



CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE



Christianity
Magazine

Christianity

ENCOURAGING DAILY LIVING FOR CHRIST

MAGAZINE

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**POSITIVE
CHRISTIANITY**
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EDITOR: Ed Harrell

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"Latch On To The Affirmative"

The very concept of Christianity is positive. Sin with all its produce, is negative. Forgiveness with all it affords for us, is inherently positive. It is frightening to consider what a drab existence life would be if there was no fact of forgiveness, if there was no assurance of divine association, if there was no route of pursuit which ends in Heaven. It all resolves into hope. And hope is in its very nature positive.

Christians should be the most positive people in the world. They are the people most connected to hope. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4). God's reservation is sure. His abundant mercy is true. What a blessed assurance!

It is impossible for God to lie. Talk about positive. That's positive. Determined to show His complete resolve to those to whom He made the promise of the great reward, He confirmed it with His own oath because He could swear by no greater than Himself. Now "this hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil" (Hebrews 6:19-20). Hope is forward-looking; it reaches those greatly desired areas where we cannot yet go. It does for us what no other mental process can do. Hope reaches eternity.

But love is the most positive thing in life. It is the great cause. It is the supreme motive. It is the progressive force for good, the dominant reason for peace, the activator of all that is noble. It behaves in a predictably positive manner. It is patient; it suffers long. It has a quiet confidence about it and is never rowdy or boisterous. It is ever strong and abiding, helpful and harmless. It enhances every situation it touches and strengthens every relationship where it is allowed residence.

Love is very personal, yet it does its best work when it is spread around. It is inexhaustibly forgiving even though it will discipline without hesitation. It is the object of the king and the precious joy of his subjects. It condemns sin but welcomes the sinner. The majesty of it is too grand for any man to adequately describe and yet the smallest child can utter it meaningfully. It can elevate the spirit and bring spring to the step, yet it can tear at the heart of the lonely and bring melancholy to the one left behind. It is the wonderful, positive paradox, love is.

Humans are fitted for such optimistic and visionary concepts. If there is one thing Christianity is forever involved with it is right thinking. Positive thinking is the power of the Christian; he is not just assigned such high use of the mind, he is privileged of it. "Whatsoever things are true . . . noble . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report . . . meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8). Things *true*, or things that agree with the facts; real things. Things which are *noble* or honorable; things which bring glory to God. Things *just*, fair, honest. Things *pure*, not mixed with the wrong; sincere. Things *lovely*; pleasing things; beautiful things. And things of *good report* (an accounting of things is a report); we should keep only the good. Ah, what a grand community is that one where Christianity is practiced. Where affirmative, positive and edifying thinking is the rule.

There are risks involved in positive thinking. The risk of self-righteousness follows thinking too much of oneself (cf. Romans 12:3). There is the potential for preoccupation so that we become unrealistic (cf. Luke 14: 28-33). And then there's always the problem of being so taken by the "rah-rah's" that we forget what the project is (cf. Matthew 23:23-24). But, as Johnny Mercer's great lyric suggests, "You gotta accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative; latch on to the affirmative; and don't mess with Mister In-between."

Prospectus

Of making many books there is no end. In offering CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE we have no delusions of grandeur nor do we intend to detract from the solid contributions of others. Papers, like people, tend to have unique personalities. All of us like some better than others and we hope that this new offering may be attractive and instructive to some who receive a copy. We encourage you to share it with others.

PURPOSE

CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE intends to provide scriptural, practical, timely, and readable articles that will build faith and hope. While we do not question the need for all sorts of religious writing—polemical, scholarly, investigative—we believe there is a widespread craving for literature which will build up the weak and encourage all those who have set out to follow Christ. Several names were discussed while this magazine was in the planning stages. One was "For Building Up." It was a good sentiment and we hope that CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE can be used for building up. A close second in our search for a name was "The Joyful Christian." While all of us know that Christianity is not all joy, we are also conscious that of all people in the world Christians should be joyous. We are happy in the Lord, though not complacent; triumphant in our faith, though not

finished with the fight; rejoicing in our hope, though not counting ourselves already to have attained. While there is much that is wrong in

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the world—and we shall feel free to comment about it—there is a true and right way called Christianity. We want to hold it high.

The theme of the first issue of CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE illustrates both the form that the magazine will take and its purpose. "Positive Christianity" we believe is the answer in a world jaded on secularism and sin. As we note elsewhere in this issue, "Positive Christianity" is often negative—opposing immorality and doctrinal flab—but it also focuses on the light which illuminates this dark and sinful world. It is that bright hope we seek to explore and magnify. We know that "Positive Christianity" has often been used as a cloak for maliciousness and weakness. It need not be so. The love and grace of God Almighty are majestic themes, as are His awesome judgment and power, and we intend to explore them all with reverence and candor.

AUDIENCE

CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE is not a preacher's magazine, though we hope that preachers will find it useful. In style, content and tone it is aimed at that great body of Christians, young and old, who need encouragement, practical teaching and admonition on a regular basis. It will be a magazine that can edify the weak, as well as feed the strong. We believe it will be a paper that you can give to your non-Christian neighbor with the assurance that it will teach him in a scriptural, firm

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and yet friendly way. While we have no intention of avoiding the toughest and most controversial questions the Bible raises, we shall address them from the Scriptures, not in language laden with theological jargon and set aflame by contemporary controversy.

The modern media saturates our senses with trash. It also provides stiff competition for one who hopes to talk about grander and purer themes. Is it possible to produce a magazine attractive enough, journalistically competent enough, and yet scriptural enough that it can be useful and used? We don't know. We have pledged one year to find out. We believe it is needed. Do you agree?

FORMAT

CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE has four editors: Dee Bowman, Paul Earnhart, Ed Harrell and Brent Lewis. Each editor will contribute two regular columns to the magazine. Dee Bowman brings an effervescent, ebullient spirit that will lift you up and a scriptural common sense that will build you up. Paul Earnhart, one of the finest Bible students of our time, will offer scriptural studies rivalling the finest commentaries. From Ed Harrell we might expect a touch of the scholarly, a pinch of the ridiculous, a little semi-dry Will Rogers wit and the unexpected. Brent Lewis brings to the magazine one of the finest journalistic minds and pens among modern Christians. Combined, these men have taught tens of thousands in person; we hope you will make them regular literary acquaintances.

In addition, the paper will feature other regular columns. Sewell Hall, perhaps the most knowledgeable observer of the spread of Christianity in the modern world, will offer a regular column entitled "Lights in the World." His articles about and interviews with the heroes and heroines on the frontiers of our faith should encourage and inspire us. Under such headings as "Woman's World," "Youth Forum," "Parents' Page," "Teaching Tips" and "Ways That Work" the editors shall ask contributors to address the most

pressing practical problems faced by modern Christians.

In this issue, among others, Marilyn Harrell Hardage addresses women about the particular problems of being both female and a Christian; young Russ Bowman tells of a Christian confrontation on a college campus; and Berry Kercheville, one of the most successful church builders around, writes with simple common sense about what has worked for him.

Spirit." Each thematic section will comprise a twelve page insert in the center of the magazine and it may be extracted to circulate as a tract or to use as a teaching tool.

Each issue of the magazine will be directed by a single editor on a rotating basis. We are confident that each will be scriptural and profitable—we also believe that every issue will have its own distinctive character and flair. The magazine will also feature a regular section

"DEE BOWMAN brings an effervescent, ebullient spirit that will lift you up . . . PAUL EARNHART will offer scriptural studies rivalling the finest commentaries . . . from ED HARRELL we might expect a touch of the scholarly, a pinch of the ridiculous, a little semi-dry Will Rogers wit and the unexpected . . . BRENT LEWIS brings to the magazine one of the finest journalistic minds and pens. These men have taught tens of thousands in person; we hope you will make them regular literary acquaintances."

Most distinctively, twelve pages of each issue will address a central theme. Twelve authors will write on discreet and concrete topics in short, pithy and practical articles. The theme sections will explore subjects ranging from the personal and subjective—"How Do I Live In This Mess?" and "True Spirituality"—to the doctrinal and theological—"Restoring New Testament Christianity" and "The Holy

called "Soundings" so you can tell us what you like and dislike.

APPEAL

Do you and your family need something joyful to read?

Do you know a weak Christian who would profit from thinking on "Positive Christianity?"

Do you feel that the time is ripe to tell the world that plain, Biblical Christianity is the answer?

How about looking us over?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

I Am A Christian

"The Americans demanded that they were free, masterless individuals," wrote Alexis De Tocqueville in his classic description of the American character in 1835, "they sought absolute independence and equality of status. They imagine that their whole destiny is in their own hands. . . . They acquire the habit of always considering themselves as standing alone." It is this fierce independence of mind that has allowed New Testament Christianity to flourish in America. I am sure we are all thankful for the freedom of speech and conscience which has been the incubator of New Testament Christianity in the modern world.

It is precisely this habit of mind that led many nineteenth century American Christians to renounce the religious baggage of centuries and to call for a return to primitive Christianity. New England preacher Elias Smith stated that plea powerfully: "I am a Christian . . . calling no man father or master; holding as abominable in the sight of God everything highly esteemed among men, such as calvinism, arminianism, freewillism, universalism, reverend, parsons, chaplains, doctors of divinity, surplices, notes, creeds, covenants, platforms." Nobly stated. As a historian, I have been repulsed by the human forms of religion—by obscure theological systems, fruitless hair-splitting and semantical debate, by ecclesiastical institutions that bear no resemblance to the Christianity of the New Testament, and by fat and flabby preachers whose selfish motives are transparent. Societies have often turned anti-religious because of such perversions; it is easy to understand why. If all there was to commend religion to us was its historic forms and its present institutions, I would opt for an enlightened secularism. If I propose to stand against war, it won't be at the behest of a political activist who appeals to a God of his own creation to support a cause of his own creation; and while I do indeed urge others to be moral, I have no interest in a religio-political movement that mixes the divine and the profane without discrimination to support right-wing politics.

Like Elias Smith, I thank God that I am just a Christian. Oh, it takes some courage to stand alone, with our "whole destiny" in our own hands. It means ridding ourselves of the accumulated assumptions of the centuries, standing lone and without prejudice before the Word of God. It means, as Alexander Campbell said, that we must "open the New Testament as if mortal man had never seen it before." There is a spiritual exhilaration in such pioneering, as there must have been in viewing this continent for the first time. But it demands brave and adventuresome men and women, the kind that carved out the American nation.

To be a Christian only, free from theological jargon and culture-bound institutions, is not only an exciting business, it is also the right way. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). I refuse all other labels and I am bored by all other systems of thought. I am a Christian.

Ouch, Crunch, Squeeze

I remember years ago when one of our children got her head caught in the seat in front of her at church services. Getting back between the spokes proved more difficult than getting through to the other side. Frustration was followed by panic, then tears, then bedlam. She was finally rescued by two or three mechanically-minded brethren.

I have been in some tight places myself—in fact, I am in one at the moment. My problem is strikingly similar to my daughter's. I can manage to squeeze through my arms and legs, even my body, but my head just won't go. Why is it that our heads won't go through small places? I have noticed that even those with small brains frequently have large heads. I know one thing—if I ever get out of the spot I'm in, I'm going to have to shrink my head and get it in the proper shape. Men just aren't built for going through the eye of a needle. And if you think it's hard getting through on a camel's back, try driving to heaven in a Mercedes Benz.



Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 5235 94th St., Lubbock, TX 79424

Soundings is intended to be a true *reader response column*. We want to know what you, the readers, think about this paper and what we are saying. The reason is simple—our effectiveness depends on our capacity to determine that. Is it possible that those of us who preach and write are “answering questions which no one is asking?” We hope not, but we sure don’t want to be. And the only way we can know if we’re “on target” is to hear from you.

In the Prospectus of this premiere issue we have stated our intent of addressing the pressing practical problems of those of us who are trying to serve our Lord. What are those problems? Well, we are certain that you know them as well, or better, than we. So, we are hoping for a steady stream of feedback from you. *Why would you write to us?*

1. To suggest a subject. There may be some topic which you would like to see treated in the magazine. A portion of each issue of this paper will be on a particular theme. Those of us who serve as editors all have some ideas about themes. We think they are good ideas. But we would welcome suggestions from you. We cannot promise that we will follow each suggestion, but we will certainly value and consider each one.

2. To comment on an article. If we do the job we expect to do, we are going to “stir up your sincere minds” in each issue. You may want to write us in order to “amen” a particular

piece. “I enjoyed the article on such-and-such. I believe brother Smart got to the heart of the matter. Something else I would add is . . .” In the same way, you may wish to disagree. “I appreciate the article by brother Not-So-Smart on . . . However, I do not agree with his conclusion. It seems to me such-and-such.” All we ask is that you write in a brotherly spirit and keep it brief—under 150 words.

***This
is the
place where
you, the
reader,
have the
opportunity
to say
what’s on
your mind.***

3. To edify, exhort and encourage. You may have some beneficial and constructive observation that you believe needs to be stated. We cannot promise that every comment will be carried here, but those that we believe to be of enough interest and profit to others will be used. The format and nature of this magazine precludes the acceptance of unsolicited

articles. But this is a place where you can “sound off” on some things that may help others. You don’t have to be a preacher to say something that needs to be said. In fact, maybe you need to sound off about preachers! At any rate, please observe the 150-word maximum.

4. To comment on current events. Things are happening around us every day. We are all involved in them, to some extent. The things you read in the newspaper and see on television may cause you to want to speak out. You may want to call for others’ response on the same issue. This is the place for you to do that. We can all profit from your thinking.

Paul said, “For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself” (Romans 14:7). Those of us connected with *Christianity Magazine* recognize the many and varied contributions that others can make to this endeavor. We are not in this alone; we solicit your help, your cooperation and your participation.

Christians are all interrelated. Someone has said, “We can see that life is a cycling phenomenon which occurs in many forms within a single system. Nothing stands alone—no individual, species, or community; no rain drop, snow crystal, cloud or stream; no mountain and no sea—for in a cycle each thing in one way or another is connected with everything else.” We are connected with you. We value what you have to say. Let us hear from you.

Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

Understanding Who I Am

The man made his way into the psychiatrist's office for his first visit, taking a seat in the big easy chair. Balanced on top of his head was a fried egg, and two strips of bacon crisscrossed over his ears and hanging down between his eyes. He said nothing, seemingly impervious to his strange headpiece. The psychiatrist, totally nonplussed, began, "Just what is it that seems to be your problem?" "Oh," he said, "I'm not here about *myself*—I need to talk to you about my *brother*!"

We all have difficulty seeing ourselves for who we are. The problem, it would seem, is with the other fellow. Jesus recognized this when He said, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:4).

Who Am I?

What is man? A dozen different answers could be given to that question, depending on one's viewpoint. The divine answer is that man has been made by God and is made in God-like fashion (Genesis 1:26-28). Man is the crowning act of God's creation. What does it mean when the Bible says that man was "made in the image of God?" Well, it does not mean physical likeness, because God is a spiritual being (John 4:24). No, it means that God reproduced in man His own nature, and gave to man, singularly among all creatures, the ingredients of personality—will, intelligence, emotion.

The primary principle that motivates God is *love*—for "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Love is the driving force of the Deity. It splays over into all His activities and attributes. It is the mainspring that moves the heart of God, and is the deep underlying force that governs God's actions in the universe.

And this is precisely how man was made. He was given a personality (will, intelligence, and emotion) just like God's and made to operate in the same way—being motivated by love. God's image can therefore be seen in man in the sense that God made man like Himself to be ruled, governed and fulfilled by the pure quality of love.

How God Designed Man

It is important that we understand this. Man can never understand why he behaves the way he does until he understands who and what he is. And our needs as human beings can never be fully realized until we are rightly related to God. We have a design deep within us

that revolves around a center that is love-related—and that love is not a selfish, human love but a love that comes from God Himself.

Life was made to orbit around the central force of God's meaning for our lives, and anyone who tries to order his life around any other pivotal point will become bored, restless, frustrated and unfulfilled. He is not functioning as God designed. No man can know a meaningful existence on this earth until God rules at the center of his life.

How did Satan attack the first human pair in the garden? He came to the woman and made an appeal based on her *self-interest*. He posed the question, "Has God really forbidden you to do that?" She began to wonder whether she was really missing out on something. The more she thought about it the more it created doubt in her own mind that God was really good, and it encouraged her to seek after that which God forbade.

Man's Real Problem

This is exactly what sin is all about. It is choosing our own way rather than God's way. People often think of sin as the performance of specific acts: murder, adultery, lying. Actually these are only symptoms of an inner disharmony. Man's basic problem is that he has dethroned God from the center of his being and has in turn enthroned self-interest, egocentricity and self-worship in place of the Almighty.

We must see this at the root of all of our problems with our brother or our self. Man is designed by God with a personality that only operates smoothly when fed by His love. When he separates himself from that stream of eternal love and seeks to run his life on another motivation which is basically egocentric—he has denied the nature of the man whom God created.

Sin must be seen as refusing God a rightful place in the center of my being. It is saying to God, "I want to run my own life. I don't want you telling me what to do."

It is only as we deal with this deep problem of egocentricity that we can solve the related problems with brother or self, and move forward to live our lives according to God's design. There is nothing more vital in life than for me to deal honestly, fairly and righteously with: my brother / my self.

Ways That Work

Having Trouble Getting A Class?

Berry Kercheville

Have you ever heard a preacher say to his audience that more Christians need to get out and teach the lost, set up some Bible classes, and invite people to the services of the church? After hearing such an exhortation, have you ever felt guilty that you were not doing what you could to save souls? I am sure that most of us have been in similar situations and felt some pretty strong feelings of inadequacy when it comes to talking to a person about his soul.

Yes, we desperately need more Christians involved in bringing the lost to Christ, but is it true that most Christians don't want to do this, or is it simply the case that many Christians don't know how to go about it? I believe the latter is the greater problem. Let us look at some solutions to getting a Bible study with a person who is not a Christian.

The first thing we need to develop is a more positive and compassionate attitude toward those who are lost. When Jesus saw the multitude, "he was moved with compassion on them" (Matthew 9:36). We need to see people in need, as "sheep having no shepherd," and not prejudge them as stubborn, belligerent sinners who couldn't care less about the Lord. We need to believe that the truth is exciting and interesting and therefore something that every person would want to hear.

Secondly, if we are going to muster all this courage to give an invitation, let's offer that which will be most profitable—namely, spending an hour in a private Bible study. To invite a person to church services is to often lose the opportunity. Every situation is different but many people will agree to a one hour Bible study who are not interested in "going to church." Besides, the sermon for the day may not be what they need at all. And if they turn you down, then it is more difficult to ask for the class.

Now with the aforementioned points as a foundation, let's answer the question, "How do we get the class?" There are generally two situations that arise giving one an opportunity. One occasion often comes by surprise when a friend mentions something Biblical or

religious, whether making a statement or asking a question. The tendency for many Christians is to try to answer their question or elaborate on their statement even though time and the lack of a Bible prohibits a *complete* discussion of the subject. A more profitable use of the opportunity would be to point out that their question cannot be answered in a few minutes, and therefore it would be better to get together for an hour one evening to study the point thoroughly.

"bring up the subject" or by trying to "work the conversation around to the Bible." Instead, relax and have fun discussing anything and everything. If religion does not come up, that is fine too, because it is a very simple matter to ask for the class as the last point of the conversation before you leave. One could say, "Well, I've got to be going, but I did want to tell you about a Bible study you might be interested in." You will be surprised at how many will

"The first thing we need to develop is a more positive and compassionate attitude toward those who are lost. . . . We need to see people in need, as 'sheep having no shepherd,' and not prejudge them as stubborn, belligerent sinners who couldn't care less about the Lord."

The other occasion where opportunity knocks is when you do the knocking. In other words, it is the result of your visiting a friend or neighbor for the express purpose of getting a Bible study with them. Admittedly, this is a scary situation for many. But try this approach. Just go for a visit; go to get to know the person better; go for the enjoyment of making a friend. Don't put yourself under pressure by trying to

respond positively to such a non-pressurized approach. Further, it is easiest to ask for only one class at a time instead of trying to commit someone to a number of weeks of study.

Finally, let us never forget "God who gives the increase." Let us pray that He will help us; that He will give us boldness to speak; and that the word may have free course and be glorified.

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Until We Have Ears

Men seldom see things alike. It's not that reality wears so many faces; it's just that men choose to look at things differently. Some people in Jesus' day were sure that He was the Son of God, but they were in the minority. Many very religious people thought He kept the wrong company—prostitutes, well-known extortioners, notorious people. And, after all, "a man is known by the company he keeps." He said He spent His time with sinners because they needed Him (Luke 5:31). But most people thought that was a likely story.

Some thought they had never heard a man speak with the wisdom and clarity that Jesus did (John 7:45). Others laughed at the idea that a man of such little learning and background—a nobody—could be thought wise, except perhaps by the ignorant and irreligious (Mark 6:3; John 7:47-49). Jesus said that His teaching came from God and that those who wanted to do God's will would be able to recognize that (John 7:15-17). Many, however, still complained that His teaching was vague (John 10:24) and often preposterous (John 6:42, 52).

Jesus did not come to a very good end. It is said that men die as they have lived—and Jesus' death was scandalous. He was charged with high crimes by the rulers of His people and executed in the company of two notorious thieves. Many thought it absolutely ludicrous that such a weak, pathetic figure should claim to be the Son of God, the King of kings, and they said so (Matthew 27:39-44). The truth is that even His disciples who had believed in Him were deeply shaken by the cross (Matthew 26:56). Jesus said He had to die to save others from their sins (Matthew 26:28). Still, the most learned Jews likely continued to repeat what the law clearly said, that a man hanged on a tree was accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

From every worldly-wise and fleshly point of view Jesus of Nazareth could not have been the Christ of God (1 Corinthians 1:23). That was how most folk felt about it. Which is not surprising since most folk have usually been worldly-wise and practical-minded. In 2 Corinthians 5:16 Paul says that he at one time saw Jesus just this way—"after the flesh"—a man who got just what was coming to Him. This is not really so remarkable. Isaiah

had long before announced that God's Servant would be "despised and rejected of men," and they would "esteem him smitten of God" because of His own great wickedness (Isaiah 53:3-4). He had earlier described Him as "a stone of stumbling and . . . a rock of offence" (Isaiah 8:14).

