forth his angels . . . to gather the elect (Matt. 24:15, 16, 21, 30, 31).

A terrible time of distress in connection with Jerusalem.

Attempts to explain this material have often foundered and failed for one basic reason. The *critically important connecting time expressions have been ignored or explained away*. In this way Jesus' message has been distorted. Vitaly important is the adverb "immediately" in verse 29. This links the great tribulation of verses 15-24 with the cosmic signs of verse 31 and the second coming which follows. These events occur in quick succession. They are not long drawn-out processes stretching over thousands of years.

Commenting on verse 29, "immediately after," A.H. McNeile, former professor of theology at Cambridge, says: "This verse is the true sequel to verse 15. The tribulation (v. 21) is the climax of the birthpangs (v. 8) being followed *immediately* by the end. In

Mark, too, the tribulation and the second coming are *in those days*, i.e., they are successive events in the same period . . . The tribulation will be terrible, but the Parousia [Second Coming] will follow it at once."¹ There is no gap between the tribulation, the heavenly signs, and the second coming. It follows, then, that the concentrated time of trouble Jesus described did not happen in A.D. 70. No cosmic signs followed that event immediately. Nor did Jesus come back.

Confirming Our Findings

There are two ways of confirming the simple series of events which Jesus says will happen in quick succession: tribulation, heavenly signs, second coming. Firstly, in verse 14 we read of "the end": "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to the nations; and then *the end* shall come." Now observe verse 15: "When you *therefore* see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) . . ." The little Greek word translated "therefore" connects the abomination of desolation with the end referred to in verse 14.² This confirms what we have already seen: that the abomination of desolation is a feature of the *end of the age*. Its appearance triggers the awful time of trouble which *immediately* precedes Jesus' arrival. The abomination of desolation signals the approaching end of the age — the return of Jesus.

Secondly, confirmation of Jesus' simple scheme for the future is found in

Daniel. Here we follow Jesus' instructions carefully. The abomination of desolation is the one described by Daniel (Matt. 24:15). The precise expression "abomination of desolation" occurs in Daniel 11:31 with a further reference to its appearance in the holy place in Daniel 12:11. Daniel 9:27 contains a third slightly less direct reference. In all three cases (cp. also Dan. 8:13) Daniel describes a final evil ruler, King of the North (from the region of Mesopotamia), who sets himself (or his image) up as "the abomination of desolation" and puts an end to temple sacrifices (Dan. 11:31). It is crucially important to see that in Daniel 12:11 *about three and a half years will elapse between the appearance of the abomination of desolation and the end of the age*. Jesus merely elaborated on what was already laid out by Daniel: abomination of desolation (Dan. 11:31; Matt. 24:15); tribulation for three and a half years (Matt. 24:21; Dan. 12:1, 7, 11); resurrection (Dan. 12:2). The whole of Daniel 11:5ff. and chapter 12 must be read as one connected story, and the Daniel passage must be kept in mind as the background to Jesus' discourse in Matthew 24.³

Breaking the connection between Matthew 24:15 and Daniel 11:31 (12:11) is the sole factor leading to mistaken systems of prophecy. The link is established by Jesus' own words: "Let the reader understand that I am referring to the book of Daniel" (see Matt. 24:15).⁴ Daniel 9:27 speaks also of an abominable person on the rampage (desolating) in Jerusalem for three and a half years. Daniel 8:13, 14 give more information. All these verses form the background to Matthew 24:15-31 and harmonize with it. Remember the one key to Matthew 24: The tribulation of which Jesus spoke is to be followed *immediately* by cosmic signs and the second coming. And the tribulation is to be triggered by the abomination of desolation already prophesied by Daniel 11:31. When these facts are held together they build up a composite

picture of events destined to happen just before Jesus arrives. When all this will happen no one knows. But when Christians see the abomination of desolation, and the events which follow, then they may "look up, because their redemption is drawing near" (Luke 21:28). The time will have arrived for the reordering of earth's affairs under the supervision of Jesus, the Messiah. The kingdom of God will be here. If the sighting of the abomination was confined to AD 70 it would be no sign of the end of the age. Near to two millennia have passed since AD 70.

Some will ask: Why did Jesus say that "this generation will not pass before all these things come to pass" (Matt. 24:34)? He was clearly referring to all the great events of Matthew 24 including his arrival in power and glory. Did these events happen within 40 years of his giving the prediction? Clearly not.

The solution is that "this generation" can mean "this present evil era of human history" lasting till the second coming. Jesus said, in effect, We will not come to the end of this present evil age until all the awful events I outlined have happened. For the meaning "age" for "generation," see Luke 16:8: "The sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own 'generation' than the sons of light." "Generation" here means a type of society characterized by evil qualities. This sort of society will last until the Kingdom comes. See also Proverbs 11:11-14 where "kind" translates the same word "generation." For the same meaning for "generation," as a group of people characterized by a single quality, usually wicked but sometimes righteous, see Psalm 22:30 and 24:1-6. "Generation" in Matthew 24:34 does not mean "race," nor does it refer to some future period of 40 or 70 years. The erroneous predictions of the Jehovah's Witnesses were based on that mistaken idea.⁵

Jesus himself did not know the day or the hour of his coming back to the earth

(Matt. 24:36). He looked out over the temple building and knew from prophecy that there would be great trouble (v. 21) in Jerusalem and in the temple just before he came back. Jesus knew that any temple on that site would have to be removed in order to make way for the building of a millennial temple when he came back to rule the world in the Kingdom. Jesus would not necessarily have known whether the temple then standing (in AD 30) was the one which would suffer trouble just before his return. As it turned out that temple was destroyed and no return of Jesus occurred "immediately after." But Jesus saw a temple and an abomination of the future, close to his second coming. *Immediately after* the tribulation connected with the temple he would return (Matt. 24:29). It is reasonable to believe that a temple or sanctuary will yet be built in Jerusalem. That temple will finally give way to the new millennial temple which Jesus will build when he comes to rule as king with the saints (Rev. 20:1-6). The presence of the Abomination of Desolation in a temple remains the great sign of the end of the age and the coming of Jesus. But before that *the Gospel of the Kingdom must be preached in the whole world, "and then the end will come"* (Matt. 24:14, 15). □

- 1 The Gospel According to St. Matthew, pp. 351, 352.
- 2 *Ibid.* p. 347.
- 3 For a full-length study showing that Mark 13 (the parallel to Matt. 24) is a commentary on Daniel 11 and 12, see *Prophecy Interpreted*, by Lars Hartman, Conectiana Biblica.
- 4 The parenthesis is no doubt added by Matthew, reflecting Jesus' intention.
- 5 For an excellent study of the meaning of "generation," see "This Generation' in Matt. 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective," Neil Nelson, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, September 1996, pp. 369-385.

Some Thoughts on the Kingdom of God and the Good News Thereof

BY WILLIAM WACHTEL

From the traditional Church of God viewpoint, the term Kingdom of God refers almost exclusively to the future earthly Kingdom to be established at the Second Coming of Christ. This understanding of the Kingdom requires that the gospel or good news of the Kingdom be almost totally occupied with that great eschatological event. The “gospel of the kingdom” thus becomes essentially good news only of future things. This concept of the “gospel of the kingdom” apparently arose in reaction to the denial within traditional Protestant and Catholic theology of such a future earthly Kingdom. In that theology the term “Kingdom of God” usually meant a present “spiritual” kingdom existing in the believer’s heart and/or as manifested in the organization and work of the visible church on earth during this present age. Such a theology, of course, was not interested in a future earthly Kingdom, because it saw any future life primarily in terms of an eternal destiny *in heaven* for one’s “immortal soul or spirit” immediately after one’s death on earth.

There is no doubt that a strong reaction to this unscriptural hope was necessary, in order to recover the Bible truth of resurrection of believers at Christ’s return — the doctrine that the future resurrection is the only exit from death, the only means of living again someday, and the only way to gain entrance into His coming earthly Kingdom! It seems clear that such a reaction to traditional errors was essential! The danger in any reaction, however, is that it can sometimes become an *overreaction*. This writer believes that an overreaction regarding the nature of the Kingdom has

taken place and has influenced the views of some believers within the Church of God.

When Jesus and John the Baptist began to preach the good news of the Kingdom, they declared that the Kingdom was then “at hand” or “near.” Bible students who believe that in fact the Kingdom was still far in the future then and is even only future to us now — i.e., simply eschatological — have had some difficulty in explaining how such a time-setting could be used in that early gospel preaching. Further difficulty comes about when we see that Jesus went on to tell His disciples that they were to go out and heal the sick, instructing them to declare that with such healing “the kingdom of God is near you” (Luke 10:9, 11).

A similar problem seems to be suggested by the Lord’s words in Matthew 12:22-29 (cf. Luke 11:14-22). His enemies were accusing Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, a popular name for Satan. In defense, Jesus points out that Satan has a kingdom and that the demons are part of that kingdom. In order to cast out demons, one must attack Satan’s kingdom and “bind” its king. When this happens, then “the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20). It is obvious that in such usage the term “Kingdom of God” means more than an eschatological kingdom! The present kingdom of Satan (which is not eschatological in any sense) is pitted in a clearly present and desperate conflict with what Christ calls “the kingdom of God.”

Another example of such usage is found in Colossians 1:10-13. Paul describes Christian believers as having been rescued from Satan’s dominion — the “power of

darkness” — and having been transferred into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Elsewhere, in a similar scenario, Satan is depicted as the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2). From this evil ruler and his kingdom the believers have now been liberated and have been placed in a different kingdom, that of Christ. Christ, thus, is in some sense clearly a king *now*, with a *present* kingdom!

When this fact is recognized and accepted other texts become beautifully illuminated. When Paul tells the Roman Christians that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (14:17), then we realize that these are *present characteristics* of the kingdom to be enjoyed *now* by God’s children, not only in the future age. By contrast, Paul found it necessary to warn the church at Corinth that his authority as an apostle allowed him to come and deal with their sins, because “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power” (1 Cor. 4:20). It is not an eschatological kingdom that is in view here, but a very present and powerful rulership that has given him authority from God!

When Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would arrive, He told them that this was not simply a matter of outward observation — as though God’s kingdom were *only* an obvious eschatological event — but rather that the kingdom was *already in their midst!* (Luke 17:20, 21.) The Emphatic Diaglott translates “God’s royal majesty is among you,” based on the fact that the Greek word
(continued on page 11)

How to Take Revenge

BY KEN COLLINS

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

— Romans 12:17-21, NIV

If you have ever been horribly wronged, you have felt an overwhelming desire for revenge.

Once, when some kids in my old neighborhood slashed the tires on my car, I found myself consumed with a desire to secretly slash the tires of their cars. Once a young drug addict broke into my house after

midnight and terrorized me for three hours by holding a pair of scissors to my neck while he robbed me. I felt helpless and angry, and at first I wanted to do the same thing to him. I imagined all sorts of things I would do to him to repay him for frightening me.

Another time when I was walking through my neighborhood, a dog began to attack me. The best way to avoid an attacking dog is to stand still and not move, which is what I did, so I was not harmed. But I was angry! I fantasized about taking a club or a spray can of Mace along the next time, and as I finished my walk I regretted not noting the address on the house so I could take my revenge on the dog's owners by calling the Fairfax County Animal Control Office.

Revenge is a normal, natural fleshly emotion that we all feel from time to time, when we've been overwhelmed, or wronged, or overpowered, and were unable to resist or prevail.

But what shall we do in situations like that?

I wrote a story about an anthropologist from outer space named Bobo, who was mugged while

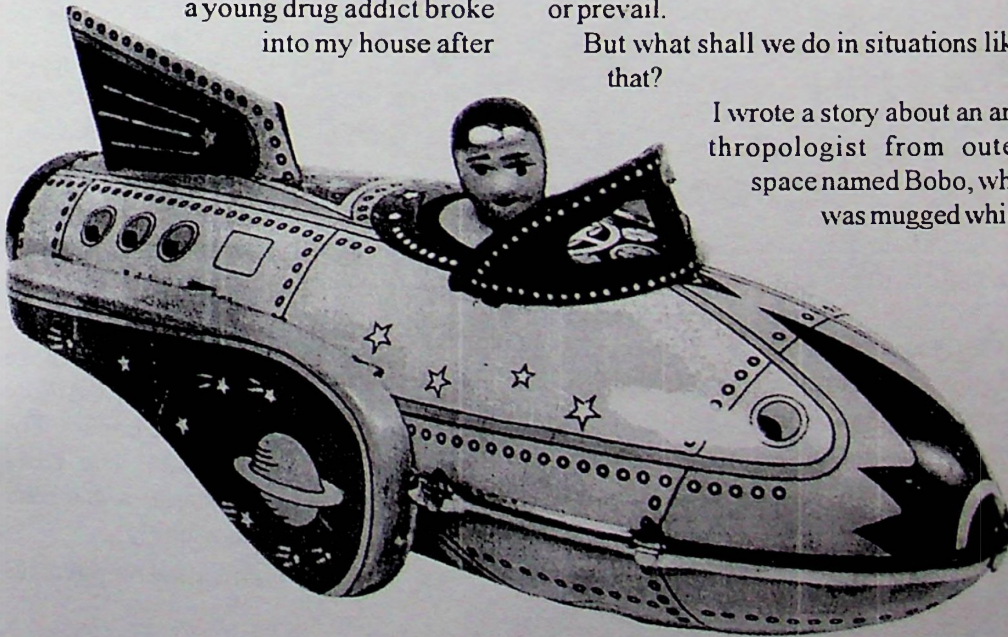
walking through Washington, DC. He was outnumbered, so he made no attempt to fight back because he knew he would lose anyway, and at least this way he might cause his attackers to pull their punches. Later, when he was recuperating in the hospital, a psychologist paid him a visit. She recommended that he learn a martial art or carry a weapon to defend himself with.

Bobo asked the psychologist for a clarification: "If someone hits me, does this mean I can hit him back? And she said yes. Then Bobo said, "So if he hits me, I can hit him, but if I can hit him, he can hit me again, and so on without ending. That doesn't seem to be very practical." But the psychologist insisted that he should 'defend' himself. Bobo replied, "But if evil is returned for evil, then evil is propagated and therefore wins!" The psychologist, now very frustrated, protested that it was a nice attitude, but he could be killed. Bobo replied, "I would rather be known for the quality of my life than the length of my days." The psychologist was speechless and left the room.

What is more important to you, to survive a mugging by adopting the value system of the muggers and becoming as one of them, or to die in a mugging as a Christian martyr? I didn't say this would be an easy question, but what is more important, your limited physical life, or your eternal spiritual life? This is not an academic question. I've faced it head on myself. When things get tough, do you trust God's advice, or do you take matters into your own hands? As one who has done both, I recommend trusting God. The outcome is better.

Jesus taught us that our treatment of other people is a function of our own

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Things I've Learned from Dr. Laura

BY THOMAS F. FISCHER, M.Div., M.S.A.

Loved or hated, scorned or adored, Dr. Laura Schlesinger is a major presence in American talk radio. Jewish by confession and often controversial, she has much to say about choices, morality and life. Though no one can agree with everything she espouses, Christians, atheists, clergy and laity — everyone — can learn something from Dr. Laura whether one listens to her regularly, occasionally, or sporadically (as I do).

Here are some things I've learned from Dr. Laura. I invite you to read, consider, learn and apply what is healthy for you and your ministry from some of her insights.

1. Anything you hear second hand is not believable.
2. People don't hear what you're talking about, even when they are listening.
3. In order to disrupt relationships, guys use guns and knives; gals use other relationships.
4. Just because you're in pain doesn't make you right nor does it justify your hostile, angry, jealous or out-of-control feelings and/or actions.
5. People in stress often lose sight of the issue. Guiding them in such a way, no matter how well intended, is always a treacherous undertaking. It is, however, an undertaking of love.
6. People asking for advice — and going out of their way to get it — can *and often will* despise the advice-giver in surprisingly reactive and hurtful ways.

7. Adults, because they are adults, are responsible for doing things in an adult-like mature manner. There are no exceptions, including those who claim to "love" God.

8. Being responsible is never easy . . . but it is *always* right.

9. Stay focused and keep your mind clear enough to understand others. This is easier said than done.

10. Not everything we do is done with full agreement of our feelings. Often our feelings must be ignored so as to do what is right. (See #9 above)

11. Don't ever accept "betrayal" and its consequences to your self-esteem. You are a worthwhile child of God given the right to not have to accept others' opinions of you.

12. Guilt, fear, anxiety and loneliness will always be there to challenge your character and take control of your life. Whether it be sex, alcohol, or other addictions or compulsions, they all seek to take over and control your life. Don't let them.

13. The "Four R's" of a healthy life are remorse, responsibility, reconciliation, and renewal. The "Four R's" of an unhealthy life are resistance, refusal, relapse, and repetition. The only difference between these two groups is which ones you will choose for yourself.

14. Don't be someone else. Be yourself. After all, isn't it hard enough being yourself without trying to be someone else, too?

15. Illness needs no repentance. Sin does.

16. The exercise of freedom must never supercede the necessity to observe the moral strictures of the Ten Commandments.

17. Completely sane adults can sometimes drive you crazy.

18. Whatever you do should be intended to make people stronger and affirm your own character.

19. Quit denying that you're wrong when you are wrong . . . no matter how many other people think you're right.

20. People often use [offering] "help" as a code for "let me intervene and totally destroy your life."

21. When in overwhelming stress, slow down and get a hold of yourself.

22. When holding others up is holding you back, you are likely neither holding yourself or others up in a healthy manner.

23. Don't act as if there were never any standards to excuse or justify current wrong or immoral behavior.

24. When considering consequences for wrongdoing, distinguish between those things which are one-time events and those which are part of an on-going process. The former things are mistakes. The latter things, however, may indicate a character deficit. Treat them accordingly.

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Some Thoughts on the Kingdom of God *(continued from page 8)*

basileia, usually translated “kingdom,” can be used in another sense. Benjamin Wilson, the translator, has an interesting footnote to that effect. He states that “*basileia* here refers to the *person* to whom the title and honor of king belonged, rather than to his *territory* or *kingdom*.” In exercising His messianic ministry, therefore, Christ was fulfilling certain aspects of His kingship, his royal authority, his *basileia*. That royal authority will become an eschatological event when Christ returns to sit on His own throne in Jerusalem, the

throne inherited from David. Meanwhile, He sits with God on the throne of the universe (Rev. 3:21), “upholding all things by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3).

None of this detracts in any way from the future earthly Kingdom of God, to which most of the Kingdom texts have reference. But this majority of texts must not be allowed to create an *overreaction* that keeps us from seeing the truth that is taught in those Kingdom texts that apply to Christ’s past earthly ministry and to His

present heavenly ministry. For us who believe He is our King and Lord, and as King He has promised to carry out through us, by means of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, the royal works and warfare that need to be accomplished even now against Satan’s kingdom. To that end He has appointed us to serve during the present age as a “royal priesthood — called out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). This is a Kingdom privilege to be enjoyed and administered by His people *right now!* □

How to Take Revenge *(continued from page 9)*

personality and should not be based on what we think they deserve. Paul reflects that teaching here. In other words, if I am a nice person, I will be nice to everyone, not just to people who are nice to me. If I am nice only to people who are nice to me, then I possess no particular virtue, because even nasty people repay niceness with temporary niceness. Gangsters reciprocate kindness, but they reputedly kill the people who offend them. So if you pay back good with good and evil with evil, then you have the same moral code as a gangster. What sort of person are you? How should you comport yourself?

But what about our desires for revenge? Paul has part of the answer, the rest is in the Psalms. Vengeance belongs to God. If you act out of a sense of outrage, you probably won’t think things out before you act. Since you are a human being, you probably won’t know all the pertinent facts, and even if you do, you won’t be in a position to take them soberly into account. Therefore, refer these

emotions to God and let God take the revenge. Contract it out to God! Of course, this is only a satisfactory solution if you trust God, so when you contemplate this you’ll find your faith and your sense of spiritual identity coming into consideration. This is not an easy topic to ponder.

If you take revenge, you might feel guilty in the morning when you’ve had a night to sleep on it. If you don’t take revenge, you might burn forever in suppressed anger. But if you refer the matter to God, trusting God to do the right thing, you can retain your dignity and get just revenge at the same time.

The Psalms teach you how to do this. Read Psalm 69, for example, and ponder that it is in the Bible. Some people think that Psalms like this, generically called ‘imprecatory Psalms,’ represent a lower morality where God is invoked as a hit man, but I don’t agree. The imprecatory Psalms validate your anger and permit you to get your lust for revenge out of your system.

At the same time, they acknowledge the inadequacy of humans to take just revenge, and defer to God’s judgment.

Adam wore a fig leaf to conceal his nakedness from God. We laugh, because God made him and knew what he looked like. Nevertheless when we pray, we keep things polite and dainty, as if not to offend God. How Adam would laugh at our fig leaf! God made us and knows our emotional dynamics! He knows our lusts and fears and rages, so why do we conceal these things from God in our prayers? Our prayer etiquette is a hypocritical sham, and a major obstacle to our spiritual maturity.

If you feel a need for revenge, tell God about it. Tell Him what you’d like to see done to that person, then defer the whole matter to Him, to do what He sees is fit.

It sounds like foolishness, but it works. □

Tony Campolo: Only a Child

BY MARLENE LEFEVER

Forty years ago a Philadelphia congregation watched as three nine-year-old boys were baptized and joined the church. Not long after, unable to continue with its dwindling membership, the church sold the building and disbanded.

One of those boys was Dr. Tony Campolo, Christian sociologist at Eastern College, Pennsylvania. "Years later when I was doing research in the archives of our denomination," Tony said, "I decided to look up the church report for the year of my baptism. There was my name, and Dick White's. He's now a missionary. Bert Newman, now a professor of theology at an African seminary, was also there. Then I read the church report for 'my' year:

"It has not been a good year for our church. We have lost 27 members. Three joined and they were only children."

Only children! Give children a few years of Christian nurture and these "only children" will change our world for Christ.

I too went to a church that eventually closed its doors because only children were joining. Forty-five years ago that church gave me a Robert Raikes Diploma that now hangs behind my desk. This award, named for the founder of Sunday school, has space for six seals, one for each year of perfect Sunday school attendance. I have only five. The church disbanded before I could get my sixth.

This award says more about who I am today than all the educational diplomas or adult awards I could display. It's a visual affirmation to the teachers who, when I was only a child in a dying church, lit in me a lifelong fire for Christian education. "In God's eyes, the phrase "only children" is meaningless. □



Things I've Learned from Dr. Laura (continued from page 11)

25. Leaders, like parents, have "parent moments." There are times when the appropriate discipline is not corporal or severe punishment. Instead, these times may be opportunities to talk, share and mentor children and others relative to what is right and wrong, proper and improper, moral and immoral.

26. You can't filter out the universe from people's lives. Thus people must be equipped and strengthened, not isolated, from testing and difficulties.

27. Slow down. Take a deep breath. You really don't have to be reactive, over-bearing and obsessively workaholic to succeed.

28. Continually build and strengthen your capacities to cope. The best way to develop coping capacities is to face the issues, experience the pain, and gain strength from the weakness and vulnerability of trial.

29. People will do anything to avoid pain and will sacrifice anything — including goals, relationships, principles and character — at all costs.

30. If you don't want to follow the above rules, you'll need to enjoy your own miserable neurotic life which, inevitably, will drive others crazy, too!

One final thought. No matter how good or many the rules, if we don't have God's loving presence in our lives, even the best rules can't help.

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind" and "Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39 (NIV) □

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Unlikely American Hero

BY JOSEPH BAYLY

His lackluster resume would never get beyond the church secretary's wastebasket, but . . .

It isn't likely he could serve on the board of most churches because he was a single young adult.

It isn't likely he'd be asked to speak at a liberated Christian women's conference because all his disciples were men.

It isn't likely he'd be asked to speak at a men's retreat because he cried publicly.

It isn't likely he'd pass most evangelism training courses because he adhered to no soul-winning formula and approached each person differently.

It isn't likely he could be the pastor of most churches because he said that people who remarry after divorce (except for marital unfaithfulness) are guilty of adultery.

It isn't likely he'd be asked to supply many pulpits because he often just told stories. And they were short.

It isn't likely he'd prepare Christian education materials because a lot of his stories were open-ended.

It isn't likely he could serve on a Christian college faculty because he drank wine.

It isn't likely he'd be asked to teach at a seminary because he had no earned doctorate and spent most of his time in practical work with his students.

It isn't likely he could serve on the board of a Christian institution or organization because he was poor.

It isn't likely he could preserve a reputation for leadership because he regularly took time out for rest and washed the feet of his followers.

It isn't likely he could be a counselor because he reinforced people's sense of sin, was directive, and turned from those who didn't respond.

It isn't likely he could run an electronic church because he told a rich man to give away his money to the poor, not to support his own ministry.

It isn't likely he could fill in at a youth conflicts seminar because he stood up to his parents when he was twelve (Luke 2:39-50), appealing to a higher responsibility, and refused to obey his mother when he was in his early thirties (John 2:1-4; Matt. 12:46-50).

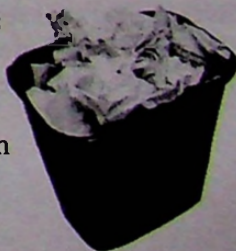
It isn't likely he could fill in at most other seminars because he defined success in non-material terms.

It isn't likely he'd be used as an example of dying, because in his last hours he felt alienated from God.

It isn't likely his opinion would be sought or heeded because he spoke of his followers in terms of a "little flock" and "two or three," warned against times when all men speak well of believers, and said that they should expect to be persecuted.

It isn't likely he'd expect people to come into church buildings; he'd probably be preaching in Central Park or Boston Common.

If Jesus were here today. Poor church, poor world. □



When I've Failed

BY ROB FROST

On 29 November 1761 John Wesley wrote in his journal:

Many have, and many do daily experience an unspeakable change. After being deeply convinced of inbred sin, particularly of pride, anger, self-will and unbelief, in a moment they feel all faith and love; no pride, no self-will, or anger: and from that moment they have continual fellowship with God, always rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks.

This work of transformation and change is an ongoing process. On a number of occasions over the years I've had to return to the Lord to ask Him to deal with aspects of my being which I know have displeased Him. When I feel that I've failed, I need to face up to my sin and remember again the extent of His redeeming power.

The address read "The Chapel," and as there was no letter-box in the church, the postman had pushed it under the front doors as best he could. The contents of the letter were bewildering. The writer, using prison notepaper, begged me to go to a nearby prison to visit him.

A week later, after all the formalities had been completed, I was led down a long gray corridor and into a small interview cell. Keys rattled and the lock turned and I was led in to meet the prisoner. Two detectives arrived and sat behind me.

The prisoner had asked if he could make his confession to me, but with the police

present. It was a horrific story of a murder and a life of sin. Eventually the man's life was transformed by the power of Christ. The prisoner could tell a new story: a story of repentance, forgiveness, and of a new beginning.

I never cease to be amazed at the wonder of the Christian Gospel. No matter how low we have sunk, how far we have strayed, or how foolish a life we have lived, there is room in the love of Jesus for forgiveness and a new beginning. Many of us who are long-established Christians need to discover again the transforming power of this redemption.

I have a friend who is the minister of a small Yorkshire chapel. He is a keen artist, and often involves the whole congregation in celebrating their faith creatively.

One Sunday I watched as his congregation turned up with all kinds of rubbish they'd collected: scrap paper, empty boxes, and useless trash. Gradually they sorted through the refuse, and over the days that followed they discovered ways of using it artistically.

By the following Sunday the mound of rubbish had been transformed into a powerful illustration of the cross. The twisted, broken scraps of refuse had been redeemed into something beautiful and elegant.

This is the work of redemption. This is what the Lord wants to do within us all, if

only we'll let Him. He wants to take away the filth and sin of our lives, and forgive us. He wants to take away the guilt and shame, and transform us. He wants to turn us away from selfishness, and redirect us.

The "Daybreak" musical tour was absolutely exhausting. Every day we traveled to a different town to set up several tons of equipment, rehearse the local choirs and drama groups, and present the musical to a packed theater.

In the production I played the part of Simon Peter. Night after night I had to stand alone on the stage in a blinding spotlight and enact "the denial."

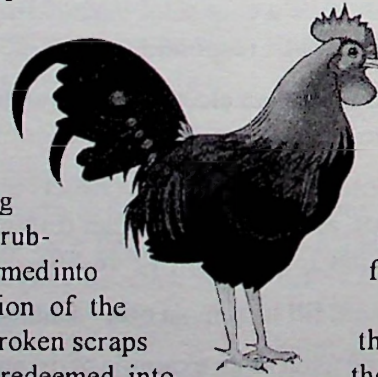
As the last chords of the last song faded, the lengthy de-rig in Southampton Guildhall began. Props, costumes and PA equipment were packed and trundled on trolleys to the waiting truck.

I looked up at the Guildhall clock; it was just after midnight. It was my turn to travel overnight in the truck. I clambered into the cab next to the driver and wrapped my coat around me. We were bound for Cornwall. It was going to be a very long night.

The roads were covered with mist. The noise of the engine made conversation impossible; and no matter how I tried I couldn't find a comfortable position to sleep.

Hour after hour we rolled along in this kind of unreal world. My thoughts turned back to the previous evening's performance. The sounds and images rolled around my mind and I relived Peter's denial.

(continued on page 15)



"God is Big Enough"

BY PASTOR RICHARD ALCUMBRACK, SOUTHLAWN CHURCH OF GOD, WYOMING, MI

I saw a bumper sticker the other day that caught my eye. It did a fantastic job of succinctly stating the philosophy of countless people in this age in which its just unacceptable to pass judgment on another person. The wisdom of this world was captured in seven simple words: "God is big enough for ALL religions." I'm sure many people who read it nod their heads in agreement, and wish that they had said it first. But let's see how it holds up in the light of scripture.

First, the Holy Scriptures tell us that the wisdom of this age is foolishness to God. *"Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."* (1 Corinthians 1:20-21). There seem to be a lot of people speaking for God these days, most notably

the billboards that sprang up across the country spouting supposed quotes from God. They were cute and witty, but you'll never find them in the Bible. We need to be on our guard against philosophies that spring from the wisdom of the world.

Perhaps God is big enough for all religions. But what we find in Acts 17 might well surprise the author of the bumper sticker, and all those who hold a similar philosophy. Verse 16 tells us that Paul was *"greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols."* If all religions lead to God, Paul should have rejoiced with these fellow seekers. Take a look at Acts 17:22-31 where we find Paul directing the Athenians to turn their attention to the one true God who has *"set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."* We are not "brothers" with Mus-

lims, Buddhists, or just anyone who believes in a god. There is only one way to God, and we have that on authority from God (John 14:6).

In many ways our world is similar to Athens in Paul's day. People loved to gather in the Aereopogas and talk about the latest ideas. They were very religious. In that setting the apostle found a way to present the Gospel of the one true God. God tells us in His word that He *"wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus . . ."* (1 Timothy 2).

In a world that gets its religion off bumper stickers and church signs, let's pray that God would give us wisdom to discern opportunities we have to share the *"knowledge of the truth"* with others, and the courage to use those opportunities when they come. □

When I've Failed (continued from page 14)

I looked again at my own life, and the words of Peter's denial returned to haunt me. The swirling mist in front of the headlights created an eerie feeling of unreality.

As my mind backtracked down the years I began to feel a failure as a disciple of Jesus. I felt that there were areas of my life which I still needed to yield to His Lordship. I felt that I loved the work more than I loved the Lord.

As soon as we arrived in Cornwall I found a room and knelt to pray. I was broken. I offered every aspect of my life and ministry back to the Lord and asked Him to change me from within.

Today, reflect on those aspects of your life which are not pleasing to the Lord. Do you really want to live in a continuing cycle of failure, selfishness and despair? Allow the Redeemer to transform those areas

which you know are flawed; allow Him to change those wrong attitudes, that unyielded thought life, that root of selfishness and weakness. Hand over the trash in your life, and let Him get to work on redeeming you! □

Excerpts from *Living Waters for Your Parched Prayers*. Rob Frost is an evangelist in Great Britain. Used by permission.

Improving Your Knowledge!!

BY PASTOR FRANCIS BURNETT

It seems to be common among many Christians to hear the remark that the Bible is hard to understand. It appears that such reasoning is used to justify the idea that it is foolish to read and study the Bible since it cannot be understood. Or, it would take so much time that the effort of trying to understand the Bible would be fruitless.

Please think on these facts! When you were first in Kindergarten class, how much did you know about reading? How much did you know about math and science? How well could you write? How well could you explain the workings of an automobile, a radio, a television, or life as it was around you?

We all learned with a small beginning of small words, short math problems, whatever it took to increase our knowledge. By the time high school and perhaps college

were finished, the average student would have gained considerable knowledge . . . twenty, fifty, yes hundreds of times as much as when entering kindergarten.

So it is in learning about God's Word. That Word will not automatically enter your mind and you will not gain knowledge of it immediately.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, we read, "Do your best to win full approval in God's sight, as a worker who is not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God's truth" (Good News Bible). Remember when you brought home a written paper or report card with excellent marks to show others how well you had done? It was because you had read and studied the material yourself. It works exactly the same way with the Bible.

The student in high school and college is often asked to do much reading, called

research. It is for the purpose of getting the student to have an increase of knowledge. How true with God's Word! The more one reads, meditates on the Word, and the more one asks God to direct in that effort, the more that student will gain and understand.

"But the Old Testament is so hard to understand!" Perhaps. It certainly does take more reading, that is, going over it more than once. The more it is done, the easier understood. "The Scriptures [Old Testament] were written to teach and encourage us by giving hope" (Romans 15:4, Contemporary English Version). One cannot understand the New Testament without having some knowledge of the Old Testament.

Take time to read, study, and seek God's help and the help of faithful people. Read and study as you did in grade school and beyond. □

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Watch over my sheep.



The End of the Brave New World

In 1931 Aldous Huxley penned his classic novel *A Brave New World*. In this story of the future Huxley gives us a picture of a world which has undergone many changes.

- Human beings are manufactured in test tubes
- Society has rid itself of religious morality
- Free sex has become the norm
- Drugs are commonly used to achieve temporary euphoria
- Various techniques of mind control are used, including a kind of hypnosis.

Huxley projected these things 600 years into the future. The scary part is that many of these changes actually occurred in Huxley's lifetime. All of them have become reality in my father's lifetime (he was born in 1931, the year Huxley wrote his book). In the year 2001, human beings are being manufactured in test tubes. Society has labored long and hard to be rid of religion and morals — no more God in school, free sex has become normal and accepted, drugs have become a common way to induce temporary euphoria, and through the media techniques of mind control are being used to control people.

So it would seem that we are already living in the so-called "brave new world" that Huxley wrote of in 1931. Well, if Huxley was a visionary 69 years ago consider Jesus who lived nearly 2000 years ago. He said: "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day catch you unexpectedly" (Luke 21:34).

Dissipation means a scattering; it is wasteful, frivolous amusement. It is in-

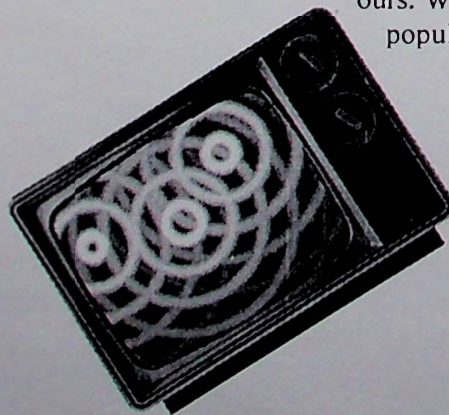
temperate, morally lax behavior. Drunkenness is to be intoxicated, not having control of one's faculties. The worries of life are the day-to-day cares of this world.