But Paul did not go on looking at Jesus in this hard-headed, practical-minded, worldly-wise, "common sense" sort of way (2 Corinthians 5:16). He came to understand that not just the Gentiles but the Jews as well, all men, were hopelessly ensnared by sin (Romans 3:23). He saw why Jesus had to come into the world (1 Timothy 1:15) and why He had to die in our stead (Galatians 1:4). He became a new man in Christ with a new set of values and a new way of looking at things (2 Corinthians 5:17). He learned to walk by faith in God rather than by human wisdom (2 Corinthians 5:7).

The gospel does not deny that Jesus' death was shameful. Apostolic preachers did not reject the Old Testament edict that a man hanged on a tree was accursed of God. They swallowed whole the disgrace and shame of the cross (Galatians 3:13b) and moved to the more critical question of "Why?" Why was the Christ of God brought to such degradation? Why was He made to suffer such contempt? And then they gave the answer that we all so dread to hear. It was not for His own sins but for ours that He was accursed (Galatians 3:13a). "God laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). "He who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf . . . that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We, too, may first look at the cross and imagine that we are seeing a scandalous man dying a scandalous death—but if we look long enough, and honestly enough, we will finally realize that the scandal is that of our own sinfulness and the glory is that of His great love. Whether that happens to us or not depends on the kind of spirit we bring to the cross. A proud man will find it incomprehensible and unacceptable. The humble man will find it altogether believable and desirable. As Jesus Himself said, no one can hear the message until he has ears to hear it (Luke 8:8). The choice between pride and humility is clearly ours.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Ed Harrell

Positive Christianity

In the pages that follow you will read of some of the blessings that we have in Christ — blessings of bringing our minds into harmony with God in worship and meditation, of reinforcing one another in common worship, of living lives that are pure and rewarding, or expressing ourselves selflessly in hospitality to others.

To be for something is, quite obviously, to be against something else. So it is with the New Testament and the Christianity which is described there. God calls us to be a Christian—it is a glorious, positive, rewarding way of life. While it is true that there is much a Christian is against, in a sense, all of that lies dimly lurking in the shadows beyond the roadside ditches when one focuses on the bright path that revelation has set before us.

Of course, some have used the idea of a positive Christianity to disguise doctrinal error, claiming that one should only speak of what is right and never define what is wrong. But the Scriptures have too much to say about standing against evil to tolerate such nonsense. I am against countless evils—including sweet-scented preachers who have become too genteel to denounce sin. But there are limitations in understanding Christianity negatively. I am against too many things. I am against institutional religion, hypocrisy, indecent movies, instrumental music in worship, most rock music anywhere, gay rights and left-handed lesbians. But that doesn't

exhaust the subject. Nor can I exhaust it. So, it is easier for me to tell you what I am for—though I am always ready to react to any particular evil that comes to my attention and to take my stand against it.

The eleven articles that follow explore some of the positive ways in which we understand the Christian revelation. It is true that "God is a Good God" and that "Christ is the Answer." While such slogans have been appropriated by popular religion to teach concepts which are not true, I shall not renounce the positive truths they proclaim. God's grace, Christ's sacrifice, the Holy Spirit's revelation—these are our hope. They can save the derelict and raise us above our own humanity and give us peace.

The Christian religion which the Godhead, each in His own role, has revealed to us is complete, perfect, equipping us for every good work. In the pages that follow you will read of some of the blessings we have in Christ—blessings of bringing our minds into harmony with God in worship and meditation, of reinforcing one another in common worship, of living lives that are pure and

rewarding, or expressing ourselves selflessly in hospitality to others.

If you read these pages and you are not a Christian, we say to you there is a better way. All humans make choices about what to do with their lives. One cannot be all things to all men. **It is true that Christians miss some of the glittering pleasures that sell for high prices in our society. But the cost of those pleasures in terms of human suffering is also high.** We appeal to you to consider what you are missing. Read on, and **try to imagine the ecstasies of true benevolence, of brotherly love, of comradeship in a just cause, of spiritual communion with the Creator of the universe, of the peace that passeth understanding. You can start over.**

If you read these pages and you are a Christian, we say to you that you should walk proudly in a world which has never been worthy of those who would live righteously. **Do not let the world define joy and happiness for you.** Reach out for the peace that God has provided for us. Not only do I know what is wrong, I also know what is right. I know who I am—I am a Christian.

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THEME

POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY

God Is Good

Harold Dowdy

GOD LETS YOU START YOUR LIFE OVER again. It's called being "born again," "forgiveness," "sanctification." Examples are found in the most unlikely places.

The ringing of the telephone in the night, a call for help, a short drive to the only lighted house in a poor neighborhood start one's heart pounding. A beat-up pickup truck in the driveway reflects the condition of both house and occupant.

*The case
before me was
sordid indeed.
This man needed
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applied to his
life. He needed
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But had God
made provision
for a man
like this?
Could Jesus
help one who
had sunk so
low? Did the
scriptures
really teach
that God could
do it?*

"Oh, if I could only start my life over," began the story of drunkenness, adultery, job loss, and separation from wife and children. Here was hopelessness and frustration.

Fortunately, the man was sober. As he told his story I reflected on those whom Jesus met in His ministry. There was the

woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears; she had not been a nice person either. The woman at the well had a family life that was filled with tragedy; the thief on the cross had been in a bit of trouble, too. The outcast publican and the open sinner had clung to the Master's every word. Even Peter had denied Him at a crucial moment.

The case before me was sordid indeed. This man needed more than a cosmetic treatment applied to his life. He needed to be able to start his life over. He needed to die, to be resurrected and start again.

But had God made provision for a man like this? Could Jesus help one who had sunk so low? Could this derelict really start over? Did the Scriptures truly teach that faith, repentance and baptism could do such a miracle? Did Romans 6 teach that a hardened sinner could be baptized into the death of Christ, attend his own funeral, gain the benefits of the Lord's death and be resurrected to a new life?

It was not God's intention to simply make nice people a little nicer. He rather takes a sinner and makes him fit to be one of the saints in light, Colossians 1. He could make this man new again.

But how do you reach such a person as this, at a time like this, with saving grace? Why not tell him the gospel story? The power of those passages that tell of God giving His only Son were not lost on this one who was now grieving for his own family. The story of lost things, the sheep, the coin, the boy, made an impression on one who had lost much. The murderers of Jesus who were made to face their crime on Pentecost were characters with whom such a one could easily identify.

Repentance surely would be the stumbling block. Yet in the midst of the black and hopeless world that had been caused by his own sin, there were moments, like this one, of pain and introspection. He saw the piercing light of the New Testament saying, "turn around and go the other way."

He was beginning to see that God had really been good to him while he was

being bad. Creation, redemption, revelation, the church, prayer, hope, morality, every Biblical theme cried out that God was his friend, not his enemy. God was not trying to trap him, or trick him; God was trying to save him, make him lovable, save his soul.

After that first stark evening, more teaching followed. The entire family became involved, and all found the

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forgiveness so freely offered by God. The loaded gun on the table that night was put away. The man traded it for the sword of the Spirit. He's preaching now.

I often wish I had sought him out sooner; he had called me instead. But I will remember the lessons he taught me that evening about God's love, forgiveness and power. I had heard He could do that and now I knew it.

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Christ Is The Answer

Steve Cawthon

"WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM!" THIS exclamation of the admitted "chief of sinners" expresses a misery felt by all who have honestly faced their spiritual plight. Not only are we plagued by the burning guilt of our past sins, but we find ourselves frustratingly helpless in trying to resist present temptations. In our minds, we intend to do good and avoid bad. But in practice, we often do the opposite. With Paul, "that which I do I know not; for not what I would, that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do" (Romans 7:15).

Does this description of the slave to sin sound all too familiar to you? Have you ever determined to quit some sin only to find yourself again entangled in it? And even when you try not to think about it, doesn't that haunting guilt feeling eventually work its way into your conscience? What misery! What utter agony! What wretchedness!

In this predicament, the Bible declares that Christ is the answer. First of all, Christ is the answer to the problem of guilt. The law of Moses was only an illumination and a reminder of sin. That law was holy and righteous and good, but it could not take away sin. It merely defined sin. Its animal sacrifices simply reminded people of their need for an offering which could do what the blood of bulls and goats could not do—take away sin once and for all. Of Christ, the Scripture declares, "But now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). So now there is good news. Repentance and remission of sins is proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ. Everyone who believes and is baptized shall be saved (Mark 16:16). Sins are blotted out. The guilty are acquitted.

But that's only part of our problem. Even when we have "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and . . . our body washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22), what is to prevent our hearts from being defiled again? What is to keep our cleansed bodies from returning to the filth of sin? After all, does not the same selfish spirit which brought me to

such wretchedness still live in my body? If, after I have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I am again entangled therein and overcome, will not the last state be worse than the first? (2 Peter 2:20)

Again, Christ is the answer. In His death, burial and resurrection, He not only provided for the remission of my sins, He showed me how to quit living in sin. "All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death." "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead

"Wretched man that I am!" is replaced with the joyful declaration, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

When a Christian commits a sin, it is because he has temporarily denied Christ's rule in his life. When he penitently confesses this, he is forgiven (1 John 1:9). Christ remains his Advocate with the Father. He is still the propitiation for our sins. He is still the answer.

If you feel that you are righteous, that

"If you feel that you are righteous, that your life has been in keeping with the perfect will of God, and that you are worthy of eternal life, Christ cannot help you. He didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." "Our old man was crucified with him that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin" (Romans 6:3-4,6).

In order to become a Christian, one must die. He must put the old self to death—crucify him. Christianity demands self-denial. Thus with the old mind of the flesh out of the way, the Spirit of God dwells in you. The Christian has put his own will to death. Instead of being prompted by his own lusts and desires, he is now motivated by the will of Christ. And the pitiful cry,

your life has been in keeping with the perfect will of God, and that you are worthy of eternal life, Christ cannot help you. He didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. He is the physician, not for the healthy, but for the sick. But if you are honest enough to acknowledge your own spiritual wretchedness, and humble enough to seek deliverance from your bondage to sin, then for you, Christ is the answer.

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POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY

The Good Book

Mark White

SOME THINK THAT THERE IS NOTHING positive about the Scriptures. "They are full of Thou shalt nots." You may have concluded that the Bible is an antiquated, obsolete collection of writings which has no value for our technologically advanced society. One young man told me recently that the Bible included a lot of "pretty stories," but that it was of no significance for enlightened, modern man. Is the Bible out of date? Does it hold no value for those at the brink of the twenty-first century?

only be attained by restricting individual liberties. There must be both negatives and positives in living a happy, harmonious life.

There is much about the Scriptures, however, which is positive. The Holy Spirit has revealed the right way as well as marking the wrong. Actually, the New Testament was written to reveal the most positive event that the world has ever known and will ever know—the advent of God's only Son, Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Ephesian

Jesus as our Saviour and friend. Jesus highlighted what the Bible can do for us when He said, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). Paul wrote to the brethren at Rome: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). This hope which we so desperately need is sure because God who gives the promise cannot lie: "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:18-19). The blessed revealed hope we have in Christ is the most positive thing in the world because it offers direction and stability in a turbulent society. Jesus came and gave us this hope. And, frankly, I need whatever hope I can get.

The Bible is positive because it contains principles which if incorporated into our daily lives will result in fuller, much happier living. The Bible is a manual for good relations with our fellow man. In First Peter chapter three, verse ten, the Scripture declares, "He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it." This is the divine formula for the "good life." No human formula for happiness could rival this revealed wisdom. Even the problems of world strife could be remedied if man would follow the principles given by the "Prince of Peace." Imagine what could be if world leaders sat down at the conference table with open Bibles! All of the evils of our world would vanish if men would look to the Scriptures for the direction they need.

Yes, the Bible does contain some negatives. And those negatives will bless our lives in a very positive way. But the Scriptures also give us a positive hope and a positive outlook on life. The Bible is the most positive book ever written; we must learn to use it not only as a rule book but also as a guide book.

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"The Bible is positive because it contains principles which if incorporated into our daily lives will result in fuller, much happier living. The Bible is a manual for good relations with our fellow man . . . No human formula for happiness could rival God's revealed wisdom."

Of course, the Bible does contain many "Thou shalt nots." They are placed there for the good of man, and right thinking people understand that God's commandments, whether negative or positive, are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). Nor is negative instruction without its positive effect. Without some restrictions, man's life would be chaotic. Our federal government enacts many restrictive laws every year; constitutional government rests on the assumption that social order and the general good can

Christians that before Jesus came they were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). Can you imagine any more negative, desperate thing than to have "no hope" and to be "without God?" Just think of what it means when a physician leaves a hospital room saying, "It's hopeless." It means that you are at the point of desperation. The Scriptures point us to



Delighting In God

Gary Henry

THE GRAND CANYON OF THE COLORADO River. Never have I stood before its awesome vastness and its exquisite beauty without being moved spontaneously to say, however inadequately, how glorious it is. And I have never failed to hear others burst forth in words of wonder. Indeed, one would pity the person who either failed to delight in such grandeur or was incapable of sharing his delight.

C. S. Lewis has reminded us, in his inimitable way, that enjoyment not only overflows into praise, but that the praise is an important part of the enjoyment. Delight is incomplete until expressed, as any young lover knows. And the worthier the object, the more intense is the desire to enjoy and praise. Since God is the most worthy of all praiseworthy objects in the universe, we have here a clue to the joy of worship.

It may well be true that the chief end of man is "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." If so, God's command to glorify Him is actually an invitation to enjoy Him, since the glorifying is part of

How exactly would we define "worship?" It is the expression of loving reverence and honor, the combination of adoration and veneration. As we have already hinted, it has very much to do with God's *worth*. Interestingly enough, our English word "worship" descends from the Old English word "weorthscipe" which literally meant "worth + ship." Practically speaking, worship is the expression of tribute to God's "worth"—His praiseworthy nature, attributes and works. The worshipper *praises* God, *glorifies* God, *honors* God.

The Bible is chock-full of worship to God. Consider just two examples. In Revelation 5:13, the innumerable hosts in heaven and earth are pictured worshipping God in these words: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" And in 1 Timothy 1:17, there is one of Paul's frequent doxologies (the Greek word *doxa* means "glory"): "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." In all such passages, the common denominator is the praise of God.

A good many of the songs in our hymnbooks are songs of worship, and they are intended to be joyous songs in which we give expression to our delight in God. (Incidentally, a "hymn" is a song of praise, in distinction to other types of spiritual songs.) "Worthy Art Thou" is a good example of a human effort to "give to the Lord the glory due His name" (Psalm 96:8). The joy of singing such songs is the joy of the creature in the act of appreciating and expressing the worthiness and glory of his Creator. It is the most "natural" of the joys that can be experienced by a human being.

Now, it is undeniably true that the joy of worship must be kept within the bounds of God's own pleasure. He has taught us that His thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9) and we ought not to think any expression of joyful reverence *must* be honoring to Him. Jesus was emphatic when He taught that

those who *truly* worship do so "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). When, however, a Christian does worship like that, he knows the joy that naturally flows from praising the Most Praise-worthy.

Now here is our point: this uplifting joy of worship is and ought to be a *personal* thing, a *daily* experience. The joy that Christians have together when they assemble as a congregation for worship

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the joy. If the enjoyment of the Grand Canyon is somehow not complete unless we praise it, how much more is that true of Him who could make the Grand Canyon! Thomas Carlyle has said that "wonder is the basis of worship." He was right. And one would be pitiable indeed who either was not filled with wonder before God or did not experience joy in the expressing of that wonder through worship.

is a very special treasure. (To minimize or neglect it may mean being lost.) But the child of God does not have to wait until he goes "to church" to experience the joy of worship. He can enjoy that every day he lives. He can joyously sing and pray, as did Paul and Silas even in prison in Acts 16:25. He can joyously meditate upon the praises of God and His word, as did the "blessed" man in Psalm 1:2.

When he makes personal worship a way of life, the Christian finds joy to be just one of several benefits: closer fellowship with God, spiritual strength and maturity, and more meaningful congregational worship. As he sets aside specific daily times of personal devotion and praise, and as he allows himself spontaneously to praise God throughout the day, the Christian discovers the joyous goodness of fellowship with God. And when he does, he is getting but a foretaste of heaven, where the joy of worship will be complete and unending!

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POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY

Bob Crawley

The Joy Of Worshipping God Together

MANKIND, AS GOD'S CREATION, HAS NO higher tribute than that God "visiteth him" (Hebrews 2:6). Similarly, man is never more noble than when he responds by lifting up his hands and heart to worship God.

There is an aspect of the spirit of man that can be fulfilled only by worshipping God. As the eye is designed to behold beauty, and the ear is fitted to listen to harmonious sounds, so is the spirit of man created to worship and serve God (Acts 17:24-28). "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth

the privacy of one's own closet (Matthew 6:6), God has directed also that His people join together sometimes to share in worshipping Him. The company of other people strengthens us in whatever we do, either good or bad. Even as "evil companionships corrupt" (1 Corinthians 15:33), so also the fellowship of others in the true worship of God serves to "provoke unto love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). When our Lord directed that His worshippers come together "upon the first day of the week . . . to break bread" (Acts 20:7), He was giving us the benefit of this reinforcement. If one neglects this appointment, or even joins with a church where this weekly communion is not practiced, he not only disobeys Christ, but prevents his own spiritual development.

Singing together. Christians are admonished, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Colossians 3:16). Words of praise, thanksgiving, hope and admonition are all the more powerful when set to appropriate cadence and melody. Such is the value of music. When we sing together with others whose hearts are similarly stirred and attuned to God, our own soul is enlarged in its upward reach toward God and in its outward reach to embrace, in love, our brothers and sisters.

Breaking bread together. Only in the privacy of his own heart can the worshipper "discern" that he is not merely eating bread and drinking the juice of the grapes, but is participating in "the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 11:27). Yet Christ, through His apostles, instructed that this supper be eaten by disciples who have come together (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20, 33). While we are eating the bread and remembering the body of Jesus, sustained as it was by "bread," in which He fulfilled all righteousness and overcame sin in the flesh, we can look around at others and be impressed that we are not alone in communion with that body.

Likewise, as we drink the fruit of the vine, we are reminded that Jesus' blood was truly shed "for many unto the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Such worship helps us become more fully "one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Public prayers. We do not have to pray aloud to be heard of God for "he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit" (Romans 8:27). Yet, from the earliest days, Christians have been taught to unite in prayer (Acts 2:42; 4:24; 12:12, etc.). Joining our fellow-Christians in prayer about their

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is the value
of music.*

for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2). Men fulfill their reason for existence only when they "seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him" (Acts 17:27).

God, in infinite wisdom and boundless love has provided that we should worship Him in those ways that both exalt Him and edify us. When we can understand that the worship which pleases God and that He accepts is also that which fulfills our own greatest need, then we shall be able to worship Him with a greater depth of gratitude.

Worshipping together. While effective worship should, at times, be rendered in

burdens helps us overcome the temptation to be self-centered in our own prayers. It is also a humbling experience to hear others praying earnestly for us. Those who lead prayers in the assembly would do well to prepare for them as carefully as for a sermon or a class lesson.

David was "glad when they said unto (him), let us go unto the house of Jehovah" (Psalm 122:1). We, too, should learn to rejoice at every opportunity to join our brethren in faithful worship to God. "For the Father seeketh such to worship him" (John 4:23).

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The Blessing Of Solitary Devotion

Darrell Hymel

IN MATTHEW, CHAPTER SIX, JESUS warned about the hypocrisy of practicing righteousness, giving alms, and offering prayers in order to be seen of men. The multiple public prayers, offerings and fastings of the Pharisees had deceived them into thinking they were right with God. All of their prayers, praise, and service before God was also done before men. These public acts were not wrong, but they should have begun to question their motives when *all* their devotion was before the public.

How can we detect if we are guilty of the same thing? What percent of our prayers, meditations and praise are offered while others are around? We pray at mealtime with our families, at bedtime with our children, and three times a week with the brethren, but none of these things can take the place of genuine individual communion with God. If we have not grasped the positive benefits of personal worship, we may be robbed of the blessings of public worship as well.

David is an example of a man who truly knew the benefits of worship in solitude. David lived during the time of a literal holy place, but he knew what many Christians do not comprehend: the avenues of worship are traveled over the heart, not enroute to a building. David's singing, praying, and meditating were not limited to the public sanctuary. He knew that the man that was blessed by God "delights in the law of the Lord and in his law he meditates *day and night*" (Psalm 1:3).

Psalms 63 expresses a time in David's life when he was a refugee in a "dry and thirsty land" (v. 1). But David's physical appetite was overpowered by his hungering and thirsting for God. How could David worship God on this occasion when circumstances seemed to dictate otherwise? David knew that God's lovingkindness was greater than life itself (v. 3). Only when we come to know what true fellowship and life with God is, can we "hate our own life" as Christ demands (Luke 14:26); and then daily, solitary worship will occur spontaneously.

What did David's worship consist of on this occasion? "Because Thy loving-kindness is greater than life, my lips will praise Thee" (vv. 3,4). Whether in prayer or song, David's lips were active. He later said, "My mouth offers praises with joyful lips" (v. 5). David's actions remind us of James' admonition, "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises" (James 5:13). Ironically, we, like David, can be both suffering and full of joy at the same time in worship.

David also used his body in private worship. "I will lift up my hands in thy name" (v. 4). What are our motives for

*As the miser often
turns to look upon
his treasure, so does
the devout believer,
by frequent
meditation, turn
over the priceless
treasures of God's
word in his heart.
To this man,
meditation is
not a task but
a joy. No spiritual
exercise can be more
profitable.*

using the bended knee or bowed head, if we only do that when in the public services? Are we doing it to be seen of men, or before God?

How could David worship for any length of time when he was weary and hungry and sleepy (vv. 1,6)? How could our Lord focus His attention toward the Father in prayer for a whole night? David's spirit was hungrier than his body. "My soul thirsts for Thee". . . "My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness" (vv. 1,5). Have we not stayed up all night at the bedside of a loved one? Did not our loving concern drive away the thought of all physical exhaus-

tion? When we understand the power of prayer, the sweetness of meditation, then our spirit will drive us to miss sleep or meals.