Neil Postman's sociological critique *Amusing Ourselves to Death* concludes with a chapter called "The Huxleyan Warning." In it he concludes that "there are two ways by which the spirit of a culture may be shriveled. In the first, the Orwellian, culture becomes a prison. In the second, the Huxleyan, culture becomes a burlesque."

Many of you, no doubt, are familiar with George Orwell. He wrote *Animal Farm* and *1984*, both of which stories described totalitarian systems — a style of government which has operated in many parts of our world for much of the twentieth century.

Postman contrasts Orwell's world from *1984* with Huxley's:

What Huxley teaches is that in the age of advanced technology, spiritual devastation is more likely to come from an enemy with a smiling face than from one whose countenance exudes suspicion and hate. In the Huxleyan prophecy, Big Brother does not watch us, by his choice . . . we watch him, by ours. When a population



becomes distracted by trivia, when cultural life is redefined as a perpetual round of entertainments, when serious public conversation becomes a form of baby-talk, when, in short, a people become an audience and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk; culture-death is a clear possibility.

Huxley's propositions, as presented in Postman's critique, are well supported by history. Consider Edward Gibbons' classic treatise *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It can be summarized in the following way.

Government paternalism, bureaucracy, inflation, an ever-increasing taste for the brutal and brutalizing spectacles of the amphitheater and the circus were symptoms of spiritual malaise which had begun when political freedom was tossed away in the interests of peace, security, and materialism. There was the cancer of slavery and the equally dangerous practice of keeping a segment of the population permanently on the dole. There was free labor subsisting on starvation wages because of the competition of slavery. At the other end of the scale lolled a group of multi-millionaires for whom no luxury was too extravagant. Nor did anyone perceive that inflation and ris-

(continued on page 18)

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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A Righteous Government

BY WILLIAM M. WACHTEL

From antiquity comes the famous saying that “man is by nature a political animal” (Aristotle). Since politics is the science and art of government, I suppose Aristotle meant that man is perpetually interested in and committed to the establishment and direction of an orderly society. From earliest times men have followed chiefs, patriarchs, kings and other leaders, hoping that this would ensure a stable and predictable way of life—peace and prosperity for the law-abiding, punishment and/or correction for the law-breakers. Laws, of course, are the expression of the various kinds of governments men have devised or chosen.

The founding fathers of this country were deeply concerned with the problem of establishing a just government, and the U.S. Constitution was the result of their deliberations and theories of government. It is a truism that almost any kind of government is preferable to the chaos and anarchy that prevail when law is ignored or rejected and political leaders become powerless to supply direction and guidance.

God’s Interest in Government

God established government in the beginning. Genesis 9:6, with its provision of capital punishment for the murderer, presupposes the establishment of an orderly system to seek out the criminal and deal with him on the basis of accepted legal procedure. This, in essence, is *government*. By the time of Genesis 11, a unified society has emerged in Shinar, and the governing authorities are in place to devise and direct in a national project (albeit an evil one).

The Apostle Paul made the classic statement about God’s part in human governments:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the au-

*God’s intention was
to establish
a righteous nation, with
a righteous government,
in the midst of the
corruption of the world.*

.
thority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but

also because of conscience (Romans 13:1-5 NIV).

Paul had already told the Athenians that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

Israel, a Theocracy

When God separated the family of Abraham from the other families of the earth, he said, “Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:18,19). God’s intention was to establish a righteous nation, with a righteous government, in the midst of all the corrupt nations and governments of the world. It was because of God’s exclusive choice of Israel that He dealt so sternly with them:

Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Can two walk together except they be agreed? (Amos 3:1-3).

Through Moses he had told them:

Thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. . . . Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them (Deut. 7:6-11).

Earlier, when about to give them the Ten Commandments, God declared:

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Ex. 19:5, 6).

This kind of government is called a theocracy—a government God has established and authorized and is actively directing. When we say that Israel was a theocracy, we assert that God himself was their ruler. He chose, of course, to rule them through human leaders he had appointed—Moses, Joshua, the judges, and later the kings. Samuel, the last of the judges, was disturbed at Israel's demand for a king "that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:20). Their motive was a poor one, and in effect they were not rejecting Samuel so much as they were rejecting God as their leader (1 Sam. 8:7).

This did not change the fact that God still reserved to himself the right to choose their king and to oversee and judge his reign. So Israel remained a theocracy. After King Saul's failure to rule as God wished, the Lord chose David, "a man after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). It was God who "set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah" (2 Sam. 3:10). This divinely-established throne of David and his successors is actually called in Scripture "the throne of the LORD" (1 Chron. 29:23; compare 1 Chron. 28:4, 5; 2 Chron. 9:8).

God's Promises to David

Some of the most amazing promises in Scripture were made to King David. Not only were his family to constitute a royal dynasty that would rule for centuries in Jerusalem, but also God envisaged a particular descendant of David whose rule would outshine them all!

And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: but I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore (1 Chron. 17:10-14; compare 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Psalms 89:19-37; 132:10-18).

The Prophet Isaiah, living several centuries after David's time, did not consider these promises fulfilled, either in Solomon or in any other descendant of David yet born. Rather, Isaiah looked forward to a "child" who would later be born, a "son" who would be given—

and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:6, 7).

The Theocracy Overturned

The theocratic kings who descended from David and who ruled in Jerusalem were not always righteous men. Some of them, such as Ahaz and Manasseh, were in fact very wicked. The last good king was Josiah, who died around 610 B.C. He was followed by four kings, the final one being Zedekiah. Not only were these rulers spiritually bankrupt, but the people as a whole refused to be submissive to the will and ways of God.

Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy (2 Chron. 36:14-16).

God's solution was to bring an end to the theocracy, to destroy Jerusalem and the temple, and to drive his people into exile in Babylon and other lands, around 586 B.C. He had already pronounced judgment against King Zedekiah and the theocratic government in Jerusalem:

And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when
(continued on page 6)

iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him (Ezek. 21:25-27).

After the fall of Zedekiah's government, no king from the line of David ever ruled again in Jerusalem. Even though many of the Jews later returned from exile to their homeland, they were never able to re-establish the Davidic monarchy. But, because of the promises God had made to David, those who believed God's Word continued to look and long for the promised Son of David to appear and to restore the theocracy. A popular title for this expected ruler was "the Messiah" (Hebrew for "the Anointed One," in Greek "the Christ"). Meanwhile, the theocracy remained in the state of being "overturned" — awaiting the coming of the one "whose right it is," to whom God intended to "give it."

The Son of David Appears

The very first things the New Testament records about Jesus Christ is that he is "the son of David" (Matt. 1:1). To Matthew's Jewish readers, this was a most significant statement! When Jesus was about to be conceived in his mother, Mary, the angel Gabriel told her:

Thou . . . shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:31-33).

There had been an end of the first theocracy because of wickedness and disobedience. It had been overturned, and had not

yet been restored. When Jesus' first disciples began to follow him, it was with the understanding and faith he was indeed "the Messiah" (John 1:41), the one promised by "Moses . . . and the prophets" (John 1:45), the expected "King of Israel" (John 1:49). After the crucifixion, two of his followers declared that they had "trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel" (Luke 24:21) — which in its historical context can mean only that they believed Jesus would restore the theocracy as the authorized king descended from David! Now that he had died, it appeared that their hopes were thwarted.

After his resurrection, Jesus spent forty

They asked him a very significant question: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

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days with his apostles, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). As he was about to leave them and ascend to his Father, they asked him a very significant question: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6)

They knew that the Davidic kingdom, the theocratic monarchy, had long since been overturned. They also knew that a restoration of that government was implied in the promises that the Messiah would someday sit on the throne of David.

Jesus is sometimes depicted by Bible interpreters as rebuking them for misunderstanding the nature of his kingdom. A careful reading of the text, however, will show that it is these interpreters who need to be rebuked! Christ's reply reveals that he simply clarified the *time element* — it was not for them to know "the times or the seasons" (Acts 1:7) for the promised

restoration. It was rather for them meanwhile to carry the gospel to "the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The fact that there was no misunderstanding on their part regarding the literal restoration of the Davidic theocracy is evident from Peter's declaration some time later, under the guidance of God's Spirit:

[God] shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution (restoration) of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began (Acts 3:20, 21).

In these words Jesus is represented as being required ("must") to remain in heaven until a certain time is reached. At that point God will "send" His Son from heaven to bring about the restoration of all things prophesied from the beginning. We have already seen that these things include the re-establishment of the Davidic monarchy or theocracy. Jesus himself had promised, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matt. 25:31). In light of Luke 1:32 and Isaiah 9:6,7 we must conclude that the "throne of his glory" is none other than "the throne of David" — which Christ will inherit and occupy as King "for ever"!

While Jesus remains in heaven, the throne of David remains unoccupied and the theocracy remains overturned. In the meantime Christ is seated with his Father on his Father's throne, awaiting the time when he will be given his own throne — the throne of David: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21).

Here there are clearly *two* thrones mentioned: that of the Father and that of His Son. The throne of the Father is in heaven. Christ promises to sit on his own "glorious

throne" (Matt. 25:31) when he comes with all the holy angels (see RSV). The throne of Christ, inherited from David, must therefore be *on the earth*, as the throne of David *always was!* So Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10 NIV).

There is no evidence in Scripture that the Kingdom comes or is established at any time before the King returns to restore it. There are many promises of Christ's second coming as a literal event to transpire in the future (e.g., Acts 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:15,16; 2 Thess. 2:1; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 9:28 et al.). The Parable of the Nobleman depicts Christ as going away to a "far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12). He did go away — he went to heaven; there he receives the royal authority (compare Daniel 7:13,14), and then returns, "having received the kingdom" (Luke 19:15). This is all very clear and plain, without complicated or ambiguous language.

The Coming Righteous Government

This earth has known very little righteous government in all its history. A succession of corrupt rulers and ungodly nations has appeared on the world stage, as players in a drama. But in the pages of Scripture a brilliant description is found — in many texts — foretelling the rise of a government that will be worldwide in extent, peaceful in character, righteous and just, and centered in Jerusalem. Here are a few of the texts:

It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all the nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his

paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more (Isa. 2:2-4).

There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. . . . And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:1-9).

I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth (Zech. 9:10).

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart (Jer. 3:17; compare Zech. 12:6).

Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. . . . He shall come down like rain

upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth (Psalm 72:1-8).

The four Gospels mention over and over again the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven." In their historical context these expressions refer clearly to the righteous government which God will set up on this earth by means of His Son, Jesus the Messiah, when He sends His Son back here. (To turn the "kingdom of heaven" to a "kingdom *in* heaven" is to do violence to the language, the context, and the historical and theological background in which these expressions originated!)

Nebuchadnezzar's famous dream, interpreted by Daniel, foresaw the succession of world empires — Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. Following these, he saw a government which the God of heaven shall set up,

a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever (Dan. 2:44).

It was later revealed to Daniel that this

kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him (Dan. 7:27).

The Kingdom is coming! Christ is coming! And he bids his people to be ready, "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matt. 24:42). □

Book Review: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's The Cost of Discipleship

BY CAMPBELL CARROLL

History and Introduction

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born February 4, 1906 into a family of seven children in Breslau, Germany. He grew up in Berlin, where his father was a medical professor.

At sixteen years of age, Bonhoeffer went to Tubingen to read theology. He presented his doctoral thesis at the age of twenty-one and a promising career in the teaching of theology began. His popularity as a writer and teacher grew. After returning from America in 1933 he denounced the German public in a radio address for its blind obedience to Hitler the "leader" (Führer). He saw Hitler as a dangerous threat to the religious and humanitarian welfare of the German people. It is in this act that we see the emergence of Bonhoeffer as a theological and humanitarian leader.

Soon after Hitler came to power, Bonhoeffer went to England to serve as a pastor of the expatriate German Church, but he eventually was recalled to Germany to serve as the head of a seminary of the Confessing Church (which stood in confessed opposition to Hitler's sway) to train young pastors. While at Finkewalde Bonhoeffer wrote the book *The Cost of Discipleship*, as well as beginning to refine his understanding of the significance of Christian community and the integrity required to follow Jesus Christ.

In April, 1943, Bonhoeffer was arrested for helping Jews escape Nazi Germany. After his imprisonment he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler. On April 8, 1945, Bonhoeffer was hanged in Flossenbug prison on the orders of Hitler,

just three days before the allied forces arrived. This man, through his personal belief and example, and through the teaching of the scriptures, lived a model Christian life in the most inhumane conditions. His experiences come alive in his writing, particularly *The Cost of Discipleship*, which challenges readers to think in a way that promotes deep insight into what it means to live a life devoted to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

*Bonhoeffer shows us
in his writings that
a life of costly grace is
possible for all people
who believe and follow
Jesus Christ.*

Cheap Grace and Prayer

The core of *The Cost of Discipleship* is a series of meditations on the Sermon on the Mount. Each chapter of the book begins with a quotation from Saint Matthew. Bonhoeffer is a master of challenging the reader to stop and think about scripture and what it means in today's world. In the first chapter, titled "Costly Grace," Bonhoeffer distinguishes between what he called *cheap grace* and *costly grace*. I found this enlightening, and I think the theory that Bonhoeffer expressed is relevant in today's society. He described cheap grace as the justification of sin without the

justification of the sinner. Bonhoeffer saw this all around him, in the German Church (in its inability and unwillingness to take action) and in the ordinary German people. However, Bonhoeffer states:

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the Cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Bonhoeffer shows us *costly* grace both in what was happening around him and by the way he lived in prison. As Christians we can reflect on the events of the world and can understand that cheap grace is all around us. Bonhoeffer lived a life of costly grace. He shows us in his writings that such a life is possible for all people who believe and follow Jesus Christ.

Another chapter I found appealing is titled "The Hiddenness of Prayer." The quotation that begins this section is Matthew 6:5-8. Bonhoeffer offered reasons for the importance of praying privately and humbly before God.

What was so appealing about this chapter was how effective Bonhoeffer is as a teacher. Armed with the relevant scriptural passage, Bonhoeffer explains to the reader not only the importance of prayer, but how to pray and why. Bonhoeffer states:

We pray to God because we believe in him through Jesus Christ; this is to

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What is a Pastor? Examining the Biblical Job Description of the “Ποιμενας” of Ephesians 4:11

BY KEITH SCHOOLEY

Introduction

The origin of the modern term “pastor” lies in the biblical reference to shepherding in Ephesians 4:11. Therefore people often have tried to describe the duties of a pastor by analogy to those of a literal shepherd, spiritualizing the physical duties involved, so that “feeding” may represent (for example) preaching the Word, leading sheep to new pasture represents leadership, and the overall caretaking responsibilities involve meeting people’s needs on an individual basis. The problem with this understanding of pastoring is that there are no inherent controls on the analogy itself—those making the analogy may interpret any duty in any manner they choose. The understanding that usually emerges from this approach lays great emphasis on personal care for the congregation by the pastor, which may or may not be what was intended by the New Testament’s use of a word for “shepherd” to describe a type of leader within the church.

A better method of discovering the meaning of the title, “pastor,” would be to analyze the *metaphorical* applications of shepherding in Greek and Hebrew, to discover what aspects of literal shepherding are applied to other occupations, what these aspects have reference to, and to what persons or offices they are applied. Once we understand how the terms for “shepherd” are used metaphorically throughout scripture, we may then better understand how they would have been understood to apply to the title named in Ephesians 4:11.

In that passage, the Apostle Paul cites the office of “pastor” (ποιμην) along with

those of apostle, prophet, and evangelist (the office of teacher, as we shall see, is probably coordinate with that of pastor), but gives no content to the position so named. In order to discover what the Biblical understanding of that office is, we shall 1) review the metaphorical uses of ποιμην and its cognates in the New Testament, as well as its equivalent in Old Testament Hebrew; 2) attempt to discover synonymous offices/titles in New Testament literature and similarly trace their usage; 3) tie the material thus gathered into a biblical “job description” of the pastor as that role is conceived in the Scriptures.

I. “Shepherd” and Its Cognates in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures

1. Ποιμην, Shepherd, Pastor

The only usage of ποιμην in the New Testament for an office of the church is that of Ephesians 4:11. Leaving aside references to actual shepherds (all of which occur in Luke’s infancy narrative), the predominant New Testament use of this term refers to Jesus in His *unique* role as messiah—specifically, in His laying down His life for the sheep (i.e., atonement through the cross). This is an important point to observe, because many simply identify Jesus as “shepherd” and then press the analogy between Jesus and the local pastor of the church. However, when one examines the specific claims to “shepherding” made by or about Jesus in the New Testament, we find that they are few in number and specifically salvific in nature. The synoptic references to Zechariah 13:7, “Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered,” can only relate to Jesus’

crucifixion, as with such statements in John 10 as “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (v. 11) and “I lay down my life for the sheep . . . only to take it up again . . . I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again” (vv. 15, 17, 18). These passages refer clearly and specifically to Jesus’ atoning death and resurrection, and they are the only passages in which Jesus clearly refers to Himself as shepherd. The implication here is that the local pastor cannot be a shepherd in the same sense that Jesus was, and so, to discover the content of the pastor’s “shepherding” responsibilities, one must look elsewhere than to simple analogy to Jesus.

Outside Ephesians, only Matthew 9:36 and Mark 6:34 (parallel synoptic accounts) have possible reference to anyone other than Jesus; in both cases the crowds following Jesus are described as “sheep without a shepherd,” without comment on who the needed shepherd would be. Matthew adds vv. 37-38: “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’” It is therefore possible that “shepherd” in v. 36 is coordinate with “worker” in vv. 37-38, and that the “workers” Jesus has in view are to be “shepherds” (i.e., pastors). This is followed in Matthew by the sending out of the Twelve on their first mission. However, in the Markan parallel, Jesus Himself responds to the need and “began teaching them many things”; i.e., one would be led in Mark to identify the needed “shepherd” with Jesus Himself.

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In fact, “sheep without a shepherd” cites Numbers 27:17, in which Moses petitions God for a leader over Israel, and God appoints Joshua as Moses’ successor; in which role Joshua functions as a type of Christ (cf. “I will raise up a prophet like you [Moses],” Deut. 18:18). In drawing a parallel between the situation at hand and that of Moses, Jesus evidently had two analogies in mind: Himself in the role of Moses, His successors as shepherds (Matthew), and Himself in the role of Moses’ successor (Mark).

The contexts (apart from Eph. 4:11) in which ποιμην is found, then, offer little information on what the biblical role of the pastoral office ought to be. They either refer to literal shepherds, to Jesus in His unique atoning/salvific role, or have uncertain reference to “workers” in the harvest; the most that can be inferred is that “harvesting,” or salvation of souls, is involved. However, a further element of the pastoral office may be deduced from the context of Ephesians 4:11 itself: in the expression “and some to be pastors and teachers” (τους δε ποιμενας και διδασκαλους), the use of “and some” to cover both “pastors and teachers” (as well as the omission of the article before “teachers,” according to Sharp’s Rule) not only allows but actually suggests rather strongly that these offices were intended to be considered together in a single category, or possibly as metonymous expressions for a single office: the pastor-teacher. It is reasonable to infer from this construction that teaching is to be understood as a principle element of the pastoral office.

2. Ποιμαινω, to shepherd, pastor, tend, rule

Three uses of the verbal cognate ποιμαινω help us to fill out the content of the term “pastor” in Ephesians 4:11; i.e., explain something of what it means to “pastor” or “shepherd” the congregation of believers. In Jesus’s reinstatement of Peter after His resurrection, in the second of

the three “Do you love me?” interchanges (John 21:16), Peter is enjoined by Jesus to “Take care of (ποιμαινε) my sheep.” What this “taking care” would involve is not explicitly told, but it is (in Peter’s case, at least) clearly to be an outgrowth of his love for the Lord, and would result in captivity and martyrdom, and brings to fruition Jesus’ original call to him: “Follow me” (vv. 18-19).

In his farewell address to the elders of the Ephesian church, the apostle Paul charges the elders to “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. *Be shepherds of the church of God*” (Acts

*“Savage wolves will
come in among you and
will not spare the flock.”*

* * * * *

20:28). In this passage we are given to understand that the “elders” (to whom Paul is speaking, vv. 17-18) are also called “overseers,” and that it is they who are to shepherd the church; i.e., the pastoral office is to be identified with that of an “elder” or an “overseer.” Moreover, Paul seems to explicate what he means by ποιμαινω in vv. 29-31 by two coordinate expressions. In the first (v. 29), he warns that “savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.” In the next verse, he explains that “men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.” Then he warns the elders to be on their guard and recalls to them his constant warnings for the previous three years. Here, watchfulness with regard to false teachers and warning the people concerning them is the evident practical import of the descriptive verb ποιμαινω.

First Peter 5:2 calls upon the “elders among you” (i.e., among the church worldwide; cf. 1:1-2) to “*Be shepherds of God’s*

flock that is under your care, serving as overseers.” In this we see confirmation that “elders” are to be identified with “overseers” and charged with “shepherding”; we see also that “God’s flock” (i.e., the congregation) is in some sense “under” the elder’s “care.” Verses 2b-3 indicate, by three contrasted pairs, the manner in which “shepherding” ought to take place: “not because you must,” “not greedy for money,” “not lording it over those entrusted to you”; but rather, “because you are willing, as God wants you to be,” “eager to serve,” and “being examples to the flock.” In verse 4, a reward (the “crown of glory”) is promised from the “Chief Shepherd” to those who faithfully serve in this capacity.

If we identify the verbal ποιμαινω with the conduct of the “pastoral” office, it follows from these three passages that 1) the *office* of “pastor” is to be identified with that of “elder” and “overseer,” and therefore what is said about these offices is in turn applicable to the pastor; 2) its *motive* ought to be out of love for the Lord and a willing eagerness to serve (rather than out of compulsion or greed); 3) its *conduct* involves serving God’s people and exemplifying the new life before them; and 4) its *content* specifically includes watching out for false teachers and warning the people of them; i.e., teaching against false doctrine as it appears.

Before turning to the offices that we’ve seen are identified with the pastorate —



“elders” and “overseers”—we will take up the Hebrew background of “shepherd” and “shepherding” and investigate what connotations the NT readers may have been expected to bring to their understanding of the terms.

3. *Râ'âh*, to tend (a flock), graze; rule; a shepherd, leader, ruler

Used as a noun, *râ'âh* frequently refers to literal shepherds. When applied metaphorically, however, its most common usage is with reference to leaders in general, without specifying what type of leadership is envisioned; the context, however, often makes clear that military and/or judicial-royal leadership is understood. A few other references clearly indicate foreign rulers or military leaders. In addition to these references, there are a few in which a specific human person is indicated: a successor to Moses, i.e., Joshua (typologically, Jesus); Jeremiah; Cyrus; and Moses. Of these, only Jeremiah is not a judge, military leader, or king. It is often used with respect to God, and a few times with reference to the messiah.

Used as a verb, *râ'âh* most often refers to the literal tending of sheep, as a rule understood primarily to involve feeding and leading to fresh pasture. Used metaphorically, it often refers to God's provision for His people, frequently with reference to Israel's restoration. When referring to human leadership, the civil leadership of kings or judges is usually assumed: judges or kings are often clearly in view in the context, and leaders, when their specific office is not identified, are often compared to (or replaced by a type of) King David. *Râ'âh* is never used with clear reference to priests, and only once to prophets, in Jeremiah's self-reference. It can refer to feeding or taking care of oneself, and can be used metaphorically. The general sense of this usage seems to be the responsibility of the leader/shepherd to provide for the needs of his people/flock. As these needs are generally either

undefined or understood to be the physical needs for food and water, there is little OT direct evidence to guide one in determining how to meet the spiritual needs of the NT church (although this may provide a basis for the mandate for the church to provide physically for those who are in physical need). Emphasis seems to be placed, however, on the attitude of the “shepherds”: whether they provide for their own needs at the expense of the people, or whether they give primary regard to the needs of the people.

In Ezekiel 34, a seminal text in this regard, the Lord pronounces judgment upon the “shepherds [civil leadership] of Israel,” on the basis that they “only take care of themselves” and do not “take care of the flock” (vv. 2-3). The Lord's specific indictment of the shepherds is that they do not help the weak, sick, or injured; that they do not rescue strays and the lost; and that they have ruled the flock harshly and brutally, benefiting themselves with the best the flock has to offer (vv. 3-4). The result of this neglect and abuse is that the sheep are “scattered,” a recurring term used frequently to describe bad or nonexistent shepherding. God's response to this situation will be to hold the shepherds accountable and remove them from their position (v. 10); to rescue His flock, search for His sheep, and tend them Himself (vv. 11-12), and to take care of the injured and weak (v. 16). His shepherding also involves meting out justice upon the sheep as well as the shepherds (vv. 17 and 22) and, as a culmination, placing over them “one shepherd, my servant David” (typologically, Christ), who will “be their shepherd” (vv. 23-24). The rest of the chapter describes the restoration of Israel in the Messianic Age.

From this OT background, we may draw a few conclusions that one may expect the early church to have understood by the term, “shepherd/pastor.” 1) God Himself and Messiah are to be understood as the preeminent Shepherd(s); “pastors” are therefore delegated extensions of that

leadership. 2) Shepherds in the OT denote civil leaders and not prophets or priests; pastoring in the church should then refer primarily to leadership within the church, and not to priestly (sacerdotal) or prophetic functions of ministry. 3) The welfare of the sheep/people is to be the shepherd/pastor's primary concern. Specifically, the weak, sick, or injured ought to receive concern and care, and lost strays are to be sought out for restoration. Above all, the flock is not to be *scattered*, i.e., unity, direction, and correction are primary responsibilities of the pastor.

In bringing together the Hebrew and Greek terms for shepherd/pastor and their verbal equivalents, we see that 1) the *motive* of pastoring should be love for the Lord, and willingness to serve as His delegates, for the benefit of His people; 2) the *conduct* of pastoring should be that of servant-leadership: exemplifying the new life, caring for those with needs, and guiding, directing, correcting, and unifying the congregation as a whole; 3) the predominant *method* of pastoring should be sound teaching, especially to protect against “wolves,” i.e., warning people of false teachers as they arise.

II. Terms Identified with “Shepherd”

1. Πρεσβυτερος, elder

Πρεσβυτερος is used to designate an office of the church only in Acts, in the Pastoral Epistles, and in some of the general epistles; the term was evidently taken over from the Jewish use of “elder” (*zâqên*) to designate leaders (originally, probably heads of families) within Israel. Elders act as the representatives of churches, receiving monetary assistance and meeting together to resolve doctrinal disputes (Acts 15); they seem to appear first in Jerusalem and are later appointed in the churches by Paul, who still later passes the responsibility of appointing elders to (at least) Titus; and were seen as Paul's successors in Ephesus (Acts 20). They are

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to be treated with respect in accordance with the gravity of their office; accusations against them are not to be frivolously entertained, but treated seriously if proven (1 Tim. 5:19-20). They are to be called for in times of need for prayer (Jas. 5:14). The work of at least some of them is described as “preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17).

The qualifications of a πρεσβυτερος are laid out in Titus 1:5-9. Briefly, they are to be: “blameless,” identified in v. 7 by five things it is “not” (overbearing, quick-tempered, given to drunkenness, violent, and in pursuit of dishonest gain); “the husband of one wife,” and one whose children are obedient believers; hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined; and one who holds firmly to the basic gospel message, so that he may encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. The emphasis seems to be laid upon moral and ethical character, along with fidelity to the gospel message and the ability to teach it properly. These qualities confirm what has already been discovered about the “shepherd”: that he should both practice and teach the content of the gospel.

2. Επισκοπος, overseer, bishop

Επισκοπος is evidently a Gentile equivalent to πρεσβυτερος; both terms were taken from generically used designations of leaders in Jewish and Greek settings, respectively. The evidence seems to indicate that, during the writing of the New Testament, the two terms were synonymous, although πρεσβυτερος may have been being replaced by επισκοπος as the church became progressively more Gentile in orientation.

The most helpful passages in understanding the επισκοπος are from the requirements laid out for the office in 1 Timothy 3:1-10 and Titus 1:5-9, the latter passage having been examined already with reference to the πρεσβυτερος since

it uses both terms. Besides those qualifications already considered, 1 Timothy 3 adds that the office consists of a “noble task”; that the overseer must be respectable, not quarrelsome, not a recent convert, and have a good reputation with outsiders.

Most of the qualifications of elders and overseers are basic moral, ethical qualities that are elsewhere urged upon believers in general; those in leadership are therefore expected to be exemplary in these matters. It is worth noting, however, the differences between the qualifications of elders/overseers and those of deacons (evidently, lay leadership): while many qualifications are equivalent, those specifically enjoined upon elders/overseers seem to stress self-control in interpersonal relationships, personal holiness and love for what is good,

He is to “command and
teach these things”
and to “devote himself
to the public reading of
Scripture, to preaching
and to teaching.”

• • • • •
self-discipline, hospitality, and in three citations (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Tit. 1:9) ability to teach.

It would appear that the terms “elder,” and “overseer,” considered together, constitute one who is set apart and appointed for leadership in the church, one who leads by example and exemplary moral character, and who faithfully teaches and preaches the gospel. They connote leadership and mature Christian character. These qualities may be understood as applying to the pastorate as well.

III. Evidence from Specific Texts

1. Διδασκαλια, Διδασκω, and Related Words in the Pastoral Epistles

The epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are generally understood as focusing on instruction in the conduct of the pastoral office (and of church leadership in general), as the common designation of “pastoral epistles” indicates. These epistles should be considered a seminal text for the understanding of the pastoral office.

The Pastoral Epistles lend a great deal of support to the idea that the New Testament pastoral office is largely conceived of in terms of teaching. Various forms of the διδασκαλια root occur 27 times in these three brief epistles. This is out of 210 occurrences in the New Testament as a whole (13%), of which most of the rest are references to Jesus. There are only 64 references in all the epistles combined, so that the Pastorals contain 42% of the epistolary references to teachers, teaching, doctrine, and instruction. While the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation contain the majority of the διδασκ- roots in the New Testament, the pastorals contain the highest frequency of these roots.

An examination of the passages involved indicates that the writer is primarily focused on the teaching role of the church leader; either Timothy or Titus himself, or the elders/overseers that they are appointing. The leader is to oppose false teaching (1 Tim. 1:3-7; 4:1-3) by pointing out the “truths of the faith” and the “good teaching” he has followed (1 Tim. 4:6), and by commanding false teachers to cease (1 Tim. 1:3) and by silencing those who are “teaching things they ought not to teach” (Tit. 1:11). He is to “command and teach these things” and to “devote himself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching” (1 Tim. 4:11, 13). He is to “teach the older men,” “teach the older women,” “teach what is good,” “encourage the young men,” and “teach slaves” (Tit. 2:2, 3, 6, 9). He is to “give the people these instructions” (1 Tim. 5:7), and to “teach what is in

accord with sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). The leader is to “correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2-3). In his teaching, the leader is to “show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech” (Tit. 2:7-8).

The leader is to keep what he has heard from the Apostle Paul as “the pattern of sound teaching” (2 Tim. 1:13), and to entrust Paul’s words to “reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2). If the elders whom he appoints rule well they are to be considered worthy of “double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17). Such an elder is to “hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it” (Tit. 1:9). Scripture is recognized as “God-breathed and . . . useful for teaching” (2 Tim. 3:16).

In short, the primary mission of the pastor, as described in the Pastoral Epistles, is to teach. This includes teaching of scripture, doctrine, and godly morals; it includes opposing false teachers; and it is to be done both by verbal means and by personal example.

2. The Choosing of the Seven in Acts 6

A final consideration is to examine the choosing of “the Seven” in Acts chapter 6. In response to a dispute in the church involving meeting the physical needs of people, the apostles decided that seven men should be chosen to take care of the daily distribution of food (vv. 1-3). Whether these were forerunners of the later office of deacons is disputed, but the rationale that the apostles gave for their action is highly worthy of note: they stated that “it would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables” (v. 2). While the apostles’ role in the early church cannot simply be equated with the role of the modern pastor,

their role certainly included that of the modern pastor — they were considered the leadership of the church and were responsible for teaching (Acts 2:42; 6:2). Acts 6 therefore gives strong precedent for lay leadership to take on some of the caretaking responsibilities of the church in order to allow the pastor to avoid neglecting his responsibilities to ministering the word of God and praying.

Conclusion

There are some who would equate the ministry of a pastor exclusively with doctrinal instruction. This position is not borne out by the present study. A pastor’s responsibilities include serving others, exemplifying his message through his daily actions, loving his people, and a concern especially with those who are weak and in need.

However, a much more common view of the pastor in the church, often arrived at by default rather than analysis, is to regard the pastor as the chief worker of the church. Tasks of administration, visitation, counseling, assuaging difficulties, and many others, are demands on his time. Individually minor, combined they have the effect of squeezing out what scripture regards as the pastor’s primary responsibility — that of teaching the people of God the truths of God’s word and principles of godly living. Many pastors are pressured by people in their congregations to be “more visible” or “more accessible.” Those who demand these things have little understanding that time spent in private study or in the solitary prayer closet may be of much greater value to the Body of Christ than endeavoring to be seen doing what the people want the pastor to do.

If the call on a person’s life to pastoral ministry is truly of God, then it is to do the work of God, which is described and exemplified in scripture. It is not necessarily to do the work expected by congregants. Churches need to allow their pastors to involve lay leadership in circumstances

that do not require a pastor, and members of congregations need to accept a visit or some other ministry by a brother or sister in Christ as just as valid as the same thing being done by a pastor. People naturally feel honored when the pastor takes time out of his schedule to meet personally with them, and they enjoy seeing him involved in community affairs. But when a pastor spends the majority of his time “taking time out” to do these things, he risks neglecting the gift he has been given; just as bad, he often finds himself trying to operate outside of the gifts God has given him, because God has given him gifts appropriate to the ministry He has called him to, not necessarily the one people expect from him. The success of modern megachurches may be due partly to the fact that a senior pastor, often a gifted preacher and expositor, is freed by his staff to actually do the work he has been called to do. How much more effective might the Church be if all those who are called to teach the word of God were able to do the same thing? □



What Does God Want?

BY LARRY BADEN

Not Offerings, not Sacrifices, but Relationships

One of the most contentious questions in Christianity, and one of the most important ones, concerns the issue of what God seeks from us, and how we should be related to Him. Does He seek those who will adhere to a religious structure, keeping a set of customs that, rightly or not, have been deemed somehow holy? Or does He seek those with a heart that is His: longing to know God, even as they imperfectly put that knowledge into practice in daily life? What sort of relationship with God is a “normal” one, and is it the same as the “usual” one? Is the typical “Christian” life-style and practice in fact the kind God seeks? Or is there something more?

It is clear from Scripture — especially the Old Testament — that what God seeks is an intimate, loving relationship with His people. However, *knowing* that is often not much help. First, what we often seek is rules and an “arm’s-length” safety, not true relationship. And then, even when we really want a relationship with Him, what will it look like? What are we really seeking? It is the nature of man — as history so abundantly demonstrates — to want clearly outlined structure and rules by which to govern relationships. We are much more comfortable with clear definition and tangible evidence than with abstraction and hard-to-define ideas. There is a story of a small child running to her parents for protection during an especially noisy nighttime thunderstorm. They assured her that it

was perfectly safe for her to return to her bed, saying, “Jesus is always there with you.” The little girl replied, “I know Jesus is there, but I want to have someone with skin on!”