David was also active in his worship with his mind. "When I remember Thee on my bed, I meditate on Thee in the night watches" (v. 6). Has meditation become a forgotten practice today? What is the difference between remembering and meditation? The memory is the chest in which we lay up truth, but meditation is the intellect tasting and delighting in truth. There is as much difference between remembering and meditating as there is between a glass of water and the drinking of it. The word of God must occupy the affection as well as the understanding. The words of our public worship are but mockery if our meditations are not acceptable to God (Psalm 19:14).

What if we frequently teach God's word, sing praises to Him, and pray in public but fail to do so privately? Should this be a warning sign? The same man who "delights" in God's statutes is also found "meditating" on His precepts (Psalm 119:15-16). We will not withdraw our mind very long from what we inwardly delight in. As the miser often turns to look upon his treasure, so does the devout believer, by frequent meditation, turn over the priceless treasures of God's word in his heart. To this man, meditation is not a task but a joy (Psalm 119:14-16). No spiritual exercise can be any more profitable than devout meditation, solitary prayer and spontaneous singing. It will make the mind wise, the affections warm, the soul fat and flourishing, and our life and speech fruitful. Those who preach and teach need to realize that the most powerful lessons come not only from hours of study, but from days of meditation and prayer. Let us not limit our worship to times when the building is warm, our clothes are just right, the hour is convenient; but let us emulate David and let our thirst for God in a dry and thirsty land lead us to seek God in secret.



POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY

God's Way Is Always Best

Tommy Poarch

MANY PEOPLE ARE BEING AWAKENED TO the moral dearth that communism, humanism and materialism have inflicted on the modern world. Moral issues have become so twisted that moral absolutes are scoffed at; for many, situation ethics has given an unbridled license for permissiveness. Such thinking allows man to live for pleasure in good conscience, to pursue the popular course of least restraint, to be considered honorable while engulfed

therefore, man's spirit cannot find true peace and satisfaction in such shallow and carnal pursuits.

Ultimately, life is one's opportunity to obtain character. One's success in life will not be determined by the accumulation of material objects or by moments of pleasure. Life will be measured as a success or as a failure based upon what one has become. I shall have lived well if the course I follow builds and ennobles me rather than destroys me. Finding that

very good, has provided instructions so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (Genesis 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible is God's communication to His creation telling us the best way of life.

The Bible is not the dreaded authority its detractors charge it to be, it is a welcomed relief to the soul who is seeking to know how to discern between good and evil. In following God's way one might not become rich, but he will know joy and happiness—there is a difference; one might not be popular, but he will be full of faith and be at peace with God—there is a difference; one might not gain positions of power in this life, but he will be full of love and hope—there is a difference.

The sales pitch of this world promotes a bottle of gusto, a bed of immorality, a wardrobe of indecency and a mind of lasciviousness and greed. In its wake we find broken homes, scarred children, and unspeakable obscenities. The veneer of worldly pleasures covers this shame, blinding the eyes of people to a standard by which God gives one joy, happiness, faith, peace, love and hope. God's standard produces happy homes, pure lives and clean consciences.

What kind of fool has the devil made of this world? Has he found a planet with nothing but ignorant savages willing to trade their eternal bliss, joy and happiness for a few beads of filth or a mirror of greed? How could he possibly do that? His work is one of deceit. He must make one think that the pleasures of sin and worldliness are of greater value than the joy reserved for Christians in the hereafter. He seeks to conceal or make light of the value of the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places that are a present possession of those in Christ. Yes, and in the life to come there is eternal bliss. He must make one desire pleasure and renounce joy, happiness and peace. What a task! Believe it or not, he succeeds!

The devil is full of deceit, but he can never change the truth—God's way is always best.

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"The sales pitch of this world promotes a bottle of gusto, a bed of immorality, a wardrobe of indecency and a mind of lasciviousness and greed. In its wake we find broken homes, scarred children, and unspeakable obscenities . . . God's standard produces happy homes, pure lives and clean consciences."

in greed and questionable but lucrative pursuits.

Viewed honestly, these standards of morality have failed. They have failed to make wholesome and well-adjusted individuals. They have failed to produce a stable and law-abiding society. They have failed to protect and preserve the family. These failures are inevitable when men aspire for nothing higher than the gratification of their fleshly lusts. God has made man in his own image;

course is man's greatest and most noble challenge.

A search for the highest good in life raises first the question of where to find a standard. That standard will be either from man, or from God. Man has never and can never produce a standard that brings about moral integrity and goodness: "a man's way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). But God, who created all things and saw that all was

POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY



Positive Morality Eliminates The Negative

Charles W. Brackett

MANY YEARS AGO MY UNCLE PAUL, HEAD chef at a large Louisville hotel, impressed upon my twelve years one of life's greatest principles. We were in his own kitchen at home. I watched as he deftly chopped vegetables into small, colorful pieces. Halfway through a celery stalk he stopped, took a dirty glass from the sink and, after emptying and cleaning it, he filled it with sugar from a nearby canister.

"Tell me, Charles," he said. "How many of these worthless vegetable scraps can you put into this glass full of

An older woman wakes up every morning unable or unwilling to face another day of the unhappy downward spiral that depression brings. There are no physical problems. Only her thinking is depressed.

sugar?" The answer was obvious. None. While filled with good, there is no room for the bad. I remember nothing else about that day.

How valuable yet how simple this lesson. The Lord Himself originally taught it when He told of the unclean spirit who, having gone out of a man, returned to find the house unoccupied. The spirit moved back in with seven other spirits more wicked than himself (Luke 11:24-26).

Oh, what a hopeless mess we can make of our lives! An older woman

wakes up every morning unwilling to face another day of the unhappy, downward spiral that depression brings. There are no physical problems. Only her thinking is depressed. A young homosexual feels trapped by his ungodly practice. Believing heaven will not admit the likes of him, he wonders if he really was born that way and really is powerless to rise above the sin in which he flounders.

"Worldly," you say? Right, but these were baptized believers caught in Satan's web, the same one he would weave for each one of us. "Not me," you say? We pray not, but consider this. A Christian deals with his sin out of anger, failing to consistently exercise discipline. Often he says one thing and does another. His son grows up confused by his father's hypocrisy and provoked by his anger. He learns anger of his own and also learns how to rebel against his father, perhaps others.

Sin is sin. While the nature differs, these three cases each bear the marks of habitual sin. "Little children, let no one deceive you, the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:7-8).

There is a bright spot. There is hope in sin! Not in the practice of sin, but in the glorious fact that Jesus has paid the price for sin. Yours, mine and, yes, even the homosexual's (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). All we need do is recognize when the negatives of life are sin, or are due to sin; repent and follow the Lord's way to remission and justification.

Uncle Paul's glassful of sugar vividly illustrated for me the way that positive morality eliminates the negative. The Bible calls it putting away and putting on, an essential principle of Christianity. Many Christians have not yet grasped this principle and more have not yet made it a part of their lives.

Long ago, another Paul taught, "lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit . . . be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been

created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Again, "consider your earthly body as dead to immorality . . . put them all aside . . . you laid aside the old self with its evil practices and have put on the new self" (Colossians 3:5-10).

There is no more practical or needed message in God's book. If there is sin in your life, there are two steps you must take with the Lord's help. First, cast out the sinful, immoral practice and second, begin an offsetting practice of what is

If there is sin in your life, there are two steps you must take with the Lord's help. First, cast out the sinful, immoral practice and second, begin an offsetting practice of what is right before God.

moral, what is right before God. The process is as clear as cleaning a dirty glass and filling it with sugar. Put aside the old and put on the new. Both steps are necessary to change, but when the old has been put aside, let none of us forget to emphasize positive morality. Keeping our lives filled to the brim with right living will eliminate the negatives and keep us safe from Satan's web. How terrible if, having swept and cleaned, we leave the house unoccupied only to be filled with greater evil than before.

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POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY

Spiritual Hygiene

W. R. Jones

RULES FOR PHYSICAL HYGIENE WERE quite simple during the thirties in rural Nagogdoches County, Texas. Generally, take a bath twice a week, brush teeth daily, and wash your hands before you come to the table. Life Buoy soap, with its awful smell, was introduced during that period, and I always felt like it discouraged physical hygiene. Of course, my concern in this article is not physical hygiene, past or present—but the “spiritual hygiene” of the inner man.

Purity Is Absolutely Essential To The Good Health Of The Inner Man

In 1 Timothy 5:22, Paul urged the young preacher, “keep yourself pure.” The New Testament strongly reveals the need for purity and the “practice gap” of Christians points up the urgent need for some very strong teaching on the subject. The signs of the time show us the potent effort the world is making to *shape the thinking* of the people of God. We must arise and fight back!

Here Are Three Suggestions For Developing and Maintaining Purity In Your Life:

1. **Think on pure things.** (Philippians 4:8) The mind must learn to dwell on pure themes. This demands pure thinking, pure reading and pure conduct.

2. **We must get our wisdom from above.** “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure” (James 3:17). In the life of man, it seems, the conflict has always been between *human wisdom* and *Divine Wisdom*. Historians tell us the great Greek philosophers, Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle, all thought the answers to life’s big questions were *within man*. That is still man’s problem today; he is looking in the wrong place for answers. Men are desperately seeking to find answers to their questions and directions for their lives from their own wisdom. In the long ago, Jeremiah wrote: “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). It is ever so true, the man who guides himself, has a fool for a guide! To be spiritually healthy, man must look to the wisdom of God.

3. **We must understand that “hope” purifieth.** (1 John 3:3) Every person who has the hope of becoming like God in eternity, will aim at becoming like God *here on earth*. You may be sure, no pretense of hope avails separate and apart from growth in purity. Take away our hope and life’s inspiration for upright living has vanished. Let us constantly remember, the pleasures of sin are most deceptive. They are like snowflakes on the river, white for a moment then gone forever. There can be no true “spiritual hygiene” apart from *personal purity*.

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A Forgiving Spirit Is Essential To The Good Health Of Our Inner Man

Our personal happiness presently, and in the years ahead, depends greatly upon our ability to forgive others. It matters not if it be your work relationship, family relationship or membership in a local church of Christ, it is *unreal* to think that no one will ever hurt you or disappoint you in their words or

conduct. From time to time, all of us are hurt by others. Though physical pain may be inflicted upon us by our enemies, strangely enough, it is the emotional pain inflicted on us by those who are close to us, that hurts the most. When someone hurts us, we are inclined to act in a way that will hurt them; we seek revenge! But, you may be sure, this so-called natural reaction is not the best. As in all other matters the Lord gives us the solution to the problem. Paul wrote: “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).

In my forty-two years of preaching I believe this has turned out to be one of the most helpful passages in the New Testament. It has freed and unburdened me from many unending troublesome problems. Now, let me show you the beauty of this teaching. To put it in modern parlance, it is as if the Lord is saying: “Jones, you don’t have to chase down every one who has hurt you, one way or another, grab them by the neck, back them in a corner, shake their teeth out, and make them take it back.” Instead, I am left unburdened to continue preaching the Truth in Love, whereby I may even effect repentance in the offender. The Lord would have me appropriate forgiveness in my heart and He will take care of the rest. The Lord sure knows how to lighten the believer’s burdens! Friends, revenge is a form of hate that will condemn our souls, and the one who seeks revenge is quite often harmed more than his victim. If we claim to follow Jesus, then let Him be our example. Peter wrote: “who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

There are other things that contribute to true “spiritual hygiene,” but you may be sure that *purity* and a *forgiving spirit* are in the forefront. By the way, is your “spiritual hygiene” as good as your “physical hygiene?” Think about it!

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How We Can Encourage Others

James L. (Jamie) Sloan

"THEREFORE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER, and build up one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thessalonians 5:11, NASV). The brethren at Thessalonica excelled in showing real love and active concern for one another (cf. 4:9-10). We need in our own day to place a higher premium on the simple and even feeble efforts to express love for those with whom we share a common faith. We must go out of our way to compliment those who have made a genuine effort to express that faith in either a public or private way; and we can show hospitality or be a source of strength to those who undergo trials of that faith.

I am optimistic that many children of God in our day are becoming more aware of the relationship that "encourage one another" has to "build up one another." The practical and the interpersonal should not take a back seat to the didactic and the doctrinal. Man is a social being—"it is not good for man to be alone." Therefore, he who helps to strengthen one's heart and shore up one's will is fully as valuable as he who enlightens one's mind. However, we tend to an unequal emphasis. Hazlett confessed: "In looking back, it sometimes appears to me as if I had in a manner slept out my life in a dream or shadow on the side of the hill of knowledge, where I have fed on books, on thoughts, on pictures, and only heard in half-murmurs the trampling of busy feet, or the noise of the throng below."

Practical Steps For Helping Christians To Encourage Others

1. We need to realize how important the Word of God is in building up others within the body of Christ. Familiarize yourself with scripture and then take it to others. Whether publicly or privately, formally or informally, teaching is one means of encouraging. Paul dealt with grief over deceased brethren by teaching the bereaved just what will happen when Jesus returns (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), and concluded with the words: "Therefore comfort one another with these words." The words of Acts 20:32 are also appropriate: "And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace,

which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Just as you gather your list of scriptures on such themes as the plan of salvation and the New Testament church, why not make a list of passages that will comfort the bereaved, strengthen the sick, give heart and hope to the discouraged, give relief to the worried, etc.?

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2. You can believe (have confidence) in others, and communicate that trust unto them. Pessimism and optimism tend to be self-fulfilling. Expectation is a powerful force in a human life, affecting one's performance or prompting one's failure. The writer of the book of Hebrews paints a bleak picture of the possible apostasy of the Jewish Christians, and is painfully blunt regarding their failures (cf. 5:11-14), and warns of the consequences (2:7-8). However, he follows with a powerful expression of hope and confidence in 2:9: "But,

beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way." We all need for our brethren to express confidence in us. One of the greatest ways you can help others is with a word of cheer and hope. Each of us needs someone of whom we can say, "I can do it if he/she thinks I can." Husbands and wives need each other's trust—assurance that their companion believes in them. Parents tend to cause their children to fail by their low expectations of them, and their hypercritical and negative attitude of distrust. They may just play out the disappointing role that we have prophesied for them. So, real growth can occur in our lives when someone says, "I believe in you." The great soprano, Leontyne Price, was once a maid for a Mississippi family. The members of the family she served saw her singing ability, encouraged her, and predicted that she had the makings of a star. She has since confessed that their hope and belief in her became a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is so important that we maintain our positive outlook and believe in the potential that is in every child of God.

3. "A new commandment I give to you, that you also love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). Basic to our meaningful relationship to each other is *love*. It is the "more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13). Eleven times we are told to love one another in the Epistles alone. I think an important statement is found for us in Romans 12:10, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love." We can identify with being a part of a family. Paul's point is clear. We are to be just as devoted to each other as are the members of a close-knit family. That kind of care and concern for others who have been saved by the blood of Jesus Christ will do so much to encourage all who come under its influence, whether weak or strong.

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POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY

Bill Moseley

What You Gain By Showing Hospitality

WHAT YOU GAIN! MOST FOLKS ARE interested in personal gain, and within proper limits this is not all bad. Jesus Himself spoke of the "reward motive" for His disciples being what they should be. He said that men who prayed as they ought and who gave alms and fasted out of proper motives would be rewarded (Matthew 6:4,6,18). This is the nature of hospitality. It carries reward with it, for the hospitable person really gains more than the one who is the object of his goodness. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" are the words attributed by Paul to Jesus (Acts 20:35). No one knows this more than the Christian who gladly and without complaint opens his hand, his heart and his home to others.

Hospitality is "giving or affording a generous welcome to guests or strangers with liberality and kindness" (*New Century Dictionary*). I am particularly impressed with the New Testament word for hospitality, *philoxenia*. It is "love to strangers" (W. E. Vine). Most of us have no problem with hospitality toward those we know, but the New Testament definition is quite another matter.

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I well remember "suffering" upon one occasion because my wife knew what *philoxenia* was. Coming home one evening, I asked my usual question (generally to her chagrin), "What's for supper?" Her reply was to the point: "I don't know. I gave your supper to some people who said they needed it!" And so she had! Whether these folks were legitimately in

need or not I will never know—God will be the judge. After my feelings of self-pity subsided I realized that whether their need was real or not, I was the one who had really gained, for I had just received the approbation of God for doing a deed of kindness to others—and I never knew the people!

Peter said, "Use hospitality without grudging" (1 Peter 4:9). This tells, in a negative way, how hospitality is to be practiced. When done out of compulsion or feelings of "repayment," hospitality loses its real meaning. Jesus said it was not to be practiced with the only motive being a hope of reciprocation (Luke 14:12-14). Real hospitality lies not only in giving others something to eat and a place to stay for the night. They can get that at Burger King and the local Motel 6! Emerson once said: "Certainly let the board be spread and let the bed be dressed for the traveller; but let not the emphasis of hospitality lie in these things." When out of a cheerful heart, out of a generous and hearty spirit one is hospitable—he has gained much for himself.

Consider some practical suggestions. Look around next Sunday and see if there are visitors at worship services. Offer to take them home with you for the time-honored "Sunday dinner." Oh sure, it will mean Mom will have to improvise and put the proverbial "extra bean in the pot" and Dad will have to forego that football game he had planned to watch. But you may well have gained friends that you would never have acquired otherwise. Your association, your talking of spiritual things, will send you back to the evening service with more zeal than you might imagine.

How about inviting some into your home with whom you do not normally spend time? You may decide you enjoy them and will have found new associates, although you have "known them" for years. We all must guard against being cliquish. Family ties are strong and they are good. But there is a danger here. Many families are so clanish they will only visit with other

family members. This is not good, as it tends to encapsulate whole families in an apparent atmosphere of aloofness to others.

There are congregational benefits to be derived from Christians interacting on a social basis. Our faith in spiritual matters may well be enhanced as those who have banded together in a common cause for Christ also spend some time together socially. Did not the early

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church "eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:46)? Did not Paul tacitly teach this when he said the Corinthians had "houses to eat and drink in" (1 Corinthians 11:22)? Certainly this is not the major thrust of his question, but a secondary lesson can be learned by it.

Selfishness—a desire to be isolated—is not conducive to a productive and happy life. Blessed is the person or family who enjoys the company of old friends and new acquaintances. Such is a mark of those who fear God. The prophet said: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often to one another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16). Did you get that? God-fearing people *spoke often to one another*; they were not isolated in their own little world. And the ultimate benefit is there—they are in the Lord's book of remembrance.

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That's Life!

Dee Bowman



I LIKE SIMPLE THINGS . . . things like small showers, slight smiles, soft cotton shirts and half cloudy nights where the moon darts in and out. And sometimes some of the most enjoyable things really don't last very long—short interludes of melancholy, bittersweet memories, even small hurts can sometimes feel kind of good—for a short time. And speaking of simple things, it seems to me that we very often find out that the most rewarding part of something is not realized when we finally reach the goal, but that it was in all the things we did to reach it.

* * *

HURRICANES ARE PART OF LIFE. I was in a meeting in Birmingham when Alicia hit the Houston area. It was a hard time for me, knowing that my family was there all alone. It was rough, they said. I was worried the night it hit. Didn't sleep much. Prayed a lot. I thought as I stared at the ceiling late that night, sometimes it's harder to be gone when things are bad than to be there.

* * *

WE SOMETIMES SAY, "If he would just obey the gospel! He wouldn't have to change much, he's already such a good person." Such reasoning is faulty and ill-advised. The fact that he is moral does not argue that he is good. The fact that he is obedient does not argue that he is righteous. These facts only show his realization of society and his submission to its pressures. Only when a man submits to the rule of Jesus can he be truly good, for no man is good who is yet in his sins.

* * *

I DON'T LIKE KEYS! Keys are heavy. Besides, keys are a sign that you have to keep someone from taking something that is not theirs.

* * *

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, but one of the hardest things I have to do is control my thinking. Sometimes it is entirely too shallow; sometimes it is far too slow; sometimes it is fuzzy; and sometimes it is filled with the wrong things. I guess it is really kind of astounding that I ever make any good decisions. Do you have that kind of trouble? But sometimes I think about good things, too, high things, things that are edifying and encouraging.

And when I discipline myself to point my mind in those right directions I feel all warm inside. And confident. And not so scared. I guess all that means is that I should do more of that kind of thinking, right?

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL, January 30, 1981: "A typical airport scene: A young lady with a very fancy dog; a lady wearing a sweater two sizes too small; two tourists wearing funny looking hats they would not dare wear to even a ball game back home; a young man smoking a pipe (it looks funny to see young men smoke pipes); a lady carrying a pinata; a lady pushing a very squeaky trunk; a religious freak of some sort, dressed in a hemp-material robe, but wearing tennis shoes; a man accompanying his wife who is obviously much younger than is he; all sorts of sounds, ranging from a telephone dial, a baby's cry, the usual raspy address system, to the muffled sounds of the whining jet engines. And people! How can so many different people be so different? Amazing."

* * *

THERE ARE LOTS OF FINE CHURCHES AMONG US. I have recently been to Hueytown, Alabama; Carrollton, Texas; Plainfield, Indiana as well as a couple of Houston-area churches. The language style is different in every place. The personality of each congregation is different. Each area's social conditions are different. And yet, they're all alike. Filled with good folks, God-fearing folks who are trying hard to go to heaven. Folks who worry about their kids, and about our country's morals, and about their neighbors. Folks who love the gospel and gospel preaching. Folks just like you. I like all the differences, but I thank God for all the sameness! I thank Him for the love, the genuine feelings of concern for truth. It's a wonderful thing to be a Christian! And it makes you feel really good to know that there are so many around.

* * *

WELL, AS YOU CAN SEE, "That's Life" is just that—a group of short, terse vignettes without even any noticeable segue, whose intention is simply to extract a little part of life and amplify it so that even the little parts of life get some attention. After all, life's made up of the little parts just like everything else. Besides, even the insignificant deserves recognition once in a while.

Interpreting the Book of Revelation

L. A. Mott

Three insights have seemed to blow away much of my quarter-century-old confusion over the book of Revelation. The first involves basic approach—how to read the book—and in particular, the relation of Revelation to history.