Virtually every ancient culture had some physical manifestation of whatever they chose to designate as “god.” They worshipped statues, rocks, bugs, the sun, and a mind-numbing array of other physical items. It is our nature to want evidence and reassurance that we can see. We are not secure with something that “just is,” something that has no form or tangible manifestation.

Israel: beloved of God

After God redeemed Israel from Egypt — with the most awesome display of divine power in history — it would seem that the people would certainly have known to trust and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who rescued them. Yet, short months later, as Moses was at a mountain-top meeting with God, many in Israel demanded some tangible manifestation of a god for them to worship, and they began a wild pagan orgy, celebrating a dead hunk of metal — a golden calf (Exod. 32).

We may shake our heads in disbelief over how Israel again and again failed to realize their redeemer-God, and fell into disobedience and sin. But we generally do little better in knowing and obeying God, and their experience is recorded for us as a warning, lest we, too, follow our natural bent toward the tangible (1 Cor. 10). What does God want from us? What did God want from Israel?

Not rules, but pleasing a Person

It is clear, both now and then, that God does not want a people who simply adhere to a set of rules, maintaining some sort of a religious structure, no matter how well intended. He wants our hearts — which will bring forth appropriate actions — and not actions that do not come from a heart that desires to know and serve Him.

The prophet Hosea said it very well: “For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (6:6 NASB). This verse has been paraphrased thus: “I don’t want your offerings, and I don’t want your sacrifices; I want you to know me and to love me” (The Living Bible). God is redundantly clear about His desires. J. Dwight Pentecost wrote, “Christian living is not keeping a set of rules; it is pleasing a Person.” God wants to be known and loved by His people. But what does that look like? How will we know it when we see it “with skin on”? Is living in the presence of God, knowing and pleasing Him, shown by living a “goody-two-shoes,” boring, do-nothing sort of life? Should our life be guided by, “I don’t drink, smoke, cuss, or chew, or go with girls who do”? Or should we be looking for “a miracle a day”? Should we expect non-stop manifestations of God’s power? We will let several examples in Scripture answer for us. Not surprisingly, for the earliest example we have to go back to the beginning, to the garden. We will look at a time and place where God’s intent in this matter was clearly demonstrated by actions.

Life in the garden

God created man and woman — Adam and Eve — to live in a certain manner, to be related in a certain way, to Him, to each other, and to the rest of creation. The plan worked... for a while. We don't know how long it took before rebellion ended what seems to us a very good thing. We generally assume that it was very soon after Adam was created, but we only know that, sometime after he was created, he fell. We know that, at some point, Adam bought the idea that God wasn't really all that good: There might be something that God was holding back, something good that Adam might want. Trust ceased and, predictably, when trust ceased the relationship changed. Before it did, however, there were some things happening that are important for us.

• Fellowship

First, it seems that God and Adam walked together in the garden in the cool of the evening (Genesis 3:8). Apparently there was a time, when the day's work was done (yes, Adam did have a job), when Adam and God met to walk and talk. This suggests a kind of relationship that is deeper, more intimate, and on the level of a friendship.

• Right and Wrong

Second, Adam and Eve did not know good from evil (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:5). They didn't think in those terms. For them, "good" was obeying God, and "evil" was disobeying God. That was the end of it. Therefore, there was no concept of morality, no set of rules outlining permissible and impermissible actions. Considering conditions in the garden, it would not be wrong to say that in God's original plan for His people there was no intention for a concept of morality. There was no understanding of law and rules, but only living in a relationship with Him, living what the Hebrew Scriptures would call "before

the face of God." What pleased Him was, by definition, good. What did not, was not.

Rules are cool

We are most comfortable with a set of rules, since with them the world and our place in it are clearly defined, and we can know what the expectations are. Personal relationships are different, because they nearly always have an element of ambiguity. We are additionally put off by the idea of such a relationship with someone who is essentially unknown to us. We, like Adam, have bought into the idea that God is perhaps not as good or as loving as we would like, and so we are not going to entirely let our guard down. We have a concept of God that is not based in Scripture, and that does not include the passionate love He has for us.

God is essentially unknown to us, but that is by human choice, not His. If the prophets tell us anything, it is that God longs to restore the relationship of intimacy, of knowing, that existed in the garden before Adam messed it up. God seeks those whose heart is fully His, that He may reveal Himself to them. Let's look at some more examples from Scripture, cases of people who had fascinating relationships with God, people who can teach us something.

Abraham: "real people"

Abraham is fascinating and is a valuable example to us for a variety of reasons, two of which we will discuss here. First, he seems to have made a lot of mistakes. Second, he was close friends with God.

• Trust and obey

On an initial reading of Genesis's account of Abraham, it seems amazing that he apparently left his homeland, his extended family, and his culture and began moving, heading southwest, looking for a destination that he would know

only when God revealed it to him. Even more remarkable, it seems that he traveled for some time, perhaps months, with no further word from God. Apparently God said "Go until I tell you to stop." And Abraham did that, with no more instructions. God seems to enjoy periods of silence. It is certainly possible that God spoke to Abraham more than is mentioned in Scripture, but if He did, it was not significant enough to be included in the account. This sort of faith seems almost beyond comprehension to most of us.

• 'Sister Act I & II'

It becomes even more amazing when, going into Egypt (was this God's will? it wasn't the promised land, and events there seem pretty negative) Abraham asks his wife — who shared the promise and vision that God gave to her husband — to lie about her relationship with him. How could he do such a thing? How could she agree to be placed in such a place of compromise? I believe that, comparing the account of this event (Genesis 12:14-20) with the second such event (Genesis 20:2-18), a good case can be made that Sara was actually sexually violated in the house of Pharaoh. So here is one of the most significant men in scripture, uniquely called of God, a man of — perhaps later — great faith (don't forget the near-sacrifice of Isaac), willing to let his wife be taken into an oriental harem to be used by the king as he wished. What a paradox. Yet, God maintained the relationship and continued to lead and bless Abraham.

• Lunch with God

Reading further, we can better see the nature of the relationship as Abraham is presented as an intimate friend of God (Genesis 18). Abraham is camped under an oak tree in the hills a few miles
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south of Jerusalem, sitting in the doorway of his tent during the hot part of the day. As he looked up, there came three men, walking near him. He jumped up and ran to meet them, as his role as a good host required, and asked them to stay for lunch. Some commentators write that Abraham had lunch with angels, and that's partly true. However, Scripture clearly portrays one of the three as God: He is referred to by the four-letter name of God—God's "first name," sort of. After this amazing lunch, Abraham and his guests walk over to the edge of the steep descent into the Arabah, the site of the Dead Sea and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This is a spectacular overlook, with a steep drop of more than 4,000 feet. As they stood looking, God said to the angels, "Should I tell Abe, here, what I am about to do?"

- **A favor between friends**

There follows an amazing conversation, as Abraham "bargains" with God for the lives of any righteous men in the cities. Many take this as a demonstration of a sense of justice in Abraham. However, there is something else, less obvious and perhaps more important, going on. Abraham's real concern is for Lot, who lives in a city that is about to become history. However, Lot is never mentioned. Abraham never asks for Lot's safety, and God never says He will spare Lot. In fact, it is difficult to see Lot as a righteous man, fitting into Abraham's plea. Peter (2 Peter 2:7, 8) refers to him as righteous, but could this be a conclusion drawn from the Genesis account? Abraham asked that the righteous be spared, Lot was spared, therefore Lot was righteous. Yet, in the end, God goes to some trouble to see that Lot is brought to safety.

This account is a wonderful example of someone who seems to live on a level

of freedom, intimacy and understanding with God that should cause us to marvel. It shows me that God welcomes those who would know and be intimate with Him. It also shows that being a friend of God is no casual matter, and that God often tests those who would know Him.

Jacob

Jacob is another story. Jacob is a man in need of some good PR. To many Christians Jacob is synonymous with deception and greed. He is Jacob, the supplanter, the schemer. But God saw him in a different light. God said He loved Jacob (Malachi 1:2). Jacob's relationship with God is difficult to analyze. It doesn't seem that he was a friend in the manner of Abraham, yet he certainly had experiences with God that were not common.

Holy chutzpah

Perhaps the most amazing incident in Jacob's difficult and very interesting life took place at the crossing of the Jabbok, where he wrestled all night with an "angel," as the commentators say. However, despite the commentators, it is clear that Jacob recognized that his opponent was God himself (Genesis 32). The most striking aspect of this event, in my view, is Jacob's audacity when struggling with God, and then refusing to let go without a blessing, contrary to God's clear request. It seems inconceivable that we would be engaged with God, and be clearly told by God to let Him go, and not comply immediately. After all, if God simply stops supporting us for a moment, we cease to exist. And Jacob had already been greatly blessed by God, and was a rich man. He seems a little greedy, perhaps. However, in some manner, he was unsatisfied, and there is no hint of criticism of his actions by God. In fact, the opposite is true. The story is fascinating:

After sending his family and others on ahead, Jacob remained alone for the night, camped by the crossing. At some point, a "man" came into the camp, and he and Jacob began to wrestle: certainly not the experience of most campers. The match continued until dawn, when the "man" told Jacob to release him — it seems like Jacob was a pretty good wrestler — and Jacob refused. "I will not release you until you bless me," he said. The match ended with Jacob having a new name, a permanent limp, and a blessing. Afterward, he named the place Peniel — the Face of God — saying he had seen God face to face. This account is another illustration — from a different perspective — of the place of tenacity, of pure chutzpah, in our relationship with God. God does not befriend those who take that friendship lightly, or for whom it is not a deep longing.

Moses

Moses shows something still different. He was uniquely called by God to be His agent in redeeming and shaping a people chosen for God's own possession. Perhaps more than anyone else — even more than Abraham — Moses stands alone in history. Moses seems an unlikely candidate: he spent the first 40 years of his life in the court of Pharaoh, in luxury and privilege. However, though immersed in the consummately pagan Egyptian culture, he retained his identity as a Hebrew, even to the point of killing an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew worker. This act, perhaps impulsive, perhaps an expression of a sense of justice, marked a major change in Moses' life.

The next 40 years were spent in the desert, herding sheep. It is hard to imagine a more total contrast, and yet even this time was spent in preparation for the task God had in mind for him. Interestingly, even through this period Moses retained his sense of identity, as evidenced by his naming his son Gershom: A Stranger There.

The story of Moses is a fascinating one — perhaps even more than those of Abraham or Jacob — because Moses certainly had an intimate relationship with God, but one that is difficult to characterize with a word or phrase. It was very complex, almost like a marriage. Even more than Abraham, we can see in the account of Moses a relationship that included some very good times, and some very difficult times. There are scenes where God became angry with Moses, and others where Moses was upset with God. Let's look at some: on the desert, at the burning bush, is where it began. God spoke to Moses, telling him that He had chosen him for a great work. To Moses, this must have sounded like suicide: he had already been run out of Egypt once (Exodus 3).

Moses began arguing with God, bringing up his lack of speaking ability. Perhaps, as the ancient Rabbis wrote, Moses had some sort of speech impediment, or perhaps 40 years of talking to sheep had taken its toll. In any case, Moses had a problem. God met him halfway, and appointed Moses' brother Aaron to speak for him: the first Press Secretary. Moses also questioned his authority to speak: Would God's chosen people accept him? God had an answer for that, too, of course. Moses continued objecting until God cleared His throat and said, "Look, Moses, you're not getting the idea here. I want you to do this, and I am becoming impatient" (Baden's Paraphrased Version). At this point, recognizing the superior logic of God's argument, Moses decided God's way was the better way.

Some time later, after Moses is back in Egypt, we read the amazing account of the confrontations with Pharaoh, the plagues and then the actual Exodus. As the Exodus begins, Moses and over a million of his closest friends — not counting animals — are backed up against the Sea of Reeds, with the cream of the Egyptian army bearing down on them. Moses begins to exhort the people, telling them to stand and see

what God would do for them that day. God's response is interesting, and a lot more pragmatic: "Moses, why are you standing there crying to me? Shut up and get moving!" (Exodus 14:15).

Still later occur a pair of incidents, each involving a rock and water. In the first, (Exodus 17:1-6) God told Moses to strike a rock, and water would pour forth to meet the needs of the people. Moses struck, and *voilà*: water. Pretty impressive. Then, some time later, there is a similar incident (Numbers 20:8-13), but this time Moses is told to speak to the rock. However, Moses once again struck the rock, disregarding God's explicit instructions. In his defense, this was a trying time for him: he had spent years putting up with the griping and complaining of the people and, on top of that, his sister had just died, which no doubt added to his distress. He was down to his last nerve, and the people had just got on it. Still disobedience is disobedience. He was kept from entering the Land.

That seems pretty severe a penalty under the circumstances, but it really wasn't.

In the Sinai, there is little rain, and when it does rain, it often does so with enthusiasm: it pours. The water runs over the rocks, through the cracks, and collects in large natural cisterns under the surface. These have a "drain" on the downstream end, but as the water runs out and rapidly evaporates, mineral deposits build up, forming a crust that plugs up the opening. The Bedouin — and Moses, who herded sheep in that region — recognize these places, strike them with a rock to break the crust, and *voilà*, water from a rock. No longer very impressive. So the second time, when we can perhaps assume that everyone knew how to do this, God told Moses to speak to the rock. Nobody can speak to a rock and make water come forth. This would be a clear manifestation of the power of God, and Moses, by striking the rock, took the glory and credit that was rightfully God's. Hence, the severe penalty.

Another incident occurred while Moses was on Mt. Sinai. The sound of a really wild party came up from below, and God said to Moses, "Those people you brought from Egypt are at it again!" And Moses replied, "No the people you brought from Egypt are at it again." ("They're not my kids, they're yours!") (Exodus 32). A pretty amazing exchange, considering the identities of the two speakers. Moses was called to a unique task, but there is much in his relationship with God that is important for us. He was certainly not some sort of mealy-mouthed "saint" who had no mind of his own, no personality, and who lived an utterly colorless, boring life, as many imagine someone living a biblical life must do.

He was a man who underwent radical changes in life, changes that were not of his own choosing. He was apparently not an articulate man, or a charismatic speaker. He was not a man who sought out the limelight or who wanted to be a superhero. When God first called him, at the burning bush, he clearly did not want to go, and raised many objections. Instant obedience was not the result of this clear word from God. He seems to have had no further aspirations beyond what he was then doing.

Yet, once he said yes to God, and agreed to do as God directed, there was no swerving and no hesitation. One characteristic of the biblical accounts of Moses' leadership is some variation of the phrase, over and over, "as God spoke, so Moses did." God said it, Moses did it. End of story. He was also a man in whose relationship with God we can see expressions of impatience, and even anger toward God and toward the people that God had set him to lead. He was not irreverent, and Moses, perhaps better than any man who has lived, knew the majesty of God. However, he was honest in his relationship with God. This sort of honesty comes out of a confidence in his relationship, a deep knowing of who he was in God.

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ing taxation must ultimately squeeze the middle class out of being. Meanwhile, a tide of Oriental religions tried to fill the spiritual vacuum.

A sense of futility seemed to permeate society. There were many outstanding administrators and good governors in Roman history, but on the whole after the Roman spirit conquered the world it seemed to dissolve into an indolence which preferred ease and comfort to facing the dangers which threatened its civilization. Some authors suggest that a change in racial stock was responsible for this attitude. Others mention the plague and malaria as possible causes of the change. Perhaps one might better label their difficulty simply the disease of materialism or, if you like, of the "affluent society."



Jesus said: "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life and that day catch you unexpectedly."

The Roman Empire, one of the most powerful in the history of the world, fell to barbarians. Rome was wealthy and technologically advanced, and it created an entertainment-oriented culture which gave large amounts of time and money to "blood sports." In their spirit of indolence the people preferred ease and comfort to an awareness of the dangers around them.

When Jesus warned against dissipation (wasteful, frivolous amusement, intemperance and moral laxity) was he talking to Rome or was he talking to us? Jesus' words

are addressed to his disciples — Christians who must live their lives in the world.

Jesus predicted that times of great distress and tribulation would come on the earth. He said that there would be terrible things happening in the world, things that would sneak up and catch most people off guard.

Why will people be caught off guard? Because they won't see it coming. Why won't they see it coming? Because their hearts will be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness.

That's what happened in Rome.

Their hearts were weighed down with drunkenness and dissipation.

They took their prosperity and took it easy.

They filled their days focused on entertainments.

They doled out money to the poor.

They entertained the rich.

This was all done on the backs of the middle class.

This little piece of history has been circulating recently. I pass it on to you now because it fits . . .

The Fall of a Republic

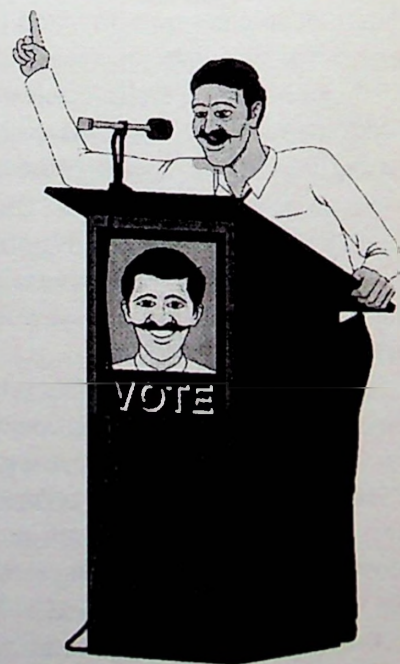
When the thirteen colonies were still a part of England, Professor Alexander Tyler wrote about the fall of the Athenian republic over two thousand years previous to that time:

A democracy cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the Public Treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidate promising the most benefits from the Public Treasury with the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal

policy always followed by dictatorship. The average age of the world's great civilizations has been two hundred years. These nations have progressed through the following sequence: from bondage to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith to great courage, from courage to liberty, from liberty to abundance, from abundance to selfishness, from selfishness to complacency from complacency to apathy, from apathy to dependency, from dependency back to bondage.

Jesus said, "be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth." As Christians, we need to heed the words of Jesus.

As we find ourselves living out the Huxleyan vision of the world, the people of
(continued on page 19)



God must, first of all “wake up.” Jesus says “be alert at all times.” He says “raise your heads.” Don’t bury them in the sand like an ostrich. Don’t numb your minds with more drugs, whether it be the kind of drug you inject into your body, or the kind of drug you mainstream into your mind through the eyes or ears or imagination. Don’t surrender your mind, your intellect, to the media. Don’t give in to the temptation to dissipate your resources in entertainment!!!

It’s so easy.
It’s so tempting.
It’s so dangerous.

Consider these commentaries on our current culture:

Dear God,
Why didn’t you save the school children in Littleton, Colorado?
Sincerely,
Concerned Student

Dear Concerned Student,
I am not allowed in schools.
Sincerely,
God

“We reap what we sow.”

Jesus says the Kingdom of God is *near*. When some people see the kingdom approaching, they will be caught completely off guard. They will be terrified! When we see the kingdom approaching, we know that the best is yet to come.

Let us not be among those who are caught off guard. Let us not be among those who are caught in a trap. Let us not be among those who surrender their freedom to “the brave new world.” Let us not be among those who, like the Romans of ancient times, give themselves over to entertainment and become spiritually lax

Be on Guard!!!

Do not be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness.

Do not let the day catch you unexpectedly!!!

Be alert at all times!!!

Keep on praying for the strength to escape all that will take place.

Pray that you will stand before the Son of Man to receive your reward. □

What Does God Want? *(continued from page 17)*

Summary

In the “Christian world,” a significant number of people have a hunger to know God and to be related to Him. We struggle with that longing, searching for something to fill the emptiness in our souls, and we often give up, deciding that whatever it is we don’t know how to get it. Equally common among Christians is a concept of God as a sort of grandfatherly, white-haired old gentleman, sitting in His rocking chair waiting to show His disapproval of us when we do something wrong. We dread the expected clearing of His throat or the tap of His cane on the floor. Both of these perceptions are unbiblical and sad. It is clear that God longs for us to truly know Him. He doesn’t want to be a mystery to us. Throughout the Old Testament, God takes

pains over and over to reveal to us what He is like, and how we can live in fellowship with Him. In the examples we have discussed above — Abraham, Jacob, and Moses — we can see that God uses and blesses people who are imperfect, who become angry with Him, and who, like us, seem to have an uncanny aptitude for mistakes. He also, however, uses and blesses those whose heart is fastened on Him, despite their mistakes.

They show us that He doesn’t zap us with lightning when we have trouble believing, when we ask questions, even when we grab onto Him, refusing to let go without a blessing — Jacob’s kind of “holy chutzpah.”

In short, God seeks real people, who long to know Him, and He responds to their

longing by revealing Himself — His person — to them and entering into a friendship that surpasses any other.

Abraham, Jacob and Moses — none of them “perfect” men — were “real people,” like all the rest of us. However, there was a steadfastness in all three, a determination to continue in the path they had chosen. There is questioning and wondering, but no turning back. Finally, there was a wonderful openness and honesty in their conversation with God. There is nothing “holy” about the exchanges between Moses and God, or between Jacob and his wrestling partner. And both Abraham and Sarah laughed out loud when God spoke to them about the coming birth of their promised son. They were fallible, they were faithful, and they were, above all, honest before God. And God loved it. □

say, our prayer can never be an entreaty to God, for we have no need to come before him in that way. We are privileged to know that he knows our needs before we ask him.

Bonhoeffer states on praying in private:

True prayer is done in private, but this does not rule out the fellowship of prayer altogether, however clearly we may be aware of its dangers. In the last resort it is immaterial whether we pray in the open street or in the secrecy of our chambers, whether briefly or lengthily, the Litany of the Church, or the sigh of one who knows not what to pray for. True prayer does not depend either on the individual or the whole body of the faithful, but solely upon the knowledge that our heavenly

Father knows our needs. That makes the sole object of our prayers, and frees us from a false confidence in our own prayerful efforts.

Having shown why praying in private is important, Bonhoeffer then moves the reader into how we are asked to pray to God, by saying the prayer, Our Father. This section presents, in turn, each part of the Our Father prayer and explains what these parts of the prayer mean. "Our Father which art in heaven," the disciples call upon the heavenly Father as a corporate body, they call upon a Father who already knows his children's needs. The call of Jesus binds them in a brotherhood." Theologically I found this very important and helpful in understanding, as a Christian and as a regular Church attender, the reason we say this particular prayer.

Conclusion

The overall significance and relevance of this book remains for today's society. Bonhoeffer gives us lessons and reflections for understanding theological issues such as discipleship, grace and prayer. It is an inspiring piece of written expression, and I believe that Bonhoeffer is a wonderful teacher of Christian theology.

After reading this book I am reminded of a mirror. The historical Bonhoeffer we know lived a life of reflection that is mirrored in his works and his life. Bonhoeffer inspires the hearts of those wanting to serve Jesus, and I am grateful to have read about a man who had such tremendous integrity and courage and who picked up his cross and followed Jesus Christ. *The Cost of Discipleship* is an excellent book for those who are searching to understand what it means to follow Jesus Christ. □

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**The Joy of the Lord
is My Strength**



Turning Grievs Into Joy

As I write this it is the week following Easter Sunday, the celebration of the Resurrection. In the early Church the day after Easter was called "Bright Monday." On that day the pastors and Church folks would gather back together at Church; not to pray or to preach, but to tell jokes, share funny stories and laugh. There also emerged a tradition called "Bright Sunday." This was the Sunday after Easter when there was a sense of frivolity and humor in the worship service. Sometimes practical jokes and pranks were played and humorous stories were shared.

There is a rationale for this behavior. Many theologians have reflected on the meaning of Christ's resurrection and why it should be accompanied by joy and light heartedness:

St. Augustine said that "God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead."

St. Francis of Assisi said "Leave sadness to the devil . . . the devil has a reason to be sad."

Martin Luther said "God is not a God of sadness, but the devil is. It is pleasing to the dear God whenever thou rejoicest or laughest from the bottom of thy heart."

John Wesley wrote: "Sour godliness is the devil's religion."

Jurgen Moltman, a contemporary theologian, writes: "At Eastertide began the laughing of the redeemed, the dancing of the liberated." "Easter sermons used to begin with a joke."

Bishop William Frey writes: "What is a joke? Something that turns the tables on

the expected, something that hinges on the unpredictable or unreasonable. There's nothing more unreasonable than the resurrection of Jesus. And to believe in it is to be part of that huge practical joke that God plays on those who trust blindly in the sufficiency of human reason to unravel all problems and to answer every question."

The point these theologians are trying to make is this: Easter is all a part of a Cosmic Joke. Sin, evil, death, the devil — they are all the butt of the joke. The resurrection is the punchline.

It is fitting that Easter usually takes place in April. On Good Friday Jesus hangs on the cross. He dies a painful, tragic death.

On Holy Saturday the disciples mourn the loss of their teacher, their Messiah, their friend.

On Easter Sunday — "April Fool!!!" Jesus is Alive; Death is swallowed up in Victory!!

Christ is Risen!!! Jesus told us in advance what would happen!!! He told His first disciples, the 12 Apostles. It's right there during the Passover feast — the Last Supper, or you could call it the first communion. In John 16:20-24 Jesus says:

"I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me

anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

Three days later, on the day of the resurrection, recorded in John 20:20, as Jesus appears to them in the upper room we're told: "THEY WERE OVERJOYED WHEN THEY SAW THE LORD."

They didn't just have joy, they were overjoyed. Jesus had said earlier: "[I want my joy] in you so that your joy may be complete." Now Jesus was getting His wish, He had made their joy complete!!! Their joy was full, it was complete and even overflowing. They were overjoyed.

Can you imagine that scene? Their cheeks are still wet from their tears of grief. They were just caught up in sadness and loss, and now, there in their midst, was the risen Christ!!! What unspeakable joy!!!

Ecclesiastes chapter three says that "there is a time to weep and a time to laugh A time to mourn and a time to dance."

Good Friday was a time to weep; and Easter is a time to laugh!!! God played a joke on the devil, and we're in on it!!!

Good Friday was a time to mourn, Easter is a time to dance. Easter, along with every Lord's day, is a celebration of the resurrection. Our days should be filled with joy.

God is a God of Joy. God invented Joy, the Bible tells us so:

Psalm 96:11-12: "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be

(continued on page 16)

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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The Tragically Under-Appreciated Book

BY PASTOR KENT ROSS

"Dusty and boring." What a terrible description of the Bible, but more than once that has been said of it. People, certainly many young people and even many young adults, just have a difficult time appreciating the value of the Bible. But it isn't just young people and young adults, if the facts were known probably most church people don't spend very much time in the Bible.

They know they should, and sometimes even wrestle with a measure of guilt about not reading it often, but it's so hard to get into it. At our church, at the first of the year, we were challenged to involve ourselves in a Bible reading program that would put us in the Bible every day. Few make that effort. It just seems too much in light of our busy schedules, when almost everything else seems more attractive and takes a higher or more pressing priority in our schedules.

Recently I read a 60 year-old book by Walter Russell Bowie called *The Bible*, and it made me realize how little we, not to mention how little I, love and appreciate and get into the Bible. But reading his book renewed my desire to make this a high priority for myself and it made me realize it needs to be a high priority for all who bear the name of Christ.

This is not just something we should do, reading the Bible is a must for me, and a must for those who want to know Him and His Plan for men.

1. Why Bother to Read the Bible?

First, the Bible should be read because it is God's communication with mankind. God didn't create mankind, and then abandon them. Though Adam and Eve and all of us since them have disappointed God, He continues to seek to offer us a way back to Him. So He had the Book written by men to help us to comprehend and understand how we ought to live.

The Bible, while still the best-selling book of all time, is increasingly less read. Lip service is given to its value.

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But the Bible, while still the best-selling book of all time, is decreasingly read. Now it is read less than at any other time in recent decades. Lip service is given to its value, but there is little actual reading of the Book itself. "It's too hard!" "It's boring." "I can't understand it." Those are all comments that I've heard as a pastor and Sunday School teacher.

Many young people, like their parents, are hoping you don't have to know much about the Bible in order to be right with God. Consequently, they have a vague hope that somehow, because they have said "Yes"

to Jesus and been baptized, it's enough. But there is much more to learn and to know; there is far more to discover about the God of the Bible.

Bowie in his book says, "In the Bible truth is not argued out, but acted out." It isn't just a book of ethical and philosophical essays, it is stories of men and women, just like us, who struggle with life. They make big mistakes; they show magnificent character. They are cruel, and they are kind. They worship God, and yet also lie and murder. They are cowardly in the face of opposition, but they are also courageous when faced with persecution. The Bible is realistic — too real for some. There is no more "real" book to be found anywhere.

2. You'll Discover That It's a Book That Knows You!

"The Bible is great because of the nobility of its themes. It tells of many men and women, and through their composite faces we see *mankind* — struggling, groping, sinning and yet aspiring, lifting their eyes toward God, and at length beholding God come amazingly more near to them than they had ever dared to dream," Bowie writes.

When we are willing to be honest about who we are, we see ourselves mirrored in the Book that knows us. It knows us better than we admit to ourselves.

We read the stories of King David. There is an embarrassment about this man after God's own heart, when we see him looking at a naked woman and lusting after

her. He not only looks, but plots and commits adultery with her. He shows no regret over his actions, and only responds when she finds herself pregnant. Then the story deteriorates with his lying, and finally murder. How can this be?

And yet Jimmy Carter, who became president of the United States and made no secret of his faith, admitted he looked lustfully and had committed adultery in his heart. That is what Jesus said when He expanded on the teaching—that even looking lustfully resulted in adulterous thoughts and guilt. We want to deny that this applies to good Christian people, but deep down in our hearts we realize that this story has all too strong an application to times in our lives.

We see similar tendencies in Peter, who showed himself to be violent and impulsive, cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest. We would never do that, and yet who among us has not had anger and hatred swell up within our hearts and minds in a moment of hurt? Perhaps we have not murdered, but the possibility exists within most hearts to act far too much like a Peter.

The Bible is full of both good and bad examples: Jezebel, treacherous and vile, but also Ruth, loving and loyal. The Bible is filled with stories of men and women who live lives that are just like our lives. We lie, we cheat, we fail God.

The Bible knows me. It knows my weaknesses. God, speaking through His Book, points out all too clearly how I fail to live up to His desire for me. But the Bible does not leave me in despair, but instead points me to hope and life.

3. It Tells Me a Love Story Between God and Me!

In the beginning God initiated creation. He created the worlds and the systems that

sustain us. He created life, both animal and vegetable. Ultimately, He created mankind. He placed them within a perfect Garden. It was to this Garden that He came to be with them, His special Creation. Somehow, mankind betrayed their Creator. Rather than enjoy the fellowship and love God wanted to have with them, they chose poorly and left their Father.

Time after time, God reached out to mankind to encourage them to come back and love Him and live with Him, but mankind refused. He wanted to go His own way. Hosea, one of God's prophets, married a prostitute. She was not loyal to her husband, and she exemplified the disloyalty of mankind toward God. Down through the centuries, men and women refused to lis-

The Bible is full of both good and bad examples: Jezebel, treacherous and vile, but also Ruth, loving and loyal.

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ten to the prophets He sent to call them back to Him.

Finally, He even sent His very own Son to call them back. They refused Jesus and wouldn't listen to him — at least hardly anyone did. At the end He was alone on the Cross. But finally a seed was planted within a few, and with the Holy Spirit of God to nourish that seed it began to produce a few people who loved the Lord and sought to enter into that fellowship He always wanted.

As we read the Bible, we see how much it portrays our world. God is still calling out to mankind through His Word, the

Bible, and now through His word, Jesus. Incredibly, or maybe not so incredibly, mankind still rejects Him. Even in the church people aren't looking at the Bible for answers. "It's too hard." "It's too confusing." "I can't understand it." They're still saying "No" to Him.

4. More Than Ever, People Are Saying "No" to Him, But . . .

Can it be changed? Maybe, but it won't happen easily and it won't happen for many people. It's true that the Book is too hard, too complicated for some to understand. It's above them and beyond them. It isn't really, but if it is never read, then it is. If there is no attempt to read and understand it, we will never come to know Him.

Anyone who wants to can come to love the Bible, and come to appreciate God's Plan and His love for them. It's not easy, and so many, most, will not even try. They just turn back to television, or recreational activities, and hope that studying and learning to love the God of the Word isn't all that important. But it is.

Years ago, my mother sat in her rocking chair many hours with her big Bible open on her lap. Sitting on the floor, we wondered what she was so engrossed with. We were reading our books of sports heroes, comic books, Jack and Jill. We were too young to appreciate what she was doing. But we saw it, and it made an impression, and today the Book lies open on my lap while children sit by with children's activities. Hopefully they too catch the vision that this Book, the Bible, is the most important book of learning that there is. God still looks to love us and teach us so we can walk with Him and live with Him when the Kingdom of God comes, which may be soon, and very soon. □

"You Have Only Ten or Fifteen Minutes"

BY WILLIAM D. LAWRENCE, M.D.

"You have only ten or fifteen minutes." This is what we were told as Mardy and I went with Prison Fellowship and Christian Medical and Dental Association in Honduras to three Honduran prisons. Prisons in developing and impoverished countries are deplorable compared to developed nation's prisons and justice is nearly non-existent. Of the 750 prisoners in the first prison we visited only 149 had been brought to trial and sentenced. The other 601 were being held on "charges," often only the accusations of others. They had no idea how many years it would be before their cases even went to trial. Our prisons are "country clubs" by comparison.

It was our purpose to evaluate and treat the prisoners for medical and dental problems and let them know we and God loved them. One of the first prisoners we saw had been incarcerated for four and a half years without sentencing, and without visitors for that four and a half years. After helping him medically with his symptoms, which were actually all based in depression, I had 10-15 minutes to tell him of God's love for him. I held one hand and put one hand on his shoulder and talked to him. I talked to him about God's love for him and God's gift of His Son Jesus to him; and his sinfulness, telling him that no matter what he may or may not have done to end up in prison God would forgive him with his acceptance of Jesus as his Savior and that he could have eternal life with Jesus.

As prisoners, most of these men had not been physically touched by a human who was not angry and rough with them — many showed injuries received in being arrested or since they came to prison. Some were

already Christians and told of their belief and hope.

Our team saw 892 patients and of these 126 asked Jesus to come into their heart and 62 Christians rededicated their lives to the Lord. Much ground was plowed in very hard soil for future seed-planting.

Some will ask why we bother. Some will say "how sincere were these decisions"? Some will say "how could they possibly know enough to be saved"?

After we medical persons saw them we marked on their registration paper whether

Some will ask why we bother. Some will say "how could they possibly know enough to be saved"?

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they had "received Jesus" or "rededicated to Jesus," then they went on to the pharmacy where Mardy worked and there they also received a dose of Jesus' love and acceptance and spiritual encouragement. The interpreter for the pharmacy was a 16-year-old boy who was born in Honduras but had lived in the U.S. for nine years before moving back to Honduras. He was fabulous in showing God's love and sharing the Gospel. What a role model for young gang members!

Teams of Prison Fellowship Volunteers, area pastors, and Christians from nearby churches also talked with each of the prisoners and followed up by registering them

for one-on-one counseling, discipling, and/or group Bible study classes.

How much does one need to know in order to be saved? Some feel they must associate with a church, as the Catholics and Mormons do. Some say they must believe facts about the nature of God, nature of baptism by immersion, etc., etc. Of course no one knows for sure.

We served with a team of twenty-eight persons; six medical doctors, three dentists, nine interpreters, one pharmacist, two pharmacy assistants (Mardy was one), one driver of the Mobile Medical Unit (a bus made into a surgery, X-ray area and lab) and seven "support" persons. Mardy and I were unaware of what churches these people attended, nor were we aware of what churches the local follow-up people attended. We do know that Prison Fellowship and Christian Medical Dental Association are evangelical organizations which know God as sovereign and His Son Jesus as our savior. We were impressed with the spiritual maturity of team members as they led morning and evening devotions, and shared their testimonies — besides noting their obvious love for each other and the prisoners. We were blessed!

We know of a prison in Quito, Ecuador where Prison Fellowship is encouraged and assisted by the government and administration. The reincarceration rate is 3% among those who become Christians and are taught and nurtured while in prison, as opposed to the 60% or so in many U.S.

(continued on page 7)



Three Cs Important to Christians!!!

BY PASTOR FRANCIS BURNETT

The three important Cs are: the Cross, the Christ, and Communion.

In the last 50 years, most of the Christians in the U.S. have observed the Lenten period of six weeks in some fashion or form. First is Ash Wednesday, when those attending an Ash service allow ashes to be put on their foreheads. It is to inspire humility. Some have a weekly Lent-oriented worship service during the first five weeks of Lent, culminating in nightly services during the week before the commemoration of the crucifixion.

What does the cross mean to you personally? Sure there is the quick answer that "He died for me." That is quite true. But have you "died" for Him? The Apostle Paul wrote, "because if we have been planted with Christ [in baptism], dying as he died, we will also be raised to life with him. You know that our sinful selves were nailed to the cross with Christ, so that the body of sin would lose its power, so that sin will no longer be used to make us slaves. A person who dies has been set free from sin." (Romans 6:5-7, Simple English).

Question: Are you letting parts of your life continue to make you a slave to some sin? Have you died because of the cross?

The Christ. The word "Christ" means "anointed." A synonym for this is "appointed." God gave His Son for the sins of the world. For all who have believed in Him and have been baptized, He becomes their anointed. He was put in that position to be the "lamb" offering for eternal life.

Question: How completely and fully have you made Jesus your anointed? Do you let His teachings lead you? Are they more important than the newspaper, current magazines, TV, movies, fun get-togethers?

Being in Christ gives each one of us great privileges. "There is no condemnation now for those people who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1, Simple English). *Now!* Where does each one of us fit in God's plan in Christ? "I am sure that *nothing* will be able to separate us from God's love which is found in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 7:38, Simple English).

The Communion. The meaning of this idea in the Greek is partnership — a sharing. A synonym is fellowship. The communion service which is celebrated in our worship services is for us to "share" in our minds the suffering that Jesus endured for each of us. Is *that* important? Is Christ important? Is Christ important to you? Do you *need* to think of his suffering? You be the judge. What would Jesus tell you?

Even as important, if not more so, is to have a "fellowship" with Jesus each day of our lives. Jesus said, "follow me." How much? Once a week when I attend Sunday School? How much do I need to learn about Jesus? And how can I learn? The answer is first, the accounts in the Gospels. Then, the personal "walk" I take with Him every minute of every day. Jesus said, "if anyone wants to follow me, he must carry his cross [his burdens, problems, life itself] every day. He must say *no* to himself and follow me." (Luke 9:23, 24, Simple English). Your life in the Cross, the Christ, and the Communion is the most valuable thing you can choose to give to your children and friends. Do it! □

"You Have Only Ten or Fifteen Minutes" (continued from page 6)

prisons who are reincarcerated. One prison in Texas is run entirely by Prison Fellowship — its reincarceration rate is only 5%.

Back to some of the questions. We went to plant a seed, to touch (Physically, as well as Psychologically and Spiritually) persons with possibly no gentle touch in

years — and to do as Jesus commanded: "visit those in prison." Hebrews 13:3: "Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoner." Matthew 25:36b: "I was in prison and you came to visit me," and verse 40: "whatever you did for these brothers of mine, you did for me."

What God will do with these men and these planted seeds obviously we don't know. Please pray with us for these and the millions of prisoners worldwide who do not know the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior. One of them may be sitting next to you at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. □

Slavery and Sonship

BY KEN COLLINS

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." — John 8:34-36 (NIV).

Notice that Jesus has the slave living in the house, albeit temporarily. We normally think of slaves living in shacks out back. This points out a cultural difference between us and the New Testament.

The New Testament talks a lot about being a faithful slave of Jesus Christ and about being, through Jesus' grace, an adopted son of God. It sounds like a mixing of metaphors, so let me explain.

First off, the Greco-Roman institution of slavery was quite a different institution from what you might think, especially if your knowledge of slavery is derived mainly from American history before 1865. The events in the New Testament took place 1,800 years before then and in a completely different part of the world.

In America, a person entered slavery by being kidnapped in Africa and shipped, chained to the deck of a ship, across an ocean. Upon arrival in America, the slaves who survived were carefully sorted out so that they had no language in common with each other, except what broken English they picked up from their taskmasters. This made rebellion impossible until their spirits were broken. They were forced into hard labor under conditions that are considered unfit for animals today, and in many situations they were used for sexual purposes and prohibited from forming family units. In the beginning, some slaves were educated and were used to tutor children but, as the social implications were

realized, that changed. In my state, Virginia, it became a criminal offense to teach a slave to read and write. Since slaves were also a different race from free people fallacies of racial inferiority arose, which made the abolition of slavery a difficult process that has had social ramifications lasting until the present day.

Some slaves were freed for meritorious service or because their owners had second thoughts about the institution. In fact, long before the Civil War a local slave owner in Virginia had freed over 700 slaves after he became convinced that slavery was morally wrong. According to the *Washington Post*, that episode in history was deliberately obscured by biased local historians who felt the incident was ill-befitting to our state's dignity. It was only recently discovered. (The previous governor of Virginia was the grandson of a slave, so we've come a long way since then.)

If this is your picture of slavery, it is accurate for the United States of the nineteenth century, but it is not a good picture of slavery in the New Testament.

Roman slavery corresponded most closely to contract employment in our day. Slaves were hard laborers, educators, personal advisors; they filled all occupational niches. Sometimes people sold themselves into slavery in order to pay off debts (this situation is depicted in the New Testament), and sometimes people saved up money to buy their own freedom (Paul commended slaves who did this).

Slaves were legally part of the family, although on a secondary level. The law required masters to provide their slaves with food, clothing, and shelter. There were legal penalties for mistreating slaves (al-

though we might think them inadequate, they did exist). We think of slaves living in leaky shacks in the fields, but in Roman days slaves lived in the house with the family, but not permanently, because if the master died the family remained but the slaves had to go. If a master fell on financial hard times he had to sell or free the slaves; and if he freed the slaves he was legally responsible to make sure that they could make a go of it in the world. A slave who had spent his whole life tutoring people in philosophy might need to be taught the realities of the marketplace and be trained in a trade, for example.

There were incidents of slave rebellions for better working conditions, there were incidents where slaves begged not to be freed, there were incidents when slaves defended their masters the same way you or I might defend our employers so that we can keep our jobs. The New Testament epistle to Philemon is interesting in this context. In many cases, if a slave were a trusted friend and companion and had a good sense for business, he would be adopted as a son, because under the legal system sons inherently possessed the power of attorney of their fathers and could conduct business on their behalf. Adopting a capable slave as your son was a quick but expensive way of acquiring a good and loyal business manager, and it was by no means an uncommon event.

If a master died, the slaves left the household, as I stated above. But, as you can tell from Jesus' parables in which slaves plotted to kill the son for his inheritance, slaves had rights at probate time.

So here's what we mean by slaves and sons in the New Testament:

We are creatures of God who have sold ourselves, like so many football players, into lifetime contracts to serve sin. Some of us did this knowingly but foolishly, others of us did this without realizing what we were getting into. We were deceived. (In this mess, Satan is not our master, just the fast-talker who persuaded us to do it. Satan is a liar who has no legitimate claim to anything.)

Jesus sees this, takes pity on us, and purchases us with His blood. That is to say, He buys our life-time contracts by paying the penalty of sin (that is death) not to Satan, but to the Law (according to Hebrews). We were slaves to sin, not Satan, however much he might flatter himself otherwise.

Here's another way of looking at it: suppose Jesus owns a football franchise, but He doesn't have a team yet. He notices that another team is suffering under very bad conditions and they're going nowhere fast. The players are all under contract to an owner who cannot provide for them properly, but they aren't free to leave, because of their contracts. So Jesus, moved by compassion, makes a big sacrifice and risks

everything to buy their contracts. This disposes of the inept owner, but it doesn't make the football players into free agents! No, if Jesus bought their contracts, their obligations are merely shifted from their old owner to their new owner! Then, in an act of further mercy, Jesus makes them all co-owners of the team! They become the first player-owned team in the football league, but Jesus retains the controlling interest. So the players are employees and owners at the same time.

In the same way, Jesus found us as slaves to sin; He bought us, which made us His slaves. Then He caused us to be adopted as sons of God. That means that we become God's business agents in this world; we are each given a distributorship of God's love, grace, and providence in this world. We are the instruments through which God will answer people's prayers. But Jesus retains the controlling interest, so we are slaves and sons at the same time.

Jesus bought us, which made us His slaves, then He adopted us into His family. Therefore we remain in His household forever. So when Jesus sets us free, we are free indeed!

So the metaphor isn't really mixed at all, viewed from the first century. We can glory in the fact that we are sons, but it is probably more strategic to be grateful for the sonship, but to work as if we were only slaves, so that our service will please our Benefactor. I doubt there is much reward for the adopted sons of God who take up a playboy life and live off of room service! This appears to be the tack that the apostles took, counting themselves slaves, while proclaiming our sonship!

This is a far cry from the old sacrificial system, which set no one free from sin; it just sort of hosed off the muck from time to time.

So What About Us Daughters?

The New Testament is concerned with the legal status of sons, not their anatomy. That is why Paul refers to female believers as sons of God in Galatians 3:26-29. He means 'son' in the legal sense and not the biological sense. In the legal world in which Paul lived, if he had said 'you are all sons and daughters of God,' he would have been giving the women an inferior status. □

Why Me???

BY TRAVIS HAMILTON

Why me? This is a question I have asked many times over the years. Why has God chosen me to travel to Africa? Why has God chosen me to have a heart to help every single person I see in need? Why has God given me the abilities to go out and make millions of dollars and then tell me to use these abilities to do His work, making only peanuts, compared to life in the business world?

Ever since the days of Moses (and possibly even before that time), people have

been asking this same question. Moses asked (in Exodus three — I'm paraphrasing), "Why me? There are others who speak better. There are others who can lead these people better. Why me?" God simply replied to Moses by saying, "I will be with you!"

The only answer that I have been able to come up with is "Why not me?" Why shouldn't I be the one to go to Africa? Why shouldn't I be the one who desires to help everyone that I see in need? Why shouldn't I be the one who is give the abilities to

make a million dollars and then use those abilities to further the work of God? Why not me?

Let me take this to a more personal level — why not you? Why shouldn't you be the one to start a church in the Bronx? Why shouldn't you be the one to become a pastor of a dying country church? Why shouldn't you be the one to take a leap of faith no matter what that requires of you? Why not YOU?!?! □

No Excuse Sunday

BY LARRY BADEN

To make it possible for all to attend church this week, we will have a special "No Excuse Sunday."

Cots will be placed in the foyer for those who say, "Sunday is my only day to sleep in."

There will be a special section with lounge chairs for those who feel that our pews are too hard.

Eye drops will be available for those with tired eyes from watching TV late Saturday night.

We will have steel hard hats available for those who say "the roof would cave in if I ever came to church."

Blankets will be furnished for those who say the church is too cold, and fans for those who say it is too hot.

Scorecards will be available for those who wish to list the hypocrites present.

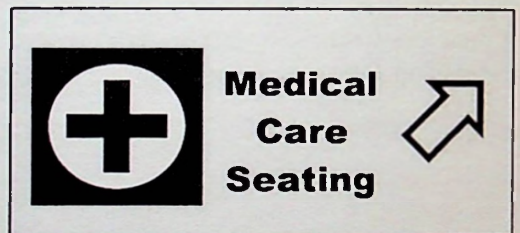
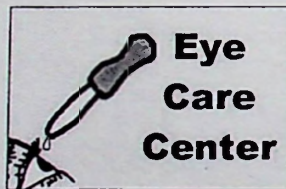
Relatives and friends will be in attendance for those who can't go to church and cook dinner, too.

We will distribute "Stamp Out Stewardship" buttons for those who feel the church is always asking for money.

One section will be devoted to trees and grass for those who like to seek God in nature.

Doctors and nurses will be in attendance for those who plan to be sick on Sunday.

The sanctuary will be decorated with both Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies for those who never have seen the church without them. □



Russia and Iran Pact

BY PASTOR HOLLIS PARTLOWE

There is growing concern in the free world about Russia rearming, repairing and continuing to supply Iran's obsolete defense system. The U.S. is especially concerned since we are the main opponent to this would-be coalition.

News reports have called our attention to this situation, which some have connected to scriptural predictions. Let's look at Ezekiel 38, 39, which is usually considered to be one prophecy. It may shed some light on this subject. This prophecy involves a massive *future* invasion of Israel by six nations, five of which are identified in 38:5, 6.

Persia: now known as Iran, which is ruled by Islamic fundamentalists who are building their nation to significant military power. Some believe that power includes nuclear weapons. Iran is openly committed to the annihilation of the Jewish state.

Ethiopia: today Sudan, part of the old Ethiopia, is dominated by an Islamic fundamentalist government which uses brutal means to establish a pure Islamic state.

Libya: neighbor to Egypt on the west, it is another Islamic nation which is strongly anti-west and anti-Israel. Western intelligence says that Libya has employed Soviet scientists to aid the development of its military.

Gomer: the people known as Cimmerians. These people originally lived north of the Caucasus mountain

range, in the southern part of modern Russia. In Ezekiel's time they had settled in what is now central Turkey.

Togarmah: the people of this nation (Phrygians) settled in Cappadocia, which is now in eastern Turkey.

Having just described the connection of the fourth and fifth nations to Turkey, it should be noted that the present secular government in Turkey is now being threatened by Islamic fundamentalists. Some leaders fear that Turkey could become another Iran. If that happens all the nations in Ezekiel 38:5, 6 will be characterized by an Islamic militant hatred of Israel.

Identity of the Leader of This Invasion

The five nations of Ezekiel 38:5-6 will be led by a sixth "chief prince" (38:2) — "the prince of Rosh" (NASB and NIV footnote) in their attack on Israel. "Rosh" is seen by some as an ancient name of Russia; others question that. This invasion will probably take place at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Ezekiel's list may not be complete. Notice that twice he adds: "and many people with thee" (verses 6b, 9b).

His name: Gog of the land of Magog (38:2). Jerome, a prominent church leader (345-420 AD), the Jewish historian Josephus (ca. 37-100 AD), and various Greek authors associated the name Magog with the Scythians who lived near the Black Sea. It appears that the land of Magog was located near the Black and

Caspian Seas, north of the Caucasus Mountains in the southern part of twenty-first century Russia.

His political position: this leader is identified as "the chief prince" or ruler of Meshech and Tubal (38:2; 39:1). The people of Meshech settled in the area of Armenia, where the borders of Russia, Iran and Turkey now converge. The people of Tubal (38:2) were located in central Turkey.

His geographical location: Gog's location is described as the extreme or uttermost parts of the north (38:15, 16; 39:2). Ezekiel would refer to geographical locations from the vantage point of his homeland.

When Gog leads the multi-nation attack against Israel he will come from the extreme or uttermost parts directly north of Israel, foretold in Ezekiel 38, 39.

Why will he come? "To take a spoil," or to plunder (38:12). There are greater
(continued on page 12)



deposits of mineral wealth in the Dead Sea than anywhere else in the world.

Another reason is anti-Semitism. Before communism, Russia was notorious for brutal persecutions of Jews. During the time that communism controlled the nation the *outward* expression of hatred toward Jews was suppressed. Now that communism has lost that grip anti-Semitism has again been allowed to openly raise its ugly head.

Some members of Pamyat, a strongly anti-Semitic organization, was to rid Russia of all Jews. They blame all of the nation's problems on Jews, including AIDS.

With these ominous trends, and the lifting of communist era travel restrictions, there has been a mass exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union. A majority of these emigrants have gone to Israel.

Another reason for Russia to lead this future invasion is a desire for public status. Former officers of the Soviet army believe that Russia can still have superpower status if it will ally itself with the Islamic nations, against Israel. In 1990 an official Soviet spokesman said that young people in the nation's schools were being required to learn Arabic as a second language because his government had concluded that the future of their nation lay with the Islamic nations of the world.

The Time of the Invasion

"In the latter years," "latter days," (38:8, 16)—in the Old Testament these phrases relate to Messianic times, the era when Israel's national history will find its fulfillment and climax. Clearly it is after Israel is regathered from the nations to its homeland and feels safe and secure, with no defense of its own (38:11, 12, 14), but before conversion to her Messiah. The timing does not fit today, because Israel is heavily armed. With a current population of 6.3 million, and having been a nation

since 1948, today Israel has one of the strongest militaries in the Middle East. And, of course, there will be no war in the Millennium (Isa. 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4; Psa. 72:6-20). The invasion will take place sometime between now and the coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom.

Israel will have made a covenant with the antichrist at the beginning of the tribulation — the seventieth "week" (Daniel 9:27). Perhaps Israel is unarmed because she has entrusted her defense to him. He breaks that covenant in the middle of the week and intense persecution and destruction breaks out all over (Matt. 24:15-21; Dan. 12:1). It appears that this invasion of Israel by Russia and Islamic allies occurs during the first half of the tribulation.

Incidentally, the Gog and Magog of Revelation 20:7-9 are not the same as those of Ezekiel 38, 39. Don't confuse them!

The invaders' attitude: the invaders think Israel has dropped her military guard and that this is an opportune time to strike so as to plunder Israel (38:10-13). The large invasion seems like a massive cloud covering the land (verses 9, 15, 16).

God's view of the situation: God will destroy these invaders for His own sovereign purpose (38:4, 16; 39:2). His wrath is poured out (38:18, 19). He intervenes to destroy this massive invading force by a fierce earthquake, landslides, self-destructive panic, pestilences, excessive rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone (verses 19-22).

God brings vultures and beasts to eat the dead bodies. It takes the Jews seven months to bury the rest of the dead and seven years to destroy all their weapons (39:3-5, 9-20).

God's purpose in all of this is to glorify Himself before Israel and all the nations. Many Jews and Gentiles will be saved during the Great Tribulation (Rev. 7).

Note: in studying prophecy, "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). The true purpose of prophecy is to strengthen, encourage and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3, NIV, LB, NASB, NEB). Let's use it for God's Glory!

Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:20). □

Sources: *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, by Charles Lee Feinberg.
Israel My Glory, Aug.-Sept. 1995 issue.

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Thoughts on Confessing Sin

BY PATRICK AND BARBARA KAVANAUGH

Rich Mullins (1955-1997) was a Christian singer with a vision for Christlikeness. Long after he had achieved success in his music, he insisted on limiting himself to a very small income so that he could give the rest away. He often worked among the poor children of New Mexico's Navajo reservations, teaching music and the Bible.

A characteristic of Mullins' high spiritual maturity was the way he radically dealt with sin. He once told the following story to *CCM Magazine*. "I was in Michigan, on my way to somewhere where I knew I ought not to be going. I started praying, 'Oh God, why don't You just make my car crash so I

won't get there because I can't stop myself.'"

Then Mullins remembered the Scripture, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (John 1:9). And another Scripture came to mind: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16a). Mullins decided, "I'm just going to stop and confess to the first preacher I see. The first church I go by, I'm going in there and I'm going to tell everything."

But Mullins realized that he needed to talk to friends rather than strangers. He immediately drove to Cincinnati, Ohio,

and confessed his struggles with several good friends. He remembered, "It was one of the most liberating things I've ever done. It's not like I haven't been tempted since that time, I still have to make right decisions. I still have to flee temptation. But the power of that sin was broken."

If you find yourself struggling with bad habits or desires, have the courage to speak to a friend, parent, or pastor. Like Rich Mullins, you will find God's grace and freedom. □

Excerpt from *Devotions from the World of Music*, Cook Communications Ministries. Used by permission.

Constitutional Amendments Pertaining to Reorganization

The Board of Directors is proposing the following amendments to the Constitution of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General Conference that will bring the constitution in line with the reorganization that was adopted by the delegates at the 2000 Summer Conference. These proposed amendments will be considered by the delegates at this year's Conference to be held July 5-8 in Atlanta.

Article II, Section 3, c: Current reading regarding who is a delegate at summer Conference: "The President of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General Conference."

New reading: "The Chief Administrative Officer of Atlanta Bible College/Church of God General Conference, President of Atlanta Bible College, and Director of Church/Pastor Services."

Article IV, Section 4: Current reading regarding the submission of nominations for the Board of Directors: "Names of nominees and resumes will be submitted to the President of the General Conference by May 1 . . ."

New reading: "Names of nominees and resumes will be submitted to the Chief Administrative Officer of Atlanta Bible

College/Church of God General Conference by May 1 . . ."

By-Laws, Article II, Section 6, H: Current reading regarding duties of the Board: "To employ a President who shall be responsible to the Board of Directors . . . The president shall meet the qualifications . . . The president may be either male or female."

New reading: "To employ a Chief Administrative Officer who shall be responsible to the Board of Directors . . . The Chief Administrative Officer shall meet the qualifications . . . The Chief Administrative Officer may be either male or female." □

Stop the Violence!

BY ANTHONY BUZZARD

The popular, cherished hope of churchgoers everywhere is that death means continuing to live on in heaven. Obituary notices daily reinforce what is thought to be a source of comfort: the deceased are now conscious and with Jesus in heaven. They have changed addresses, but they have not really died.

Despite its massive popularity, this idea is false to Scripture. Scores of Bible experts from all the various denominational camps have protested against it, but “business” seems to continue as usual. Very few appear motivated enough to search this matter out. Yet the issue is one affecting Christian hope and destiny. The Bible has a mass of information on this subject — for our comfort and as a vital part of the Gospel.

Whenever Paul addressed the subject of the Christian hope he insisted on the resurrection of *all* the Christians at the return of Christ to establish His Kingdom on earth. “Thus [by this process] we shall come to be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17). “Comfort one another with these words” (v. 18). So Paul concludes his dramatic account of Jesus’ coming descent to the earth for the purpose of raising the faithful dead.

Churchgoers, however, have chosen their own model, not Paul’s, to sustain them in the face of the death of loved ones.

Paul is consistent and logical. In 1 Corinthians 15 he tells us that the sound of the last trumpet will be the signal for Jesus to come and raise all the faithful dead and confer upon them immortality and a spiritual body — a body equipped with brand new capacities and not subject to disease and death. A year later Paul addressed the

Corinthians again on the great theme of resurrection. In 2 Corinthians 4:14 he introduces his topic: “The one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us up [resurrect us] with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence” (see RSV). Exactly as in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, it is only by resurrection at the second coming that Christians can come into the presence of Jesus and be with him forever.

A few verses later, in 2 Corinthians 5:8, Paul reinforces his teaching with other words: he said that Christians desire “to

An amazing violence is done to Paul when half of one verse is wrenched from its context and offered as support for a disembodied existence.

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leave the body and go home to be with the Lord” — or to be “absent from the body and present with the Lord.” It is at this point that Bible readers abandon the all-important context of Paul’s remarks. They forget that Paul has been talking about the *resurrection* back in 2 Corinthians 4:14. Let us combine the senses of these verses: “We are of good courage and would rather be away from the body and, **when the Lord Jesus raises us up [4:14]**, be present with the Lord [in our new bodies].”

An amazing violence is done to Paul when half of one verse, 2 Corinthians 5:8, is wrenched from its context and offered

as support for a *disembodied* existence of the dead in heaven, *before the resurrection*. This is precisely not what Paul intended. In fact Paul expressly states that he does *not* want to be without a body, “naked” (v. 3). He longs rather to be invested with his new body, the resurrection body. When this happens at the coming of Jesus he will be at home with the Lord, equipped with an indestructible body.

Popular teaching, relying on one half of one verse isolated from its immediate and wider context in Paul’s other letters, offers a hopeless future in which the dying will be “homeless,” bodiless, naked in heaven. The Bible’s view of our hope is much more comforting. We will be at home with Jesus in His presence only and exclusively via resurrection of the whole man, at the return of Jesus. Then we will be clothed with immortality, the event of the seventh trumpet (1 Cor. 15:51-55). There is no other way to come into the presence of Jesus.

We recommend that Paul not be derailed on the basis of the one verse 2 Corinthians 5:8; that he be read in context; and that we understand that death is not swallowed up for Christians until Jesus comes back to raise the dead (1 Cor. 15:54, 55). Hades, the resting place of the faithful dead, will be overcome only in the future. There is no passage into immortality apart from the great central Hebrew doctrine of resurrection. Bypassing resurrection in favor of the disappearance of so-called “immortal souls” is the common practice of pagan religions. The faith of the Bible ought not to be contaminated by the mixing of alien thought-worlds. It would be good for us to heed the words of Dr. Shirley

Guthrie, the distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia:

We have to talk about a point of view that from the perspective of Christian faith is *falsely* optimistic because it does not take death seriously enough . . . Because the position we are about to criticize and reject is just what many believe is the foundation of the Christian hope for the future . . . we reject it not to destroy hope for eternal life, but to defend an authentically biblical Christian hope. . . *We refer to belief in the immortality of the soul.* This doctrine was not taught by the biblical writers themselves, but was common in the [pagan] Greek and oriental religions of the ancient world in which the Christian church was born. Some of the earliest Christian theologians were influenced by it, read the Bible in the light of it, and introduced it into the thinking of the church. It has been with us ever since. Calvin accepted it and so did the classical confession of the Reformed Churches, the Westminster Confession. According to this doctrine, my body will die but *I myself will not really die* . . . What happens to me at death, then, is that my immortal soul escapes from my mortal body. My body dies but *I myself live on* and return to the spiritual realm from which I came and to which I really belong. If we follow the Protestant Reformation in seeking to ground our faith on "Scripture alone," we must reject this traditional hope for the future based on the immortality of the soul . . . [Death] does not mean that the immortal divine part of us has departed to live on somewhere else. It means that life has left us, that our lives have come to an end, that we are "dead and gone." According to Scripture . . . my soul is just as human, creaturely, finite — and *mortal* — as my body. It is simply the life of my

body . . . We have *no hope at all if our hope is in our own in-built immortality.*

(*Christian Doctrine*, page 378. Dr. Guthrie is author also of *Diversity in Faith — Unity in Christ*. His book on doctrine from which the above is quoted is known as a "classic text.")

We may look to the *Companion Bible*, by E.W. Bullinger, for support specifically on 2 Corinthians 5:8:

It is little less than a crime for anyone to pick out certain words and frame them into a sentence, not only disregarding the scope and context, but ignoring the other words in the verse, and quote the words "*absent from the body, present with the Lord*" with the view of dispensing with the hope of the Resurrection (which is the subject of the whole passage) as though it were unnecessary; and as though "*present with the Lord*" is obtainable without it.

The Bible about Death

Let the Bible speak for itself about what happens with death, and about resurrection and the rewards that come:

Job 14:10ff.

Man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires and where is he?

As water evaporates from the sea and a river becomes parched and dried up, so man lies down [to sleep] and does not rise.

Until the heavens be no more he will not awake nor be aroused out of *his sleep*.

Oh that you would hide me *in Sheol* [equivalent to *Hades*], that you would conceal me until your wrath returns, that you would set a limit for me and remember me.

If a man dies will he come to life again?

Daniel 12:2

Many of those who are sleeping in the dust of the earth will awake, some to the

life of the Age [everlasting life: more exactly the Life of the Age (to come)].

1 Samuel 2:6

The Lord kills and makes alive; He brings *down* to Sheol and raises *up*.

Psalms 13:3

Enlighten my eyes lest I *sleep the sleep of death*.

Psalms 88:3-5

My soul has had enough troubles and my life has drawn near to Sheol.

I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit. . . Like the slain who lie in the grave [LXX, lie sleeping in the grave], whom you remember no more.

Job 7:21

Now I will lie down in the dust and you will seek me and I will not be.

Ecc. 9:2ff.; 3:19ff.

It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous and for the wicked; for the good, for the clean and for the unclean . . . This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men . . . For the living know that they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any reward for their memory is forgotten. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might: for there is no activity or planning or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other. Indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over the beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All come from the dust and all return to the dust.

Isaiah 38:18, 19

Sheol cannot thank you [i.e. its inhabitants cannot]. Death cannot praise you. Those
(continued on page 16)

who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. It is the living who give thanks to you.

Any Hope?

"The Son of Man will be three days . . . in the heart of the earth" (Matt. 12:40).

"After three days I will rise again" (Matt. 27:63).

"Stop clinging to me: I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17).

"Christ was not abandoned to Hades [equivalent to Sheol]. This Jesus God raised up again" (Acts 2:31, 32).

Jesus said:

"Our friend Lazarus *is sleeping* [*has fallen asleep*]. Lazarus is dead and I am going to awake him out of his sleep" (equivalent to "resurrect him"), John 11:11-14. "'Lazarus, *come forth*,' and he who had died *came forth*" (John 11:43). (*He came forth from the tomb, not back from heaven.*)

"Do not marvel at this: The hour is coming when all who are in the *tombs* shall hear his voice, and shall *come forth*: those who did good things to a *resurrection* of life and those who did evil things to a *resurrection* of judgment" (John 5:28, 29).

"You will be repaid [rewarded] at the *resurrection* of the righteous" (Luke 14:14).

"Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection of the dead . . . cannot die anymore" (Luke 20:35, 36).

"The Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels and then he will reward every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:27).

"Behold, I am coming quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according to his work" (Rev. 22:12).

Paul said:

"He who raised the Lord Jesus will *raise us up* also with Jesus and will present us with you" (2 Cor. 4:14). (He develops this concept in chapter 5, where he speaks of being present *with the Lord*.)

"We do not want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep . . . The dead in Christ will *rise first* . . . and *in this way* we will all be *with the Lord*" (see 1 Thess. 4:13ff).

"For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are *awake or sleeping*, we will *live together with him*" (1 Thess. 5:9, 10).

"The Lord, the righteous judge, will give me a crown *on that day*, not to me only, but *to all* those who love his appearing [second coming]" (2 Tim. 4:8).

"In Christ all will be *brought back to life*. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; after that those who are Christ's *at his coming* [Parousia] . . . Behold I tell you a mystery [one of the mysteries of the Kingdom]: We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*, for the trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised, and we shall be changed . . . For this mortal must put on immortality . . . When this mortal will have put on immortality *then* will come about the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' " (1 Cor. 15:22, 23; 51-55).

"The third woe is coming quickly. The seventh angel sounded his trumpet: and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying 'The Kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah and he will reign into the ages of the ages . . .' We give thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who is and who was, because you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came and *the time came to give their reward to Your bond-servants* the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear your name, great and small, and to destroy those who destroy the earth" (Rev. 11:14-18).

"The saints of the Highest One will receive the Kingdom and possess the Kingdom forever, for all ages to come . . . *The*

time arrived when the saints took possession of the Kingdom . . . Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest one. Their Kingdom will be an everlasting Kingdom and all dominions will serve and obey them" (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27).

John saw it. Do we believe it?

"*I saw* thrones with people sitting on them, and judgment was given in favor of them. And I saw those persons who had been beheaded because of Jesus' testimony and because of the word of God [Gospel of the Kingdom], and those who had not worshiped the Beast, and they came back to life and began to reign with the Messiah for the millennium [thousand years]. (The remainder of the dead did not come back to life until the millennium was completed.) This is called the First Resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who takes part in this First Resurrection. The second death [the Lake of Fire] has no power over them, but they will be God's and Christ's priests, and they will rule as kings for the millennium" (Rev. 20:4-6; cp. 5:10 and Matt. 5:5).

From the Old Testament:

To Adam: "You will return to the ground, because from it you were taken. Dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen. 3:19).

"God will redeem my soul [me] from the power of Sheol. He will receive me" (Ps. 49:15).

"I will be satisfied with your likeness, when *I shall awake*" (Ps. 17:15).

"Many of those who *are asleep* in the dust of the earth *will awake* . . ." (Dan. 12:2).

"Your dead *will live*: Their corpses *will rise*. You who are lying in the dust, *awake* and shout for joy" (Isa. 26:19).

"The LORD kills and makes alive; he brings *down to Sheol* and *raises up*" (1 Sam. 2:6). □

Turning Griefs Into Joy (continued from page 2)

jubilant, and everything in them, Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy. They will sing before the LORD for he comes."

Psalm 97: "The LORD reigns, let the earth be glad; let the distant shores rejoice."

Psalm 98: "The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Burst into jubilant song with music.

Shout for joy before the LORD, the King."

Psalm 100: "Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs."

Some anonymous person wrote the following poem:

The News is good!

Jesus is alive!

The stone is rolled away.

Why aren't we shouting—
"the victory's won!"?

Why aren't the drums drumming,

And the doves flying

And the knees kneeling

And the hands clapping

And the horns blowing

And the tambourines playing

And the bells pealing

And the trumpets blaring

And the symbols clashing

And the crowds clamoring

And the hearts rejoicing

And the eyes smiling

And the bands marching

And the banners flying

And the voices calling

And the hearts rejoicing

And the tongues praising

And the choirs singing

And the children laughing

And the arms waving

And the bells pealing?

It happened somewhere along the way since the first Easter—when the Apostles were "overjoyed" at the sight of the risen Christ. Sometime since the early Christians gathered on Bright Monday and Bright Sunday to laugh, and to tell funny jokes and stories in honor of God's great practical joke against the devil, the Church lost its sense of joy.

Some feel this was due to a theologian named John Chrysostom (meaning "the golden tongue"). This highly acclaimed theologian, pastor and preacher unfortunately preached a sermon suggesting that Jesus never laughed and that laughter is inappropriate for Christians. There began a long history of sad-faced Christianity. The crucifix, with Christ hanging dead on the cross, became the predominant symbol of the Church. From that time onward Images of Christ were often either sad, or at least not joyful.

Unfortunately, (or perhaps fortunately,) Chrysostom was mistaken. The Bible in general and Jesus in particular are filled with joy and laughter. Proverbs 17:22 tells us that "a cheerful heart is good medicine." Proverbs 15:15 says "a cheerful heart has a continual feast." Nehemiah 8:9-10 says "the joy of the Lord is your strength." Philippians 4:4 says "rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice." Hebrews 12:2 says of Jesus: "for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross."

The word "joy" appears in the gospels 125 times. Jesus used humor in His preaching and teaching.

He used hyperbole—"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (see Matthew 19).

He used satire, calling the Pharisees "Whitewashed tombs full of dead men's bones" (see Matthew 23).

He used irony—consider Luke 16, the parable of the shrewd manager. Many commentators and theologians struggle to discover the meaning of this bizarre parable in

which Jesus seems to be extolling as virtuous what is clearly sinful behavior. All kinds of theological gymnastics are done to try to make this meaningful. Elton Trueblood, in his book *The Humor of Christ*, debunks all those attempts. He concludes that Jesus is here telling a joke. He is using irony to poke fun at the Macchiavellian drive to get ahead, to achieve wealth and power at all costs. Verse nine is quite understandable if we see it as part of a joke. Of course worldly wealth will NOT buy us a way into the Kingdom of God. Jesus uses a joke to penetrate our defenses and get to the heart of our sinful attitudes.

Humor is able to do that kind of work. It can penetrate to places that other kinds of teaching can't reach.

Here are some examples of how humor can be directed to a point:

A preacher visited in the home of a man who, while a member of the preacher's church, never attended it. The man promised to come to church on Easter Sunday "if I'm alive."