Most people begin with history. This or that, they say, has not been fulfilled. We must look for it in the future. Others pick up scraps of history which seem to

suggest that instead of standing as twentieth century persons looking back on Revelation through two thousand years of history, we ought rather to forget everything we know about history, and take our stand with John in the first century before the predicted events, reading Revelation as though that were all we had and none of the events since then had occurred. We must see the

we turn to history which then can be viewed in the light of Scripture.

I do not believe Scripture will be inconsistent with history. But our first and primary business as students of Scripture is to understand what God has said in Scripture; as believers, to accept whatever God has said without reservation and regardless of history; and as teachers, to repeat in the twentieth century what God said in the first century. It is not our business to make Scripture fit history.

Matthew 24 is an excellent illustration of this point. Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and said, "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished" (v. 34). When one starts with history and contends that some of "these things" remain unfulfilled, the effect is to make a false prophet of Jesus who said they would all be accomplished before that generation had passed. That is the approach of an unbeliever. As one who has put his trust in Jesus, I start with Scripture and conclude that whether I understand the application of all Jesus' language to history or not, I know it has already been fulfilled, for Jesus said it would take place in that generation, and I believe Jesus. Our first responsibility is to understand, to believe and to repeat what the Scriptures say, and only then to do whatever we can with regard to history. A believer can take no other view.

The book of Revelation must be approached in the same way. We must first forget everything we know about history and read Revelation to see what John has said. Then we can turn to history if we still think it is of any importance. But I want to show in another article that Revelation contains several references to time that specifically define the place in history where one must look for the predicted events. The scope and span of time to which the prophecies of Revelation apply is just as definitely and conclusively fixed by the book itself as Matthew 24:34 fixes the time span of that prophecy.

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fit Revelation and read these back into the book, interpreting Revelation by history. Scripture is sometimes bent to fit history.

That approach is fundamentally unsound. Scripture is not to be interpreted in the light of history or the newspapers. Rather, history must be understood in the light of Scripture. We must learn to see history as God sees it. I therefore

future through John's eyes. We must understand what he expected to happen. We must then see history in the light of Scripture.

Our first responsibility as Bible students and teachers of the Word is to understand and then repeat what Scripture says. What Scripture says, it says regardless of history. Only after we have understood what Scripture says should

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

The Power For Overcoming Sin

The Psalms are practical. They are down-to-earth. They are sound, realistic. As we read them we readily empathize with the writer. He speaks of things we have experienced. He expresses emotions we have felt. His approach to life is valid and authentic.

In the past two years of my life I have walked with the psalmist. I am much the better person because of it. He speaks of the God who will hear when the godly man calls unto him; and that has been my experience. He tells of his perplexity as he sees the evildoer prosper; and I have wondered about that, too. He talks of seeing the majesty and glory of God everywhere in the earth; I have seen that. He describes his hurt and anger at being slandered by both false friends and enemies; I also have some first-hand knowledge of that. But all of this is a part of life.

We do not study the Psalms. Perhaps it is because it is in the Old Testament and we feel that the Old Testament has nothing to say to us of any real application today. If so, we are greatly mistaken. In this column, I wish to share my thoughts and conclusions drawn from the study of this book. It is my hope and prayer that in your reading these things you, too, will become better because of it.

One of the great exhortations I have gathered from the Psalms is found in chapter four, verse four: "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still" (ASV). Here are *two vital rules* to follow in overcoming sin:

Be afraid of it. "Stand in awe." It is not entirely clear from the original word, *raghaz*, whether it means "to tremble" or "to be angry." The Greek version of the Old Testament translates it with the idea of *anger*, and Paul evidently used this version in Ephesians 4:26, "Be angry, and sin not," showing that a Christian can express righteous indignation without being angry in a carnal way.

However, it seems that "stand in awe" or "tremble" is a proper rendering in this psalm. Also, it is possible that the idea is that we are to stand in *awe of God*. This is certainly found frequently in other places.

But, I believe that the writer is saying that we are to *stand in awe of sin*, for to do so is at one and the same time to fear the God who tells us of sin's dreadful power. We must cultivate the *fear of sin*. There is no cowardice in being afraid of sin. Paul says, "Flee fornication." That is one sin you do not argue with. You either do what it

says or you get out of its way. Joseph was not a coward, but a brave man, when he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" All sin is against God. To stand in awe of sin is to get out of its way, and it is to tremble at the feet of the Holy God.

So we must fear sin—not only because it is *against God*, but because it is *against ourselves*.

Man is made in the image of God. Sin breaks the inward law of man's nature. It defaces God's image in me. It destroys my power to know and obey God. God is severe against sin in the Bible because sin is severe against man in life. Sin destroys us, and God knows it. He wants us to be all that we can be, all that we were made to be—a little lower than the angels, the offspring of God, made in His image. God created man great and noble, holy and pure. We must fear sin lest we ruin ourselves. "A ruined hut is no great matter, but a palace in ruins is a woeful spectacle."

Be introspective. "Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Reflect upon what you do. Do not act rashly. A thinking man is a wise man.

I have spent some time in the quiet hours of the night, reflecting upon the course of my life—my actions, my decisions, my faults. This is good. We all need to do it more. Is my course of conduct base and reprehensible? Or is it good and pure? Listen to your conscience; don't sear it. Consider your ways.

We think too little of sin. We do not contemplate its terrible tragedy. We do not consider its frightful consequences. And while we are upon our bed, in our moments of serene reflection and serious contemplation, we must *think about it!* We need to let reason speak and allow the clamor of the world to be still for awhile. And while we are thinking, let us think of what sin has cost: the blood of the Son of God. He was made to be sin for us. By His stripes we are healed. If thinking upon the cross does not persuade us to "stand in awe, and sin not"—nothing will.

Two things, then, I need to do. Be afraid of sin. Be introspective. In so doing, I will, with David, glorify God "when I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches."

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol.1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Youth Forum

Point of View

Russ Bowman

Being a student on a major university campus is an interesting experience. Not long ago I was walking through the University of Houston's Engineering building on the way to my first class. There were several groups of people around handing out various books, papers, and leaflets, as is normal on any college or university campus. As I walked on, I heard a girl's voice say, "Here is your free copy." I looked around in time to see her walk away. Suddenly I realized that a thick paperback book had been placed in my hand. I was sure that I had become the proud owner of the teachings of some Eastern guru with a long beard of whom I had never heard. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find that I had been given a copy of the New Testament.

I thumbed through the book and came across a bookmark. Printed on the marker was a small article entitled "Point of View." It interested me. As I read the short essay, something about it struck me as funny. Its main observation was that everyone has a point of view which affects his thoughts and actions; a personalized pair of "rose-colored glasses" through which he sees the world. With this point I agreed. However, the remainder of the article emphasized that we have the right to any point of view and ours is fine as long as we consider other viewpoints. The essay then requested that Christianity be considered also, stating that it could "radically affect" our personal point of view.

I beg to differ with the article's "point of view." First of all, mankind does not have the "right" to a viewpoint as if he deserves it of his own merit. Our personal point of view is a privilege given us by God. We do not deserve freedom of choice—God gave it to us. Keeping this in mind, we need to realize that with any privilege comes responsibility. When my mother gives me the privilege of using her car, I am under obligation to care for it (and even put gas in it!). So it is with our freedom of choice. We are responsible for using it correctly.

Secondly, in order to correctly fulfill

this obligation, we must be aware that there is a right point of view and a wrong point of view. It does matter how we see things. The right point of view will enable us to fulfill our purpose for existence: to serve God (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Every time a decision is made—whether or not to see this movie, or go to that party, or associate with these people—we should consider our service

to God. Only then will we fulfill our obligation to choose the correct "point of view." We will never be truly content nor will we ever perform our responsibilities if we do not make God's point of view our point of view.

"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:7).

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Mining The Scriptures

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

The Sermon On The Mount

Introduction

George Bernard Shaw once described the Sermon on the Mount as "an impractical outburst of anarchism and sentimentality." The German philosopher Friederich Nietzsche treated it even less kindly when he wrote that "Christian morality is the most malignant form of all falsehood" (*Ecce Homo*). In 1929 humanist John Herman Randall was willing to acknowledge that Jesus was "a truly great moral genius" but then wondered how a Galilean carpenter could have uttered the final word on human ethics (*Religion in the Modern World*). But many more people have held this sermon in great reverence even when they did not know or understand it very well. It is safe to say that the Sermon on the Mount is the best known, least understood, and least practiced of all the teachings of Jesus.

The modern mind, religious as well as irreligious, has treated this sermon in a variety of ways. As earlier noted, some have rejected it as wholly impractical or positively evil. Others have received it, but with significant reservations. Humanism, at its kindest, has viewed it as a remarkable but tentative moral code wholly separated from the cross or a divine Christ. Religious liberalism sees it largely as a blueprint for social reconstruction rather than individual conversion. Albert Schweitzer explained it as a special ethic for a special time based on Jesus' mistaken belief that the end of all time was about to occur.

Among conservative religionists many dispensational premillennialists see it as another "law" inconsistent with an age of grace and impossible of application in a sinful world. They await its fulfillment in a "millennial kingdom." The large part of evangelical Protestantism has separated life into two arenas, one personal, the other social. For them the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount are intended to govern personal relationships only. They deem it impossible to apply its precepts to either business or government.

All of this is to say that we have worked a wonder in our times by taking the most revolutionary document in history and turning it into something tame and inconsequential. The word of God has been severely blunted. The gospel has been trimmed to fit the life style of undisciplined and indulgent men.

There is a real sense in which we have come full circle. The Sermon on the Mount was first addressed to a

world in which the Pharisees had succeeded in draining the life and meaning from the law of Moses. We live in a world that has transformed the gospel into little more than twentieth century civility. For this reason it is the more urgent that we look often and carefully at the one sermon of God's Son which perhaps more than any other defines the very essence of the kingdom of heaven. Here, if we listen humbly, our lives can be transformed, our spirits refreshed, our souls saved.

"The Gospel of the Kingdom"

The New Testament view of the sermon is best seen in Matthew's introduction to it. It is "the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23). This should serve to make two things clear. First, that it is not merely Jesus' exposition of the law and, secondly, that its blessings and ethical principles are not attainable by the unconverted. This is a sermon for kingdom citizens. Salvation, not social reconstruction, is its aim and worldly-wise men are destined never to understand it.

Luke's account (Luke 6:12-49) places the sermon in the second year of the Lord's public preaching at the height of His popularity—a popularity He never trusted (John 2:23-25) and which proved to be short-lived (John 6:66). The times seem to have been characterized by a great religious enthusiasm which was both misguided and superficial.

The Sermon on the Mount stands as an explanation of the true nature of the kingdom of God. It is a sermon delivered in history and serves to answer the questions which would have naturally been raised by the announcement in Israel of the kingdom's imminent appearance (Matthew 3:1; 4:17). In addition, the wholly unexpected character of the preacher and the sharp conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was bound to stir even more concern among those who first heard the cry—"The kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Jesus' discourse upon a Galilean mountainside is in reality no mere sermon. It more approximates a manifesto of the kingdom of God. There is more to Jesus' teaching than this but here we feel the very heartbeat of kingdom truth, and we will neglect it at our peril. Because it deals with attitudes, the sermon stands at the entrance of God's kingdom as much as on its more exalted planes. It is not just meat for the mature but a challenge to the one who makes his first approach to heaven's rule and righteousness. (To be continued.)

Woman's World

A Woman — A Christian

Marilyn Harrell Hardage

Long before we become conscious of what it means we learn that we are "girls." After a while we come to understand that we are "women," a unique part of the human race.

A generation or so ago most women never questioned their roles as women or their relationship to men; today most, in industrialized countries, do. The questioning does not surprise me. In view of the choices offered, the toleration by society of alternate life styles, and the emphasis on the "me" philosophy, it would be strange if values and customs and attitudes were not openly challenged. What does surprise me is that so little of the questioning seems directed toward a woman understanding herself in the most crucial and practical way.

Is there an "ought" in being a woman? What does it mean to be a woman? Many young and some older women go through an identity crisis as they seek to find a meaning in their often confused lives. Should we not in the midst of the hurried, everyday decisions ask ourselves: "Who am I? What am I doing with my life? What ought I to do?"

Through long centuries of toil, strife, tragedy, and triumph women have lived and worked, loved and wept alongside men. In our generation, women are Russian peasants, English duchesses, Nigerian tribeswomen, Chinese students. In this country, they are migrant field hands, Hollywood starlets, teachers, homemakers, factory workers, Park Avenue sophisticates, nurses, waitresses, social workers. There are those who know the harsh, unrelenting labor of poverty. There are those who have lost their way in alcoholism, prostitution, drug addiction. There are young and old, well and sick, black and white, mistresses and servants, hopeful and despondent. Woman cannot and must not be defined as a simple middle-class concept.

A culture's definition of "woman" has always been stated not only in words but in what it offers her and takes from her. These expectations are ever changing; often they change both radically

and rapidly. What is expected and accepted in one generation and society is despised in another. Today's women come in a wide variety. I read of a super-woman who is expected to be all things to all people; of an aggressive, tough-minded woman who is eager to pursue her own career and sees her own needs as primary; of a fluffy, mindless, sugar-coated woman who sees herself only in relationship to a man; of a dissatisfied, dull woman who shuffles from the TV to

*Women
were exalted
by Him and
humbled.
He called
them from
narrow
selfishness,
foolish
pride,
and worldly
care. He
told us
to stop
being so
concerned
with ourselves.*

the dirty dishes and unmade beds; of a rich, hedonistic woman who is completely concerned with her own pleasure. All of these are shrill caricatures, but they underline the diverse possibilities in modern women's lives.

Have I anything of meaning to say to the women of the world, my sisters in the flesh? I am a woman.

Long ago, for many of us, but not before we became conscious of what it meant, we chose to become Christians.

We understood, some more clearly than others, that our choice was free, for life, and of real consequence. Through the word of God we came to know the Saviour. Jesus was presented to us in the story of the Gospels as He walked on this earth doing good. Our hearts were stirred and broken as we heard of His strength and sweetness and the intense, pure love He bore for us.

In His time, men and women spoke in the same harsh, greedy, calculating, indifferent ways they have always spoken. Jesus' words were different. They were so shockingly different that it was necessary to either honor or despise Him. For with His words and works He pierced the superficiality of life and the arrogant, yet pitiful, barriers that all erect in self-defense. For those who were willing to be pierced He brought life and light and peace.

Women were exalted by Him and humbled. He called them from narrow selfishness, foolish pride, and worldly care. He told us to stop being so concerned with ourselves. He told us to look around and see the needs and rights of others and to set ourselves to serve as He served. Of course, herein lies the difficulty, the crux of the challenge to women. Do I want to serve? Am I willing to humble myself, to submit?

The life He lived has been almost universally admired from a distance and disdained when the reality of the cross is recognized as other than an ornament or an abstract idea. However, He does offer an alternative to an existence of loneliness, vanity, and emptiness.

To women He holds out a definition of themselves in a relationship to Himself. He says that whatever our circumstances He will accept us, love us, forgive us, change us, and use us. He will teach us to be a part of an eternal kingdom of right where the questions of identity, meaning, purpose, fulfillment are answered in faith and obedience.

I have something to say to women, to all my sisters in the flesh. Come and see. I am a Christian.

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Remember Who You Are

Bill Fairchild, Jr.

If we would develop the attitude of being thankful that we are Christians, we would have very few problems being involved in the church.

When Paul summoned the Ephesian elders prior to his departure, among other things he told them, "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you over seers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The worth of the church is clearly seen in the tremendous price that was paid to purchase it.

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Throughout the
New Testament we
find admonition
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to remember who
they are.***

To be a member of this blood-bought institution is a wonderful privilege. To accept the Savior's invitation, submitting to His will, is the greatest, most important decision one can ever make. Although the world does not properly value the church, those who comprise its membership do. It is this recognition which should motivate God's people to even greater service. Throughout the New Testament we find admonition and

exhortation for God's people to remember who and what they are. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Peter is saying we are different and special, because of who we belong to!

Christians are to "present their bodies a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1). There are many things we can be doing as we seek to please Him if we will just make up our minds to do so. Maybe the problem is we haven't made up our minds yet. Just where do you see yourself as a member in the local congregation? Every member of the Lord's body has a vital role to fill in order for the congregation to accomplish what God wants. Note Paul's comparison of the church to the human body in 1 Corinthians 12. He forcefully emphasizes the need for all the members to be functioning and working together. As we recognize the importance of each member of our own body, we must recognize the importance of each member of the Lord's body. No one is unimportant!

God has been so good to us, giving each of us various talents and abilities. As the parable in Matthew 25 teaches, failure to use what the Lord has given us is sin. Note also James 4:17. Obviously, there are some works of the church we may not be able to participate in because of a lack of ability or training. That does not mean there is nothing for us to do. We must use the abilities we have to glorify our great God in heaven. There is work for all to do, if we will simply get busy and accept the challenge.

If we could develop the attitude which says, "I am thankful for the privilege of being a Christian; I will do everything I can to serve the Lord," we would be much better off. There's just a lot more involved in being a Christian than attending worship services. It takes work. Profession without performance is meaningless.

Do you see yourself as a vital part of the local congregation? Are you con-

tributing in a positive way to the work and the growth? If not, how come? Are you too busy? Do you not care? As someone once wrote: "Suppose every member of the church were just like you, what kind of church would it be?" There's a lot of truth involved in the answer to that question.

Paul wrote to the saints at Colosse in Colossians 3:1-2: "If ye then be risen with Christ . . . set your affections on

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things above." We're the children of God. We need to always remember that. "There is much to do, there's work on every hand," the song teaches. Don't feel unimportant or unneeded. You are important! You're a child of God, a citizen in the kingdom which cannot be shaken. You have a role to fill, a function to perform, a work to do. Let's all get busy.

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Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Paul Andrews — Tampa, Florida

It is generally supposed that to be an evangelist one must spend much time going from place to place. Yet one of the most effective evangelists of recent times spent forty years in the same city and lived thirty years in the same house. During all those years he was too busy doing the work of an evangelist to spend very many nights away from home.

Paul Andrews faced the same obstacles which many consider justifiable excuses for failing to save souls. He was working in a metropolitan area, a worldly seaport city in a resort community where many retired people make their home. The church was not large or popular and often his work was done in areas of town which were generally considered undesirable. The man himself, unaffected by the sophistication of the city, ever remained the country boy, raising his pigeons and preaching the same old gospel he had learned and preached in the hills of North Alabama.

In the face of all of this, Paul's success as an evangelist cannot be questioned. Beginning with only six or seven families at North Street in 1958, he baptized more than six hundred before the congregation divided peacefully in 1971 to form a new congregation. During three consecutive years, he averaged almost one hundred baptisms a year. In the new location on North Boulevard, more than three hundred were baptized over a twelve year period. Most of these were substantial and stable people who have remained faithful and become workers in the kingdom.

How did this man accomplish so much? Many have tried to determine the answer to this. Was it that unspoiled rural friendliness that waves at strangers and expects the best of everyone? Was it the challenge which new acquaintances always seemed to offer, causing him to begin making plans for their conversion? Was it the fact that the hospitality of his home was so often extended to those he was seeking to convert, reinforcing their feeling that he was genuinely interested in them? Was it his absolute certainty of the truth that he was teaching that made him so convincing? It was all of this; but most of all, it was the fact that he never forgot what he was—an evangelist. His job was to save souls by

teaching them the gospel.

Paul did not measure his success by his reputation in the brotherhood. He never wrote articles for the papers. His concern was not what he was paid or the size of the church. He did not politic for meetings or for opportunities to appear on lecture programs. (At one such appearance, he expressed doubt that he should even be there, missing so many teaching opportunities back at home.) Paul measured success as an evangelist by the number of souls brought to the Lord. That kind of success is still possible if that is the success we are seeking.

Such success, of course, is not achieved by one man working alone. Good brethren provided support which gave him time to teach. His wife and family shared his interest and showed their concern for each prospect. Many of those he baptized were taught or brought by other Christians. As soon as one was baptized, he was expected to go and find yet another to be taught.

Training and motivating other Christians is an important part of the work of an evangelist. Paul, the apostle, wrote to Timothy: "The things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). Several years ago, Paul conducted a personal work training course for a church in Alabama. A few weeks later the local preacher was asked to evaluate the success of the course. He replied that thirty-five classes were being conducted that week by members of the church. "What method did he suggest?" the preacher was asked. The reply: "He didn't say much about methods; he just convinced us all that we were going to hell if we didn't get out and share the gospel with the lost."

Though he passed from this life on Lord's Day morning, August 28, 1983, the light of truth will continue to shine in Tampa and around the world from the many lamps which he set burning and from the vivid memory of his teaching. Paul Andrews—truly, a light in the world!

3231 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

Unionizing Church Headquarters

Columnist Victor Riesel first noted the efforts of the United Auto Workers Union to organize American religious denominations over two years ago. In a recent column he revealed that the union had won certification among the staff employees of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Riesel predicts that the union will now "seek members in all headquarters of all religions—and such employees are in the thousands." I have nothing against unions and am openly in favor of religion, but this whole affair, apparently not a hoax, struck me successively as ridiculous, unchristian, and hopeful.

I confess that my first reaction was to let my mind wander irreverently over the possible scenarios posed by unionized religion. A union preacher might refuse to baptize more than three people a week, two in weeks that

included funerals, and only one in weeks with weddings unless the groom (or in the case of feminists, the bride) agreed to take him along on the honeymoon. House calls would be remunerated on a sliding scale ranging from \$50 per hour for cantankerous old men to complimentary visits to young widows. One assumes that sermons would be purchased by the minute which would further increase the demand for short-winded preachers.

What struck me as unchristian about the story was the idea that any Christian would tie his labor in the Lord to his wages. The motive of those who preached in New Testament days was not good wages and decent working conditions (since they frequently worked with neither); nor was their service to God tied in any way to how others treated them. The apostle Paul's motivation was, "Woe is unto me, if I

preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Just as basic is my inability to put the concept of "church headquarters" in a Biblical framework. I know the Bible talks about the church having a "head," that is, Jesus Christ. His "quarters" are in heaven. Otherwise, all I can read about in the New Testament are local churches with their own officers and duties. I'm not so much opposed to organizing unions in church headquarters as I am to organizing church headquarters to start with.