Easter Sunday came, and the man didn't show up, so after the service the minister took one of the Easter lilies from the altar and went to the man's home. When the man answered the door the pastor held out the Easter lily and asked "Where's the body?"

A beloved rabbi was on his deathbed, with his life slowly ebbing away. Around the bed were gathered a group of his sorrowing disciples who felt the coming loss keenly. As they stood there they whispered among themselves of the manifold virtues of the old man now leaving them.

One said, "So pious, so pious! Which of the many commandments of the Law did he fail to keep? Where at any point did he deviate in the slightest from the commandments of God?"

Another mourned, "And so learned. The vast commentaries of the rabbis of the past
(continued on page 18)

(More Holy Humor, Cal Samra, p. 96)

were, so to speak, imprinted on his brain. At any moment he could call to mind a saying to illuminate any possible theological question.”

Still a third said, “And so charitable, so generous. Where was the poor man whom he did not help? Who in town is ignorant of his kindness? Why he kept for himself only enough to hold body and soul together.”

As the litany of praise continued, a faint tremor appeared on the rabbi’s face. It became obvious that he was trying to speak. The disciples all leaned forward, holding their breath, to hear.

Faintly came his words: “Piety, learning, charity! And of my great modesty you say nothing?”

Once a preacher was giving a stirring sermon about the mortality of life. He spoke of the fact that everyone in his congregation would die one day. As he spoke, the preacher noticed a man in the last row who was grinning. When the service was over the preacher approached the man and asked, “Why, after I said that everyone in this congregation is going to die someday, did you smile like that?” The man responded, “I’m not a member of your congregation; I’m visiting from out of town.”

Using humor we can deal with deep issues of life: the need to worship God and to keep our promises, the sinfulness of all (even the best of us) and the subtlety of pride, and also our natural human denial of our own mortality.

Laughter can help us to deal with some of life’s painful realities. Norman Cousins, who had a life-threatening illness and wrote about his discovery of the healing power of laughter in his book *The Anatomy of an Illness*, tells the story of how one day in the hospital there was an unfinished cup of apple juice by his bed. The nurse came in and mistook the apple juice for his urine sample. She said “It’s looking a little cloudy today.” So Cousins picked it up and said

“Well, let’s run her through again” and drank it down.

Cousins got over his disease and would go on to live many more years. He reported that watching old comedies like the Three Stooges and Laurel and Hardy would make him feel better. He said: “Ten minutes of hard, belly laughter would yield two hours of pain-free sleep.”

God is a God of laughter and Joy.

In the parable the father, who represents God, throws a party when the prodigal son comes home. Can’t you imagine the laughter at that party? But there is more joy in heaven over a sinner repenting than in anything comparable on this earth.

Psalm 2:1-4 tells us that God laughs at humanity’s feeble attempts to thwart His plans to bring about the Kingdom.

So laughter is from God, it can be healing, and humor can be useful in getting to the heart of life’s issues. But can laughter and humor ever be inappropriate? Of course so!

A patient might, very appropriately, choose to face serious illness or even death with humor as a way of coping, as a way of finding comfort—but it would be inappropriate for someone to laugh at another person’s suffering.

Humor that degrades others, that makes fun of the handicapped, the oppressed, the weak, the downtrodden, humor against another race: these are demeaning and reprehensible and should not be used. The Apostle Paul cautioned Christians not to use obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking (Eph. 5:4). Much that passes for humor in the mass media today falls under these categories and should be avoided by God’s people.

The weak and powerless may at times be empowered by laughing at the powerful, but the powerful must never laugh at the weak. We must have a social conscience. James 4:8-10 tells us that at times we must

turn from our sins and repent both as individuals and socially.

For all people, including Christians, there are still appropriate times to mourn. We can and should mourn when a loved one dies. We “rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.” Jesus certainly modeled this for us when He wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus, knowing that shortly He would emerge from the tomb. Paul tells us that in the face of death we grieve, but not as those who “have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4).

We know that, in Christ, God has played a joke on the devil. Sin doesn’t have the last word. Death is not the final answer for those who trust in God. A day will come when God will “wipe away all tears from our eyes” (Revelation 21:4).

This past week it was confirmed that my father’s cancer is beyond treatment from a medical standpoint. We now seek to offer him comfort through the help of hospice. He is completely in God’s hands but, then again, he has always been completely in God’s hands, as we all are, but now we are more highly aware of that fact.

Of course I am sad, but underneath the sadness there is a deep sense of joy. That is because I know that death is not the last word. I know the punchline to the joke. Just as Christ rose from the grave we, too, shall rise on the last day, when Christ comes again.

In this hope we find great joy. My prayer is that you, the reader, have the joy of knowing that Jesus died for you, Jesus rose from the dead for you, and that Jesus Christ will come back for you and provide for you a place in the Kingdom of God. Then, as Jesus said, our “grief will turn to joy.” We will share the experience of the disciples. We will be overjoyed, when we see the Lord.

May you sample a taste of that joy now, through Faith and Hope in Jesus Christ. □

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Our Unity Stems from our Diversity

BY DR. PAUL BRAND AND PHILIP YANCEY

During my life as a missionary surgeon in India and now as a member of the tiny chapel on the grounds of the Carville Leprosy Hospital, I have seen my share of unlikely seekers after God. And I must admit that most of my worship in the last thirty years has not taken place among people who have shared my tastes in music, speech, or even thought. But over those years I have been profoundly — and humbly — impressed that I find God in the faces of my fellow worshipers by sharing with people who are shockingly different from each other and from me.

C.S. Lewis recounts that when he first started going to church he disliked the hymns, which he considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as he continued, he said,

I realized that the hymns were, nevertheless, being sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit.

A color on a canvass can be beautiful in itself. However, the artist excels not by slathering one color across the canvas but by positioning it between contrasting or complementary hues. The original color then derives richness and depth from its milieu of unlike colors.

The basis for our unity within Christ's Body begins not with our similarity but with our diversity. □

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The Restitution Herald

Volume 90, Number 5

June, July, 2001

**Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.**

John Donne (1572-1631)



Have you ever discovered yourself overcome by the waves?
When we are faced with an ocean of sin it is better to turn back
at the shore than to stubbornly swim for it on our own strength.



If Your Heart Keeps Right . . .

Recently I awoke early in the morning to the sound of distant thunder. The normally bright sunrise was blocked by the presence of dark thunderclouds in the sky. I could hear the thunder, and I saw lightning in the distance; but as I looked carefully, painted against the black sky where little rays of sun had strained through, there was a faint rainbow. As I focused on the faint rainbow, beside it a distinct brightly colored rainbow shone through. Two rainbows were painted against the black thundercloud. It reminded me of a song I used to sing in Sunday school:

If your heart keeps right, if your heart
keeps right,
there's a song of gladness in the darkest
night.
If your heart keeps right, if your heart
keeps right,
*Every cloud will wear a rainbow if your
heart keeps right.*

During the past few months I've experienced some pretty dark nights. My family journeyed with my Father through several painful months. They were months spent watching cancer transform an active, healthy man into a man confined to his bed 24

hours a day fighting a constant battle with pain. Yet, throughout that process, my Father was sustained by his faith in God's love and the love and support of his church family, and the hope that he had of seeing all of us again at the resurrection.

On May 22 my Father fell asleep in the Lord and I felt myself to be in a fog, surrounded by black clouds. But God is good, for even in the midst of those black clouds there were rainbows of hope and promise. God extended His love and support through the faithfulness of the church family — both our local church here in Hammond, Louisiana, and others from places faraway. We've been overwhelmed with love and support throughout the Church of God family. And that's what the Church of God is, really, it is a family of God.

We, the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith, may not be large in number, in power, or in influence from the world's point of view, but we are a family and we know how to love. In an age when so many families are crumbling, when our post-modern society is redefining family roles and the need for family, it's important for us to know that we are a part of a family. To me, that's a key motivation for us to share our faith with others. God wants to adopt people into His

family. He has love to share with others and He has called us, His church, to be the ambassadors of the good news that through Jesus Christ you can become a part of God's family. You can live as part of a family of love in the hope of the coming kingdom of God and eternal life at the resurrection. And you can experience today the blessings of that hope.

As Christians we have no guarantee from God that our lives will be free from pain or trouble. Suffering and death are a part of life that all of us must face. But through Christ we can know that God is everywhere, and that His love for us is sufficient. That love is demonstrated by God's people. God is everywhere — even in the midst of our storms.

Every cloud will wear a rainbow . . .

Grace and Peace to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeffrey Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeffrey Fletcher
Editor

The Restitution Herald

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- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
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- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Drunk With New Wine!!!!

BY CHARLES BOTTOLES, HAMMOND, LA

Pentecost is celebrated on the tenth day following the anniversary of Jesus' ascension to heaven, 50 days after the anniversary of His resurrection. This day is one of the Jewish feast-holidays established in Moses' law. The feast was called Pentecost during the later history of the Jewish nation because it fell fifty days after the Passover Feast (it is named after the Greek word for "fifty"). It is also known to the Jews as the Feast of Harvests, Feast of Weeks, or Day of First Fruits.

The fifty days after Christ's resurrection were packed full for the disciples and apostles. They spent 40 days with the Christ and then waited 10 more days, as directed by Him, for the "Comforter to come" as He promised. Let us look at Acts 1:6-8 (in Barclay's version) for clarity:

Once when they were together they asked Him: "Are you going to restore the royal power to Israel at this present time?" "You are not permitted" he said, "to know how long things will last or the date they will happen. These things are solely in the Father's control. Apart altogether from that, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power, and tell the story of me in Jerusalem and all over Judea, and in Samaria, and all over the world." After He said this He was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud received Him and He passed from their sight.

Let's also look in Luke: "I am sending upon you my Father's promised gift; so stay here in this city until you are armed with the power from above" (Luke 24:49).

So the disciples were armed when the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them. O.K, they were armed. But with what, and for what, and for how long, and what does all of this have to do with me? Maybe it's an interesting history lesson, but is it for me? Now *here* is an interesting story:

A farmer had a very beautiful daughter and a city boy dated her for many months and then finally got up the courage to ask her father for her hand in marriage. The farmer thought the situation over and responded, "Son, go stand out there in the pasture and I'm going to release three bulls, one at a time. If you catch the tail of one of these bulls, you may marry my daughter."

The young man stood out in the pasture awaiting the first bull. The barn door swung open and out ran the biggest, meanest looking bull he had ever seen. He decided that one of the next bulls had to be a better choice than this one so he ran over to the fence and let the bull pass through the pasture out the back gate.

The barn door opened again. Unbelievable! He had never seen anything so big and fierce in his whole life. It stood there, pawing the dirt, grunting and bellowing, slinging slobber all around as it eyed him. Whatever the next bull was like, it had to be better than this one. So he ran to the fence and let the bull pass through the pasture, out the back gate.

The door opened a third time. A smile came across the young man's face. This was the weakest, scrawniest little bull he had ever seen. This one was his bull. As the bull came running by, he positioned himself just right and jumped at just the exact moment. He grabbed. But the bull had no tail.

Life is full of opportunities. Some will be easy to take advantage of, some will be difficult. But once we let them pass (often in hopes of something better) those opportunities may never again be available.

The same thing is true of opportunities to serve Christ. God often opens doors — opportunities to speak up for Him, to minister to someone who is hurting or in need, or to influence the world around us in some way. If we allow these to pass by and out the back gate (often in the hope of something easier to come along), we may miss the opportunity altogether.

"Continue praying, keeping alert, always thanking God. Also pray for us that God will give us an opportunity to tell people his message" (Col. 4:2, 3a, NCV).

Let's look now at the key text for our discussion of the disciples who received the Holy Spirit: Acts 2:13 (Barclay's version) "Others treated the whole affair as a joke saying 'They are full of new wine.'" You have heard this scripture read before. You will recall that the disciples all began to talk in foreign languages — foreigners present from 15 provinces listened and heard the message in his or her own language and all knew that these were unlearned men (Galileans, they called them). But some made fun of them and said they were drunk with new wine (sweet wine). The ones accusing them appeared to be the local citizens who could not understand the issue. The real question is *did they stop preaching?* NO. In fact Peter got up and either began another sermon or gave a continuation of the first one. We do not know in what language he spoke, but it was a powerful sermon. A large number were baptized and began to worship with the 120 or so believers already present. Many of

them were from other provinces — Barnabas is an example.

So what is particularly pointing to me from this story? I think the text speaks loudly about “commitment.” Look at these men — some people made fun of them, called them drunk, yet they were committed to speak the Gospel so they continued.

What does the Holy Spirit have to do with all of this? The Holy Spirit provides gifts to all of us to use in our church, and I am convinced that when we fail to use them in our church we fall short of God’s expectations of us. Why did He imbue us with the gift if it was not to be used in His church?

Can I say I have no gift? **Absolutely NOT!** All have been gifted in some manner, just not all in the same manner. You each have a gift. All of us do not know what the gift of each of the others is, but God does. God expects us to exercise the gift we have. That is what commitment is; using the gift God gave us, all the time. I believe God has given through the Holy Spirit all of the gifts necessary for each church to exist — but He placed them in a lot of different people.

We cannot say we will exercise our gifts in some manner and then walk away from that commitment and expect God not to notice that bit of rejection — for that is what it is, rejection. The reasoning for my position is this: God placed us here to serve Him and we have chosen our church as the place where we choose to serve Him. As such we have obligations to the Body of Christ. To get a better grip on this let us look at what the body of Christ looks like:

A Christian congregation as described in the New Testament is to be a fellowship of believers (Acts 2:42) which proclaims the Gospel (Acts 10:34-43), witnesses to its faith (Acts 1:8), is engaged in life long teaching and learning as disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20; Colossians 3:16), worships God in word and in deed (Colossians 3:16-17), and expresses its faith in works of love and service to others

(Ephesians 4:7-16; Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 13). These are the functions of every Christian in each congregation.

As a priest of God (1 Peter 2:9-10) these functions are my responsibilities, *which I cannot give up* [emphasis by CGB]. Even when certain aspects of congregational life and work are assigned to committees, this does not relieve me of my personal part in the function of my church. [From *The Church Since Pentecost*, by John W. Constable.]

Just in case you somehow missed the 1 Peter 2:9, 10 connection, this text states that each person is a priest of God and is expected to carry out those priestly duties as God assigns them to him/her. So this text does not only refer to the Pastor or the Elders or the Deacons and so on, but to all of us. No one is left out.

Contrary to what we would like to think, the church has needs in order to live effectively. Together we supply many of these needs through personal work in the congregation and community and through our regular and systematic offerings of money as God has prospered us [and with our time]. [John W. Constable.]

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the early church was “koinonia.” This is a Greek word often interpreted as “fellowship” in other texts. It is best demonstrated in the early church as described in Acts 2:42-47:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as had need. Every day they continued to meet together

in the temple courts. They broke bread together in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Is this the picture I am suggesting for our church today? No, but it is close. Look at the commitment. It is not hard to see. If we had the commitment to do one half of the things these believers did we would be closer to the “koinonia” that the Holy Spirit brought to them. It brings the same gift to us but we must be willing to act in “koinonia” to exercise our gifts. The biblical texts describing “koinonia” imply that it has both a vertical and horizontal dimension.

Vertical describes the believers’ fellowship with God and horizontal describes the believers’ fellowship with other believers through the Holy Spirit. Here is the action of the Holy Spirit. It is critical that these two aspects be held together and understood together. The New Testament idea of Koinonia is not fully understood until we grasp the significance of the horizontal and vertical dimensions *together.*” (*The Problem of Wineskins*, by Howard A. Snyder.)

Here are the key thoughts for the application of Pentecost to today’s church:

The creation of genuine fellowship is an integral part of the work of the Holy Spirit. In this sense the Holy Spirit’s work in *the individual believer cannot be separated from what he is doing in the church — the church not as so many believers but precisely as a community of faith.*

Failure to see this vital interconnection between the individual and group aspects of the Spirit’s working weakens our understanding both of

(continued on page 7)

Lord's Harvest International Trip to Haiti

BY PASTOR MARK TSCHAENN, SPRINGFIELD, OH

This is an exciting article for me to write because this was my first mission trip. I was excited to be involved in something that has potential to start a new ministry within the Church of God, but at the same time was very uneasy about where we were going because we had heard and read some disturbing stories about Haiti. The truth is, when we arrived we did not find the stories to be accurate and I am excited to tell you what we did find.

This all started when our Haitian contact, Pastor Lesley Bertrand, attended a Theological Seminar at ABC a few years ago. He picked up *Systematic Theology*, by Alva Huffer, and through his studies he has come to many doctrinal beliefs consistent with the Church of God. In November, 2000, Lesley contacted Lord's Harvest International with a request to bring a mission team to help in his churches. We scheduled a trip for February, 2001, to investigate the possibilities and sent three members of LHI, Judy Myers, Travis Hamilton, and myself to see the work being done there and how we could help.

We arrived in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on the afternoon of February 23. After clearing customs, we ventured out to locate Lesley in a crowd of people who were waiting outside, most of whom were beggars. It was the trip to the missionary house that gave us the first insight of what Haiti is like. Travis Hamilton and I piled into the back of a pick-up with Lesley as Judy Myers rode up front with the driver. The roads in Haiti are mostly unpaved so it was quite a bumpy ride (and dirty). Along the way we saw several trash piles heaped high and the stench of all the garbage in the hot

sun about knocked us over. (Welcome to Haiti.) Luckily it wasn't a long trip. We soon arrived at the Walls Missionary house where we would be staying.

The missionary house was a nice place to stay; several other missionaries were also staying there. Travis and I roomed with a man from Uruguay and had a lot of fun talking with him. There were a few people from France and several from the U.S. The lodging was good and fairly inexpensive, it worked well for us. We settled in for the first night and prepared ourselves to visit the orphanage Lesley was connected with, and whatever else Lesley had planned for us.

The next morning we were greeted by Lesley and headed out to see the orphanage run by him and a few other pastors under his care. The building was designed to house the pastor and 15 girls ranging in age from toddler to 16 years old. Lesley told us that ten other girls are in the care of church families. They are there because their families had died — life expectancy for Haitians is only in their forties. The girls at the orphanage stay in a room that I guess is no bigger than 15 by 20 feet. If you can picture that, it is not much space for 15 girls. The pastor has a room in the back of the building and there is a small front room. In an area around the building church services are conducted on Sunday mornings. The kitchen is outside and is not much more than a room where an open fire can be made.

Some of the things I noticed about the orphanage involved a lack of items we consider necessities, such as the fact that at least four beds in the girls' room lacked mattresses. The girls with those beds sleep

on cardboard over the bedsprings. They have no closets or dressers, and we soon found out why. Lesley explained that he does not have much to work with so he has turned several physical needs over to God. Those include clothes and shoes, mattresses, and food. The girls cannot attend church or school without shoes or the proper clothes, and many have only two sets — one for church and school, and the other for home. At the time we were there Lesley was working on getting new shoes for the girls. Food for the orphanage costs about 50 American dollars a week. The basic diet is rice, beans, wheat, and cornmeal. Meat is purchased for the girls on Sundays, as a treat.

We received a special treat ourselves while we visited the orphanage. The girls sang for us in English and in French. They sang Lord I Lift Your Name on High, My God is So Big, and several other songs. They had great harmony and did very well with the songs. Hearing them sing was a blessing.

After seeing the orphanage we got a tour of Port-au-Prince. As we traveled through the city it was obvious that Haiti is a very poor country. Abandoned vehicles sat stripped by the side of the road. Even the police vehicles were old and beat-up. People set up shops along the road to sell their crops or whatever they have. People sorted through the trash piles. We came to a place that was a junkyard, where people bring anything that might be worth something to be sold or traded. It was just rows of buildings with stuff lying outside. We saw several different parts of this capital city but no matter where you looked you could see the need for ministry. We re-

Lord's Harvest International Trip to Haiti (continued from page 6)

turned to the missionary house later that afternoon.

Sunday was our final full day in Haiti. We went to Lesley's church in the country that morning. The church was located outside of the town among the area's farms. We passed fields of sugarcane and also what they called pigeon bean. There were about 80 people in the church that morning. Several of the youth were gone to an evangelism effort on the other side of Haiti. It is customary for men to sit on one side and women on the other, but as we entered we were led to the stage area up front, where we sat with the leadership of the church. We had expected to say something to the people, as Lesley had asked all of us to say a few words from our hearts that morning. Judy came up and said a few things and then Travis spoke a few words. I was then brought up and Lesley leaned over and said "You are Pastor, you bring the teaching this morning." So, unexpectedly,

I gave the sermon that morning. Actually I was honored to have the opportunity and it was exciting. After church we headed back to the missionary house.

We discussed with Lesley exactly what he envisions our organization doing as mission projects. Lesley impressed me, since he never asked for things or money. He wants help—a team to come and teach his youth and train his pastors. He also needs work to be done on the buildings, such as painting and building benches—that would be done along with the help of his people. The other thing he asked for is prayer for his ministry. It was interesting to hear this is all he wants. We had seen the many needs that they have, but here is a man who simply wants someone to help him and work with him. Our meeting ended with us assuring Lesley we would be praying for him and discussing ministry ideas with the rest of LHI. We returned to Atlanta the next day.

I found Haiti to be a surprise. The people are friendly, but they are spiritually hungry and very much in need of assistance in teaching. At our May meeting, LHI approved sending a small team of approximately seven people to work with Pastor Bertrand in 2002. Plans are for the team to work with the mountain churches on several projects. Applications are now being received for this trip. Team members will be selected at a November meeting so the application deadline is October 15. Please mail applications to Judy Myers, 6898 East Brick Road, Oregon, Illinois 61061.

We are collecting used clothes, shoes, non-prescription medications, vitamins and other items to be supplied to Pastor Bertrand for his ministry. If you would like to participate in this, please contact me at 4005 Willow Dale Road, Springfield, Ohio 45502 or email me at markt@mics.net. We covet your prayers for Lesley and the work in Haiti and also for LHI as we begin this working relationship with him. □

Filled With New Wine!!!! (continued from page 5)

the individual believer and of the church. . . . The church provides the context for spiritual growth by sharing *together* a fellowship which is at once the gift of the Spirit and the *environment* in which [the Spirit] may operate." (Ibid.)

Thus the individual believer is responsible for his/her part in the work of the church. He/she cannot fail to see the connection with commitment to the church in its fellowship and its work. Carrying out the work of the church is a part of obeying the Holy Spirit's direction in our life. I wonder if failing to do what we are asked to do in our church is "denying the Power of the Holy Spirit." If so, this is a fatal sin.

It is true we cannot each do all things, but together we can do all things. However to accomplish this we must accept the roles that come our way in the church and not turn our backs on them halfway through them. We can be committed to the world. We can do the things of the world, and not do the things of the church, and fail to support the fellowship God has created. John Kennedy said in his inaugural address "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." This is similar to how we must think of the church. Our responsibility to ourselves and our God is to step up and accept the roles we are given and use the gifts that God has given us. God has given the gifts to us for our use. And they are for the use of the church. Yes I will miss sometimes, and

I expect that you will too. But do not say "No" to every thing or every opportunity. God grants us life and His Holy Spirit to assist us in building the *koinonia* in our church. The way we do that is to accept the roles He has given us—even if it makes us look like we are "drunk with new wine" and the world laughs. Look at what happened in the first church when everyone (120 people) accepted his/her role. It grew by the thousands just in one day.

Can we afford to sit around and let others do it—NO, we must be committed to our church and our God. He expects no less and has given His Holy Spirit, His Power, to help us accomplish whatever the task that lies ahead.

Don't wait for an easier bull—he may not have a tail. □

Food For Thought

"Preach the Gospel at all times, use words when appropriate."
St. Francis

"Truth is so obscure in these times, and falsehood so established, that, unless we love the truth, we cannot know it."

Pascal

"Perhaps a great love is never returned. Had it been given warmth and shelter by its counterpart in the other, perhaps it would have been hindered from ever reaching maturity."

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"What the Church needs to-day is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more and novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use — men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. [It] does not come on machinery, but on men. [It] does not anoint plans, but men — men of prayer."

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"In the New Testament, religion is grace and ethics is gratitude."

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"Not only in the world of commerce but also in the world of ideas our age has arranged a regular clearance-sale. Everything may be had at such absurdly low prices that very soon the question will arise whether anyone cares to bid."

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"Spiritual rest makes no man idle, spiritual walking makes no man weary."

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"We have not and cannot give up anything for God. We don't make sacrifices for God. For there is nothing that we have given up that he has not already provided, or that he will provide."

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"In efficacious grace we are not merely passive, nor yet does God do some and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, we act all. For that is what produces, viz. our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain; we only are the proper actors. We are in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active."

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Cotton Mather □

Stewardship of the Gift of Sex

BY PASTOR MICHAEL HOFFMAN, OREGON, IL

Several months ago my teenage daughter, Hannah, and I were driving in the truck. I was minding my own business going along when out of a clear blue sky Hannah said, "Dad, is there a crisis pregnancy center in Rockford?" When I got the truck back on the road I laughed a little nervous laugh and said, "What for?" She laughed and explained her service project. I said, "I think I smell a sermon illustration coming on." Too many parents have had a similar experience and found no humor in it at all.

God has created us and called us to be stewards of the gifts that He has given us. When sexuality isn't managed well, according to God's standards, it can be incredibly painful. Too many people are all too familiar with that pain.

I think it can honestly be said that former President Bill Clinton was obsessed with his legacy. I think part of his legacy will need to be that many parents had to explain sexual things to young kids before it was time. Another part of his legacy is that many teens don't think that oral sex is sex (after all, the President explained it away with lies and incredible linguistic gymnastics), and do think that being thoroughly self-absorbed is not only okay but admirable. There is now a perception that character only counts in public. All of those things are wrong, but because Bill Clinton's public life was successful he was given a pass on his private life. The damage from that will never be undone.

Having said all that, the purpose of this article is not to focus on the lies wrapped up in Mr. Clinton's life or how pervasive they are in our society; rather the purpose is to share the truth of God's Word. If we

claim to have faith, to be believers in Christ, God's Word must have an impact on our daily life. Our sexuality is one area to let it impact daily.

Why did God create sex? Was sex created to be good? Men and women probably have different answers to that question, but one thing we must get absolutely straight at the outset is that God did not make a mistake when He created sex. In spite of all the turmoil it causes, it wasn't a mistake. Those feelings that well up so intensely inside guys and gals as they mature sexually were built in by God on purpose. Genesis 1:27 says that God created them male and female, in God's image. We are sexual beings, we are different, special. In Genesis 2:25 it says that the man and woman were naked and not ashamed.

The Bible speaks of sex without embarrassment. It is a shame to speak and joke about sex as so many do today, but sex God's way isn't shameful or secular, it is a sacred gift. The Bible is very open about sex and honestly portrays both its joyous experiences and abuse. Look how God treats His creation of man differently than that of the animal kingdom. God said about the creation of animals "It was good" (Gen. 1:25). Later, seeing man and wife together God says it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

It might be difficult for you to think of sex as something sacred, but look at the specific answer to why God created sex in Genesis 2:24. The husband and wife were to leave the parents home and cleave together like glue, to become one flesh. What does it mean to become one flesh? So often people assume that simply having sexual intercourse makes two become one. The Bible states that this is true in a physical

sense, but there is much more involved for marriage partners to become one. What about really knowing each other's thoughts, goals, dreams, likes, disappointments, spirituality, and emotional feelings? What about communication? We are whole beings, not just physical beings. Signing a piece of paper and going to bed together doesn't make any two people become one. You can't pass off sex as purely a physical thing, but the rest of the day is just as important.

I believe the idea of becoming one flesh speaks to us of commitment, a bigger intimacy than just the physical. It's not an issue of "love," that word is far too general. We are to love everyone, but we are to be fully committed to just one spouse. God created sex as a way of saying to another person: "I am totally yours. I share this gift with nobody else." Sex is intended as a way of strengthening the commitment, to express intimacy already there, it is not intended as an end in itself. Even in procreation sex is not an end. We gain a lifetime of responsibility for another life. Sex alone cannot and will not create intimacy in marriage.

Sex alone does create feelings of being prostituted. Men, it is especially important for you to understand that intimacy, closeness, and caring must be present or sex is not very special to a wife. God intended sex to be an *expression* of the intimacy in marriage, of the two becoming one. That is God's intention. Society's use has been very different, very selfish.

I could talk at length about the abuses and perversions of God's sacred gift in society. Instead let me show you how incredibly relevant the Bible is. I'll let God

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say it with just a few short verses that perfectly summarize our world.

Jeremiah 5:7-9 says "Why should I forgive you? Your children have forsaken me and sworn by gods that are not gods. I supplied all their needs, yet they committed adultery and thronged to the houses of prostitutes. They are well-fed, lusty stallions each neighing for another man's wife. Should I not punish them for this? Declares the LORD. Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?" Here God is declaring His righteous anger about Israel essentially acting like a bunch of animals with no more control than a wild stallion.

Jeremiah 6:10 says "To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it." Notice that their ears are closed and the Word of God is offensive. Few pay attention even to common sense, let alone God's Word.

Verses 13-15 tell of people who are greedy, deceitful, and shameless. They have lost the ability to blush. Does not that perfectly describe the degree to which many have been desensitized? Sin, perhaps especially sexual sin, no longer shocks. With grief I must honestly say that, like ancient Israel in many ways, the Church at large has lost its distinctness from the world.

Jeremiah 17:9 says that "the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure, who can understand it?" So many deceive and kid themselves about sexual sin, to the point that even prominent clergy can commit adultery, violate vows and shatter covenants and be fully recovered in just three days—amazing!!

Let me proclaim God's standards without hesitation, and let us as families uphold the standards, hold each other accountable, and support each other all that we can.

According to God's standards, sexual relations outside of marriage are sin. First Thessalonians 4:3 says "It is God's will that you should be sanctified; that you should avoid sexual immorality." God's will is very specifically spelled out in two

different ways here. "Be sanctified" means to be separate, called out, distinct. God's will is for us to be holy, distinct, not like everybody else. It was Israel's purpose to be a distinct people for God, and that is our purpose in the world today.

An extremely practical way to be distinct is to avoid sexual immorality. How do we avoid it? First Thessalonians 4:4-5 says "control yourself." Control your body in a way that is holy and honorable, not hot and hormonal. We are not to be filled with passionate lust like heathens who do not know God. The essence of life is not sex (contrary to what society portrays, especially in the movies). The meaning of life is found in being in an obedient relationship with the Almighty God. Misuse of the gift of sex is a sin, it is outside of God's will.

How many times do we dance with immorality by seeking it out rather than fleeing from it?

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In 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 we are instructed to flee. How many times do we dance with immorality by seeking it out rather than fleeing from it? Paul says that sexual sins are sins against yourself. They are sins *against* your own body. This is certainly true in the case of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), particularly AIDS. Paul goes on to say that the body is the temple of God. You have been bought with a price so honor God with your body, being sanctified, set apart.

In 1 Corinthians 7:1-2 Paul expressed his personal preference to remain single and celibate. In order to do this you must be able to handle it and remain sexually pure. So Paul says that for those who can't (because there is so much immorality, sexual activity outside of marriage), each man should have his wife and each woman should have her husband. The Bible never comes close to sanctioning same-sex marriages.

That is a sin, and the notion that God condones homosexual relationships is a lie.

In verses 8 and 9 Paul counsels to stay single, but that if you can't control yourself then you should marry. It is better to marry than to burn with passion. If there is any doubt in your mind that sex outside of the bounds of marriage is sin, and that it has some rather serious consequences, look at 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Four of the first five sins listed are sexual ones. God knew what our world would be like. Sexual immorality means no kingdom of God, and no kingdom of God means no eternal life. That has to be scary. The occasional ten minutes of pleasure is not worth eternal death.

Why wait? Josh McDowell put together some great thoughts on the benefits of waiting. This is specifically addressed to singles or teens. God's plan for waiting protects us from:

1. Guilt which we have when we sin against God.
2. Unplanned pregnancy.
3. STDs.
4. Sexual insecurity — if you know that your partner fooled around sexually before marriage, what is to keep him/her from fooling around during marriage?
5. Emotional distress (a wounded spirit); suspicion, disappointment, sorrow, stress, comparison, and other destructive emotions.

God's plan for waiting provides for:

1. Spiritual rewards — a greater sense of closeness to God.
2. Optimum atmosphere for child rearing. A single, 16 year old, high school girl is not the best candidate for raising a child. A child needs two stable, mature parents.
3. Peace of mind.
4. Trust.
5. True intimacy, it's a gift that is not to be shared with more than one person.

Let us now consider marital standards as reflected in the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 Paul well expressed the idea of two becoming one flesh:

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone, but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Two become one. Your body does not belong to yourself. In marriage your body is shared, for two become one. You need to take care of your body because it belongs not only to you, it also belongs to your spouse. We must be careful in how we use verse five because it can easily be abused. It doesn't say "never say no unless both agree." There may be instances where one spouse does not desire sex due to poor health or fatigue or other pressures. In these instances a loving spouse does not demand sex. But there should not be a pattern of sexual abstinence in marriage. Sexual abstinence in a marriage can occur for positive reasons. Paul here mentions prayer. It can be a great way to honor and uplift each other, to take the pressure off, to pray, fast, read. Proper abstinence requires good communication. Often marital problems are misperceived as being about sex or money when those things are simply symptoms and the actual problem is poor communication.

I do want to comment here that in marriage withholding sex can be used for a power play or a punishment. It can be manipulative, and sometimes it's just plain mean. If that is happening clearly it is wrong and unhealthy for that marriage. There needs to be good communication to work through this. As I said earlier, I believe sexual relations in marriage express the closeness and intimacy that's present in the marriage. Without true intimacy sexual intercourse won't happen, or if it does it's not much fun because someone will feel used.

Husbands, remember that your wives need to be loved with kindness, caring, romance, and helpfulness. Your wife wants to be seen as a person, not as a sex object for your gratification. If you want that one half hour to be good, work on improving the other 23 ½ hours.

Wives, keep in mind how powerfully God wired your husband as a sexual being. You have the power to fulfill and the power to virtually destroy your husband. Be patient and communicate well so that your husband understands your needs. Please



don't withhold sex from him for the wrong reasons.

I would now like to consider the danger of affairs of the heart. In Matthew 5:27-28 Jesus said "You have heard that it was said 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." This passage intrigued me for a long time. Did Jesus really mean that just to look at a woman with lust was really adultery? Remember when President Jimmy Carter answered a question about lust truthfully and really got into trouble? If Jesus meant that every lustful look was adultery, then there is a lot of adultery being blatantly promoted in our society. I think he meant it.

The word adultery comes from adulterate. That word literally means "to

poison." My dictionary spoke of making something inferior or impure by adding a poorer substance, but leaving the product with the appearance of genuineness. That's a great definition. In this sense looking at someone other than your spouse and lusting poisons your mind toward your spouse. The relationship still looks genuine because no physical betrayal has occurred, it was just an affair of the heart. I believe we must be very careful about our thoughts, particularly our fantasies, so as not to poison our marital relationships. That special intimacy of two becoming one is not to be poisoned (adulterated), mentally or physically. We are to bring every thought captive to Christ. Hebrews 13:4 says that "marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." Guard your heart to keep the marriage bed pure after the wedding. Guard your relationships before marriage to keep it pure later on.

Now, let me offer some practical suggestions for keeping sex sacred:

1. Teens or singles, make a covenant (that's an unbreakable promise, which you will keep no matter what happens) to remain sexually pure until marriage. Actually sign a paper about this, and stay accountable to your parents, your pastor, and your peers. Remember the importance of being sanctified, consecrated. It's like placing a "reserved" sign on a table. Save the gift of sex only for marriage. If you have already blown it, don't give up. Through Christ you can start fresh.

2. Draw the line ahead of time. Decide now what your standard will be. Will you stay pure or go as far as you can? You must decide ahead of time where the line will be because when the hormones are running wild and passions are on the loose it is too late. You must decide ahead of time.

3. Ask the right question. "How far can I go?" is the wrong question and the wrong approach. I think a far better approach is "what will honor God and the other person

(continued on page 12)

in this relationship?" If you are not worried about honoring God or the other person, then that boils down to pure selfishness (not a very pretty character quality).

4. Talk to someone who will give you straight answers. I consider the truth to be straight answers. I hope you can talk with your parents. If not, seek out someone you trust. Schools are essentially mandated to give less than accurate information. "Safe Sex," isn't! God says what you need to wear for safe sex is a wedding ring. Talk with someone to get straight, honest answers.

5. Guard your mind. Married or unmarried we need to be careful what we take into our minds so as not to adulterate them. The way we view people matters. We need to keep our minds constantly seeking to uphold God's standards and not those of the world. Proverbs 4:23 says "above all, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." Parents, I can't warn you strongly enough about the internet if you have access in your home. It's a wonderful tool, but it's also very dangerous. Pornography is all over the internet. Pornography is addic-

tive, it escalates, and it often leads to acting out. Nearly always it is very disruptive to a marriage. There is no question that it can poison the minds of those who view it. I would not allow internet access in my home without some strict filtering. Your kids and your marriage matter too much not to.

6. Build intimacy in many ways. I truly believe that entering into a sexually active relationship essentially prevents you from really getting to know someone. There are many ways to build closeness and intimacy without sexual relations. The brain is the best sexual organ, especially in men. Work at building the relationship and the sexual aspects of your marriage will be far better.

7. Enjoy sex within God's boundaries. There is nothing dirty about the gift of sex God's way. He made us sexual beings. It is a beautiful gift given to be used and enjoyed with fun and great pleasure within the context of marriage. Enjoy it there and only there.

8. If you have made a mistake sexually, repent. Many people, including Christians,

have made sexual mistakes. People sin, and they feel tremendous guilt. If this has happened to you, you need to confess it to God, repent (that means turn around), and seek forgiveness and restoration. God can and will forgive. It's wise to become accountable. We need to love, accept and forgive, not condone or condemn. We must seek to uphold God's standards by loving people back into a better relationship with God.

It has been my goal in writing this article to be frank, honest and real. I have attempted to declare, without hesitation, God's truth. I do not wish to offend, although some offense may have occurred. If so, I ask your forgiveness. The message must be heard. Life is not about "have sex and then you die." Life is about "surrender to God and then you live." He has given us a wonderful gift. It is His idea, His design. He owns it. May you use it well, as intended, for His glory and the betterment of others. □

Passion for Your Marriage

BY DOLLEY CARLSON

Playful — plan playful and surprising dates for each other. The only expense: thoughtfulness.

Attentive — remember your dating, falling-in-love days? You listened attentively.

Sensitive — it is tried but true: put yourself in the other's shoes.

Study your spouse — what is important to him and what doesn't matter at all? (Just this morning I learned that Tom really likes for the bed to be made. It isn't always, oops!)

Interested and Interesting — try to be interested in every aspect of life. Keep the "need to do's" (as in "honey do . . .") to a minimum. Be well informed; peruse the newspaper or watch the news and sports reports on TV each day.

One and only — "we're a team" is what Tom and I have said to each other through the years. This proclamation is especially meaningful during difficult times. Then there's the sweetheart meaning of one and only: You belong to me, I belong to you.

Nearer — and dearer — to each other than to anyone else, after the Lord. Your relationship with each other comes first, not to the neglect or exclusion of anyone else, but simply first! □

Excerpted from *Mr. & Mrs. Gifts from the Heart*, used by permission.

Free to Follow Christ

BY PASTOR JEFFREY FLETCHER, PONCHATOULA, LA

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free (Galatians 5:1).

If Jesus Christ were to appear to you today—right here, right now—and invite you to go with him to perform some task or ministry, would you be free to follow him? Do you have the freedom to say “yes” to Christ’s invitation?

In Luke 9:57-62 we hear Christ inviting people to follow him, to live as his disciples. But as we listen to their responses and his responses to them, we discover that each of them had to wrestle with their own freedom, or lack of freedom, to be able to say “yes” to Jesus.

Are you free to say “yes” to Jesus?

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

He said to another man, “Follow me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.”

Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

The first one said: “Jesus, I’ll go anywhere with you.” And Jesus answered by

asking him “Do you realize what that means? It means making some major sacrifices.”

The second person was invited by Jesus to “follow me” and responded “O.K., but first let me bury my father.” Jesus replied, “Let the dead bury the dead.”

And the third said “I will follow you, but let me go say goodbye first.” To which Jesus makes some cryptic statement about plowing.

Now let me say that, at first glance, Jesus seems to be pretty unreasonable here.

In the first instance Jesus takes some excited, eager person who wants to follow him anywhere, and dumps cold water on him by basically saying “if you follow me you’ll become homeless and destitute.”

In the second instance, the person is willing to follow, but they want to have their father’s funeral first, that seems pretty reasonable. Certainly when a beloved family member dies to give them a proper burial seems to be an appropriate priority. Jesus’ response—“let the dead bury their dead”—seems pretty harsh and unloving. Frankly, Jesus, it doesn’t seem all that loving of a thing to say to a grieving son.

In the third instance the eager disciple-to-be is ready to go anywhere with Jesus, they just want to run home and tell the family “adios.” That seems like the polite thing to do. Yet even here Jesus is critical. He makes some comment about plowing and looking behind you.

So what’s the deal here, anywhere? Did Jesus swallow a handful of nasty pills? Did he miss out on his morning coffee or his afternoon nap? Why is he being so harsh to these potential disciples?

It doesn’t seem to be a very effective

recruitment strategy. Normally when you’re trying to recruit someone to your organization you try to be positive, particularly when the person has shown an interest in joining.

If Jesus were a modern-day pastor his church would probably be very unhappy that he would treat his would-be congregants so harshly. You’re supposed to cater to potential Church members, offer them gentle encouragement. But here is Jesus—seemingly at his worst.

It’s like Jesus is trying to sell you a used car, and you want to buy it, but then he walks around the car and points out all the defects:

You: I’d like to buy this car.

Jesus: Great! But you should know that it’s been in an accident, it gets lousy gas mileage, and it’s not very reliable. I’m not even sure you’ll be able to drive it home. Do you still want it?

You: Yes, but I need to check with your financing department on getting financing for it.

Jesus: I’m sorry, we only accept cash. Up front.

You: Oh, O.K. Let me just run and tell my wife that I’ll have to write a check and wipe out our savings account.

Jesus: I’m sorry, this offer ends immediately. Besides, if you were a real man you wouldn’t need to go talk to your wife.

Ouch!!!

I seriously doubt that Jesus would sell a lot of used cars. He gives too much information up front. He demands too much up front. He doesn’t allow people a chance to think it over or consult with family. But

then again, if you did buy a used car from Jesus, you wouldn't have much room to complain afterward, because he provides full disclosure up front.

Today the demands Jesus makes seem quite foreign to our ears. We're not used to the gospel being presented in those terms.

Maybe it's because we pastors are worried about things like church attendance, meeting the monthly budget, and making the congregation happy and keeping our jobs.

If we presented the gospel like Jesus did we might find our churches much smaller, our budgets much smaller, and our job security at risk.

But Jesus was *free* from those kinds of concerns. Jesus didn't seem to be bothered by the possibility of flat out rejection. Jesus was free from worrying about the world viewing him as successful.

The fact of the matter is, from a worldly standpoint Jesus *wasn't* very successful: He was over 30 years old and had no college degree, no real job (at least no job that paid anything), no home — he was estranged from his family and, in fact, at one point they thought he was nuts.

Jesus was *free* from all of those kinds of worries. What made him free? He knew that before long he would die, so he wasn't holding on all that strongly to his desire to live, although he did have the desire to live. He was willing to let go of that desire. He knew what his mission was and he was following that mission, he was proclaiming the coming kingdom of God.

He also knew that he was in a right relationship with God. He had an intimate experience of God as his Father, "Abba" or Daddy was his favorite term for God.

Jesus was *free*. He didn't care about saving his life, because he had let go of his attachments in life. He didn't care about being successful in the world's eyes, because he was interested in being successful in God's eyes.

Jesus was truly free. Wouldn't it be wonderful to experience that level of freedom? You CAN!!

Galatians 5:1 says "It was for freedom that Christ set us free." Christ came to set us free.

In Luke 4:18-19 Jesus quoted from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . he has anointed me to share the gospel . . . to release the captives . . . to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus was free!!!!!! You can be free too!!!

"But [you say], I'm not a slave, am I? After all, I live in America, the land of the free [apologies to readers from other areas]. It was 225 years ago this month that Jefferson and all signed the Declaration of Independence, declaring our Freedom. We're free!! We can do whatever we want, right? Well, we can do whatever we want as long as it doesn't hurt someone else."

But are you really free?

If Jesus were to come to you today and say "I want you to be a missionary to Africa, would you be free to go?" Could you say "Yes"?

If not, why?

"Well — where would I live? I've got a home, I've been paying a mortgage for years and years, I can't just leave my home and move half way around the world. Where would I live?"

"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests . . . but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head."

"But you don't understand; I couldn't go to Africa now, I have a responsibility to care for my elderly parents, I can't just up and leave, I'd have to wait until my parents die, then I'll be free to follow Jesus."

"Let the dead bury their dead"

"O.K, but wait — I'd like to be a missionary to Africa, but can't I at least go say goodbye? I've got to close out my bank account, and tell my family goodbye. That should take a month or two. O.k, just give me six weeks and then I'll go to Africa and be a missionary." "No one putting their hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Friend, "it was for freedom that Christ set us free." How free are we to follow Christ? How free are you to follow Christ?

The Declaration of Independence was a beginning, not the end. Freedom didn't come quickly or easily. A war was fought and blood was shed.

When you said "yes" to Jesus and you sealed that "yes" through baptism, you declared your freedom.

That too was a beginning — not the end. A war has to be fought. Spiritual growth is all about the process of becoming truly free.

Outside of Christ, we are slaves to sin.

We are enslaved to the desires of the flesh, which Paul listed in Galatians 5.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

No one is a slave to all of these, but all of us are slaves to some of them at some time.

Here is a look at some of the types of slavery that are common to post-modern people:

Paul mentions sexual sins, fornication, adultery. Some people are addicted to sex. Pornography has always been a problem, but modern technology has made it more easily accessible. In the old days you had to go to an "adult" theater to watch a dirty movie, now you can rent them at your local video store, or have them beamed into your house via Cable or Satellite T.V. Furthermore, thanks to the internet, images that used to only be bought in magazines can now be piped directly into your P.C.

Many thousands of people, if not millions, are literally addicted to pornography — are they free? No, they are slaves to sin.

Chat room cybersex is destroying marriages, it is rampant!!! Many of you can probably think of one or two marriages of

people you know that have broken up over internet affairs. There are people who are SLAVES to sexual sin. "It was for Freedom that Christ set us free."

Paul talks about idolatry, that's another word for GREED! Ever notice how many casinos keep popping up? What makes a casino profitable? Greed. People start out wanting to win more money than they lose. If they win, they want to win more; if they lose, they try to win it back. They get hooked. For many it is an addiction. People have lost their life savings, their cars, even their homes to gambling addiction. They aren't free.

Why did the stock market run so high over the past few years? Greed. The stocks of companies that weren't even offering goods or services were going through the roof. People invested, people got rich, and then the house of cards came tumbling down. People who love money aren't free. "It was for Freedom that Christ set us free."

Paul mentions drunkenness. People turn to alcohol to anesthetize their pain, and many get hooked. If alcohol has become a substitute for meaningful human relationships then you are addicted and you are no longer FREE! "It was for Freedom that Christ set us free."

Sorcery: the Greek word is *pharmikea*, from which comes pharmacy, related to drugs. Drug addiction, to illegal or legal drugs, prevents people from being FREE. "It was for Freedom that Christ set us free."

Friends, these are extreme examples of the kinds of things that keep us from being free. Other examples could be cited. Hatred and an inability to forgive imprison many. A desire for wealth and status imprisons many.

When we say "yes" to Jesus we declare our Freedom from *all* of these and any other things that imprison us. But in order to be truly free we must remember that we are still at war.

I don't know that we can experience complete and ultimate freedom in this life, but part of the Gospel of the Kingdom is the living out of the reality of our freedom to follow Christ wherever he leads us to go. Are you free to follow Christ wherever he wants you to Go?

Are you free from attachments to money, substances, and relationships? Does anything in this world keep you from following Jesus? If the answer is "yes" then part of your spiritual growth means asking God to help you to let go of those things that keep you from being free. Continue in this until you arrive at the place of being able to truly say, "Lord, I'll do whatever you ask me to do, I'll follow you anywhere, anytime."

Friends, that is true freedom. I pray that you will trust God and grow in your freedom. I pray that your church will be free of all obstacles that prevent you from serving God in the way which He is calling you to serve Him.

It was for Freedom that Christ set us free. □

The Color of Music

BY PATRICK AND BARBARA KAVANAUGH

Where there is no vision, the people perish — Proverbs 29:18 (KJV)

Russian composer Aleksandr Scriabin was born in Moscow on January 6, 1872. Compositionally, he is best remembered for his piano works and his symphonies, notably his fourth, the *Poem of Ecstasy*. Scriabin is also remembered for his innovative interest in the mysterious relationship between certain musical notes and the color spectrum.

Throughout history, both musicians and artists had sensed an illusive bond between visual color and aural pitch, but no one had quite understood this association. Scriabin

determined not only to conquer the problem, but also to use all the senses in his compositions. For his last symphony, he invented a special color keyboard, projecting colors onto a screen synchronized to the music. He envisioned works using music, dance, drama, poetry, colors, and even various perfumes.

Unfortunately, a premature death put an end to his aspirations, but he left us with a portrayal of a man with a vision. Practically every day of his last decade was spent pursuing his theory. He let nothing get in his way. Although his work remained unfinished, it fascinates musicians, artists, and even scientists today.

There is nothing better than understanding God's call for your life and then actually living out that calling. Discovering what God has planned for you can be difficult and take time, but you're never too young to seek His will and start living for Him.

Get out a set of paints, put on your favorite music, and paint what the music inspires. Thank God for giving each of us a mission in life, and ask Him to help you discover His mission for your life. □

Excerpted from *Devotions from the World of Music*, Cook Communications Ministries. Used by Permission.

Make Deposits in the Love Bank

BY BARRY AND CAROL ST. CLAIR

"How can we make daily deposits of loving communication in our children's lives?" Occasionally we get a notice from the bank notifying us that we have overdrawn our account. We have noticed that it always happens to us when something big is occurring, like going on vacation. One time as we walked out the door for our vacation, we grabbed the mail. We opened the notice from the bank and discovered an error of several thousand dollars. That led to total panic. All other activities came to a halt. Frantically we called the bank and then went over there for a personal visit. A big deposit had been recorded incorrectly. We worked through the process of fixing the problem. This problem distracted me (Carol) so much that when we finally resolved it and got into the car to leave for vacation, I left my wallet at the house. Having to do without the wallet reminded us of the problem during the entire vacation.

The lesson from the deficit: don't overdraw your account. Even better, make enough deposits to ensure plenty of margin in the account. If we overdraw, then we not only have to make the extra effort to fix it, but sometimes we also have to live with the frustrating consequences it typically always causes.

Opening an Unconditional Love Account

Our children's lives parallel that account. They have a need for security and significance that come from unconditional love. When a deficit occurs in their lives, that threatens their security and significance, and then they panic. It's not hard to spot it when their account gets overdrawn.

- They seek attention.
- They want to control the situation.
- They get revenge (usually by clobbering a sibling!).
- They resist and rebel.
- They turn to their friends.
- They get depressed.

Only through communicating unconditional love can we make deposits in their account and get them out of a big deficit.

Daily deposits of loving communication bring very positive results. Our children . . .

- have positive self-worth.
- have a willingness to obey.
- are less drawn to peer pressure.
- develop openness and honesty.
- set a pattern for healthy communication as they become more independent.

The most positive result, however, is that they will grasp God's love more easily because of the concrete example of love they have experienced. Many parents fall into the trap of expressing "if" love to their children. That means they love them if they perform properly. For example: "I love you if you get good grades." Other parents get trapped into expressing "because" love. For example: "I love you because you are beautiful/handsome." Sometimes we express that form of superficial love without even knowing it. Every time we do it, we undermine our children's sense of security and significance. Yet God desires for us to express "in spite of" love to our children. "I love you in spite of your attitude right now." That kind of love is totally unconditional. It comes from God to us, then through us to our children. It encourages our children's sense of security and

significance. "In spite of" love from us prepares our children's hearts to receive God's love for them.

Communicating unconditional love to our children creates closeness and emotional warmth with them so that when we have to say "no" or discipline them, we can draw from a surplus account. Parents are responsible to make deposits to their children's accounts to keep them in the black until they learn for themselves how to let Jesus make deposits. Even then our children need consistent deposits of unconditional love from their parents.

Ross Campbell, child psychologist and author, reinforces how critical communicating unconditional love really is by using the word picture of a gas tank rather than a checking account.

A teenager will strive for independence in typical adolescent ways — doing things by himself, going places without family, testing parental rules. But he will eventually run out of emotional gasoline and come back to the parent for conditional maintenance — for a refill . . .

During times when a teenager is striving for independence he may upset his parents to such an extent that the parent overreacts emotionally, and usually with excessive anger. This emotional overreaction, if too excessive or frequent, makes it extremely difficult, and perhaps impossible, for the teenager to return to his parents for emotional refills. Then if parent-child communication is broken, a teenager may turn to his peers for emotional nurture. What a dangerous and frequently disastrous situation this is!

(Ross Campbell, *How to Really Love Your Teenager*, Chariot Victor Publishing, 1981, p. 27, 30.)

Using the Checkbook

Along with making deposits in our bank account, we need to know how the checkbook works. In our relationship with our children, unconditional love is our asset in the bank and our communication skills are the checkbook. These skills create a channel through which our love can flow. Our communications checkbook allows us to dispense love, acceptance, affirmation,

physical warmth, and availability. In order to do that we must be aware of our need to move from superficial levels of communication to deeper ones.

Communication experts point out five levels of communication that move from surface responses to intimate sharing.

1. Cliches. "How are you?"
2. Facts. "What did you eat for lunch?"
3. Ideas. "What do you think about that?"
4. Feelings. "How do you feel when that happens?"
5. Intimate sharing. "What is on your heart about that?" This level occurs only in

the few relationships in which a person can open his or her heart and share deeply.

Some people find it easier than others to change levels. But if we want to communicate deeply into our children's lives then we must make significant love deposits to reach the level of most intimate sharing. All families use the first three levels. Some move to Level 4. But only families surrounded by unconditional love enjoy the opportunity to reach Level 5. □

Excerpted from *Ignite the Fire*, Chariot Victor Publishing. Used by Permission.

The Adolescent Language

BY CLIFF SCHIMMELS

"**B**ut, Mom, Everybody will be there. Just Everybody!"

Isn't that heartbreaking? Mix a few tears and sobs in with this kind of talk, and you have nightmares of all those innocent adolescents having fun at the party and your child is the only one in school not there. How can you be so cruel?

Don't despair. *Everybody* is a proper noun here. In other words, *Everybody* is only one person. This may be the best news you have heard for a while. Ever since it first dawned on you that this child was going to be leaving elementary school and headed into middle school you have been worried that a nebulous monster called "Peer Pressure" was lurking in the halls of school ready to gobble up your innocent offspring.

You have every right to worry, but let me offer a bit of counsel. Peer pressure is not an amorphous horde of teenagers plotting against mankind. Peer pressure is one person — the person your child looks up to. And that person's name is Everybody.

Isn't this good news? You don't have to worry about something you can't identify

or even influence. Sure, peer pressure exists; and, of course, it has power and influence over your child — what he does, what he thinks, and even what he feels. But peer pressure is within your realm of understanding, if not controlling.

There probably is a group to which your child belongs, so you get the idea that it is bigger than one individual; but study the situation closely and you will probably find one person who is the central leader and the spokesperson for the whole group. So it isn't the group that's peer pressure, it's that one person — that one person we call Everybody.

My advice is obvious. Find out who Everybody is. Get acquainted with Everybody. Invite him over to the house. Take him on family outings. Make sure Everybody knows your family values and your expectations. If at all possible, get Everybody on your side. As I said before, Everybody has a great deal of influence on your child just now. Take this person seriously and make the effort to get to know him.

Go further — make the effort to get to know Everybody's parents. Call them on the phone and ask them if it is true that

Everybody is going to the party. It could well be that Everybody is at home even now pleading with his parents by telling them that your child is going and all the while referring to your child as Everybody. Invite Everybody's parents over and cultivate a close friendship with them. This in itself may well be the best time you can spend during this stage of your child's development. Your children will probably accuse you of forming a conspiracy, but a conspiracy is not all bad for parents of middle school children.

A few years ago a group of parents of seventh grade girls took this suggestion even one step further and started meeting informally about once a month on Sunday evenings. At first they didn't know each other but came together with the one common interest of having daughters in the same class. Not only did they all grow into good friends, but these meetings went a long way to ease the anxiety of being the parent of an adolescent girl. In other words, they took an active instead of a reactive role to the threat of peer pressure. □

Excerpted from *The Middle School Maze*, used by permission.

Twelve Parenting Essentials

BY MICHAEL AND DEBBIE PEARL

1. **Love.** Love is many a thing, from a feeling that might be selfish, to a service done in secret. Love can be the crest of an emotion, or it can be the toil of assistance. Love can be forgiveness, or it can be judgment. It can be a balm to soothe, or a surgical knife. Love can be decidedly blind or painfully seeing — praise or rebuke.

If love wore one expression, if its hands were always open, if it gave and never retained, then it could exist as a sentiment without thought. But true love places a supreme demand on the resources of wisdom, for manifestations of love are as varied as human need.

If the end of love were passivity, the absence of conflict; if it laid aside principles for peace, laid aside conflict for cordiality, it would not be a virtue. It would be vice.

That love sometimes leads one into desperate sacrifice, with no certain promise of return, that it requires trading one goodness — your own — for another, makes it as rare as manifestations of deity.

Love must be ready to embrace or to refrain from embracing, to give or to deny. It requires expenditure and vigilance. Love must be ever alert — a delicate, shifting balance of law and grace. The final measure of love is not the cloak of emotion it wears, but the service it renders. Certain love is not found in the good feelings but in the high cost to the one loving.

Rather than say, "Children need love," we must define the acts of love by which children will realize their full potential. For the sentiment of love can be as harmful as that of hate. As all the Law is contained in this one commandment, "Thou shalt love

thy neighbor as thyself," so parenting is nothing more than the activity of love. But as the law meticulously defines the expressions of love, so the works of love must be defined.

2. Security. Not just physical security — sometimes parents cannot control the circumstances — but security of soul. It is not only that parents provide food, shelter, and clothes, but that children feel their commitment to do so. This is not about what you do; it is about atmosphere, the very breath of home-life. The soul of a parent is the source of this security. Outward circumstances cannot touch that secret place where children feel their parents' love and good will. Morale is of utmost significance in business, war, and sports; how much more in a child attempting to win against the world? The child must be able to assuredly say to himself, "I am worth having people care about me."

This inner security is absolutely essential to healthy development. Without that peace of soul that comes with knowing that you are supremely valued and that there are people in the world who have an unswerving commitment to your happiness, then a child has no ground on which to stand while growing up.

A well ordered and disciplined environment can be helpful, but it is not essential. Children living in poverty, occasionally evicted from tenement houses, cast upon the street with all their belongings, and ridiculed by their peers can still be rich in emotional security. Children of single parents can also be secure and stable. "Disadvantaged minorities" need not be disadvantaged in providing emotional security for their children. Providing for a child's physical needs is insufficient in and of itself. It

takes a giving soul, not just a giving hand.

3. Acceptance. This does not mean that children are to receive unconditional approval, but that whether parents are approving or disapproving, children never feel that they have been dismissed. Our present age is pervaded with the "to each his own" approach to human relations. It is the assumption that there are no absolutes. Allow the child "free expression," never reject any conduct, maintain a positive face regardless of behavior. The error of this is apparent in its fruit.

But the relationship parents have to their children is different from general society. It is the parents' duty, as well as their instinct, to accept and care for their children until they leave the nest. Regardless of children's conduct, they must know that their parents have an unconditional commitment to their ongoing development. For someone else to value your life is to have a life that is never without value. To have someone else forgive, when you cannot forgive yourself, leaves the door of forgiveness ever open. To have someone accept you, when your conduct demands that you be rejected by all, places you under demand to act so as to deserve the sweetness of that acceptance.

4. Respect. Children are future adults — little people. They have the same souls, the same feelings, pride, shame, desire to be accepted, to be approved. Children have opinions, ideas, and views that they like to share. They may talk you to death, but often what is tiresome to an adult is significant to a child.

A child has a right not to be tickled until it hurts, not to be bullied or pushed aside simply because he is smaller. If a child is to respect himself and others, he

must be shown respect. A child that does not respect the person, rights, and feelings of others is usually just reciprocating in kind. A human being without self-respect is lower than an animal. Children estimate their value according to how they are valued by others.

5. Communication. Communication is the vehicle of society. Interpersonal relationships are built on communication. It is essential for intellectual development. Several studies have shown that infants isolated in their cribs, away from human contact, score much lower on IQ tests taken later in life. Children that are not the objects of communication become incommunicative. Read to your infants. Show them things and give a name to everything. Talk with, not just to, your three- and six-year-olds. Listen to your teenagers and learn from them.

6. Time, not just "quality time" but quantity time. Know this, that when you are not spending time with your children, someone else is. When you received your child into this world, it was like receiving a beautiful book with all blank pages. Like a daily planner, each fifteen-minute interval has an empty line beside it. Your child's history is not yet written. The sum total of life is the accumulation of minutes — minutes listening to someone, talking to someone, seeing or hearing something said by another, or minutes consumed watching a video produced by a disreputable character from Hollywood. Everyday, you write in that book, line by line; or you take your child to a baby-sitter or to school, and you turn the book over to someone else and they, too, write into your child's life. The hour you spend with your child is not more influential than the hour someone else spends. Value time enough to spend it on your children.

7. Boundaries. Children must learn quickly that they are not the center of the universe. Others have needs and rights as well. Self-restraint is essential to society. Animals do what they want to do and what they are big enough to do with impunity. Humans must consider what is right —

thus boundaries. Just as nature contains innate laws that carry consequences when violated, so the world of mind and soul is governed by laws (boundaries). Boundaries exist even where they are not recognized. When a two-year-old takes something away from a three-year-old, he discovers a boundary.

Children need to have it deeply instilled that they are subject to irrevocable boundaries. Boundaries with no consequences are no longer boundaries. That one should design his own boundaries and be responsible to no one is anarchy. Self-control is the pinnacle of human existence. The essence of sin is lack of self-control. It is the parents' responsibility to clearly legislate boundaries and enforce the keeping of them.

8. Structure. Doing the same thing each day at the same time is structure. Any individual, not just children, left to do as he pleases from one moment to the next will likely do nothing unless it is immediately gratifying. To determine ahead of time what needs to be done and then doing it at the allotted time enables one to do the unpleasant with regularity. A schedule prevents one from procrastination. It relieves boredom, gives a sense of security, and minimizes stress. Good habits of scheduling one's time are best established early in life, before four years old. Without structure, the child lives as an irresponsible rogue. Structure allows children to set goals and sacrifice to reach them. It is the road to betterment.

One of the most common concerns of parents is sibling squabbles. Children that are on schedules are far less likely to gripe, complain, and fight.

9. Belonging / significance. Children must feel they are a vital part of something significant. One feels himself to be a part of that to which he lends significant contribution. A child that is served, but not called upon to contribute, will have low self-esteem. Everyone needs to be needed.

"Positive affirmation" is degrading if it is not based on genuine performance.

Children will appreciate praise to the extent that it accurately reflects their real performance. False praise is received as manipulation. When children are part of a family team overcoming real obstacles, they know they are needed. Their contributions are essential, so they are essential. To struggle together and win together is the wedding of souls.

10. Example. Be what you want your children to be. "More is caught than taught." Children read actions better than words. They are imitators, taking on the likeness of the ones they most admire. If you cannot walk your talk, don't expect them to. When the older child develops bad habits, the younger children will follow his example and probably take it a step further in the wrong direction. Likewise, if you get that first child in control, you have a good example for other children who come behind.

11. Crisis management. Life often moves from one crisis to another, especially for children and teens. There is frustration, disappointment, rejection, failure, sickness, pain, etc. The ability to view supposed crises as opportunities greatly lessens the stress in life. A person with that kind of outlook is called "brave, resilient," or "wise."

You might call this, "coping skills." When you are there beside your child for eighteen years, you will share responses to life's knocks. They will learn from you how to deal with anger and conflict.

12. The meaning of life. A human without purpose is a parasite. In the heart of everyone is the faint knowledge that "I have been placed on this earth for a purpose higher than pleasure. I have a destiny to fulfill." As Christians, we know our destiny is to "be conformed to the image of his son (Rom. 8:29)." We must teach our children to live in light of eternity. □

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A Hymn to God the Father

BY JOHN DONNE (1572-1631)

Wilt thou forgive that sin where
I begun,
Which was my sin, though
it were done before?

Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I
run,

And do run still, though still I do
deplere?

When thou hast done, thou hast not
done,

For I have more.



Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their
door?

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?

When thou hast done, thou hast not
done,

For I have more



I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the
shore;

But swear by thyself, that at my death thy
Son

Shall shine as he shines now, and here-
tofore;

And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more. □

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The Restitution Herald

Volume 90, Number 6

August, September, 2001



Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman near Sychar. (John 4)



Six Years

This edition of the RESTITUTION HERALD is a very personal one from me as it touches on some themes that are very important to me. Some of the issues touched on, like Spiritual Direction or Hospice Care for the Dying, may be new to some of our readers, but they are both issues that I have deeply experienced and found incredibly valuable and desire to share with you, the reader.

Other issues touched on here are more familiar and will be more like old friends . . . the beginning of the Gospel as found in Genesis 3, God's provision for a substitute sacrifice and the faith evidenced in the life of Abraham . . . tasting the goodness of God's word. These subjects are old friends in the Church of God, but they are here presented in fresh new ways that are sure to inspire and uplift you in your spiritual journey.

Spiritual Direction is a classic spiritual discipline that has been largely unknown in the Protestant tradition of the Church. Thankfully, it has been rediscovered in recent years and its widening practice adds an important dimension to our spiritual growth. On a personal note, I would like to say that I have been receiving spiritual direction for three years. During the past year I have been receiving training in spiritual direction and I am now practicing spiritual direction as a part of my pastoral

ministry in my church and also as a wider ministry in my community. The personal benefits I've experienced are amazing as I've grown in my relationship with God through prayer and discernment, and those whom I have directed have shared with me their personal benefits. For this reason, I invite you to consider the first two articles as they relate to spiritual direction and I would welcome your responses and inquiries.

The article on care for the dying is another that touches me personally. For the past five years I've served as a volunteer chaplain for a local hospice and have provided spiritual care for the terminally ill. I've seen the incredible spiritual and emotional support that hospice care provides. Beyond that, during the past six months, I have been on the receiving end of hospice care as they offered spiritual support to my father as he died of cancer, and also to myself and my family. I want others throughout our Church community to know of the tremendous blessing hospice care can be. While this article is somewhat technical, it provides some necessary information that could be helpful to you or someone you know.

Another article which touches me is David Johnson's article on Freedom Vs. Strict Fundamentalism. David is a thoughtful member of the Church of God who

risks taking a close look at some of the attitudes that we carry with us in many of our Church communities. His article is challenging and prophetic and may very well cause some to react in anger, while no doubt others will shout a loud amen. I would invite you to consider deeply his words and if you choose to respond to them I would welcome your thoughtful responses and reflection. The purpose of the article is to create dialogue, not division. "Come, let us reason together" says the Lord.

This issue of the RESTITUTION HERALD completes my sixth year as your editor. I would like to solicit your feedback on this or any issue of the HERALD. Let me know what issues you find helpful. Let me know what areas you would like to see addressed that we are currently not addressing. As always, I welcome your articles and your letters.

May God bless each of you as you seek to serve Him in the days and weeks to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jeff Fletcher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Jeffrey Fletcher
Editor

The Restitution Herald

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD ADVOCATES:

- THE ONENESS OF GOD (1 COR. 8:6);
- THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD'S POWER (ACTS 1:8);
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON (MATT. 16:16), AND IS OUR MEDIATOR (1 TIM. 2:5);
- THE BIBLE IS THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD (2 TIM. 3:16);
- THE MORTALITY OF MAN (JOB 4:17; PSA. 146:4);
- THE NEAR RETURN OF CHRIST (ACTS 1:11), AND LIFE ONLY THROUGH HIM (COL. 3:3);
- THE LITERAL RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD (JOHN 5:28);
- THE IMMORTALIZATION OF THOSE IN CHRIST (1 COR. 15:53, 54);
- THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED (REV. 21:8);
- THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ISRAEL AS THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST (LUKE 1:32);
- THE CHURCH TO BE JOINT HEIRS WITH HIM (ROM. 8:17), AND ISRAEL TO BE MADE HEAD OVER GENTILE NATIONS (ISA. 60:1-3);
- THE "RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS WHICH GOD HATH SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN" (ACTS 3:21).
- IT ALSO FIRMLY ADVOCATES REPENTANCE AND IMMERSION IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS (ACTS 2:38), AND A CONSECRATED LIFE AS ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

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Making Space for God

BY JENNIFER H. DISNEY

What is “spiritual direction,” and why are evangelicals increasingly attracted to it? To find out, read this interview with *Holy Invitations* author Jeannette Bakke.

“Evangelicals are listening for God in ways that are different from our usual understanding of discipleship. We are looking at many Christian disciplines, including prayer, silence and solitude, discernment, journaling, and others. . . . Spiritual direction is one of these disciplines many evangelical Christians are learning about and exploring.”

So says Jeannette Bakke, a faculty associate at Bethel Theological Seminary, where she was professor of Christian education from 1978 to 1994. In a recent interview she discussed some of the themes in her book *Holy Invitations: Exploring Spiritual Direction* (Baker, 2000), the result of more than 15 years of study, receiving and giving spiritual direction, reflection, and teaching.

She was interviewed at Bethel Seminary by Jennifer H. Disney, a writer and psychologist who lives and works near Minneapolis-St. Paul.

What is spiritual direction?

It is a discipline in which, with the help of another, you try to listen to your own heart and to God's. It is about intention and attention: I desire to hear God, so I am going to make space to give God my attention. Spiritual direction is done either with two people or in groups of three or four.

I like to say that spiritual direction is discernment about discernment, as Christians are always in the process of

discernment in some way. When faith is important to us, we often consider such questions as How is God with me right now? How is God inviting me? What is God saying to me? Is God pleased with me? Where are God and I at war? We are often muddling along with those things. Spiritual direction gives people a place to talk out loud and confidentially about what they are thinking about already.

Many prefer the terms spiritual friend or spiritual companion to describe this relationship. Why do you like the term spiritual director?

It has value because this is the term used in the literature of this spiritual discipline. If you want to learn more about the discipline, you will find more resources using this term. Also, it's a helpful way to quickly distinguish this discipline from pastoral counseling, mentoring, discipling, or even intense friendship. In my experience, more and more Protestants, including evangelicals, are using the term to describe a particular kind of spiritual companionship.