But the more I pondered this subject the more favorably inclined I became to the whole idea of unionizing church headquarters. I hope the Auto Workers succeed. Sooner or later there are bound to be management-labor problems. There is no way that average penny-pinching, pleasure-loving, money-mad church members will ever support

their preachers at a level which will allow them to participate in the sins of their hell-bound customers. When this injustice becomes apparent to all, someone in church headquarters is going to get mad—I mean really mad. Church-headquarters union-big-wigs will pitch a fit, order the whole bunch to throw down their catechisms, dynamite the steeples, and close down the man-made religion business.

Round 'em up, Auto Workers. Of course, it probably won't work. If we managed to close down all of these man-made American church headquarters, it would probably only open the way for a flood of cheap import Japanese churches.

Maybe it would be better to try to Christianize union organizers instead of unionizing church organizations.

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Memory—Key To Your Own History

Memory is a wonderful mental tool. It is the faculty with which we recall and bring to life again things that have happened before. It is at the base of all experience and its value to our lives is unquestioned. Memory is not connected to time or place. In fact, a thing done at some other time and in some other place can be recalled so vividly that one can sometimes almost live the scene again, experiencing all the precise emotional stimulations which were present at the time of the original event.

Memory is important in our service to God. At various times God calls on us to use our faculty for recollection in order that we might be stronger, or be prepared, or be courageous, or be careful. "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance" (1 Peter 1:12-13). In Acts 20:35, Paul asks his auditors to bring to mind again the saying of Jesus that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The radical idea in forgiveness is God's assurance that He remembers the sin no more.

The everyday service we are to render to God is connected inseparably to our ability to remember and be impressed with certain kinds of information. If we can learn to keep that information in an ever-ready mode (near the present situation) so that it prompts us in a moral way, that is a proper use of the memory. But if we push that information back and do not recall it, we are apt to be vulnerable. Spiritual information is just like any other type of information: if it is not retained, it has not really been learned.

Many people have left the Lord because of a failure to *remember the value of time*. Time is a precious thing, a gift that once it is squandered, cannot be reclaimed. It takes time to serve God. Time to meditate about His love and our need for it. Time to properly locate ourselves to see to it that we are headed in the right direction. Time to examine our motives, to ascertain why we do what we do and whether or not it is in our best spiritual interests to be doing what we are. Time to teach ourselves and others. Education of any sort is a slow process and we must be willing to invest the time it takes to learn. It takes time to pray, to help others, to be a good parent, a good neighbor. And through it all we should realize that time

invested in a right thing enhances its value. In fact, time invested in the right thing is what living the Christian life is all about.

Remember the joy of overcoming. There is no worthwhile project that is easy. It takes planning, time, perseverance. "And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do it heartily as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23) is always good advice. There is great joy from just participating, from just being involved. Bring to mind the most joyful experiences of your life—that ballgame you won against all odds, the new job which came only after great labor, the temptation you overcame after great struggle. To recall these things is to secure the future, to know that it can be done. And in all instances, the pleasure is derived as much from the participation as from the success achieved. We should always remember the joy of serving to the end, even if the way is hard.

If we are to be pleasing to God and hope to live tranquil lives, we must *see the true value of character*. Character is what we are. President Theodore Roosevelt once said, "A sound body is good; a sound mind is better; but a strong character is better than either." He is right. The sound body does not necessarily argue as to who you are; neither does the sound mind. But the character does! The Christian must be virtuous, dedicated, courageous. He is the kind of person who recognizes the true worth of his character to the cause he represents; that in order to "let your light shine before men" he must stay spiritually trim and adequately motivated so that there is absolutely no doubt about who he is and where he stands. "Remember who you are" is always sound advice.

Finally, *let us not forget the simple*, the little, the insignificant. I think we are so impressed with the great things that we are often bored with less than the exciting, the climactic, the cataclysmic. There is real excitement in the small, real joy in the less, real contentment in the insignificant. The Lord was born in a manger; the world was first evangelized by simple men. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" is not the astounding, the weighty, the startling—but a simple route to true joy. Stop and notice Spring, feel the gentle breeze, play with the little people, perceive the sheer wonder of just being loved. Ah, what great use of the memory is made when we recollect the small!

Prospectus

Of making many books there is no end. In offering CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE we have no delusions of grandeur nor do we intend to detract from the solid contributions of others. Papers, like people, tend to have unique personalities. All of us like some better than others and we hope that this new offering may be attractive and instructive to some who receive a copy. We encourage you to share it with others.

PURPOSE

CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE intends to provide scriptural, practical, timely, and readable articles that will build faith and hope. While we do not question the need for all sorts of religious writing—polemical, scholarly, investigative—we believe there is a widespread craving for literature which will build up the weak and encourage all those who have set out to follow Christ. Several names were discussed while this magazine was in the planning stages. One was "For Building Up." It was a good sentiment and we hope that CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE can be used for building up. A close second in our search for a name was "The Joyful Christian." While all of us know that Christianity is not all joy, we are also conscious that of all people in the world Christians should be joyous. We are happy in the Lord, though not complacent; triumphant in our faith, though not

finished with the fight; rejoicing in our hope, though not counting ourselves already to have attained. While there is much that is wrong in

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the world—and we shall feel free to comment about it—there is a true and right way called Christianity. We want to hold it high.

The theme of the first issue of CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE illustrates both the form that the magazine will take and its purpose. "Positive Christianity" we believe is the answer in a world jaded on secularism and sin. As we noted in the premiere issue, "Positive Christianity" is often negative—opposing immorality and doctrinal flab—but it also focuses on the light which illuminates this dark and sinful world. It is that bright hope we seek to explore and magnify. We know that "Positive Christianity" has often been used as a cloak for maliciousness and weakness. It need not be so. The love and grace of God Almighty are majestic themes, as are His awesome judgment and power, and we intend to explore them all with reverence and candor.

AUDIENCE

CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE is not a preacher's magazine, though we hope that preachers will find it useful. In style, content and tone it is aimed at that great body of Christians, young and old, who need encouragement, practical teaching and admonition on a regular basis. It will be a magazine that can edify the weak, as well as feed the strong. We believe it will be a paper that you can give to your non-Christian neighbor with the assurance that it will teach him in a scriptural, firm

(continued on page 5)



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and yet friendly way. While we have no intention of avoiding the toughest and most controversial questions the Bible raises, we shall address them from the Scriptures, not in language laden with theological jargon and set aflame by contemporary controversy.

The modern media saturates our senses with trash. It also provides stiff competition for one who hopes to talk about grander and purer themes. Is it possible to produce a magazine attractive enough, journalistically competent enough, and yet scriptural enough that it can be useful and used? We don't know. We have pledged one year to find out. We believe it is needed. Do you agree?

FORMAT

CHRISTIANITY MAGAZINE has four editors: Dee Bowman, Paul Earnhart, Ed Harrell and Brent Lewis. Each editor will contribute two regular columns to the magazine. Dee Bowman brings an effervescent, ebullient spirit that will lift you up and a scriptural common sense that will build you up. Paul Earnhart, one of the finest Bible students of our time, will offer scriptural studies rivalling the finest commentaries. From Ed Harrell we might expect a touch of the scholarly, a pinch of the ridiculous, a little semi-dry Will Rogers wit and the unexpected. Brent Lewis brings to the magazine one of the finest journalistic minds and pens among modern Christians. Combined, these men have taught tens of thousands in person; we hope you will make them regular literary acquaintances.

In addition, the paper will feature other regular columns. Sewell Hall, perhaps the most knowledgeable observer of the spread of Christianity in the modern world, will offer a regular column entitled "Lights in the World." His articles about and interviews with the heroes and heroines on the frontiers of our faith should encourage and inspire us. Under such headings as "Woman's World," "Youth Forum," "Parents' Page," "Teaching Tips" and "Ways That Work" the editors shall ask contributors to address the most

pressing practical problems faced by modern Christians.

In this issue, Joanie Greer writes for parents about the particular problems confronting them as they try to raise those children in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Next month, Ruth Thompson, respected teacher of women and author of the book *That They May Train the Young Women*, writes concerning women who are seeking to live as Christians.

Spirit." Each thematic section will comprise a twelve page insert in the center of the magazine and it may be extracted to circulate as a tract or to use as a teaching tool.

Each issue of the magazine will be directed by a single editor on a rotating basis. We are confident that each will be scriptural and profitable—we also believe that every issue will have its own distinctive character and flair. The magazine will also feature a regular section

"DEE BOWMAN brings an effervescent, ebullient spirit that will lift you up . . . PAUL EARNHART will offer scriptural studies rivalling the finest commentaries . . . from ED HARRELL we might expect a touch of the scholarly, a pinch of the ridiculous, a little semi-dry Will Rogers wit and the unexpected . . . BRENT LEWIS brings to the magazine one of the finest journalistic minds and pens. These men have taught tens of thousands in person; we hope you will make them regular literary acquaintances."

Most distinctively, twelve pages of each issue will address a central theme. Twelve authors will write on discreet and concrete topics in short, pithy and practical articles. The theme sections will explore subjects ranging from the personal and subjective—"How Do I Live In This Mess?" and "True Spirituality"—to the doctrinal and theological—"Restoring New Testament Christianity" and "The Holy

called "Soundings" so you can tell us what you like and dislike.

APPEAL

Do you and your family need something joyful to read?

Do you know a weak Christian who would profit from thinking on "Positive Christianity?"

Do you feel that the time is ripe to tell the world that plain, Biblical Christianity is the answer?

How about looking us over?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Religious Tax Exemption

In May, 1983 the Supreme Court revoked the tax-exempt status of two conservative schools, including Bob Jones University, because in the court's opinion each practiced a form of racial discrimination. The ground for the decision was, basically, that a tax-exempt educational institution must "be in harmony with the public interest." Since segregation clearly violates the current consensus of the "public interest," the schools, though religious, were refused the privilege of tax-exempt status.

I have no intention of arguing here the merits of most of the elements in this important decision. I have long opposed segregation, and still do, though I have never believed that New Testament Christians considered themselves social reformers. I think it has been a consummate blessing to live in a secular state which allows freedom of religious expression and would be happy to see all religious privilege disappear, including tax-exempt status. But I have little hope of ever seeing the United States government beard such financial giants as the Roman Catholic Church and the Mormons. If the court is interested in equity, I should think all Roman Catholic seminaries which refuse to admit women into study for the priesthood would soon lose their tax-exempt status.

Whatever one may think about those questions, there are two instructive points the ruling calls to my mind. First, the court drew a careful distinction between churches and other religious institutions. Otherwise, the ruling would have been a devastating blow to freedom of religion in America, requiring all churches to teach only such doctrines as agreed with the "public interest." In making that distinction the court recognized what anti-institutional Christians have long argued—auxiliary institutions related to churches, however devout their caretakers, are fundamentally non-religious. They are necessarily involved in the provision of secular and social services which in a secular state are properly regulated by the government. I would also add that they are unscriptural, having no precedent in the recorded behavior of New Testament Christians. One might argue that the New Testament church was too young to have ancillary institutions. Such an argument misses the point of

revelation: the Bible tells us what we need to know. It also ignores the potential of the church to always stay, young, fresh, and non-institutional. The time will likely come soon when a denomination will either be non-institutional or will be forced to bend its religious teachings to fit bureaucratic readings of the public interest.

A second, and more ominous, question raised by the court's ruling is the expansion of the government's regulatory powers into the area of religious belief. Whatever the court's commitment to religious liberty, why should churches be allowed to openly teach doctrines which threaten the "public interest?" Surely the climate is warming for some patriot to propose the loss of tax exemption for any church which refuses to ordain women as ministers, or which disfellowships homosexuals. It is not inconceivable to me that in the lifetime of my children such beliefs would become illegal in the United States.

To say so is not to be an alarmist. Perhaps it will not be so; perhaps we shall be allowed to live on in the aberrant environment which has allowed every man to believe and say what he wished. But it has not always been so, nor is it so in most places in the world today, nor will it always be so if history continues.

I read a historical paper several years ago in the Orthodox Seminary in Bucharest, Romania. I expressed to several of the priests there my thankfulness for the existence of religious freedom in the United States. "We have religious freedom here," one replied. Somewhat surprised, I said, "I don't think you do." "Oh, yes," he replied, "We have twelve churches authorized by the government and you can belong to anyone of the twelve you choose."

Why not twelve churches, or fifty, or two hundred at most? All of them in agreement with the "public interest," none of them troublemakers. It would be tidy, neat, patriotic, in the national interest. Just list your choice under your social security number.

It all sends a little chill up my backbone. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16).



Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 5235 94th St., Lubbock, TX 79424

Soundings is intended to be a true *reader response column*. We want to know what you, the readers, think about this paper and what we are saying. The reason is simple—our effectiveness depends on our capacity to determine that. Is it possible that those of us who preach and write are “answering questions which no one is asking?” We hope not, but we sure don’t want to be. And the only way we can know if we’re “on target” is to hear from you.

In the Prospectus of this premiere issue we have stated our intent of addressing the pressing practical problems of those of us who are trying to serve our Lord. What are those problems? Well, we are certain that you know them as well, or better, than we. So, we are hoping for a steady stream of feedback from you. *Why would you write to us?*

1. To suggest a subject. There may be some topic which you would like to see treated in the magazine. A portion of each issue of this paper will be on a particular theme. Those of us who serve as editors all have some ideas about themes. We think they are good ideas. But we would welcome suggestions from you. We cannot promise that we will follow each suggestion, but we will certainly value and consider each one.

2. To comment on an article. If we do the job we expect to do, we are going to “stir up your sincere minds” in each issue. You may want to write us in order to “amen” a particular

piece. “I enjoyed the article on such-and-such. I believe brother Smart got to the heart of the matter. Something else I would add is . . .” In the same way, you may wish to disagree. “I appreciate the article by brother Not-So-Smart on . . . However, I do not agree with his conclusion. It seems to me such-and-such.” All we ask is that you write in a brotherly spirit and keep it brief—under 150 words.

***This
is the
place where
you, the
reader,
have the
opportunity
to say
what’s on
your mind.***

3. To edify, exhort and encourage. You may have some beneficial and constructive observation that you believe needs to be stated. We cannot promise that every comment will be carried here, but those that we believe to be of enough interest and profit to others will be used. The format and nature of this magazine precludes the acceptance of unsolicited

articles. But this is a place where you can “sound off” on some things that may help others. You don’t have to be a preacher to say something that needs to be said. In fact, maybe you need to sound off about preachers! At any rate, please observe the 150-word maximum.

4. To comment on current events. Things are happening around us every day. We are all involved in them, to some extent. The things you read in the newspaper and see on television may cause you to want to speak out. You may want to call for others’ response on the same issue. This is the place for you to do that. We can all profit from your thinking.

Paul said, “For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself” (Romans 14:7). Those of us connected with *Christianity Magazine* recognize the many and varied contributions that others can make to this endeavor. We are not in this alone; we solicit your help, your cooperation and your participation.

Christians are all interrelated. Someone has said, “We can see that life is a cycling phenomenon which occurs in many forms within a single system. Nothing stands alone—no individual, species, or community; no rain drop, snow crystal, cloud or stream; no mountain and no sea—for in a cycle each thing in one way or another is connected with everything else.” We are connected with you. We value what you have to say. Let us hear from you.

Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

Moving Self Out of the Center

The innate desire to keep self at the center of our beings is called *pride*. Pride is insidious—the deadliest of all sins. It builds a barrier between men and God and is the catalyst for every problem between fellows. It separates the races and encourages a sense of superiority of one nation over the other. It segregates whole nations into social classes.

But here is its worst evil—it moves the God of heaven out of His rightful place at the center of our lives! All of our restlessness, our aimless wandering in life, is caused by this simple fact. Augustine stated a basic truth in his *Confessions* some fifteen hundred years ago: “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in Thee.”

Pride is a refusal to honor God as God and fails to admit that His rightful place is at the center of our existence. We cannot hope to see ourselves as we really are when pride takes up a position of strength within our being. The rejection of God as the spiritual center of our selves is the essential factor behind all evil.

How do we go about dethroning pride and enthroning God in His proper place within our hearts? What practical steps can we take to beat down this horrible sin?

The initial act of moving self from the throne of our beings and allowing God to rule at the center of our existence is called *conversion*. There is no human therapy in the world that can accomplish this. The Christian life begins when we allow Christ to enter our lives. This is an act of *will*—it is a deliberate choice we make, a decision of surrender on our part.

Thus, one does not become a Christian by being born in a “Christian” nation, or by living a reasonably decent life. He does not become a Christian because he was “baptized” as an infant, or because he attends church. As has been said, “Sitting in a church building does not make one a Christian any more than sitting in a hen house makes one a chicken.”

No, a true relationship with Christ begins with *surrender*. Jesus Christ must be admitted into our lives as *Lord*. It must be on His terms, not ours. The decision to accept these terms involves what we call *repentance*. This is being sorry enough about our sin to turn away from it. Repentance is agreeing with God about our sin and being

ready to hand it over to Him for cleansing, forgiveness, pardon and release.

The way in which we repent of sin is very important. God requires complete repentance. Some see their sin as something which has gotten them into trouble and they are actually only sorry for the consequences of sin. Here is where we have to be terribly honest with ourselves. Repentance is not being sorry for the results of sin, but being sorry for the *sin itself*. A failure to acknowledge this is responsible for some people still feeling guilt in their own hearts and lives, even after they become Christians. This gives rise to deep feelings of insecurity. True repentance also involves making right any wrongs which have been committed, to the best of our ability.

If God is to enter our lives, then He simply must be given His proper place at the core of our whole existence. Someone has said that sin is like *anarchy*. Crime is breaking the laws of a nation, but anarchy challenges the right of the nation to make such laws.

Every individual, to be true to himself, must turn from sin. He must allow Jesus Christ to be Lord of his life—for man was designed by God to that end.

In the New Testament there were two people who asked Christ the exact same question. One was the rich young ruler. He came to Jesus, asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus told him. The requirements were more than he expected, and because he was not willing to move his riches out of the center of his life so that Christ could rule—He went away sorrowful. Paul asked the same question, “Lord, what will thou have me to do” (Acts 9:6)? And when Jesus told him, he was willing to make a complete commitment to Christ that led him to say, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

Through the centuries there have been those who have invited Christ to come into their lives but have sought to maintain their own authority in certain portions of their lives. This cannot be. If Christ is to be Lord *at all*, He must be Lord *of all*. If He is to keep us free from evil, He must have the entire territory of our lives in His hands. Are we willing to surrender it? One thing is for sure. Every problem we have with self hinges upon the answer to this question.

Do You Dance?

L. R. Hester

Morality alone is not Christianity, but Christianity apart from moral purity is impossible. The Lord commands: "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). And: "Keep thyself pure" (1 Timothy 1:16).

Adherence to this charge calls for every possible precaution. One seldom, if ever, plays with fire without getting burned. Christianity is a fight against temptation. The body does not cease to make its demand of self-gratification, and many of those demands are immoral and ungodly. Solitude or seclusion cannot make us exempt from temptation; yet, temptation is not overcome by willful exposure. When temptation threatened Joseph's moral purity, he fled out of the house (Genesis 39:12). And Paul said to Christians "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

As an appeal to sensuality, dancing ranks among the greatest. It tends to strip man of his spiritual armor while his carnal nature is fortified. It stupefies the spiritual senses, dulls the conscience and subjects man to his animal desires. Hence, dancing is often a sure road to adultery and every kind of immoral practice.

Today dancing is sponsored by some religious groups as clean and wholesome recreation. It is taught and encouraged in many schools as though it had a place in constructive education. Even some preachers and elders in the Lord's church sanction it among the members. All such is sickening to the spiritual-minded. The fact that the dance is sponsored by some religious group, taught in the school, or considered by some as just an innocent school dance does not remove its appeal to sensuality. To sponsor dancing among the young in an attempt to build moral citizens is like striking matches in the vicinity of highly inflammable materials in an attempt to prevent fires.

But someone says, "Only the evil-minded are adversely affected by dancing. I can indulge with a pure motive and a clean mind." If you can honestly make the above statement, it is still wrong for you to dance. It is a well-known fact that dancing encourages

many to be immoral. We must not disregard others in our practices. Paul said, "But when ye so sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:12-13).

Dancing is a mark of worldliness. Even if the dancer's motive is pure, his practice casts a shadow upon him. It is generally agreed that "birds of a feather flock together." Mentally, both the church and the world associate the dancer with the worldly crowd. Is it not

never hear men ask, "Is it good to dance?"

Young Christian, the Lord, the church, and the world are watching you. You are called out of darkness into His marvelous light, that you might show forth the praises of Him who called you" (1 Peter 2:9). The church has received you into its fellowship and the world has noted your professed stand for the Lord. All expect you as an individual of honor to be what you profess to be—a Christian. The sinner and the ungodly church member will try to allure you, but they will not truly respect you for being allured. You may think you must

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true that gamblers, drunkards, adulterers, and such like are usually found at the public dances? "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Dancing is sinful because it destroys one's influence for good. Even the world knows that the most faithful in the church do not dance nor find pleasure or spiritual strength in the fact that a brother or sister does so. Dancing neither leads the sinner to the Lord, nor builds spirituality in the lives of those who have taken His name. There simply is nothing good to say about dancing. Many ask, "Is it wrong to dance?" but we

dance because the world dances, but the Lord commands: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." You have renounced the world to stand with the Lord; now it is your duty to stand. You cannot have both—the Lord and the world. To the worldly church member, James wrote: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). To engage in the modern dance is to be worldly. Whose friend are you? Are you with the Lord, or with the world?

From *The Preceptor*, Vol. 7, No. 1, November, 1957



How To Avoid A Spiritual Failure

In his final hours in Rome, awaiting an inevitable execution, a very lonely apostle Paul suffered some additional heartbreak. "Demas," he wrote, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). We are left to speculate as to the particulars—what dread fears or powerful allurements led this faithful friend and co-worker to abandon the kingdom of God and to forsake his burdened brother. It was not as though he had fled the field at the first approach of trouble. During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome Demas had evidently been a steadfast companion (Philemon 24; Colossians 4:14). Now, unexpectedly, this heart-mauling betrayal and desertion. Only those who have had a trusted companion in Christ—one who has proven himself in many a crisis—to suddenly turn from God and run for the world can understand. It can numb the spirit.

What is it that can cause one who has invested so much in the kingdom to suddenly abandon everything? Some fade early because they have little understanding of the calling of God and even less commitment. The first approach of temptation and hardship devastates them (Luke 8:13). Others seem to have a deep commitment to righteousness but not an absolute one. Their price for betrayal is high but they have one nonetheless, and when it gets high enough they run. The wealthy young ruler who came to Jesus was like that. He was willing to give up a lot, but not everything (Matthew 19:16-23).

Paul said that Demas "loved this present world." The "world" is many things. John describes it as a way of thinking where lust, materialism and pride abound (1 John 2:15-16). What was it that got to the faithful Demas? Was it fear of death or imprisonment? Or was it something more subtle like a nostalgic longing for the old easy ways free of constant unabating warfare? We are not told which one of these undid Demas but one of them found its mark.

Breaking points can come to us too if we are not very careful. A deep hurt we cannot find it in ourselves to forgive. A disappointing marriage. Failures with our children. Lost health or prosperity. Anything we had never imagined happening to us. And often it's just plain prideful stubbornness. At any rate, don't ever say you'd never do what others have done. You've never been all the places you could be. Peter learned a valuable lesson about that (Matthew 26:31-35). It is far better that we know our own weaknesses and watch and pray that we enter not into temptation (Matthew 26:41). Satan loves

an arrogant and self-confident man.

Another lesson to be learned from the failure of others is that those who at last go back, at first look back. Departures of apparent suddenness are really the end of a process. Our Lord warned that those who put their hand to the kingdom plow and look back longingly at the world are not fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). The disciples who go back are those who first begin to cultivate again the values of the world and like the Israelites in the wilderness grow nostalgic amidst their trials for the fleshpots of Egypt. They forget, of course, the galling bondage that accompanies the life of sin. These are the ones who gradually cease to meditate upon God's word (Psalm 1:1-2), then become prayerless (James 4:1-2) as God and Christ seem far away. First men cease to study, then to pray, and, finally, to care.

Sometimes this all begins as a casual flirtation, a few little compromises dismissed as harmless. Too much time with worldly companions (1 Corinthians 15:33), too much interest in a job (1 Timothy 6:9-10), too much concern with being accepted and making our mark in the world (1 Peter 5:5). Finally, it becomes a passionate love affair that makes us heedless of the injury we do to our Savior, ourselves and others.

Satan is the master of the "short step" method. Slow change is more effective in producing spiritual collapse than sudden departure. The danger of alerting the victim to what is happening is eliminated. We can be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13). Warning flags need to start flying the moment we feel the slightest ebb in commitment. Beware the spiritual slow leak.

The unfailing answer to this kind of spiritual failure is the daily discipline of an uncompromising dedication which admits of no exceptions and makes quick and humble redress for every transgression. Burn all your bridges and press on to the heavenly mark (Philippians 3:7-14). And if, in spite of everything, you happen to stumble badly, don't let despair destroy you. Remember that everyone who has faltered has not ultimately fallen. We can all thank God for that. John Mark's disgraceful desertion in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13) was not the end of him because he didn't allow it to be. Paul sent for him during his last hours (2 Timothy 4:11) and the Holy Spirit chose him to record the gospel story. We don't have to be like Demas. In the mercy of God we have the privilege of being like John Mark or Peter, and, yes, even Paul.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor:
Dee Bowman

How Do I Live In This Mess?

God did great good when He created man. Man is unique among all of God's creatures simply out of the fact that he is fitted to act from his own volition rather than from a law of necessity. Everything man does is only the fulfillment of what he has before decided of his own will. C. S. Lewis has properly observed that "wickedness, when you examine it, turns out to be the pursuit of some good in the wrong way." Misuse of good, illicit use of right things, poor motives, selfish use of desires, appetites—all these and more constitute the basis for immorality. And in all of it, man's own selfish choices are the culprit.

We are bound to live in our atmosphere. Atmosphere is important. We are so attached to our own that when we leave it we must, as do the astronauts, take a little of it with us where we go. And there are different kinds of atmospheres: some are humid, some arid; some are warm, others not so warm; but in every area people have adapted to their atmosphere. The ability of man to conform to his surroundings is amazing.

We live in a mess, an atmosphere where restraint has been cast aside and where what might be called "moral liberty" runs rampant. People today have lost their sense of shame. The blush is as outmoded as bustled skirts and high-button shoes. Pornography is not only tolerated, but its purveyors legally protected. Drug use has run through

every age group, beginning with the young adults and running all the way down to grade school students. Prostitution is openly practiced as immoral women ply their trade openly on street corners as well as in fancy hotels. Bad language, absolute gutter filth, is everywhere and no ear, no matter how tender, is excepted from it. Marital promiscuity has become so common as to be expected. Television programs depict it as the norm and in doing so promote it to a level of respectability. Lying, cheating, stealing, are excused today as being just good business and shoddy workmanship is practiced without excuse or apology.

This, then, is the atmosphere in which we live. Can we overcome it? Can we, in the midst of such filth and decadence, stand up for purity and righteous living? I say we can. We not only can, we must! It's up to us to pervade society, to seek to show that there is a sublimated way of living that not only makes better people, but better living; and in the end, eternal life.

But how can we do it? We are so few; they are so many. Besides, look at the appeal of evil. How can we be expected to contend against such appeal? Evil imposes no hardships, it requires only that one conform; it removes moral barriers and opens new frontiers for enjoyment.

But we can do it. I suggest:

1. That we stop being timid about who we are and accept the challenge.

Sure, it's hard. But it's worth it. We must not be weary in our well-doing (Galatians 6:9); we must remain constant (1 Corinthians 15:58). And we have no reason to be ashamed of our Master or of His gospel. We walk with the King! Let's act like it.

2. That we develop a sense of well-being about who we are. It takes confidence to win and we of all people should be the most confident. Do you realize that while we stand with God we cannot lose? It's so! There is no power that can stop us (Romans 8:35-39)—not even death (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). So let us be bold and fearless, for ours is the victory!

3. That we learn again what is the value of the spiritual. All of us knew that at one time, when we first obeyed the gospel. But we tend to let it slip away. We need to return to it. To understand the value of the spiritual is to relegate our trials and difficulties to their rightful place of only relative importance; to tune our minds to the noble, the sublime, the truly great; to aim higher; and to work harder. Our heart and our treasure are at the same place. Let us begin again to look up, not out.

We can do it. We not only can exist in this mess, we can change it. With neither shame nor diffidence, let us concentrate on where we are and who we are and realize that ours is a grand mission even though it must sometimes be in the midst of a mess.

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HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?

Business Ethics vs. Bible Ethics

H. Osby Weaver

THERE IS A LATIN PHRASE *caveat emptor*, meaning "let the buyer beware" or "that the buyer buys at his own risk." Another similar one that runs parallel with it is *caveat venditor* or "let the seller beware." So, it works both ways.

That either or both should be appropriate for our time is an indictment of the business practices so commonly employed today. Apparently some have fallen for the shallow pretext that religion is one thing and business another; that the two cannot be merged without getting in each other's way since they are supposed to be antagonistic to each other. There was the fellow who claimed that he had "done got religion." When asked if he was going to church and reading the Good Book, he resoundingly replied, "Yes sir!" When asked if he intended to pay his debts and stop cheating, he replied, "Now you are off the subject of religion and are talking about business!" To many, that is the relationship that business and religion sustain.

This attitude is not the result of what the Bible teaches nor a deficiency in God's word that fails to cover all of life's problems. The scriptures propose to be a perfect guide, "furnishing completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Its discipline is in righteousness and prohibits making provisions to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Romans 13:14). This is not an imaginary state but real and practical guidance to everyday living.

In order to measure up to this indenture, it must provide adequately for all activities in the business realm, as well as all other relationships. This is not to suggest that the scriptures will deal specifically with each individual, personal problem. On this basis the Bible would be too voluminous to read, much less make application of what it says. It does, however, guide in paths of righteousness and helps one make the proper choices that should be made, not only in the things specifically stated, but also by divine principles that apply to more than one situation. If one would live acceptably to God in the kind of

world in which we find ourselves, scriptural principles must be learned and allowed to prevail in all activities and relationships.

It has been said that "honesty is the best policy." This no doubt would be true if *honesty* were only a policy, but honesty is not a policy. Policies may be altered according to circumstances, but honesty cannot be so handled. Honesty is a principle and principles never change. In business, whether a buyer or a seller, a merchant or a customer, if divine principles regulate us, we can make it in this world and anxiously look forward to the big reward in the world to come.

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A close companion to honesty must be *generosity*. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). This is not just something that sounds good theoretically, but it is practical and it works. But one has to work it, and there are times when it requires the very best within us to see that it does. Making these principles work requires patience, steadfastness, and even a willingness to be "taken advantage of," mistreated, and perhaps abused—but victory will be

ours. We can do it!

A preacher once was asked to address a group of business men in a near-by city, and he chose for his subject the Lord's statement in Matthew 5:38-41, with emphasis on "Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." He made application to business practices. As would be expected, most of the business men took it with a grain of salt as mere preacher talk.

However, there was one exception—a man who operated a tire store. Upon returning from the luncheon where he had listened to the preacher, he was confronted by an angry customer demanding a new tire or his money back. It was obvious that the supposed defective tire had been abused by running it flat and it had been chewed up by the rim. The business man's first impulse was to bawl out the customer and throw him out the door. Then he remembered the preacher's talk and decided that he would give it a try even if it cost him a new tire, so he told the customer to pick out a new tire and it would be installed on his car "free for nothing."

The customer's attitude immediately did a 180 degree turn and he replied, "Well, I guess I did run a little too long on that tire after it went flat." The business man pressed the advantage he had going for him: "That's all right, we stand behind our merchandise. Just select the tire you want and it is yours free of cost." The customer walked up and down the row of tires with his hands stuffed down in his pockets up to his elbows. Then he said, "That damage was not altogether the tire's fault." Well, to shorten a story, an hour later the customer left with four new tires on his car, happy with his purchase, and the business man had the money for all four of them in his cash register. The business man had established the practicality of a divine principle and had learned firsthand that when one "smites you on the right cheek, it does not hurt nearly as much as one might think, to turn the other also!

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HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?



Rearing Children Today

Dale Smelser

WHAT HAPPENS TO INNOCENCE? WHAT happens to ten-year-old girls in sweet dresses and pretty hair showing the loving attention of a mother? Charming smiles are shy or vivacious. Laughter lilts. But in two or three years the change is profound and brutal. Innocence is replaced by precocious make-up and affected sophistication. Tight jeans and raised heels flaunt an immature clumsy seductiveness. Mourn innocence.

Surely no responsible mother had a part in this. And that is symptomatic and symbolic. In too quickly abdicating authority, parents helplessly stand aside and allow innocence to be raped. Do not tell me it is hard to resist today's pressures. Of course it is. But if you are going to be a good parent in a wicked age you must be a fighter. If you are unwilling to fight, please do not have children.

The ravagers of innocence are not subtle. A rock concert can do it in a night. Television, controlled by a cadre evangelistic in opposing morals of the past, is unconscionable. And permissive parents who provide a child with his own television set perform the moral equivalent of handing him a revolver with only one empty chamber and telling him to go play with it in his room. Television needs supervision. Its events and ideas need discussion by responsible parents. But most often, it just needs turning off.

That and other modern activities isolate a child from the family. And that is precisely what an inordinate and excessive devotion to the sacrosanctity of privacy does. Children supposedly need their "space." But if we make our homes happy and sharing, a child will relish his space inside a nurturing family. Isolation tends to alienation and seeks like lonely company. The consequences can be tragic. A child needs his family more than he needs prolonged privacy.

Togetherness creates family loyalty and helps overcome peer pressure, another ravager of innocence. Peer pressure is caring more about what one's associates think than what one's parents think. A tightly knit family of joy and

love can yield youngsters who care more for their parents' estimation than that of their peers.

Another problem is school. Given the penchant of teachers for assigning *The Scarlet Letter* and *Catcher in the Rye*, we know there is Trouble in River City. While the former, in the right circumstances, may teach tempered judgment, in the milieu of today's classroom it may simply make adultery seem less than bad. Then there are the problems that arise such as insistence on shorts in mixed gym classes. And sex education

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may become sex advocacy, unrestricted.

I know parents who tell their children exactly what to tell the teachers about all this. But a willful teacher is not deterred by that, and is not above intimidation by humiliation. Parents must take responsibility for a child's morals, and when necessary go to the teacher *personally* and establish that, and go with dignity. That usually suffices. When it does not, since you *cannot* accept what is wrong, it is time for no-compromise-determination, back-

against-the-wall courage, and a take-no-prisoners-battle that may escalate to the principal, superintendent, and school board. And if it is for a principle of faith and religious freedom you can do it and win. You may not destroy objectionable curricula, but you can keep them from involving your children.

Do not be deterred by, and do not tolerate threats of, lowered grades or non-graduation. They will graduate, and can do so respected and with honors. And if you are not just cranky, but live consistently with your principles, your children will have learned something about conviction, courage, and idealism. There are worse things to learn in life.

Parents need to consider two questions. One, "What do I want *this* child to be?" The best trumpeter in the county? See that he never misses a rehearsal or a performance, not even for church services. He might make it, and how proud you will be. But do not be surprised if somehow he gets the idea that some things can be more important than serving Christ. Of course, in the Judgment he might seek a trumpet tryout. But I doubt if he will be able to replace the angels who have the trumpet seats pretty well nailed down. You see the point. More important than fleeting recognition is the character and service that will stand him in good at the Judgment. That is what you really want most for him, isn't it?

The other question is, "What do I want?" Will my children see inconsistency, compromise, selfishness, or neglecting Christ, or them, in order to obtain my ambitions? Do I need the vicariousness of my children's triumphs, even to the point of exploiting them and giving the Lord short shrift? What you are and want is the starting place of what your children will be. That's where it started with Timothy.

Let us try this summary: Love God, love right, love service, and love your children, all uncompromisingly. Now get out there and mop up on today's mess.



HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?

The Christian Woman's Role in Today's Society

Harold E. Turner

What Is Her Role?

1. To offset as much as possible the anti-Biblical influences prevalent in our time. No one can minimize the ungodly influences of so-called "feminism" and the philosophies of like ilk better than a woman. *No one!* Preachers can get up series of sermons that will reach from now until Christmas, and then sear the walls and scald the hide, and when they get through they will not have accomplished nearly as much as one woman in the right setting (where the above ideas are being promoted) affirming bravely and unhesitatingly: "I believe this is a bunch of junk that needs to be seen for the rubbish that it is."

There is something about a woman saying it that drives the point home like nothing else; that being the case, the responsibilities of right-minded women today are indeed great.

Some of our women have sold out on this issue and have given in to the pressure of their peers. But, thank goodness, this is not true of all. Every now and then, there is that one special kind of person who will stand up in a crowd (no matter what the odds) and declare her stand for God, His ways and the righteous standard. May their number increase.

2. To really be a woman. One of the greatest needs we have today is for women to simply be women. We don't need any more truck drivers, body builders, cigarette smokers, foul-mouthed beer guzzlers or picket line walkers. The men have furnished us with all of this business for many years. What the world needs now—and it needs it badly—is for women to be women again!

There is a certain softness and true femininity about a real woman that is refreshing beyond words. It is there, and it is real, if it isn't stifled and squashed by the would-be directors and promoters of that which, by the very nature of it, causes a woman to look and act more and more like a man every day she lives. How sad it is indeed to see that which has a natural proclivity for sympathy, kindness and yes, *motherhood*, gradually

usually be eaten away and replaced by the harder traits just simply because somebody somewhere decided that is the way it should be. Who is that somebody? Who are these people who would defy the living God and change the natural order? And why then, does anybody find their doctrine appealing and worthy of imitation? Their teachings are advocated openly, unashamedly, proudly (as if merit of the highest order runs freely from their pronouncements) and in such ways as to indicate that anybody who would have little enough sense to disagree is unworthy of the slightest note. Time and time again we are treated to this kind of exercise in our society today. That they are

her. To the contrary, she was smothered with favorable comments after the class and stood amazed herself at the reaction she received.

Many more people than we might think have an appreciation for real conviction and, even if they didn't, God does—and that should cause us all to form them and stick by them at all cost.

Women have the opportunity to instill faith in God in the little ones coming up, and in that place they have no equal nor real competitor. They can do a job that cannot be belittled by anyone or anything—a work that will endure forever. May God help women everywhere to declare their faith in His way of life and to do so today.

"One of the greatest needs we have today is for women to simply be women . . . There is a certain softness and true femininity about a real woman that is refreshing beyond words."

being successful to a great degree in their intentions cannot be denied, but it does not have to be so, and it will not be so if enough women will shun them, their proposals and dictates, and choose simply to be *true* and *real* women as is intended. Will you not join that group?

3. To boldly declare her faith in God and His prescription for life. My wife recently, in a graduate course involving all kinds of godless philosophies of life, stood and affirmed in the hearing of all that she believes that the Bible prescribes how man can best live and that is to "fear God and keep his commandments." She was not laughed out of class (although in some instances that might very well be the reaction). The other students didn't look down their noses at

4. To accept the reality of her influence and direct it aright. Consider the influence wielded by the promoters of the modern women's movement. Women are powerful when they decide to be. They can accomplish much in the thinking of those around them when so inclined. It is a stubborn fact that refuses to be denied, as well as one that needs desperately to be put to work for the forces of right. *Women are influential in this world and you are no exception!* Recognize the truth of that statement and determine with all your being that from henceforth and forevermore your influence will be solidly in favor of the best interest of all. We pray for your success.

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HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?



Today's Music

Eugene Britnell

Today's Music

I CANNOT IDENTIFY THE AUTHOR AT THIS moment, but someone before me stated that if he could write the music of a nation he could control its morality and affect its destiny. I agree, for nothing more clearly reveals the mentality and morality of a people than the music they endorse and support. I feel that such reveals a serious problem in our society, and I'm pleased to write about it.

Scriptural Music

Beyond doubt, the most beautiful and meaningful music on earth is that which the Lord has ordained for His church—the blending of the voices of His people in gospel singing. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

For this study, we are concerned about other kinds of music and their influence on the minds and in the lives of people today.

Rock Music

Some twenty-five years ago, a music (?) was introduced into our society known as rock. It is my sincere conviction that this has done more to corrupt the minds and morals of today's youth than any other thing on earth! Almost without exception, rock songs purvey a message of sex, drugs, immorality and rebellion. And the rock stars nearly always live what they sing. I have a large file of newspaper articles and other information concerning the leading rock stars and their involvement with dope, sex and crime. Elvis Presley did much to introduce rock and roll music, and he killed himself with drugs.

Many of us have difficulty in classifying rock as music. A hungry calf, a pig caught in a gate, and a billygoat on a tin roof could come close to producing the sounds of rock music—that is, if they could bellow, squeal and stomp with volume that could be heard for a mile.

I have never been to a rock music show, and don't plan to go, but I would like to give you a look at what goes on from one who did attend. I have before

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me an article from a church bulletin in Ft. Worth, Texas, by Dick Marcear, entitled, "I SAW SATAN IN ACTION: or what it is like to attend a rock concert." We recognize the language necessary to present a vivid picture of what happened, and apologize if you find it offensive, but we must describe it as it is to get some people to see it for what it is. We now quote from the article:

"Rock concerts are not exactly my bag. Usually, you would expect to see them packed with kids, not a group of preachers. But because we were given free tickets by a group who wanted us to know what was going on, Bob Crass, Scottye Tarliff and I attended the KISS and PLASMATICs Concert at the Amarillo Civic Center on March 22. What we saw and heard literally made us sick. Look in on what we witnessed:

"1. A lady whose only clothes were small pieces of tape on her breasts and a 'G-string.' Her main song was called '—and Roll.' With it she made an obscene gesture with her middle finger. She took a microphone and acted as if she were having sexual relations with it. She encouraged the audience to make the same gesture and join in the singing. Many did. Then she took a good TV and smashed it with a sledgehammer. Then she cut up an electric guitar with a power saw.

"2. The couple in front of us drank two bottles of liquor and then smoked their dope openly. Dope was freely passed around in plain sight for anyone

who wanted to smoke it.

"3. One person had lighter fluid sprayed on his back and someone set him afire. The lead singer for KISS said, 'Now if you want to set yourself on fire that's cool—only don't do it to someone else. Anyone want to come up here and set themselves afire and burn for us?'

"4. We went to the bathroom and the floor was covered with blood and a syringe was lying there where someone had shot himself with some type of dope.

"5. The man who was taking tickets recognized me and asked, 'What in the world are you doing at a place like this?' When I told him, he said, 'Tell parents to not let their kids come to these things. They are terrible.'"

If you think that rock concert was an exception, you are wrong. They are all that way. No decent person should attend one of them. And for the same reasons, parents should discourage the purchase and use of rock albums and tapes.

Country Music

For many years country music presented a wholesome message and represented the heart of America. But no more! The majority of songs in so-called country music concern love triangles, adultery, profanity, drinking and broken homes. We can't hear songs like "You Are My Sunshine," "Home on the Range" and "Cool Water" on radio any more. Such songs can no longer be popular in a society of rotten rock, broken homes, intoxicated people, sexual revolution and general permissiveness.

Other than a few stations which play the old songs, about the only clean music I know of is traditional bluegrass. The lyrics are clean, and no drugs, drinking or immodesty is allowed at bluegrass festivals. I saw the manager of one ask three men to leave for not having on shirts. Had it been a rock show, they could have stayed without their pants!

Regardless of what our favorite music may be, let us all work to keep music a clean and wholesome entertainment.

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HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?

"The Light Is Sweet"

James W. Ward

BACK LAST FALL, BEAR, OUR GOLDEN retriever, lay stretched out in the sun. On a whim I said, "Bear, Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun . . ." He raised his head, thumped his tail, and went back to snoozing. What do dogs care about Scripture?

But you and I do, and Scripture tells us about an even sweeter light: Jesus Christ. He is the light of the world. And because we belong to Him, so are we! Read it yourself: "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-

house." Our task is noble; we can dispel darkness, that arch-metaphor of sin. What a power this is! And (3) we can "glorify (our) Father in heaven." No, we can never repay God for His goodness to us, but we can *want* to try. As astounding as it seems, we can actually influence men to give glory to God. How compelling!