Still, to be clear, a spiritual director doesn't “direct” or tell the other what to do; he or she simply asks questions, and suggests readings and practices to help the other discern God's presence.

Why is there a growing interest among Protestants and evangelicals in spiritual direction?

People are hungry for authentic spiritual companionship. Many are concerned about the crassness of the larger culture, and the fracturedness and pace of life — they desire to slow down and notice more about who they are and how to be

connected with God. They are dissatisfied with what feels like a lack of significance and are seeking something more.

Do you see anything like this contemporary movement in the history of evangelicalism?

Spiritual direction has always been a part of the church's experience, and different groups of Christians have described God's participation with us — the awareness of God's nearness and leading individually and collectively. The early Methodist class meetings, small groups in which people talked about their spiritual lives together, is perhaps the best-known example of a spiritual formation group.

How is it different from typical devotional practices?

Many Christians set aside a quiet time to be with God and pray. But we often hesitate to talk with someone else about it, partly because of our awareness of intimacy with God and a sense of privacy. But also, everyone I know, including me, thinks that his or her own prayer is inadequate, not very spiritual. There is a reticence to talk, because then others will see I am not so spiritual. Spiritual direction is a place to say, “I am an ordinary person but I have an extraordinary God, and it is okay to be just who I am, to ask God to be a part of the conversation, and to talk to another person about that.”

Why talk with another person about our personal relationship with God?

When we intend to be God's, to love God and serve God, we begin with high hopes and energy and desire to listen to, love, and follow God. But in our life

journey we do not know what we might encounter — what side paths will look interesting, what life circumstances will change our point of view. Birth, death, disease, surprises, love, joy — all these have their say in the journey.

As we continue along with God in and through the midst of life, at times we are drawn to God, and at other times we strike out on our own, either consciously or unintentionally. Being in spiritual direction, sharing our journey with others, helps us pay more attention to our lives, how we are responding to and resisting God as we move along. It assists our noticing grace in ways we might have missed.

A lot of what you're describing doesn't sound very "spiritual." Spiritual growth seems to include "negative" moments.

There are stages in the spiritual journey — of learning, serving, moving inward, opening all our questions, doubts, boredom, settling for mediocrity, having our pat answers blown wide open, being more aware of and responding to God's love, moving toward trusting God no matter what, running away from God when we are angry, hurt, disappointed, or afraid of God, life, or circumstances.

I think of the parable of the seeds falling on different kinds of ground. At times our ground, our hearts, are open, and at other times we are hard ground. Speaking with someone about our prayer and our life helps us notice what's going on and helps us offer our hearts as they are to God, to ask God for grace, mercy, assistance, or even to speak about our hardness and lack of desire. The divided human heart dwells in us, not just in others. There are many things we cannot see about ourselves — we need each other.

What keeps spiritual direction from being a subjective interpretation of another's life?

Eugene Peterson, in talking about spiritual direction, says, "Responding to God is not sheer guesswork. The Christian

community has acquired wisdom through the centuries that provides guidance." Spiritual direction is grounded within the Christian community and the wisdom that God gives. It isn't something totally subjective or mystical. It is grounded firmly in Christian theology, prayer, spirituality, and Scripture.

From listening to believers across a wide range of Christian faith traditions talk about their experiences in spiritual friendship, I am convinced that the charism of spiritual direction is always present in the body of Christ: "Where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them" (Matt. 18:20). Most Christians have had some experience of seeking God with another person, and been aware of the Holy Spirit's participation with them, but not called it spiritual direction.

*It is grounded firmly
in Christian theology,
prayer, spirituality,
and Scripture.*

.

What is the typical agenda in a spiritual direction session?

The agenda of spiritual direction is to have no agenda — except to be open to God. It is to say, "I would like to be available now with the director to see what God will show me." And of course that is always in the context of an ordinary life.

A session is usually about an hour long. It starts with greetings and then bridges into silence or Scripture reading or prayer together — some way to offer ourselves and the time to God, asking the Holy Spirit to be the real director.

Then the director waits for the directee to begin talking. Sometimes the directee may talk at length, or there may be a dialogue. But however it comes about, whether during or after, because it has been given to God, there is fruit from it.

One doesn't usually feel spiritual or religious, but I think the fruit of giving the time to God shows up eventually. Sometimes one is aware of when it shows up and sometimes not.

Sometimes in the session there is insight. The directee may say, "Oh, now I see — now when I say it out loud," or the director may ask a question that brings insight. But not always.

The director really serves in the background. There is God and the directee, and then there is the director, who is a prayerful, listening person. Spiritual directors try to put what they know on the back burner and listen to how God prompts them. You realize that God will do what God will do, and you are not in charge. Both director and directee desire to be willing to trust the Holy Spirit.

How is spiritual direction related to Scripture?

Spiritual direction is grounded in Scripture. Often we read and listen to biblical texts as we seek direction and God's voice. And the Bible is full of examples of spiritual direction. In the Old Testament, remember the story of Eli and Samuel, how Eli points Samuel to listen to God's voice. Jesus is the ultimate spiritual director because of his intimacy with God, his Abba. Take for example his encounter with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Jesus is acting as a spiritual director but also he is the risen but concealed Christ. He is listening to their story and responding by using Scripture — pointing them to the prophets' teaching about the coming Christ. But it is when they sit down with him for companionship at a meal that they recognize him as the Christ. What connects us with Jesus more often is companionship — making time to be with Jesus. Spiritual directors invite directees to slow down and ask, Where is God in this? Where is Jesus? Where is the risen Christ? And they often use Scripture to help others discern that.

(continued on page 24)

Spiritual Direction as Choosing Life

EXCERPTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH JEFFREY S. GAINES, MDiv.

Jeffrey S. Gaines, MDiv.
Executive Director of Spiritual Directors International. Published in *Hungryhearts News* Summer 1996.

What is Spiritual Direction?

HHN: The first question people usually raise about spiritual direction is, "What is it?"

JSG: Spiritual direction can mean different things to different people, but in my understanding it is *the art of Christian listening carried out in the context of a one-to-one trusting relationship*. It is when one Christian is trained to be a competent guide who then "companions" another person, listening to that person's life story with an ear for the movement of the Holy, of the Divine.

HHN: For many people spiritual direction is a new concept, and some people are uncomfortable with the word "director" because of what it might imply. Is it a problem for you?

JSG: I would say that "director" really is a misnomer, because God is the Director and I am simply one who companions. There is a tradition of using the word "director," and I don't see that being changed, but truly God is the Director, and the spiritual director simply assists the seeker in uncovering and discovering the *direction of God* in that person's life. This enables the directee to see, claim, receive, own, and reverence God's voice, God's nudging, and God's acting, in such a way that it elicits a natural and genuine response.

Spiritual direction — or mentoring, or companionship, or spiritual friendship —

has been part of the Christian tradition for centuries. It's part of the discipling model. People sought out Jesus because they saw that he was wiser, and they respected his walk with God. John Knox sought out Calvin in Geneva and walked with him. In monastic communities a novice might have the abbot as his/her spiritual director. These kinds of prayer relationships have existed down through the ages.

In the spiritual direction session there would be a candle or some other non-verbal symbol representing the Holy.

Distinctions Between Direction and Therapy

HHN: Can you say something about the relationship between spiritual direction and pastoral counseling or psychotherapy? Are they the same thing?

JSG: If you were to be looking through two one-way mirrors and on your left was a spiritual direction session and on your right was a pastoral counseling or psychiatric session, they may look quite similar, but actually there are important differences.

In the spiritual direction session there would be a candle or some other non-verbal symbol representing the Holy. It may be an open Bible, a plant, a cross, or maybe some water — something that is understood to represent the Holy.

Spiritual direction, unlike pastoral counseling, always happens in the context of prayer and spiritual intimacy. This is where intimate engagement happens. Whereas in psychotherapy the clinical distance is crucial to bring about objectivity and healing, in spiritual direction discernment is based upon the *intimate engagement* of two people walking into the sanctuary of God.

Another difference is that people usually enter pastoral counseling because something is *wrong* in their life, whether it is an area of shame, or guilt, or abuse, or addiction, or poor self-image. They're coming because something is wrong and they want it to be made right.

HHN: So they're in some sort of crisis

...
JSG: Yes. I really believe a crisis is what initially gets a person into therapy. It may not, however, be what keeps the person in the therapy, but it often is the initial threshold crossing. Spiritual direction deals with the assumption that the person is already whole, but hasn't yet fully embraced this truth for themselves.

Another important assumption of spiritual direction is that it is not for everyone, because it presumes some degree of psychological health in one's life. . . . We're really listening for the stream *beneath* the stream of the person's life, . . . for those moments of encounter with the Holy. A classic question is "Where is God in the midst of this experience . . . ?" "Directors do not *create* relationships between God and their directees, they simply foster these relationships so that they may deepen and grow . . ."

Hearing the Inner Call

HHN: What will impel someone to seek out spiritual direction then? Assuming that the person who is coming to explore this for the first time is not in crisis, is there something else that usually will draw them to this?

JSG: . . . a yearning for God — to understand meaning in their life; to gain a sense of discernment; to understand where they are going and how to live their life more fully.

HHN: So there might be some hunger or sense of something missing, but the real motivation is being drawn toward the possibility of living a more abundant life, as John 10:10 puts it?

JSG: Absolutely. I believe it really is a call . . . an inner longing and hunger for God — which is confirmed outwardly when the person finds the right director . . .

Making the Connections

HHN: How does someone who feels this yearning — this inner call — go about locating a spiritual director?

JSG: Well, they might initially begin by approaching someone whose spiritual life they respect, and asking that person to walk with them. That person may not be “trained” in the discipline of direction, but the directee respects that person’s walk with God. This experience will often lead to further reading, which will then lead people to finding out there is such a thing as a discipline of spiritual direction. In terms of resources to learn more about spiritual direction, a wonderful book is *Holy Listening*, by Margaret Guenther.

For people seeking a more formal spiritual direction relationship with someone who has been trained in this discipline, they might then ask their pastor or their friends to recommend a director in their community. *Spiritual Directors International (SDI)* does not endorse or recommend any particular directors, but we do assist in helping a person . . . by giving him or her the name of one of our

regional contacts who may know spiritual directors in their locale. The mission of SDI is to connect people with one another as an individual network of spiritual directors.

HHN: What about monetary compensation for the work of directors?

JSG: It is all over the map! In certain parts of the world, even the thought of charging a fee is anathema, because it is seen as a charism — a spiritual gift. In this country (U.S.A.), where it is someone’s livelihood . . . the normal range is between \$25-\$45 per session. This is simply saying “I’m taking this seriously.” In the U.S.A. to take something seriously, we usually put a monetary value on it . . .

Training of Spiritual Directors

HHN: Is there any kind of credential or specific training that you would look for in a spiritual director?

JSG: I don’t think you can be *trained* to be a spiritual director. First, you must have the gift, the charism — the gift then can be fine-tuned by training. I think this is a really key distinction.

There are about 350 training centers worldwide to train spiritual directors, that we are aware of, but there is no certifying body as of yet. SDI may do that in the future . . .

HHN: So you would look for someone who had gotten some kind of formal training in spiritual direction?

JSG: It would be a caution for me if a person hadn’t been trained. And if a person was not in direction him or herself, I definitely would not go to him or her.

HHN: Does it matter if the director is a member of your own faith tradition or denomination?

JSG: . . . I don’t think that the director needs to be a member of your own faith tradition or denomination, because if a person is truly listening for the movement of God,

they are listening beneath all the externals . . .

What to Expect

HHN: What might a directee expect?

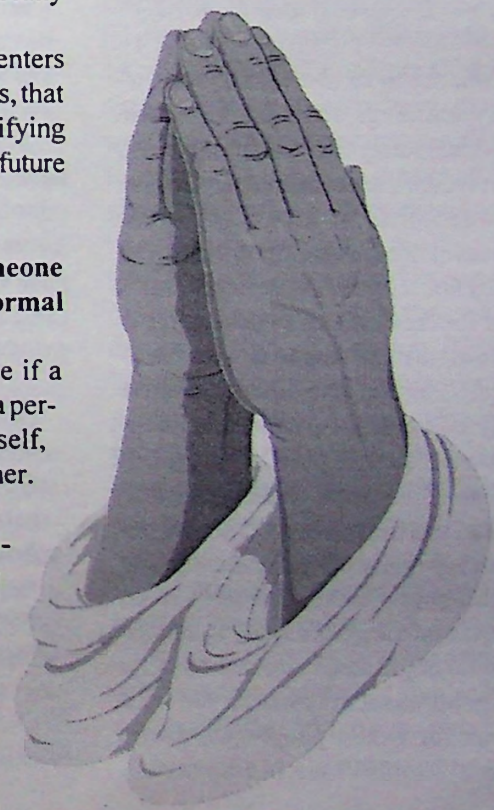
JSG: . . . A one-hour session per month which focuses on listening to and noticing what the movement has been in a person’s life.

Reaping the Harvest

HHN: One last question. What kinds of benefits or fruit could someone expect from ongoing work with a spiritual director?

JSG: A sense of inner peace and inner calm, a sense of direction in their life, and discernment. And the fruit would be actually living in and embracing the wonder and awe of God. □

¹ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*. New York: Seabury, 1981.



Tasting the Goodness of the Word!

BY PASTOR KENT ROSS

Recently our church has been examining those elementary teachings about Christ delineated in Hebrews 6: repentance from acts that lead to death, faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. But the text goes on to challenge us.

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace. (Hebrews 6:4-6.)

It is one thing to re-examine the “elementary teachings about Christ” again and again, and surely each time brings profit to us, but we are urged to go on from there. But there is a warning involved in those last three verses of not drawing back from what we already know and have experienced.

As we focused on these warnings, the one regarding not drawing back after “tasting the goodness of the word” seemed especially of concern. While the Bible remains the best-selling book of all time, and the best-selling book of each year, it is seldom read and appreciated. That seems true for all too many Christians and even regular churchgoers. And yet isn’t it us, who have tasted the goodness of the Word of God, who ought to be convinced of its inherent goodness and value for us? Too often, even for God’s people, the Bible seems more like nutritious, but dry cereal,

rather than nutritious food with peaches and cream.

Psalm 119, in its entirety, is written to help us call to mind the value of God’s Word. But particular portions stand out and call us to enter more fully into it.

Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees! Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands. I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws. I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me. (Psalm 119:1-8)

But it goes on throughout the psalm and advises us and warns us and instructs us and convicts us. “*How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word*” (v. 9). But we need to ask the Lord’s help. “*Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law*” (v. 18).

Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word. (vs. 34-37)

Note the emphasized areas, they call to God for help in appreciating the goodness

of His Word. In our sinful nature we do not, and perhaps cannot, do what we ought to do without His help. Romans 7 posits that dilemma, but also ends with thanks to the Lord, because through Jesus Christ we can come to love, value and appreciate what we ought to — such as appreciating, valuing and loving the goodness of the Word.

The Word Convicts Us

In Jeremiah 23:25-32, we can see the dangers that are there to deceive and confuse us.

“I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, ‘I had a dream! I had a dream!’ How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? They think the dreams they tell one another will make the people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?” declares the LORD. “Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? Therefore,” declares the LORD, “I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me. Yes,” declares the LORD, “I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, ‘The LORD declares.’ Indeed, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,” declares the LORD. “They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least,” declares the LORD.

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Self-control

BY MICHAEL AND DEBI PEARL

Two-year-old Johnny was sitting in his mother's lap at the kitchen table. He reached for a dish of steamed squash, but his mother pulled him back and said "No." He twisted his shoulders back and forth as if to break her grasp, and then he defiantly slapped the table with the palm of his hand. His face expressed anger. He made grunting noises that were clearly designed to imitate an angry bear. He highly resented his mother limiting his powers of indulgence. He wanted to indulge his senses of touch, smell, taste, and sight, along with the human drive to manipulate. And finally, he wanted to indulge in controlling his environment and those in it. This mentality of "give it to me now" has been developing since the day he was born. He has now had two years to accept it as a way of life. His parents are wondering if they should start training him to exercise self-control. However, they are two years overdue.

Parents are responsible to impart values and self-control to their children, but there is a dilemma. The infant has fully developed fleshly desires and habits of indulgence long before his mental faculties have developed to the level where he can understand the need to exercise self-control. When a child gets old enough to begin to develop a will to exercise self-control (possibly around three or four) his flesh is already well practiced in the dark arts of indulgence. His flesh will get a three or four year head start on the development of his sense of duty. He is born with a wanton but no stopper – with a gas peddle but no brake. At age three or four he will already be a confirmed "pleasure junkie," a "do as I please rebel," an "if it feels good do it hippie," a "nobody tells me

what to do politician," a spoiled brat. With intemperate habits already well formed, he is not going to appreciate the call of his newly developing conscience toward self-restraint. Nor will he appreciate anyone else trying to impose limitations on his addiction to indulgence.

In the extraordinary ignorance of modern psychology we are told that the child should be left to his own free expressions, that we must be careful not to suppress his personality. What will you do when his free expressions are antisocial, when his behavior is disgusting and embarrassing? Will you call it modern art, and appreciate it for its original departure from the prudent? To allow "free expression" is to allow the child the freedom to be in bondage to appetite and carnal desire. We would no more allow a child the freedom to wander and explore the bounds of his drives and passions than we would allow him the freedom to wander in traffic. If you lovingly provide everything a child needs, but fail to cross his will with enforced boundaries, you will by default produce a self-centered, carnally minded, emotionally disturbed, and (at the best) average member of the group hanging out at the mall.

Selfish Self-control

If parents don't institute and enforce boundaries, the child will eventually develop some of his own. It happens by osmosis as he bumps into the boundaries that society erects for its own selfish ends. A man who wants to eat everything learns to control his drive until he gets out of the store. A man who wants to get drunk, yet wants to keep his job so as to have enough money to keep drinking, learns not to drink

on the job. His self-interests will cause him to exercise the level of self-restraint necessary to continue functioning in a circle that "indulges and lets indulge." Any self-control your child develops out of his contact with society is going to be for the purpose of advancing his indulgence with the least amount of friction.

It is universal to disguise one's fleshly living as some form of self-restraint. This is possible because of that segment of society that has thrown off all restraint and indulges its flesh to the extreme. The radical fringe makes the vast majority of intemperate sinners look normal by comparison. The socially conscious majority are pragmatic enough to exercise sufficient self-restraint so as to maximize their indulgence without diminishing their mental pleasure in regard to their pride of life. In other words, the middle of the road sinner will learn to balance intemperance over against his desire to appear moral. His relative self-control is prompted by desires to both indulge and maintain a reputation that offers the most mental satisfaction. It is a juggling act of balancing one pleasure against another, the end always the same: self-gratification. This calculated and rationed self-restraint will never produce benevolence and godliness; it will produce sophisticated, culturally adapted hypocrites, who seek the fulfillment of animal drives while pretending a higher motive.

If you learn to function this way without hurting anyone other than a few people close to you, society will consider you mature and emotionally stable. You will succeed in life and can even be considered

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a good “Christian.” Wanting to appear righteous is not the same thing as wanting to be righteous. Sin has many roots and quite a few disguises. Jesus said, “You do indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but within you are full of dead men’s bones.”

In our present age, a child has no hope unless his parents have the wisdom and courage to ignore modern psychology and the low expectations of the church as they train up the child in the way he should go. Basically a child needs two things: a stable secure environment of love and understanding, and boundaries consistently enforced by a dignified authority.

It is the parent’s responsibility to cause the child to exercise moderation and restraint. When a child is less than two years old, you cannot expect him to offer any assistance in constraining his appetites and drives. He will eat everything that tastes good, demand anything that appeals to him, expect to be the center of attention, and is unwilling to wait for any reason. Face the fact: no child is going to develop wholesome self-control naturally, and if you wait for him to get old enough to adopt the relative standards of society, you will find yourself fighting a battle against well entrenched depravity.

So how do we induce a child to practice self-control in the early years before he is mature enough to understand the need to do so? A small child learns self-control when his will is constrained by an outside force — in our case, that outside force is his parents. For the constraint to translate into real training it must make use of the child’s will. If you tie a child’s hands behind his back, you have negated his ability to learn to control his hands. Likewise, if you place an object out of reach, the child cannot learn to restrain himself from reaching for it. *Self-control is learned when self is controlling self.* Pressure must be placed on the child’s will, not restraint on his body. The will of the child must be bracketed with constraints that cause him to *choose* to control his impulses.

You may ask how it is beneficial to *constrain* the child to choose the end we dictate if his choosing does not spring from his own values. Is the child building character if he chooses “A” simply because we are there to make it very unpleasant for him to choose “B,” on which his lust is focused?

Here is the key, the reason behind early conditioning. *We are constraining the volitional part of the child to control the appetite part.* In other words, we are exercising the spirit and will of the child, causing the self to exercise command over desire. Just as we move the limbs of a stroke victim in anticipation of the day when he will be able to move them, so we exercise the child’s will against the resistance of his fleshly drives, and this in

Self-control is learned
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.
anticipation of the day when he will be mature enough to value temperance. By causing the child to employ the mechanics of moral choice, he is denying his propensity to intemperance and is stunting the growth of his flesh, keeping it from gaining ascendancy in his life. Thus, when the child is old enough to hold his own moral values, he will already possess a will that is accustomed to exercising control over the flesh, and he will already be comfortable with the idea that life is built around the concept of self-control and self-denial. By way of illustration, we are not waiting for him to become a confirmed alcoholic; we are causing him to refuse the first drink.

People control impulses to seek pleasure only when they deem it needful to do so. Adults can see the future and recognize

the ill consequences of indiscriminate gratification, but a child can see only immediate pleasure or pain. His reason and conscience is worthless as a guide — powerless against the ever-present lust for pleasure. He knows no tomorrow, no day of judgment. If ill consequences do not come with the first bite or first touch, he does not consider the consequences. Don’t bother to tell him that too much candy will give him cavities or incline him to diabetes. Don’t bother to warn him that too much television will stunt his intellectual and social growth and diminish the quality of his life when he is grown. If it promises to feel good right now, he will do it. You are wasting your time to warn a plump child to exercise self-control in eating lest it result in more fat cells, thus inclining his or her body to obesity when full grown. It certainly won’t do any good to advise a child that when he or she is older this will help in impressing members of the opposite sex. The response will simply be, “Pass the mayonnaise and cheese dip.” You are wasting the child’s time to say “wait because patience is a virtue.” Virtue can’t be eaten. “I want to eat now, so why shouldn’t I?”

Later on a child may give up food because of valuing sex appeal and social image more than eating, but this is just a trade of one indulgence for another. The child has not learned self-control, but has simply learned to discriminate between roads to pleasure. The child is still leading a life with but one end — self-gratification.

Self-control is not expressed in any one act; it is a condition of heart. It is the character to sacrifice any gratification, legitimate or otherwise, for the sake of divine principle. It is following the high road at the expense of any pleasure or comfort. The entire moral condition could be summed up in the concept of self-control. Righteousness is almost synonymous with self-control. *If you have not trained the child to temperance by the age of three or four, then you have allowed depravity to perfect itself.*

So how do you cause a child to make a choice to deny his most pressing passions? If flesh is more fun, why would a child choose principle? He won't unless you add some element that convinces him there is more immediate pleasure in principle than passion, or more immediate pain in passion than in principle.

The child cannot yet understand that which is obvious to a mature Christian, that lack of self-control is sin, and in the end sin brings misery and death. There is a sowing and reaping principle in place. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8). Sin (lack of self-control) has negative consequences. Self-control (righteousness) has positive consequences. All intemperance, willfulness, lust, greed, self-seeking, and carnal indulgence is sin. Sin ends in death. The final consequence of sin will not come until judgment day, but it will come.

The child is incapable of understanding long range consequences even as short as one year away. Parents must modify the child's environment to make the negative consequences immediately apparent to the child. This will require the fabrication of a rule of law based on real reward and punishment in the here-and-now. Parents must construct circumstances so as to give the child a true representation of reality. You cannot explain to a two-year-old that if he runs into the road he could be hurt, but you can punish him when he crosses the sidewalk and thus cause him to "feel the hurt." You cannot tell a child that it is illegal to ride in a car unless in a restraining device. He will not understand the cost of a ticket or the potential for harm, but he can well understand the harm to his backside if he does not immediately sit down, buckle up, and enjoy the ride.

Keep in mind, the younger the child is the less he is able to retain in his memory the association between the act and the

consequences. The smaller a child is the more he lives in the present only. That is why so many parents have found their spankings so ineffective when they remove the child from the scene of the transgression to administer discipline. By the time the child has been led into the bedroom, he has forgotten the transgression. He associates the spanking with the bedroom, not the deed done in the living room. The same loss of association occurs when you delay spanking to grill the child with long lectures. He forgets the transgression and thinks he is getting a spanking for being bored with the speech. It is much more effective to administer one or two licks within seconds of the transgression. You don't need to make a lengthy ritual out of it. Some parents try to turn discipline into a revival meeting, complete with altar calls.

Likewise if you are not consistent, and you allow the child to occasionally get away with his lack of self-control, you are allowing a seed of dark hope to grow in his imagination. It doesn't matter that you spank him five consecutive times for the same offense; if you fail to spank him the sixth time he commits the offense, he will keep violating the rule, bearing the pain, hoping for the exception to roll around again.

You need to compare the child's desire to indulge to the desire of an alcoholic. It is not rational. It is idiotic. Just the smell of indulgence will drive a child to absurd lengths. If every time an alcoholic took a drink the alcohol produced an immediate hangover, once the drinker was convinced that the pattern would never change he would cease to drink. People drink because there is immediate pleasure in it. Children abandon themselves to uncontrolled indulgence because it is immediately pleasurable, and they care not for the next hour, much less for the rest of their lives.

Parenting is being on the spot to bring discipline to every area of a child's life. If the child is to grow morally, we must

arrange the consequences so that the child is always rewarded for the proper behavior and suffers for the negative. Make all negative behavior counterproductive and all positive behavior productive. Thwart any attempt of the child to act without restraint, by artificially constructing negative consequences.

Don't depend on corporal punishment alone. In reality this is not sufficient by itself. Training is much broader, and in most cases can achieve the desired end very effectively long before you must resort to spanking. If you can consistently deny a child the indulgence he desires, you need not spank. The bottom line is not that the child be spanked, but that the proposed infraction is thwarted to the point of being unpleasant.

If you arrange circumstances so as to constrain the child to choose correctly, you are strengthening his conscience while starving his desires, and you are preventing bad habits from developing. Then when the child is old enough to possess the reigns of his own choices, the transfer will be easy. He learns why one thing is right and why another is wrong, and he begins to make his own decisions based on values that are now his own. Self-control is the foundation of all civilization and the essence of law and righteousness. Start training early on. If you missed the first few years, you will experience a lot of resistance to the new order from the older kids, but you must stand by your guns until they are convinced that you will not vacillate, and then reconstruct your home around peace, love, and self-control. □

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You can order a copy of their book *To Train Up a Child* for \$4.00. Send to: The Church At Cane Creek; 1000 Pearl Road; Pleasantville, TN 37033

Freedom Vs. Strict Fundamentalism

BY DAVID L. JOHNSON

Preface

Perhaps I am a prodigal son of the Church of God. I have been much blessed by my Creator in a full life. I grew up in a strong family and my father raised me as a strict COG Fundamentalist. That is to say that my family's views of lifestyle and sin were those of a Pharisaical, legalistic interpretation of judgment. Upon reflecting on the Church of God movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I think believers *had* to be fundamentalist to survive with their doctrinal distinctives intact. That is due to the church's disjointed national structure.

I have served two terms on our national board, with the much revered Stan Ross and with our erstwhile diplomat David Krogh. I have been privileged to travel far and wide. My family was hosted by Alva Huffer as we enjoyed the richness of the Holy Land. (His book *Systematic Theology* is outstanding! But where is the promised Version II? Also, why has the Church of God produced no Prophecy Study Bible, such as those by Tim LaHaye and John Hagee? The future national policy of the Church of God must put the highest priority on using the considerable intellect available in the COG to produce a Study Bible, as well as an expanded edition of *Systematic Theology*.) I once traveled through Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, Leningrad to Vladivostok, with an anthropologist traveling companion. He had been a Lutheran pastor at the Jonathan Ecumenical Church in Minnesota. The board of his organization included a Jew, a Catholic, a Lutheran and representatives of many other faiths. My visits over the years with pastors

of many faiths, and Catholic priests, have granted me a better understanding of the great umbrella of Christian teaching. God also has blessed me with a helpmate for over 40 years and with four children, though we have had an empty nest for many years. All the trials and calamities of life have pounded me on the anvil of faith, and have given my faith a richness that far surpasses my youthful enthusiasm. Nonetheless, I remain fully convicted that God is one and that when my time is finished I shall sleep and await the Savior's call.

A Fresh Approach

Please bear with me as I share with you a *fresh approach to the 21st Century*. I have chosen marriage and divorce to illustrate this approach (all scripture is taken from the King James Version).

Jesus clearly taught and confirmed our Maker's total dedication to family. In the beginning God intended man and wife to marry and have children, thus to provide for and protect their family and to provide a blueprint for their offspring. This is thematic throughout scripture, and confirmed by Jesus. Sin entered, however, and caused division, one aspect of which is divorce.

It is argued, based on Matthew 5:32, that remarriage is forbidden to a divorcee, except for unfaithfulness (adultery): "But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." Fornication is the lone exception. Likewise Matthew 19:9 says: "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication,

and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." The underlying principle is that remarriage (adultery) results in loss of salvation.

Let us consider who Jesus was talking to in Matthew 19 — clearly this was the Pharisees (v. 3). He was addressing the abuses of divorce allowed within the Mosaic Law (v. 7). At that time a husband could write a bill of divorcement and put his wife out of his home. In the beginning such divorces were only allowed because of uncleanness (Deut. 24:1-4), however this rule had been perverted so that divorce was now practiced for the flimsiest of reasons. The Jewish practice was particularly cruel because it put a wife out with nothing. She received no share of the couple's accumulated property, had no rights or privileges with her children, and had no alimony or any money at all. Since most Jewish marriages were arranged relationships (no romance) they began at a very young age. Thus most divorced women of that time became destitute beggars; they had little or no skills for employment and that was coupled with the stigma of being a social outcast from a failed marriage. Jesus called attention to this dilemma, he was a social reformer. Consider the pattern today in the United States: in divorce property is split, women gain child custody, and alimony is granted by the courts.

I have asked a number of pastors whether they had lived up to the standards set in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7). After some consideration, they each confessed that they had failed. Jesus becomes the lawgiver. No one in the General Confer-

ence, or any church, has ever lived up to the standards set forth by Jesus the lawgiver. Therefore is it the Gospel, the good news? No. The Gospel is, as Paul said to the Corinthians, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures: "And that he was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:1, 3, 4). There is no mention in Matthew 5-7 of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore Matthew 5-7 leads us mortals to a standard which it is impossible for us to maintain. What the Sermon on the Mount does do is clearly show the way to Jesus' summation of the Ten Commandments. Jesus continues the compression process for the *Age of Grace* illustrated in Matthew 22:22-33. "Thou shalt love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" and in verse 39: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The Sermon on the Mount is Law lifted to the nth degree. Man failed to keep the Law of the Old Testament. So how in the world can anyone keep, in human strength, the Sermon on the Mount which elevated Law to an even higher degree?

It is likewise true that the *modus operandi* for Christian living is not really found in the Sermon on the Mount. It gives the ethic without supplying the dynamic. Living by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit is just not one of the truths taught in the Sermon on the Mount. Paul says:

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit

(Rom. 8:3-4). In studying the scripture you will find no reference which empowers us to judge each other to determine if we have complied with Jesus the Lawgiver's new law. This is the wonder of the Age of

Grace: only Jesus on the cross could say "forgive them for they know not what they do." But here is a problem: *all of us have a habit of becoming judgmental!*

Jesus set a much higher standard for man to live up to; if immediate judgment was needed surely he would have appointed someone to make judgments in future generations, to determine if we have lived up to the standard. But no greater Sanhedrin was appointed for the Age of Grace.

The Age of Grace was born with Matthew 22:37-40. But back in Matthew 7:1 the Jews were noted for their severe judgments and condemnation of their peers. *This was to stop.* Jesus declared "Judge not, that ye be not judged." In Matthew 7:3-5 a remarkable insight is presented, declaring us hypocrites when we judge others because of the beam (prejudice) in our mind's eye (mud) which makes us incapable to judge others with clarity. The penalty for human judgment is clearly laid out in verse 2: "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Only our Lord can see issues of judgment with crystal clarity.

It is quite clear that Jesus was addressing judgment concerning each individual's merits for salvation, as determined by their acts of disobedience to the Jewish law.

We must be clear in our understanding of Jesus' new commandment in Matthew 7:1: he told each of us with the dawning of the Age of Grace not to judge one another. Clearly in our daily lives all of us must make judgments about our mortal livelihood. However, as believers we must not — shall not — sit in judgment over another's sin or their erring in unacceptable human behavior when it relates to his or her qualification for salvation within the framework of biblical principles.

Jesus clearly told us, in no uncertain terms, that we are not to judge (Matt. 7:1). Why? Because our prejudice is so prevalent that it skews our decisions. Consider this: our parents' set of values, our school

learning (from K through 12), our Sunday School teachers, playmates, life experience (including media spin), *all* influence our mindset when making judgments. Sometimes we are told, and believe, truths; sometimes we accept untruths — all of these become part of our ultimate value system.

Many have assumed that in their case judgment is crystal clear. These verses prove it is *not*, because of the human "beam in the eye."

So if we are not to be a moral compass for fellow believers by judging, does this give us license to engage in immoral conduct? I refer you to Paul: "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." (1 Cor. 6:12). Paul reflects on the changed life driven by the "holy spirit": "What know ye not that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" (1 Cor. 6:19). The point being that baptism, putting on Jesus Christ, and living a spirit-filled life keep us from iniquities. "Unto you first God having raised up his son Jesus Christ sent him to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26).

Paul continues his discourse on freedom from the Law (or *strict fundamentalism*): "What then shall we sin because we are not under the Law, but under grace? God forbid!" (Romans 6:15). Paul continued this point in Romans 7:4, and outlined the principle of living under grace and with a new body within the believer.

The Bible is sharper than a two-edged sword useful for doctrine, reproof and a whole list of additional applications. Pastors correctly inform their flocks of the consequences of marriage and divorce — the problems occur when judgment is delivered. It is the pastor's prerogative to refuse to conduct a marriage ceremony. However it is the pastor's responsibility to counsel and support the soon to be married couple, regardless of his choice about the ceremony.

Each of us strives to be in the first resurrection (1 Thess. 4:13-18)! Stand back and reflect for a while and you will see that

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The Proto-gospel

BY R.C. SPROUL

If we consult Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, we will discover a fascinating study of the word *evangelion*. This is the Greek term that is translated "Gospel." In rudimentary form the word means simply "good news, message or announcement." The word was employed in antiquity for almost any kind of good tidings, such as the good report on the outcome of a battle delivered by a runner. Hence the allusion Paul makes in Romans 10 to Isaiah's words in Isaiah 52:7.

The reference to beautiful feet reflects the joyous anticipation of the watchman who is posted as a look-out for an approaching messenger. Without the benefit of CNN ancient people relied on the reception of reports by runners. The experienced watchman could discern the nature of the message by the distant sight of the movement of the messenger's feet. If the runner appeared to be sluggish or plodding it indicated the footsteps of despair — bad news. If the messenger's feet were flying, with an obvious excitement and eagerness to complete the run, it signaled good news. Hence, the sight of the feet of the runner who brought good news was deemed "beautiful."