Second, *we must think humbly*. We are reflectors, not generators, of light. Jesus is the generator. We play the moon to His sun. That means we must stay close to Jesus or our light will die. When we forget that, we become self-righteous, striving for the short-lived

radiates from kind and gracious speech—and remember, light heats as well as illuminates. We all shrivel under constant carping and grumbling. To keep the balance, though, kindness must join with truth, because truth is the ultimate kindness. Truth is the watermark of honor and integrity. We all long to trust others. We are tired of cynicism, of between-the-lines communication, of the *caveat emptor* in life's marketplace. But trust and truth must start with us. We cannot expect from sinners what we will not give. Let my speech be seasoned with gentleness and honesty. (Read Ephesians 4:25-32.)

We are to reflect Christ in *shining conduct*. That is the main point of our text—that our *good works* may bring glory to God. Look yonder at the Judean seacoast northwest of Jerusalem. Do you see the light shining from Joppa? It comes from the home of a woman with the lovely name of Gazelle. Just think—all that light is reflected by a sparkling needle! Can we match it? We must try, for the human misery in this world defies imagination. I write about Dorcas in the present tense because her light still shines. Think about the lasting power we have for good if only we will use our skills and gifts as Tabitha did. We can light the world, each from his own corner.

But after the surface needs of man are met, there is still a dark place in the house: the corner where sin dwells. That calls for *shining teaching* of the gospel. We must *tell* the gospel as well as live it. All our good deeds cannot save even one soul. We must tell sinners about the soul-saving, life-changing gospel of God's grace. He changed each of us; He can change the whole world. I must let that truth shine from my lampstand, not hide it under the basket of fear or laziness.

Well, it's winter now, and old Bear keeps shifting about, hunting for the scarce sunlight. He doesn't know or care much about Ecclesiastes, but he surely does know that the "light is sweet." He's probably not the only one.

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"Look yonder at the Judean seacoast northwest of Jerusalem. Do you see the light shining from Joppa? It comes from the home of a woman with the lovely name of Gazelle. All that light is reflected by a sparkling needle! Can we match it?"

stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). What a privilege to be the light for a bleak, gloomy world, darkened by sin. And what a challenge! How can we meet it? How can we let our light shine?

We start with *shining hearts*. I mean three things by that. First, *we must think often about our motives* for shining. Check the text: (1) We are "set on a hill." God has elevated you and me, just ordinary people, so that we "sit in heavenly places." Talk about incentive! (2) We can shed "light to all who are in the

reward of public applause and bringing only shame on God.

Third, *we must think purely*. "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8). We mustn't think constantly about evil—not even in order to fight it. That will turn us into suspicious, "spiritual nags," who light the way to bitterness, but not to God.

Shining talk is another way to let our light shine. Kindness and truth come immediately to mind. What a warmth

HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?



Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother

Robert Harkrider

MOST OF US BECOME UPSET AT THE stories we hear of child abuse. Front page stories in newspapers have literally shocked whole communities, and citizens have risen up in righteous indignation to form committees for the prevention of child abuse.

Another form of abuse within families often occurs which is no less despicable, yet this abuse often goes unnoticed by society. No committees are formed to prevent this, and newspapers would not print the story even on an inside page. However, the Lord has indelibly written His righteous indignation against such. We might describe it as "parent abuse."

Almost two thousand years ago Jesus rebuked some who were guilty of parent abuse, yet they thought of themselves as righteous. You see, this is not a new problem to society, but we have not learned from the mistakes of past generations. Even today so-called "respectable citizens" who may also supposedly be "good Christians" are *worse than infidels and have denied the faith!* (1 Timothy 5:8).

Jesus called them hypocrites! They had found a religious loophole by which they justified themselves when they failed to honor their parents. They said it was "Corban," i.e. they vowed a gift to God, but nothing was left to give to their parents. In their neglect of their father and mother, they had "rejected the commandment of God." "For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother: and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites . . ." (Matthew 15:3-7).

He is no faithful Christian who selfishly pushes his parents out of his life; who leaves them solely to welfare and charitable organizations for financial assistance; and who forgets them in the hour which should be their crowning glory years! Solomon wrote, "Whoso

curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness" (Proverbs 20:20). God abhors such an attitude, and one day shall justly reward all who neglect their parents.

How Do We Honor Parents?

1. **Show your appreciation!** Financial support is not the only way to honor our loved ones. We witness this truth in raising children. A parent can buy every toy his child desires but still have no influence over the child. The best things in life are those things which money cannot buy. A child needs *you!* A parent needs *you!* How often do we hear, "no one appreciates me." Employees, wives,

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husbands, children—and even parents—are left with an empty, lonely feeling when no sign of appreciation is shown. A few kind words, thoughtful phone calls or letters, and various gifts of remembrances should help show that you care.

2. **Give time to them!** One of the saddest visits this writer makes is to an elderly person whose family has no time for them. They spend hours of loneliness, but their depression could be alleviated with the gift of time. Your father, through hours of labor, helped provide your needs. Your mother, through sleepless nights when you were sick, had time to help you through

troublesome periods. Is it true that now you have become "too busy" with the mundane things of life to make a few small sacrifices for those who gave so much to help you become what you are?

3. **Support your parents!** The word "honor" inherently describes something of value, and we honor those whom we esteem highly. "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice; and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice" (Proverbs 23:24-25). As stated earlier, financial support is not the only way to honor our loved ones, but the lack of it is certainly a way to "reject the commandment of God" (Mark 7:9-13). Children who turn their parents over to churches or to the government for the caring of their parents have a sad day facing them in judgment. "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1 Timothy 5:8; see also 1 Timothy 5:16).

4. **Love them!** Perhaps we have all heard the story of the father, who along with his young son, was driving his aged father to admit him into the nursing home. As he topped the hill the home came into view, and the father remarked what a nice place it was. The young lad asked, "Is that where I will be taking you some day?" The father was dumbstruck. He had never thought of himself in that role. He turned the car around at the next convenient place and took his father back home.

Nursing homes provide care which the average home cannot. This is not intended as a put-down for nursing homes nor should one necessarily feel guilty because their parent may be in a nursing home. However, if the *motive* for placing them in such a home is to get them out of your way, and to absolve yourself of the day-to-day responsibility of a loving, caring child, then you should feel guilty! "Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:17).

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HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?

Spiritual Management in a Secular World

Almon L. Williams

SECULARISM IS A MUCH MORE SUBTLE enemy to true religion than is false religion. Firstly, we can have the form of true religion even when we have already sold out to secularism. For example, Paul speaks of those who have a "form of godliness" but deny by their worldly lives "the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). Secondly, even the appeal of much of false religion has been mainly the appeal of its materialistic features. In fact, was this not the enticement which many Israelites felt for much of Canaanite religion? Is not secularism, then, the answer to the question regarding the cause of the decay of so many Chris-

(2 Corinthians 4:18).

The remedy is, to use the language of the world of business, to *reorganize management, cut costs, and increase profits*.

Reorganization of Management

Hear again the soul-booming words of "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). Also, let us believe that the dear words of "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5) are true of all believers. In short, let us recognize God again as the sovereign Chairman of the board and allow Him to take over the management of our lives.

not by a miracle but by using the pagan Gallio to keep the Jews from harming him (Acts 18:9-16)? In such a faith, the psalmist declares, "surely the wrath of man shall praise thee" (Psalm 76:10).

Now, since we have reorganized management, let us *cut costs and increase profits*.

Cutting Costs—Increasing Profits

Since we have not been increasing our capital (Matthew 25:14-30), we have been losing even that which we have (Matthew 25:29; 13:12). Our record is one of loss, not of gain. The reason is that our faith has become adulterated with secularism. The "faith without works" is dead, unable to save, and profitless (James 2:14-26). Further, the faith without love (Galatians 5:6) "profiteth nothing" and makes us "nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2-3). Such losses are too costly to continue to bear, for they may cause us to lose everything, even our souls (Matthew 16:26).

As a result, being "renewed in the spirit of" our mind (Ephesians 4:23), we can maximize our profits. So are our orders from Headquarters, "Make a profit or else!" With a revived faith, "godliness" (i.e. reverence for God), indeed, "is profitable unto all things" (1 Timothy 4:8) and such "profiting may appear unto all" (1 Timothy 4:15). Further, we must lay up for ourselves the imperishable treasures (Matthew 6:19-21), and we can do so as our gifts of love produce "fruit" (i.e. interest or profit) for us in our heavenly "account" (i.e. record) (Philippians 4:17).

Conclusion

To have successful spiritual management in a secular world, we must use shocking words to shake us out of our lethargy even as our Lord often did to the dull hearts of His day when He recommended for His disciples to perform the rough surgery upon themselves of tearing out an eye or cutting off a hand rather than to lose the whole self in hell (Matthew 5:29-30). "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34).

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"We must use shocking words to shake us out of our lethargy even as our Lord often did to the dull hearts of His day when He recommended for His disciples to perform the rough surgery upon themselves of tearing out an eye or cutting off a hand."

tians?

Indeed, we have forgotten that, as "stewards (managers) of God," we must be "faithful" to God (1 Corinthians 4:2), and we have taken our eyes off of "him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27) and away from "Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith" (12:2). The result has been that since we have had nothing to look to, except the *saeculum*, i.e. the age or generation in which we are living, we have filled our hearts with material and worldly things so much that we are staring not at "the things which are not seen" and "eternal" but at "the things which are seen" and are "temporal"

Can we, then, believe that God is in the driver's seat of the universe? Can we believe in His almighty power as exemplified by the following two examples?

1. *God can control natural law without a miracle.* Did He not send rain in Elijah's day after three and one-half years of drought not by a miracle but by "a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand" which became "black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain" (1 Kings 18:44-45)?

2. *God can control human affairs.* Did He not answer His promise to Paul that "no man shall set on" him "to hurt" him

HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?



Peers, Pressure and Ego

John M. Kilgore

I RECENTLY READ OF GROUPS OF TEN teenagers brought into a room to ostensibly test their vision by asking them in a show of hands to identify the longest of three lines. Nine were secretly told to always vote for the second longest line. The results were that 75% of the time the one joined the nine and said shorter was longer. Most would simply not go against the group even when they were obviously wrong. Being right was not worth being different.

But then again they were just teenagers and everyone knows peer pressure is a teen phenomenon. Right? Then why is this 40-year-old so nervous about whether you are going to like this article? From Adam who caved in to Eve (Genesis 3:6,12; 1 Timothy 2:14), to Peter and Barnabas who withdrew from Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:11-14), to the last silent saint in the office, school, or family—peer pressure is for everyone.

But how is it that peers can pressure in the first place? It's because they are at least peers (one regarded as having equal standing) and the nature of man. God made man a social creature, not a loner (Genesis 2:18). Therefore he needs another to be fully complete himself. This complement could not be found in the animal world, for nowhere was there found "a helper suitable for him" or, literally, "a helper corresponding to him" (Genesis 2:20, NAS). He needed a peer, not a puppy. And a peer is just what he got—one with the capacity to fulfill his social needs and at the same time enable him to perpetuate society itself (Genesis 1:28; 2:21-24).

Thus, society was born with all the capacity for acceptance, approval, and love that man needs as a social creature. As Adam had approved of Eve on the basis that she was like him so Eve as a peer could now return the favor. Man now had a way to bolster his ego other than through a hollow echo. (Ego for our purposes is not used to mean arrogance but self-worth.) It is natural for man to love his own flesh (Ephesians 5:28-29) and to love a consenting opinion from those of like flesh. We love to be

thought lovely by the lovely.

But lovely is a relative term—lovely by what standard? Since God made man with a desire for social approval, He also gave man the standard upon which to tender that approval. As long as society gives and withholds approval based upon God's approval, the innate societal needs of man serve him well. But as with all God-given human desires, man can choose to fulfill that desire to his hurt.

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By refusing to fully accept God's standard of "good," Eve sinned and then exerting the inevitable pressure as a peer, invited Adam to become like her. Sadly, he chose her approval rather than God's, thus beginning a societal pressure which works contrary to the good of man. Sin is never satisfied with itself. It always loves company and the greater the company the greater the pressure.

How do we as Christians deal with

this danger of a nature that yearns for approval while living in a blackmailing society that would destroy us? First, we can start by recognizing and accepting that as long as we live in this world its pressure will be upon us. Further, it will never extend its approval until we agree to become like it. If we refuse, it will actively hate and persecute us (1 John 3:13; 1 Peter 4:4). Second, we can recognize and accept our innate need for approval and begin to look for sanctified ways of receiving it. The best defense for the siren call of the crowd is a strong and secure ego, a transformed and renewed mind (Romans 12:2), which has anchored our value and worth in God. Insecurity here is disastrous.

Ego from God. God has provided for the secure ego we need by continually reminding us that He made us in His image. And even when this image was enslaved by sin, God in His love redeemed and renewed it. Seeking Him as our highest good, we now are His children. He calls us holy ones. He allows us into His very presence. We confidently shout, "If God is for us, who is against us?" (Romans 8:31).

Ego from Others. Although in our allegiance to Him each of us stands alone, we are not lonely, for there are others who also seek first His approval. They are truly "helpers suitable" who tender their approval upon God's standards and even lovingly withhold it to bring us back to safety. Within this company, peer pressure finds its finest purpose, the ultimate salvation of our souls (1 Corinthians 5). We must fortify ourselves with this companionship.

Ego from Work. God has also given us purposeful work. Our ego humbly swells with the knowledge that we are the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). We alone have been honored with this great task, for we alone were made able. Therefore we turn to the world with all of its pressure to victoriously overcome with a greater pressure (Romans 12:21; Ephesians 5:11). Greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

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HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?

Success: What Is It?

Clarence R. Johnson

SUCCESS! WHAT IS IT, AND HOW DO WE achieve it? Of course, we must realize that the word does not mean the same thing to everyone. Webster says success is the "favorable termination of a venture; specifically the attainment of wealth, favor, or eminence;" so we see that success is measured by gains, by the achieving of goals.

In the business world, success is most often measured by (1) material wealth—houses, lands, automobiles, boats, bank roll, etc., and (2) title and the power inherent therein—president, vice president, manager, etc. In the entertainment field a person's success is measured by the first of these considerations com-

International Settlement, as well as a member of the cabinet of the President of the United States and four other men who were equally successful in their chosen fields of business endeavor. But twenty-five years later, two of those same men had served time in prison and another had died a fugitive from justice. Two more of those "successful" men had died bankrupt. Another was insane and three had committed suicide. There must be more to success than material wealth and power.

Into a world where many acclaim success to be determined almost wholly by the abundance of the things which a man possesses, comes the drastically dif-

riches *may* have been the by-product of wrong goal-setting. The poor man was not saved because he was poor. There is no virtue in poverty, nor is there necessarily sin in prosperity. But there is virtue in finding contentment with one's lot in life, be it little or plenty. Material gain is not the stuff real success is made of, because material gain is temporary. Today's success in worldly endeavors may be tomorrow's failure.

Jesus spoke in Luke 16:11 of true riches—alluding to eternal life in Heaven. Attainment of the true riches, real success, has its basis in goal-setting and priorities, just as the attainment of material wealth does. To go to Heaven, a person must set his mind on things above, spiritual things (Colossians 3:2). He may be blessed with many earthly possessions, but the treasure of his heart is a home in Heaven. This treasure, moth and rust cannot corrupt nor thieves break in and steal (Matthew 6:19-21). This is the treasure that death cannot take away from us. This is true success, offered to us and made available in Christ.

For the Israelites of his day, Joshua summed up the way to sure success: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Joshua 1:8). We live in the day of a better law with better promises and a superior mediator (Hebrews 8:6). If we will meditate upon the precious gospel of Christ and follow its guidance, the goal of Heaven will be obtained. Jesus our forerunner has gone there already to make our reservation (Hebrews 6:19-20; John 14:1-3). Our success is assured. Real success. But if by ignoring the claims of Jesus and His gospel upon us, we refuse Him who speaks from Heaven (Hebrews 12:25), no matter what we may gain, we will miss the true riches (Matthew 16:26). With Christ we cannot fail; without Him we cannot succeed.

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"Attainment of the true riches—real success—has its basis in goal-setting and priorities, just as the attainment of material wealth does. To go to Heaven, a person must set his mind on things above, spiritual things (Colossians 3:2)."

bined with his current popularity. Taking our cue from the business and entertainment fields, most of us are likely to judge our success and that of our friends by these material standards—wealth, power, popularity, etc. But is that all there is to success?

Leroy Brownlow, in *Sermons You Can Preach*, tells about an important business meeting held in Chicago in 1923. Present were ten men from the world of business and finance who had risen far above their peers—successful men, as the world views success. Included were presidents of the world's largest steel company, the largest utility, the New York Stock Exchange, the National City Bank, and the Bank of

ferent outlook of Jesus Christ: "One's life does *not* consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). He goes on to explain, "Life is more than food, and the body more than clothing" (vs. 23). He even insists that it is sometimes advisable to forsake houses, lands, etc., in order to provide for real success, lasting success (Mark 10:29-30).

In Luke 16:19-31, the Lord told the story of two men. One was a success, the other a failure. Do we have trouble knowing which man was successful? Most folks in our society would probably be inclined to pick the wrong man—until verse 23 is read. Let it be clearly underscored that the rich man did not fail *because* he was rich, but his

HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?



Living With Today's Mass Media

Harold V. Comer

IT'S SUNDAY AND BIBLE STUDY IS ABOUT to begin. In the hall, a child curses and uses God's name in vain. He heard it on H.B.O. A college girl walks by on her way to class with a long slit in her skirt. In the Junior High class, a boy repeats a joke from the Johnny Carson show. His friend snickers and two girls look embarrassed.

As the Bible study begins many of the men are thinking about sports and the young married women stop their conversation on movies. The Lord's people are assembled on the Lord's Day in a world influenced by a powerful mass media.

The Jews vs. Pagan Assaults

Godly men have often had to learn to live with powerful influences in the cultures that surrounded them. The Jews failed this task for eight hundred years as they imitated pagan practices. They had not removed the Canaanites from their land as God commanded them. Finally, God exiled them and the Babylonian captivity motivated them and taught them how to resist Gentile cultures. When Israel was engulfed by the attractive Grecian culture in the third and fourth centuries B.C., they wavered but finally resisted many of the Greek religious and moral influences.

Today, we are surrounded by a secular culture powerfully portrayed in our mass media. The secular humanistic elements in our society have dominated the popular media. The Christian must learn how to resist the inherent power of these mediums as well as the subtle temptations used by them to squeeze profit from their attractions. He must learn to teach his family how to live among their appealing techniques and resist the error of their doctrines.

Media Bias

The mass media includes TV, newspapers, radio, movies, magazines, records, novels, and videos. In spite of its diversity, each preaches a fairly common or similar view of morality and values. Of these, the news media would be more conservative than most writers, musicians, and creative people in TV. Yet newsmen have a very marked bias

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which is clearly secular and opposed to common religious values. This was established in a recent analysis of the opinions of 240 leading newsmen in a survey published in *Public Opinion* magazine. Exactly half of the newsmen rejected any religious affiliation. Only 8% went to church once a week. 86% seldom or never attended religious services. Such facts influence their presentations on alcohol, cohabitation, E.R.A., gambling, homosexuality and many religious subjects.

The few voices who object to the message of most mass media are hardly attractive. They come from small, radical, political and self-interest groups, from some TV evangelists who themselves deserve challenge, and from some ordinary preachers who seem to be over-reacting to common everyday standards and life styles.

Society has not had time to build the techniques to analyze the bias and self-interest of varied media. But unless we act forcefully to challenge mass media influences around us, we may be engulfed in a generation of young people who curse, laugh at double meanings in jokes, divorce quickly, jest indifferently about sexual matters, and scoff at chastity as an unrealistically naive hope.

What Can Be Done?

1. **We must admit it is a serious problem.** Media power is subtle and disarming. While we try to relax we are more susceptible to its power to please

our senses and leave us with secular values. Our casual indifference must be alerted.

2. **We must build our resistance.** Without conscious resistance we will be changed as much as Israel was changed by idolaters. Resistance is first a fear and then a decision to act!

3. **We must intensify our reaction.** Does sin, packaged as entertainment, attract you or anger you? If you seldom blush and don't abhor that which is evil, you are far too casual about the danger. The abuses and manipulations of mass media should anger you!

4. **We must develop other sources of relaxation.** We can read more non-fiction and talk to our family more. We can pick an interesting Bible topic to explore or visit a Christian. We can take a walk. We can spend time with our family, engage in a sport or invite someone to drop by. We can visit a prospect.

5. **We must make a habit of counter measures.** Turn the knob on the radio or TV often. Stop buying certain products. Walk out of a store. Quit subscribing to a magazine.

6. **We must be vocal in our response.** Say something to the keeper of the news stand. Stir concern among the drugged and unaroused brethren. Talk to others.

7. **We must use the mass media better.** The powers of a medium work as well for truth as they do for error. We must be quicker in learning how to use them.

Conclusion

Cable TV, direct transmission disks, cheap computer instruction and entertainment, and the computerization of the printed word may make available such a mass of cheap information in the next three decades that the dominance of one viewpoint which we have had before us for the last three decades may be shattered. If so, fine; but if we have vast new resources of communications, Christians must learn how to use them quickly and use them well as we have the printed page and the pulpit. Till then, we must strongly assault the harmful influences that seriously threaten our values and a godly life style.

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HOW DO I LIVE IN THIS MESS?

James W. (Jim) Poppell

YOU CAN LIVE A GODLY LIFE IN THIS ungodly and deeply anti-spiritual world—not because you are so great, but because your God is. You don't have to walk alone in this darkness. Do not try to.

That is, however, just what the fad-dists who sanctify the "positive mental attitude" philosophy would have you do. With them, Peale and Ziglar substitute for Paul and David, while sheer grit and determination take the place of a Biblical faith and hope. They're right about our problems: a general lack of faith, zeal and joyful enthusiasm. Too many of us are sad and sour, but numbers have tried to try harder, to redouble their efforts, to produce the fruit of the Spirit by calling it up from deep within themselves, and have failed. The answer is not PMA.

The answer is to believe more strongly *in our God*—not in ourselves. A constant awareness of His omnipotent presence steels the mind, strengthens the heart, and satisfies the soul. We are never stronger than when we know the strongest walks by our side.