In the New Testament there is a progressive movement of the meaning of the term "Gospel." The Gospel is first proclaimed in the New Testament by angels. The term "angel" itself means "messenger." It comes from the same root as the word evangelism (see Luke 2:10).

Later with the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus the accent was on the proclamation of the "Gospel of the King-

dom." John the Baptist was the herald of this announcement. Much of Jesus' teaching, especially in His parables, focused on the announcement of the advent of the Kingdom of God.

In the writings of Paul the focus changes from the kingdom (which he does not repudiate) to the person and work of Christ. Paul speaks of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This does not mean simply the Gospel that Jesus Himself announced but rather the good news *about* Jesus Christ.

This progressive change in emphasis does not indicate a disparity between the Gospel Jesus proclaimed and that proclaimed by Paul and the other Apostles. The Gospel was and is always about Christ. It finds its core significance in Him and in what He has accomplished in our behalf.

The Gospel is not an innovation of the New Testament. That it is called "good news" may be a bit misleading. We see the link between the words "news" and "new." We read the newspaper to find out what's new. But though there are new aspects revealed about the specific details for the Gospel found in the New Testament there is a sense in which the good news of the Gospel is in fact "old news." It is found in a multitude of places in the Old Testament, as the New Testament writers are fond of pointing out.

Indeed the "news" of the Gospel is as old as the Garden of Eden. The Gospel was first preached to Adam and Eve. The Preacher who delivered the message was God Himself. This message is known in the church as the Proto-Evangelion or the "First Gospel." Technically, the Gospel was not preached to Adam and Eve directly. Pre-

sumably they were eavesdroppers or bystanders who overheard it. Indeed to the original audience it was not even a Gospel, it was bad news delivered in the form of a curse. The original recipient was an audience of one, the serpent who beguiled Adam and Eve. This malediction — turned Gospel — is found in Genesis 3:14-15.

There is irony here. We usually understand the Gospel in terms of reconciliation. Yet the first Gospel is couched in terms of enmity and alienation. Christ proclaimed a Gospel of peace, but in Genesis the message is about conflict. As part of the curse God placed upon the serpent, He decreed that He would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, between the serpent's seed and the woman's Seed.

The thinly veiled good news in this decree is found in the divine promise that the mortal enemy of the human race will ultimately be vanquished. It is good news to Adam and Eve and to us that the evil one who led in temptation and fall will not be the friend of fallen people in need of redemption. The enemy of the serpent will emerge as our ally, indeed as our champion in cosmic conflict.

The promise of the proto-Gospel is the promise of victory — it is the promise of One who will come from the Seed of the woman who will be *Christus Victor*.

There is an ominous note contained in the proto-Gospel. The good news is that the head of the serpent will be crushed, fatally bruised by the heel of the Seed of the woman. The image is of a strong man grinding his heel into the head of a snake. It is not that the snake will be kicked or merely injured by the confrontation. Nor

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The Lord Will Provide

BY O. PALMER ROBERTSON

"The Lord will provide" (Gen. 22:8, 14). This testimony of Abraham took great faith. God had made him wait for a miracle to have this son. This one son named Isaac God Himself had designated as the only one through whom all the promises of the covenant would flow. But now the voice of the Lord says to offer him as a sacrifice. 'Go to the mountain I have chosen, lay him on an altar, take away his life, and let the flames consume his corpse.'

What do you imagine went through the patriarch's mind? Did he question the propriety of God's ordering human sacrifice? Apparently not. Did he question whether or not he had dreamed this whole thing? His rising up early the next morning to do the deed nullifies that suggestion. Did he conclude that God had contradicted Himself? That puzzling prospect must have been the one thing Abraham kept mulling over. God had said, "This son is the one, the only one through whom all the promises shall be fulfilled." Would it not be a flat contradiction for Him now to command, "Take this your son, the only one, the one you love, and sacrifice him as a burnt offering"?

Walking is good for thinking, and no doubt Abraham was thinking deeply as he walked the three days from Beersheba on the edge of the desert to Mt. Moriah, the place chosen by God in the hills of Judea for this the most awesome of sacrifices. The precise train of thought that went through the mind of Abraham we cannot fully reconstruct. But whatever his line of reasoning might have been, it did not interfere with his determination to obey the perplexing commission of the Lord.

We do not know all the details, but we know the outline of his reasoning. Later Scripture tells us what he thought (Heb. 11:17-19).

Only faith, belief in the reality of the invisible, all-powerful, ever-present, forever-faithful God, could have reasoned in this fashion. But once these assumptions about the reality of the Lord of the covenant had been made, the logic was irresistible. God cannot lie. God said all the promises will be fulfilled through this son. For some unknown reason this same God now commands that this son be sacrificed. So this God who proved Himself once to be the author of life by implanting Isaac in the dead womb of Sarah must intend to bring him again to life after he is sacrificed.

It must not be overlooked that Abraham's son Isaac also participated in this act of faith. He was the strong youth following behind an aged father. He penetrated quite quickly the problem in his father's preparations. "Look, the fire and the wood," he observed, "but where is the lamb?" (v. 7). "God will provide for Himself" replied the father.

It couldn't have taken Isaac long to get the point. He accepted without resistance the role of the sacrifice. Strong enough to overpower his father, who was well over 100 years of age at this point, the son allowed himself to be bound on the altar, and watched as the knife was lifted, poised for the plunge. His was the role of the willing sacrifice, and fulfilling it he played the part with a trust that reflected the faith of his father.

But the Lord had His own sacrifice prepared. A ram caught in the thicket would substitute. The son was spared, though in the mind and the will of Abraham he already had been offered up for the past three days.

"On-the-mount-of-the-Lord-it-will-be-seen," was the designation given to this sacred moment, according to a literal translation of the text. Two things must be noted about this memorial name. First, the event occurred on the particular mountain specified by the Lord. This place where Abraham offered his only son was God's personal choice. Later it proved to be the mount where David would offer his atoning sacrifice to stop the wrath of God for his sin in numbering the people (2 Chron. 3:1). On this very same mountain Solomon constructed the temple that had been planned by David, and consecrated it with the first of sacrifices that would continue almost unbroken for the next 1,000 years. To this same spot Jesus came to present Himself as the Son of God, offering to sacrifice His life in reality where Isaac was offered only in the mind of his father. This mountain, the mountain of the offering of Isaac, was indeed the place chosen by the Lord Himself. God intended to do a world-saving deed on this mountain, and so Abraham's offering could be nowhere else.

Secondly, on this mount the Lord would see to the sacrifice, providing the actual offering that was to be made. It looked as though Abraham would be the one to surrender his son. But he was spared the agony of plunging the knife and consuming his son in the sacrificial flames. All along it was God's intent to provide His beloved

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The Proto-Gospel (continued from page 14)

will the Seed of the woman merely step on the snake's tail, leaving him to wriggle away to safety. No, the good news is that the conflict will not end in a draw or in mild chastisement. The conflict will end with a mortal blow delivered to the serpent.

But the victory will have a price tag. It will not be accomplished without pain to

the Seed of the woman. In crushing the head of the serpent, His own heel will be bruised. He must feel the fury of His enemy, the pain of bared fangs that inject venom. But His is not an Achilles' Heel by which He will Himself be destroyed, having been bruised in a vulnerable point. Yes,

He will die in the battle, but death will lack the power or authority to hold Him. The wound will be fatal, but not final. His triumph will be complete. The Suffering Servant of Israel will emerge as her risen, glorious King. This is The Gospel in a nutshell. □

Tasting the Goodness of the Word! (continued from page 8)

There are many today weaving attractive fantasies of faith that have no basis whatsoever in God's Word! Yet because of the ignorance of what is in God's word, even those who consider themselves God's people are led astray after these fanciful demigogues, lying prophets. Instead of dreams, we need to have the Word of God faithfully taught and preached. We need to be convicted of the dangers of false gospels that will lead to a loss of God.

The Word Warns Us

Isaiah speaks to those who ought to have been God's people, but who had lost their connection with Him.

They say to the seers, "See no more visions!" and to the prophets "Give us no more visions of what is right! *Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions.* Leave this way, get off the path, and *stop confronting us* with the Holy One of Israel! (Isaiah 30:10, 11)

"Tell us pleasant things" reminds us of Paul's warning in 2 Timothy 4:3, 4,

For the time will come when they will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

That is exactly what Isaiah said that those who had been God's people were saying,

"Stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!" But isn't that exactly what I want from the Lord, that through His Word He would confront me in my errors and lead me into the paths of righteousness?

We need to re-learn to love the truth of God's Word and to discover and appreciate its goodness, partly because it is true but also because it helps us discover His Son and the hope of the Kingdom.

The Word Instructs Us

Along with convicting us of the need to hear His Word, and the warning He gives over not heeding His Word, God also instructs us about how we ought to live, and what should be priority in our lives.

The Wise Preacher says, as part of the whole section on getting wisdom, "My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body." (Proverbs 4:20-22).

How much time and energy is generally spent in study of the Word of God? There is usually just twenty minutes or so for a Sunday School or Growth Group lesson. We have time for coffee and fellowship, both of which are fine, but there is precious little time for study of the Word so we can grow deeper into our relationship with Him.

Paul exhorted us to study: "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be

ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Five phrases seem to jump out at us:

"*Do your best*" – Ask yourself: "Am I spending much time at this, getting to know Him and His Word?"

"*Present yourself to God as one approved*" – Again, ask: "Do I realize how high a priority this relationship with God ought to be for me?"

"*A workman*" – We often work at our work, but seldom at our Bible study, or our spiritual relationship with God. That gets thrown together in the few moments we try to spare Him.

"*Who does not need to be ashamed*" – Maybe we can not motivate many by making them feel guilty, but this ought to motivate God's people. He calls to us to change our stinkin' thinkin' and get back to Him.

"*Who correctly handles the Word of Truth*" – That's what all Christians must strive for, for this is His Holy Word. It is His communication to those who claim to be His people.

Have you "tasted the goodness of the word of God?" Don't turn away from it, or let its importance slip to low priority in your life. It is His Word that fully reveals Jesus, His Son, and God's plan for the future of the world in the Age-to-Come!

We need to regain the position of being people of the Word. We need to know it, to apply it, and then to communicate it, for it is the Word of Life! □

The Lord Will Provide (continued from page 15)

Son as the sacrifice. Before the foundation of the world the Lord had determined that His Son would be slain in the place of sinners (Rev. 13:8). The offering of Isaac was to be a picture but not the reality. What Abraham did in a figure, God did in fact.

By Abraham's example of faith, you are encouraged to exercise your faith. Why

should it be more difficult for you today to entrust your hope of reconciliation to God's sacrifice of His own Son than it was for Abraham to offer his own son in sacrifice?

Extend your trust toward the God who has provided, continues to provide and shall

yet provide. For the mount that He designated for Abraham's offering of his son, was the place where His Son, by His appointment, was chosen to be sacrificed and accepted His role. In His own Son Jesus Christ all the provision necessary for fullness of life through time and eternity has been clearly seen. □

Freedom Vs. Strict Fundamentalism (continued from page 13)

all are judged every day by Jesus. We are judged by our choices and our actions as to whether we will be accepted on that glorious day. Likewise we appeal daily to Jesus the mediator when we err. Thus final judgment of all of man's deeds is unequivocally given to Jesus. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to Jesus his son" (John 5:22).

Jesus' ministry supplies us with a broad range of examples of His compassion. Of the many that are available, however, I have chosen John 8:1-11. Jesus is teaching in front of the temple. The scribes and Pharisees bring him a woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery. They probably set the woman in the midst of a scriptural study discussion. This whole episode is an attempt to trap Jesus and disgrace him through their courts and Jewish law. Obviously Mosaic Law dictates that the penalty for adultery is that the woman must be stoned (vs. 4, 5)! The Pharisees asked "How would you, Jesus, treat this case?" Now Jesus, saying nothing, stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground. Finally Jesus stood up and proclaimed "He that is without sin among you let him first cast the first stone"; then he sat down again. Astounded, the accusers looked at one another reflecting on their collective guilt and one by one walked away! Finally Jesus stood up and being

alone with the woman asked "Where are your accusers and those who condemned you?" The woman, who is not given a name, replied. "No man, Lord." Now comes the reply for the Age of Grace — Jesus said "Neither do I. *Go and sin no more*" (vs. 11). Total forgiveness! No condemnation! No Judgment! No penalty!

Brethren, let us rejoice that the Lord has blessed us. Only in extreme cases is there justification for a pastor or any church being forced to strip any of their flock of full membership rights and privileges because of unacceptable behavior.

Our Maker has provided us with the light of His Son Jesus and the written word. All of us must study to receive additional light. Let us apply this to the problem of sitting in judgment and find the blessing of peace.

For additional insight into this matter I refer you to the parable of the sheaves, Matthew 13:24-30, and Jesus' interpretation of it, in Matthew 13:36-43. The church must develop a much broader policy toward divorce and the many failures of human behavior in this century, the twenty-first. Approximately half of all marriages now end in divorce, for many reasons. However it is now extremely important that the church become a hospital for sinners and God's healing. Paul's teaching shows the way to accepting in our midst

folks who are of a diversity of lifestyles. The truth of the scripture will deliver and prevail.

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul was a Jew. Historians relate that Paul was raised in a strict Jewish home observant of Jewish Law, the Torah and the Talmud. He was obviously an extremely bright student, which earned him the select privilege of mentorship from the great Rabbi Gamaliel (a senior member of the Great Sanhedrin). This ultimately made Paul a Pharisee legalist. It explains his zeal to destroy the Christians whom the Pharisees believed to have blasphemed God.

By the power of the Holy Spirit Paul made a truly remarkable turn around. He proclaimed himself free of Pharisaic Legalism in such scriptures as 1 Corinthians 6:12; Romans 6:15; and 7:4. He declared that he had found Freedom from the Law through Christ. Surely we, who are not under Paul's inherited and inherent bonds, can do no less. □

Editor's Note: Readers who wish to respond to the content of this article in a thoughtful and reflective way are invited to submit their comments to the editor for consideration.

Care for the Dying: The Church and Hospice

BY DR. RANDALL E. OTTO, PH.D.

Although she has experienced no miracles and has not been cured, Donna White no longer contemplates suicide. The coronary artery disease which already forces the thirty-seven-year-old woman to breathe from an oxygen machine and inject herself with morphine, will bring death soon. She is now able to cope with her condition and her pain.

Donna White once wished for pills, poison, starvation, anything that would end her torment. She bought the Hemlock Society's best-selling suicide guide *Final Exit*, looked for a doctor who would provide the lethal drugs, and prepared to end her life. Like most people who face death, White had three fears: she didn't want to die in pain, she didn't want to die alone, and she didn't want to bring great financial or emotional cost to her family. The only solution to these fears that she knew of was suicide. While searching for a doctor to provide her with the deadly dose, White found a better solution: hospice.

Like 250,000 other terminally ill Americans each year, Donna White found in hospice care the solution to her three driving fears. She would not have to die in pain, because a hospice nurse who specializes in pain relief joined with her doctor to find a more effective combination of drugs to minimize the pain and taught White how to control the amount of drugs she needed. "Once they got my pain under control, I started thinking with my heart," White says. She wouldn't have to die alone, because the hospice concept is built around an integrated support network involving family, friends, medical and spiritual assistance. Finally, she wouldn't bring great financial or emotional loss to her family, because hospice care is considerably less expensive than hospital care, with whatever costs

that are not paid by Medicaid underwritten by outside sources. The integrated support of family and friends to the dying process, plus subsequent bereavement counseling, gave White assurance that the emotional cost would also be lessened by the hospice approach.¹

There are now almost 2000 hospices throughout the United States. As the nation debates issues surrounding health care and costs, euthanasia and assisted suicide, and the patient's right to autonomy in determining the extent to which aggressive curative therapy should be administered, only one approach adequately resolves the issues involved: hospice. As ABC's medical editor Dr. Timothy Johnson, also an ordained clergyman, says,

We should be doing far more in our health-care system to develop and support local hospices. If hospices were geographically and financially available, I believe that the person considering suicide would prefer the hospice. In fact, if we did an adequate job of providing such care, the issue of physician-assisted suicide would largely disappear.²

If it is going to faithfully care for the dying, the church must actively promote and support hospice.

The Present Debate

Modern medical technology offers many ways of aggressively combating cancer and other terminal illnesses, yet it often fails to consider the physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial effects of such treatment on the patient. Increasingly, patients are seeking to take control back from the medical technologists, to say

when aggressive therapy aimed at a cure should be suspended. This has resulted in the present surge of interest in living wills and the durable power of attorney. Through these means, patients may now declare the extent to which treatment should be pursued in the attempt to restore them to health or keep them alive. Patients may now declare when treatment should be halted so that they may die with dignity and not be kept alive artificially by a connection to a machine. Based on the patient's advanced directive, life-sustaining technology may be withheld or withdrawn so that the disease may take its course and death result.

The desire to reclaim control over how one dies has led many to the advocacy of active euthanasia and assisted suicide, in which active measures are taken to effect death. In active euthanasia, the doctor acts deliberately to cause death, usually by giving the patient a drug overdose. This practice was brought to the fore in an anonymous account of a gynecology resident's decision to inject a young cancer patient with whom he had no prior acquaintance with a lethal dose of morphine. Entitled "It's Over, Debbie," this article elicited a storm of physician outrage for its attack on medical protocol and its violation of the hallowed canon of medical ethics expressed in the Hippocratic oath: doctors must not kill.³ In physician-assisted suicide, the doctor gives the patient the drugs and counsel necessary to administer the lethal dose himself. In 1989, physician-assisted suicide was granted a veneer of medical acceptability when the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* ran an article in which ten out of twelve physicians endorsed physician-assisted suicide.⁴

That some doctors see little wrong with killing is becoming more evident. When Dr. Timothy Quill, a Rochester, New York physician, reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1991 that he had given instructions and adequate supplies of barbiturates so that Diane, a cancer patient he had known and treated for years, could and did kill herself, no outcry occurred such as had followed the publication of "It's Over, Debbie." In fact, what followed was mostly approval. The fact that Quill had a prior relationship with his patient in which he offered medical care with deep concern for the patient's well-being seemed to justify his act to many physicians.⁵

There is increasing support for euthanasia and assisted suicide in the United States. In November, 1994, Oregon voters passed the so-called Death With Dignity Act, also known as Measure 16, which permits physicians to prescribe lethal drugs for terminally ill patients. As is the case with the active euthanasia permitted in the Netherlands, the Oregon measure contains certain stipulations which are intended to arrest the possibility of abuse. This is purportedly ensured by a terminal diagnosis of the patient, concurrence by a second physician, testing for depression, repeated requests at specified intervals, self-administration of the dosage, and family notification. As is the case with the Dutch experience, however, once on the slippery slope, the safeguards against abuse are regularly overlooked and even legally permitted to be bypassed so that euthanasia may be foisted on a patient who is not terminally ill and who has made no such request.⁶

According to Sherwin Nuland, M.D., author of the 1994 National Book Award winning *How We Die*, 57% of Americans now approve of some form of physician-assisted suicide. Although he is committed to the concept of euthanasia, Nuland acknowledges that "euthanasia is killing." His concern about the "slippery slope" moves him to suggest a series of steps to safeguard abuse: (1) A request by a patient or family member to end life must be

defensible; they must have examined all the alternatives and not be in a state of depression treatable by therapy or drugs, (2) If after a reasonable challenge the doctor is convinced that a request for death is appropriate, another specialist should be consulted, as well as experts in the field of palliative care (symptom control and comfort care), (3) the request for euthanasia be made to a "council of sages" made up of educators, civic leaders, philosophers, clergy, lawyers, or other laypeople with "collective wisdom." Nuland concludes, however, that such requests for death will be minimal when proper care is given to those who suffer.

In my experience, most people who ask for death do so because of symptoms or a state of mind that can be relieved by proper attention and consultation. When the symptoms lessen, these people no longer want to die.⁷

The Hospice Alternative

Advocates of assisted suicide and euthanasia seek to help people die in comfort and with dignity. How dignified is it, however, when a doctor, charged with care and cure, actively kills his patient or provides the means for the patient to do it himself? Such an approach must be resisted by those committed to Holy Scripture, particularly on the basis of the sixth commandment not to kill. The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "The Sixth Commandment requireth all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others" (Q. 67). The Heidelberg Catechism states that the sixth commandment requires "that I do not harm myself or willfully expose myself to danger" and that the Christian "prevent injury" to his neighbor "as much as we can" (Qs. 105, 107). Scripture's affirmation of the sanctity of all life and its prohibition against doing injury or harm to ourselves or to others compels a different approach to helping people die in comfort and with control and dignity than the misguided proposals of euthanasia or assisted suicide. The Christian approach must be that of hospice. The Anglican Bishop Maurice A.

P. Wood has remarked, "A strong supporter of euthanasia once told me that only the hospice movement, undergirded by the religious stress on the sanctity of life, could withstand the demands of euthanasia."⁸

Hospice is an approach to care that is designed to support the physical, psychosocial, and spiritual needs of people who are terminally ill. It is a physician-directed, nurse-coordinated, interdisciplinary approach to patient care available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Its goal is to allow the dying process to unfold with a minimum of discomfort and to maintain patient dignity and quality of life to the end. Care is provided by family and friends at home or in a homelike setting within a hospital or special facility. The hospice team, which in addition to the patient's physician and the hospice nurse also includes social workers, chaplains, and volunteers, addresses the needs of the patient as well as those of the family members during the process of death and following its occurrence.

"Hospice" and "hospital" both come from the Latin word *hospes*, which meant both host and guest. This idea of reciprocity of care in community is central to the hospice idea and markedly distinguishes it from the modern hospital.

From *hospes* to hospital, the psychology has changed from one of love to one of war, and in the psychology of war, force is imperative. Therefore we arrive at the strange, new embrace that pins the inert body of a man or woman, terminally ill, to a machine that forces that person's body to breathe without even knowing its name.⁹

The aggressive approach of the hospital construes the disease as an enemy to be defeated, while the physical, emotional, and financial pain that results from this aggressive treatment on the patient is often regarded, in military euphemism, as "collateral damage." With treatment options for cancer and other terminally ill patients greater than ever, the scope of the modern

hospital is almost exclusively curative and all the weapons at its technological disposal are launched in the effort to destroy the enemy of health, disease. While the treatment of those who can be cured has vastly improved in the twentieth century, the way the terminally ill are cared for has grown steadily worse.

Doctors are simply not adequately prepared for treating the terminally ill. "It is regrettably true that the majority of physicians in the United States have never been taught the techniques of treating the physical, psychological or emotional symptoms of terminal disease."¹⁰ Medical students often have but one course in pharmacology and drug therapy. They fail to appreciate the pain of their patients and do not treat that pain effectively. This is only now being rectified. In December, 1993 the American Medical Association, as part of its new resolution against euthanasia and assisted suicide, resolved to promote better pain control for dying patients. Early in 1994 the U.S. Agency for Health Care Policy and Research issued new guidelines on "Management of Cancer Pain," admitting that while cancer pain can be managed effectively through relatively simple means in up to 90% of the eight million Americans who have cancer, pain associated with cancer is frequently undertreated. Asserting that drug therapy is the cornerstone of cancer pain management, the guidelines say "an essential principle in using medications to manage cancer pain is to individualize the regimen to the patient."¹¹ These and similar recommendations which are now being urged upon oncologists and others treating the terminally ill have been known to hospice physicians and nurses for decades.

Chronic pain can render life meaningless and enhance the desire for the end. Some Christians think the inability to find meaning in pain is a major reason for the promotion of assisted suicide in contemporary society.

The most compelling reason why physician-assisted suicide is becoming

a reality is that our postmodern, technological culture cannot find meaning in suffering. The patient has no framework for dealing with pain and hopelessness and therefore struggles for answers.¹²

These Christians are right to emphasize the need for faith in responding to pain, but their well-intended remarks can sound callous to those who suffer unbearably.

Anyone who has worked with cancer or AIDS patients in pain realizes what nonsense it is to say that excruciating pain from a terminal illness has any redeeming value. This kind of argument from the opponents of euthanasia only strengthens the convictions of Hemlock Society supporters.¹³

The pain of cancer is particularly meaningless, serving no useful purpose, such as warning the sufferer of imminent harm. Unless appropriately treated, cancer pain usually grows more rather than less severe. Without adequate treatment, it frequently expands to occupy a patient's whole attention and isolates him or her from the world around. When this occurs, the patient may believe that life is no longer worth living. One survey reported that 69% of cancer patients would consider committing suicide if their pain was not adequately treated.¹⁴

The church's responsibility is to care for the dying, not simply to preach the redemptive value of suffering. It can do this through hospice.

The hospice approach is not concerned with aggressive cure of the disease, but with palliative care of the patient. Those who want aggressive efforts undertaken to cure their disease are not candidates for hospice care. Many people who are seriously ill and their doctors continue to search for new treatments even when it is apparent that nothing will arrest the spread of the disease. Hospice is for those who recognize that they are terminally ill and who desire no further debilitation from radical attempts at a cure. Medication is

kept to a minimum and procedures such as IVs, transfusions, surgery, chemotherapy or radiation therapy are not used except for possible short-term palliative therapy for pain relief. Hospice is for those who, by their doctor's best evaluation, have a limited time left to live, usually six months or less. A patient can be considered to be irretrievably in the dying process if: (1) there is no treatment that will significantly alter the patient's disease, (2) the disease is progressive, (3) the goals are short, (4) the intent is not to prolong life, and even more to the point, the intent is not to prolong dying.¹⁵ Hospice is for those who desire that their remaining days be spent in the company of family and friends, alert and with a minimum of pain and medical intervention.

Hospice is not a place, but an integrated program of caring. Hospice care can occur in resident facilities such as specialized sections of hospitals and separate buildings or it can occur at home. From its beginning in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974, hospice in the United States has emphasized in-home care.¹⁶ Regardless of whether the hospice program is done at home or in a resident facility, it is completely unlike the sterility of the hospital setting. Hospice endeavors to approximate the normalcy of life as much as possible, since it views death as a normal part of life, not something to be hidden. As such, the normal life setting of the patient is encouraged, with unrestricted access to family, friends, and pets, all of which contribute to making life at the end as meaningful and enjoyable as possible. If depression or other circumstances have caused the patient to let his surroundings deteriorate, a family member or volunteer will clean up and help to reestablish a dignified environment.

Approximately 70% of the people in this country will die in an institution, removed from family, friends, intimate surroundings, and everything that has made their lives valuable. It was not, of course, always that way. Before modern medical advances, the family doctor used to come

to the home of the dying patient and, with clergy and loved ones close at hand, provide care in the last days of life. Healing does not always mean curing. Sometimes it means helping the patient to prepare for death and to enjoy the last days of his life. Dame Cicely Saunders describes the archetypal hospice philosophy of St. Christopher's in England:

Healing a person does not always mean curing a disease. Sometimes healing means learning to care for others, finding a new wholeness as a family — being reconciled. Or it can mean easing the pain of dying or allowing someone to die when the time comes. There is a difference between prolonging life and prolonging the act of dying until the patient lives a travesty of life. At St. Christopher's, we try to offer people space in which to be themselves. We hold fast, but with open hands; because sometimes the most important part of loving can be knowing how and when to let go.¹⁷

While utilizing the latest advances in medical understanding to control pain and provide comfort in its palliative care, hospice returns to the holistic and integrated approach to death and dying of days gone by. Surveys report that 90% of Americans would prefer to die at home, in familiar surroundings, with family and friends nearby.¹⁸ Hospice ensures that they can spend their final days meaningfully, virtually free from pain and in an environment and amongst people they know and love.

Hospice medicine successfully controls the symptoms of the disease so the patient feels little or no pain right up to the end. It provides regular nurse's visits to check on how the drug therapy is working and provides instruction to the patient and family on self-administration of dosages to manage pain and control nausea and vomiting. It provides nutritional counseling and evaluation of eating habits to enhance the patient's sense of well-being. Occupational therapy, physical therapy, and

speech therapy are available, as is emotional and psychological counseling and support. Spiritual support and guidance is available, as virtually all hospices have chaplains who regularly visit the patient and assess needs. Home support services by hospice volunteers are also available, such as doing shopping for the family, providing transportation for the patient, and, perhaps most importantly, companionship, just being there to share with the patient for an hour or two a week. Volunteers also provide respite care for periodic relief of family members from the stresses of caring for the patient at home. Legal and financial advice are also available in preparation for the death of the loved one. Finally, hospice workers become so integrated into the family of the patient that they remain with them in and through the death of the loved one, providing bereavement care for the survivors following the time of death. Hospice thus provides holistic care for the terminally ill patient and his family so that the process of death may be one of dignity, love, and meaning for all involved.

The Church and Hospice

Hospice is a concept whose time has come, though it is hardly new. The roots of hospice go back to the first century church, when the *hospitium* served as a resting place for the *hospes*, the guest on his way to and from a pilgrimage. Fabiola, a disciple of St. Jerome, founded a *hospitium* in Rome nearly two thousand years ago to care for pilgrims returning from Africa. Other such way stations for the care of the needy traveler are known, such as the hospice of Turmanin in Syria in 475, but perhaps the most noteworthy is the care for the sick provided by the Knights Hospitalers of the Order of St. John in the twelfth century. Their statutes for the care of the sick call attention to the hospitality that was due to the guest (*hospes*). Hospitality and care for the sick pilgrim and weary traveler, whatever his worldly status, were central to these precursors to the modern hospice. Founded in the Christian

conviction that all life has sanctity and dignity, these servants of God ministered faithfully to all in need as unto the Lord Jesus himself.

The first "hospice" so-called was founded in the nineteenth century by Mary Aikenhead and the Irish Sisters of Charity in Dublin.¹⁹ Since then, particularly through the impetus provided by Dame Cicely Saunders, a devout Christian and founder of St. Christopher's hospice in England in 1967, hospices have arisen in all fifty states of the United States and in many foreign countries. Some remain church-based, such as Malachi House in Cleveland,²⁰ while many others are community-based care facilities founded out of a broader constituency but retaining the religious and spiritual aspect foundational to the holistic hospice concept. Often it has been clergy and concerned Christian laypeople who have been instrumental in forming hospice care in their area. This was the case with the formation of the first American hospice in New Haven, Connecticut in 1974 and has also been true as the hospice concept has taken hold in foreign countries, such as Japan, Taiwan, India, Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong.²¹ This is not always easy to accomplish, particularly since some cultures, such as the Japanese, have traditionally avoided discussion of the issue of death and have had nothing to do with the dying.²² The holistic, integrated approach to death and dying that is foundational to hospice should, however, actually have greater appeal to non-Western cultures where community is emphasized over individualism and integration is accented over specialization and compartmentalization in thinking.

Hospice does provide a new opportunity for ministry by clergy and laity.²³ Clergy, of course, can play a vital role in ministering the love and grace of Christ to those who are terminally ill and in need of the hope and assurance that only the gospel can bring. They can do this not only among their own parishioners who are terminally ill, but among those in the broader community who are in a hospice program through

service as a hospice chaplain.²⁴ Clergy can also be valuable in ministering to hospice workers themselves, providing them with counsel to relieve stress.²⁵ George Gates warns that pastoral counselors must assert their rightful role in the hospice program or it may well be relegated to another. "A risk exists that if pastoral counselors do not begin to assume their team role, they may relinquish this opportunity to other disciplines."²⁶ Even if they do not initially intend to become active in hospice, clergy can improve their ability to minister to the dying by taking the fifteen to twenty hours of volunteer hospice training that local hospices regularly provide. Certainly, clergy cannot afford to be unaware of what hospice is and how it can benefit the dying. It is, therefore, incumbent upon seminaries to include hospice in preparing students for ministry in church and society.²⁷ Continuing education of ministers must also include addressing the significance of hospice. Lay people also have a key role to play in hospice home support. They are needed to be a friend to the terminally ill patient and his family, to spend an hour or two a week just being a companion, and also to do helpful errands such as providing transportation, doing shopping, and perhaps occasional respite care. The layperson may feel initial reluctance to embrace this ministry based on a sense of inadequacy in working with the dying. Many of these feelings of reluctance are assuaged by the volunteer training that hospices require for all who work in the program. Lay people should also be aware that clergy also sometimes feel a sense of inadequacy in dealing with the dying. All who do work with the dying come to realize, however, that it is far less a matter of what one says than it is of what one is, a person who cares and makes that care evident in being there to help however he or she can. Those who do hospice work are those with some personal commitment to spiritual values and who enjoy helping and caring for others. While it is probably not for everyone, those who feel called to such work will find that they receive greater blessings

from their work and their patients than they themselves give.

The Future of Hospice

Hospice is very likely the wave of the future in health care. "Hospice should be at the top of the agenda for health care reform in this country."²⁸ Health care providers are increasingly recognizing the benefits of hospice care.

Hospice care is generally recognized to be less expensive than hospital care. While the estimates of 30-60% savings compared to hospitalization have been questioned by some,²⁹ there appears to be no doubt that hospice does offer a cheaper alternative to radical and aggressive inpatient therapy.³⁰ Patient stays in the hospice program average 59 days with no expensive invasive procedures utilized except as needed for short-term palliative care. Not only does such an approach entail far less cost, but it also reduces the difficult decisions that sometimes have to be made regarding the utilization of invasive procedures of questionable worth. Cundiff says most people do not want artificial hydration and nutrition if they are terminally ill, since it induces significant pain.³¹

The public dialogue about whether nutrition and hydration must be provided at the end of life has enhanced the ability of hospice care providers to ensure patient comfort. Such measures now are generally assessed just as are any other medical treatment measures, with the benefits and burdens weighed relative to the patient's goals and values. Conventional replacement hydration commonly leads to oral and pulmonary secretions in excess of the dying patient's ability to handle them. Thus, foregoing the provision of nutrition or hydration by other than the oral route ordinarily enhances the patient's comfort during the last few days of life.³²

By foregoing invasive means, hospice thus enhances the quality of the dying patient's last days and obviates troublesome ethical questions surrounding the use or withholding of artificial hydration and nutrition.

With the growing number of patients with end-stage chronic illness, including AIDS, seeking hospice services, average hospice costs will escalate. This is because AIDS patients may still benefit from costly medications and require higher maintenance care for longer and more unpredictable periods. Symptom control is a common and severe problem that remains difficult to improve in HIV/AIDS patients.³³ Thus, although 84% of hospice patients have been diagnosed with cancer, AIDS will continue to require greater attention among hospice caregivers. It is generally agreed that AIDS does not fit the cancer model of hospice care and requires a different setup which is more costly and less definite in terms of beginning and procedure.³⁴ Psychosocial support is notably less among neighbors of AIDS patients and work among AIDS patients is more time consuming and stressful for hospice staff.³⁵ Notwithstanding, AIDS patients are more satisfied with hospice care than non-hospice care.³⁶

Thus, although there are problems that remain to be worked out with hospice care as it ministers to those with AIDS, endeavors to be more responsive to those with other terminal illnesses, and seeks fiscal integrity and aims at the greatest accessibility, it seems clear that hospice is vital to future health care. The church must promote the hospice approach by reclaiming its historic role in caring for the dying and their families. It can do this by providing information on hospice and actively engaging in hospice support, both financially and through volunteerism. As the church engages in hospice work by ministering to those who are dying and their families, it will help to render moot the case that is made for euthanasia and assisted suicide. In so doing, it will demonstrate that the sanctity of life and the dignity of each human being are rooted in faithful commitment to God, who cares for the dying through His church and calls them into the true community that is consummately to be found in Jesus Christ. □

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