Remember how, as a child, you were frightened to go somewhere by yourself in the dark? It was a terrifying experience. Every shadow and every sound contained a thousand horrors. Unless, of course, Mom or Dad was with you. How strong and brave we were with them along!

Conway Skinner helped me to see how true this is spiritually. He was fighting cancer but still living joyfully. He hadn't lost his smile and I wanted to know why. "How do you do it? What keeps you going like you do?" I asked.

"I know I belong to the Lord," he confided. "I'm His. He won't allow anything to touch me I can't bear. I know good will come out of all this because He's with me."

My view of God and man would allow for little of this at the time, so he elaborated. "Titus 2:14, Jim, says we are God's 'peculiar' people. That word can be illustrated by a dot within a circle: (•). The dot is peculiar to the circle. As the circle is around the dot, God is around

You Can Do It!

His people. They are special to Him. He is with me and nothing can get to me unless it first passes through His hands. It's knowing this that keeps me going."

I cannot forget his words. Hours of reflection since have convinced me that Conway was right. His hope hung on three vital truths.

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God is in control. Is this thought a problem to you? Sometimes even Christians remove God from the ordinariness of life in their thinking. They feel that a force separate from Him keeps everything going. Were they able to see His hand of providence at work they would view it as an intrusion into the order of things. Is that your view?

You could not convince Job, or David, or Jesus, or Paul of it, if it is. Job learned the hard way that though we may not understand or appreciate God's ways, He is in control! Satan's touch did

not indicate God's absence, but His grace. David looked at "nature" in Psalm 104 and saw "God" at work. Jesus taught us to walk without worry in a world of sunshine and rain, flowers and birds, because God provides our food and clothing. And Paul did not see his life as an animated dice game where we must simply take our chances against some blind force. Christ, he says, holds the whole thing together (Colossians 1:17). These men all lived and died in the firm conviction that God is in control.

God is with His people. You are not alone. Your feelings are not a safe guide here. Something more substantial is needed. I'd advise you to soak your soul in the Psalms. Some will praise Him for His faithfulness, others will rail at Him for His apparent forgetfulness. Regardless, you will always be led back to this one truth: God is with His people. Three examples come readily to mind: Psalm 139, Psalm 73, and Psalm 37—especially verses 23 and 24: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholds him with His hand."

God is faithful. No matter how dark the night gets, how strong the winds blow, the rains beat, or how wretched the storm may be, do not let this truth slip. We may not understand what is going on any more than Job did, but God is still faithful.

This is the rock upon which the assurance of 1 Corinthians 10:13 is founded. "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

After his beloved wife had died, W. W. Otey scrawled this complaint: "I do not like living alone!" None of us do. Nor do we have to. Instead of being so "earthed" in day-to-day activities we can "heaven" our hearts with these three truths. We can walk with God. And when He walks with you, *you can do it.*

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That's Life!

Dee Bowman



I WAS MAKING MY HOSPITAL CALLS just like a good preacher ought to do. I left the hospital with a feeling of exultation—the kind that comes from knowing you have done what you're supposed to do. As I drove out of the parking lot I said a little prayer for the patients I had just visited and thanked God for the privilege of doing what little I could. Suddenly a lady pulled right out in front of me, slid her brakes, and said some very nasty things to me. I retaliated. Under my breath I said something about how that she was not the only one in the parking lot and for her to shut her mouth. I then returned to the prayer I was saying. As I reached the stop sign, it suddenly occurred to me that in the midst of very religious circumstances I had been very irreligious. Have you ever done that?

* * *

IT SEEMS TO ME that a shoe is easier to shine when it's on your foot. I don't know what that proves, except that maybe a thing is more easily cared for when it's being used for the thing for which it was intended.

* * *

WHILE I WAS IN PLAINFIELD, INDIANA recently, I had breakfast three mornings in a row with three sisters (two of them were married to brothers). They were all very gracious ladies and their husbands were fine. The meals were all delicious. But do you know what was the most interesting thing? The gravy tasted exactly the same at all three places! Don't ever underestimate the power of your raising.

* * *

I HAD A DISCUSSION WITH A YOUNG MAN one time who claimed that he was an atheist. "I don't believe the Bible, either," he said.

"Have you ever read the Bible," I asked.

"No," he replied, "but I still don't believe it."

It has been my experience that most folks who say

that are just exactly like the young man, they don't believe it even though they have never read it. Something's wrong with that kind of reasoning, don't you think?

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL, October 22, 1983: "Lord's Day morning. Behind the motel where I am staying is a small lake. It mirrors the partly cloudy skies and its glassy surface shows the stillness of the morning. The birds seem almost playful as they dart away only to quickly return to their perch. Across the little lake and up a gradual slope there is a red barn, striving to stay up and providing, because of its courage to endure, a connection to the generation just past. It is a beautiful Lord's Day morning.

But how much more beautiful must have been the first one. With what colors the sun must have burst forth on that day! What light—great spreading light—must have come on that glorious morning when the Lord was raised. What gentleness must the breeze have had and what fragrances must have ridden its wings to perfume the morning air that day. If all creation mourned just three days ago at His death, what exultation must have been concerted on the day of His resurrection. Oh, glorious day when man's hope first came!"

* * *

ED HARRELL DRESSES DIFFERENTLY THAN I DO. We often kid about it. He says I wear "slick" suits. Recently we were in San Jose, California together. There had been some discussion about the aforementioned "slick" suits in some of his introductions. When it came my turn to speak, I said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I have this thing figured out: If I had Ed Harrell's mind and my slick suits, there's no telling what I could do." I should have known better. When it came his time to speak again he said, curtly, "I'd like to remind my esteemed colleague that if he had my mind he wouldn't want his slick suits!" Concession came soon. Oh, well, that's life.

The Time Element in Revelation

L. A. Mott, Jr.

According to the first verse of the book, the subject of the Revelation is "the things which must shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1:1). "For the time is at hand" (v. 3). "Behold, he cometh with the clouds" (v. 7).

The closing section contains the same references to time. The message of Revelation is again said to be "the things which must shortly come to pass. And

time is near at hand when character will be finally settled and it will be too late to change (v. 11). The next verse has the Lord saying, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is" (v. 12). Then for the third time in v. 20, "He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly."

The conclusion is inescapable that the

millenia away but executed speedily once the time came. The time was so near the book was not even to be sealed.

On the other hand, the reference cannot be to the coming of Christ at the end of the world. One might say that is obvious from history, but more importantly, the book of Revelation itself makes it obvious that the end of the world was not at hand, for one of John's visions puts it at least a thousand years in the future (Revelation 20).

What, then, is meant by "the things which must shortly come to pass?" What coming of Christ was near? The answer to these questions must be determined by the evidence of the book of Revelation itself. That evidence is found in four passages: (1) The martyrs who had already been slain were told "that they should rest yet for a little time" and their blood would be avenged (6:9-11). (2) From the time of Satan's defeat by means of the cross, symbolically portrayed in Revelation 12:7-12, he has "great wrath" against the church (explaining the persecutions), "knowing that he hath but a short time" (v. 12)—only "a short time" and he would be bound (20:1-3). (3) The chief instrument of Satan's wrath was the beast, a persecuting monster, who was not far in the future at the time of Revelation (17:7-11), and (4) when he came he would continue for only forty-two months (13:5). After that "short time" Babylon would fall (chs. 17-18), the beast and the false prophet would be defeated (ch. 19), and Satan would be bound for a thousand years (20:1-3). Thus "the things which must shortly come to pass," which were "at hand," are identified with the conflict between the church and the persecuting monster (which was not far off), ending with the defeat of the persecutor and the binding of Satan after only a short time. However the "millenium" may be explained, the book of Revelation certainly leaves no doubt where it begins—namely, not long after Revelation was written. I will not try to play historian, but will insist that this is what John has said in the book he wrote.

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"The conclusion is inescapable that the Revelation deals primarily with events that were soon to occur at the time the book was written. If someone reminds us that a thousand years is as one day with the Lord (2 Peter 3:8), we must reply that the Revelation was not written to the Lord but to men and in terms understandable to them."

behold, I come quickly" (22:6-7). Daniel had been told, "but shut thou up the vision; for it belongeth to many days to come" (Daniel 8:26; cf. 10:14; 12:4,9). But John is forbidden to seal up the Revelation, for it does not deal with the distant future—"the time is at hand" (Revelation 22:10).

That statement is immediately followed by another indicating that the

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Revelation deals primarily with events that were soon to occur at the time the book was written. If someone reminds us that a thousand years is as one day with the Lord (2 Peter 3:8), we must reply that the Revelation was not written to the Lord but to men and in terms understandable to them (cf. Revelation 1:1-3; 22:6-9). Nor can "I come quickly" refer to a coming which may have been

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Give ear to my words, O Jehovah . . . for unto thee do I pray. O Jehovah, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice; in the morning will I order my prayer unto thee, and will keep watch" (5:1-3).

The Way To Begin The Day

At the beginning of every day the priests under the Mosaic law started anew the service of God in the temple. The altar was set in order, the lamb was made ready, and as soon as the new day dawned the morning sacrifice was offered (Numbers 28:3-8). In this there was a lesson for all times—each new day calls for a fresh consecration of ourselves to God.

David says that day by day he set about to deliver his petitions to the Lord, his God. As soon as the dawn broke, his first order of business was to offer up his prayers.

Prayer is in fact a sacrifice to God (Hebrews 13:15). And prayer today should have its seasons, though it does not have to be "in the morning." But our day should begin with God. "As for me, I will call upon God . . . evening, and morning, and at noonday, will I complain, and moan; and he will hear my voice" (Psalm 55:16-17). We sometimes sing the song that says: "Father, in the morning, unto thee I pray." It is a noble sentiment—but it must be more than just sentiment. It must be our *practice*.

Observe the emphasis of the Psalms upon the importance of prayer—especially the propriety of *morning prayer*:

Psalm 59:16: "But I will sing of thy strength; yea, I will sing aloud of thy lovingkindness in the morning: for thou hast been my high tower, and a refuge in the day of my distress."

Psalm 88:13: "But unto thee, O Jehovah, have I cried; and in the morning shall my prayer come before thee."

Psalm 92:1-2: "It is a good thing to give thanks unto Jehovah, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High; to show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night."

Most of us probably are not as diligent in this matter as we should be. If not, we are missing both a duty and a blessing that God wants us to have. Think of it, now. If we, like David, consider prayer as the first work of our day—what benefits will we derive?

1. **It will make us more conscious of God's presence as we begin the day.** We must never forget who we are and who our Father is. He is with us every moment of the day. It is all too easy to forget this. But when we do, we become careless and carnal in our activities. To begin the day with God underscores our exaltation of Him and tells Him that we really acknowledge His presence in our lives and that we urge His assistance for this day.

2. **It will give us more strength to deal with problems.** Let's face it—our faith is challenged every day. The pressures and pleasures of the world assault us relentlessly. I cannot live the Christian life in my own strength, but I can with God's help. "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Jesus says that we are to pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). How I need to pray this every day!

3. **It will give us the cleansing of our sins.** There is something indescribable about a fresh new day. But how much better is one that is begun in double-freshness by prayer for forgiveness of sins? "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17).

We live in a fast-paced society. We think we're too busy to begin a day with prayer. In 1621, a Bishop Burnet wrote, "In the days of our fathers, when a person came early to the door of his neighbor, and desired to speak with the master of the house, it was as common a thing for the servants to tell him with freedom—'My master is at prayer,' as it is now to say, 'My master is not up.'" I'm afraid in our time, if he *is* up, he is likely watching the "Today" show. There is a better way to begin our day.

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol.1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Parents' Page

Teaching Children At Home

Joanie Greer

It's Ten O'Clock—Do You Know Where Your Children Are?

We're all familiar with this public service announcement heard on various local television stations. And while it's an excellent reminder to parents of their responsibility for their child's physical well-being, it also has a spiritual application. Spiritually speaking, it's ten o'clock. It's getting late. It's not too late, but it is late in the sense that one can never begin too soon.

A study was done of the children who attended services *regularly* at a particular congregation. These were children of faithful parents who saw to it

the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Notice that it does not say, "tell" a child the way he should go, nor does it say to help a child accumulate a large number of Bible facts, and when he is old he will not depart from it. Too often "telling" or an "accumulation of facts" is viewed as the final step in the training process. Telling isn't teaching. It would certainly simplify things if it were. Telling is certainly a part of teaching, but it isn't the sum total. Christians are not in the business of just establishing a mental collection of Bible facts. Christians are in the business of *doing*, and the objective

we begin? Earlier it was mentioned that "telling" is the beginning of the training process. One might illustrate this by picturing an individual perched on the edge of a cliff needing to cross to the other side called Conviction. As parents and teachers, it is our job to help our children bridge this gap and build this spiritual structure. The first "plank" then is *listening*. When you have a student listening to you, this is a very fragile time in communication, and the teacher needs to be aware that things can easily break down at this stage.

The next "plank" is *talking*. This is where the student has listened to the teacher, thought about what was said, and is now ready to make a comment. While not as delicate as the first "plank," this too is a very fragile time in communication. And the wise teacher will sharpen his skills in "active listening." Active listening involves reinforcing or encouraging the one speaking with comments such as "good," "okay," "m-mm hm," "tell me more," and nodding approval.

The next "plank" is *sensing the value*. At this point, the student has listened to some information, thought about it, and is now realizing that this information is valuable to him and is relative to his life. When one is first hearing the gospel, this is where conversion takes place.

The last "plank" before forming conviction is *establishing a system of values*. This is where the student takes the information he has come to value and uses it to establish the rules by which he will live. This does not mean that he always lives by these rules. As we all know, we may be aware of what's right and wrong, but we don't always act accordingly. Consistent action regarding our system of values is conviction, and a lot of time takes place between establishing a system of values and being able to act with conviction.

Knowing these steps in forming conviction is helpful, but what is needed now is how to help our children get through these steps. This will be covered in the next article.

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"Why are we losing so many of our children when they get to be 18, 19, and 20? I do not believe we're losing them then; but rather, we're losing them at the ages of 5, 6, and 7 and it only manifests itself at 18, 19, or 20."

that these children attended consistently. Out of 85 children, only 34 remained faithful. About 60% left the church. Unfortunately, this is the rule rather than the exception.

Why are we losing so many of our children when they get to be 18, 19, and 20? I believe that we're not losing them at 18, 19, or 20, but rather, we're losing them at the ages of 5, 6, and 7 and it only manifests itself at 18, 19, or 20.

I propose that a major cause of this exodus is lack of conviction. Our children have no conviction because as parents and teachers, we only begin the training process; we don't complete it. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in

of our training should be preparation for doing (Matthew 7:21). God did not give us His word so that we could become skilled at filling in the blanks of a lesson book.

If faithfulness is dependent on having conviction about God's word, and if we want our children to have it, then we need to know what it is. When one has conviction, he is able to act without having to think about it, and regarding God's word, this is where we want our children to be. For instance, if one has conviction regarding partaking of alcoholic beverages, when invited to do so, he will immediately refuse. If conviction is our final objective, then where do



The Sermon on the Mount

Beatitudes: The Character of Kingdom Citizens

Jesus opens his momentous sermon with a series of eight pungent and largely paradoxical statements known traditionally as the "beatitudes" (Matthew 5:2-12). They must have fallen like thunderbolts upon those first century Jewish ears. A more likely formula for success could hardly have been imagined. They assaulted every maxim of conventional wisdom and left the hearer startled and perplexed. In this way Jesus gains the attention of his audience and drives home the essential character of the kingdom of God and its citizens.

The whole world, then as now, was in earnest pursuit of happiness and had just as little conception as men today of how to obtain it. There was no surprise in the announcement that there was true blessedness in the kingdom. The shock came in the kind of people who were destined to obtain it.

The beatitudes speak exclusively of spiritual qualities. The historic concerns of men—material wealth, social status and worldly wisdom—do not simply receive little attention, they receive none at all. Jesus is clearly outlining a kingdom not of this world (John 18:36), a kingdom whose borders pass not through lands and cities but through human hearts (Luke 17:20-24). This altogether unlikely kingdom arrived as announced in the first century (Mark 9:1; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9) but most were unprepared to recognize and receive it—even as they are now.

It must be further noted that not only were the qualities of the kingdom citizen spiritual but they are qualities which would not come to men naturally. They are not the product of heredity or environment but of choice. No one will ever "fall into" these categories. They not only do not occur in men naturally, but are in fact distinctly contrary to the "second nature" which pride and lust have caused to prevail in the hearts of all humanity.

Perhaps there is no more important truth to be recognized about the beatitudes than the fact that they are not independent proverbs which apply to eight different groups of men, but are a composite description of every citizen in the kingdom of God. These qualities are so interwoven in one spiritual fabric that they are inseparable. To possess one is to possess them all, and to lack one is to lack them all. And as all Christians must possess all these qualities of kingdom life, they are also destined to receive all its blessings—blessings which, like its qualities, are but components of one reward—one body called to one hope (Ephesians 4:4).

In sum, then, the beatitudes do not contain a promise of blessing upon men in their natural state (all men mourn but all will certainly not be comforted, 5:4) nor do they offer hope to those who seem to fall into one category or another. They are a composite picture of what every kingdom citizen, not just a few super disciples, must be. They mark off the radical difference between the kingdom of heaven and the world of other men. The son of the kingdom is different in what he admires and values, different in what he thinks and feels, different in what he seeks and does. Clearly, there has never been a kingdom like this before.

A Kingdom for the Sinful and Lowly

There have been many approaches to the specific content of the beatitudes. Many feel that there is a progression of thought moving through them which begins with a new attitude toward self and God, leads to a new attitude toward others, and culminates with the world's reaction to this radical change. There is some merit to this analysis, and whether or not such a neat format always coincides with the actual order of the beatitudes, the ideas are certainly there. To a society governed by some serious misconceptions of the kingdom of God, the beatitudes make two basic statements. First, that the kingdom is not open to the self-righteous and self-assured, but to the supplicant sinner who comes seeking out of his emptiness. And, secondly, that the kingdom is not to be had by the "mighty" who obtain their desires by wealth or violence, but by a company of patient men who yield not only their wants but even their "rights" to the needs of others.

Though not explicitly stated (Jesus was not to speak clearly of His death until a year later, Matthew 16:21) there is nothing quite so obvious in this sermon as the central gospel truth that salvation is by the grace of God. Here the dispensational premillennialist is palpably wrong. How could men and women so hungry for righteousness (5:6) and so much in need of mercy (5:7) find a place in a kingdom governed by a system of law alone? And who could imagine that citizens in the earthly kingdom envisioned by the dispensationalists would ever suffer persecution (5:10-12)? The righteousness of the kingdom does not rest on a system of law but upon a system of grace. Its holy standards are attainable by sinful men (5:48). Otherwise, the Sermon on the Mount would be the source of greater despair than the law of Moses (Romans 7:25).

(To be continued.)

All Things Are Yours

Brent Lewis

When we belong to Christ, we have truly grasped what life is all about, because we are living our lives "with the grain" of God's truth rather than against it. The Christian is greatly blessed!

Sometimes I like to sit back and think about all the wonderful blessings we Christians have from God. Do you ever do that? Do you ever stop to remember all the blessings and the good things God has sent your way? It does me a great deal of good to remember. My only regret is that I do not do it often enough. I suppose that I am not alone in that—most of us spend too many waking hours thinking about the problems we have, the bills we must pay, the many imperfections we have.

It may be that much of the preaching we hear is responsible for some of this thinking about the negative. It is natural for the preacher to direct his comments against those things that need to be improved. However, if we are not careful our total emphasis can become negative. This is regrettable because most of the time we need to be thinking of the good that is about us—the encouraging achievements of the past, the great potential of the present.

It is a marvelous thing to be a Christian. There is a passage in the Bible that jumps out at us with this fact. It is one of those optimistic passages which sends you on your way with a song in your heart. Observe it with me, please: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:21-23).

Paul, Apollos, Cephas. Paul said that he and these other two men were theirs. Why would he say that? Go back to chapter one in the book and notice that the Corinthians had begun to call themselves after the man who had baptized them; to wear such a one's name was, in a sense, to say that they "belonged" to that man. Paul says that they must understand that their religion is to be centered on Christ. They do not belong to their leaders, but rather teachers, preachers, leaders belong to them. I am glad that we, as Christians, have great preachers of the gospel and elders of the church. But we do not belong to them; they belong to us; their place is merely

Here is one of the most optimistic passages in the Bible.

to serve; they have been provided for our spiritual good. We must not elevate men beyond their proper place. Abraham Lincoln once said: "Go along with any man who is in the right, stay with him as long as he is right, and leave him when he goes wrong." That is exactly what we must do. But how grateful we are that God has provided great men such as Homer Hailey, Floyd Thompson, James P. Miller and Paul Andrews—they are ours!

World, Life, Death. Paul says the "world" is yours. There never has been a time in our history when men have been so blessed as now. The scientific achievements of our age are truly incredible and we are greatly favored by the time-saving inventions and life-saving medicines of our time. "Life" is also ours. The life expectancy of an American man is now in excess of seventy years; American women can expect to live seventy-two years. Think of life as a great reservoir of hours and minutes which you are given when you are born. You can spend them here or there, doing this or that. You have a life, and that life is certainly a great blessing. "Death" is also yours; it is every man's in one sense (Hebrews 9:27). But death does not have to be feared by the Christian; it is an ally rather than an enemy, for to him it is "gain" (Philippians 1:21-23).

Things Present, Things to Come. There are so many encouraging things in our present society. People are now more interested in religion than ever before. Books with religious emphasis are flooding bookshelves in the 1980's. There are more people who call themselves Christians now than at any time in the history of the world. This is good, even though many of them are mistaken about what it takes to become a Chris-

tian. Further, I believe I see a deepening spirituality among Christians which emphasizes the spirit as well as the letter of the law—one that makes us all pray more, study our Bibles more, and try to be more like Christ. That is what I see when I read the expression "things present" in the text. And because these things are so, it suggests the next phrase, "things to come." We have a splendid future if we center our lives on Christ.

Ye Are Christ's, and Christ Is God's. Now, here is a statement that is really inspiring! Paul repeats the expression "All things are yours"—then adds the reason why—"Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." *The future belongs to us only because we belong to Christ.* It is because we have embraced those truths which Christ came to teach that we have such confidence of future good. If we take Christ out of our lives, our houses are built on sand.

But notice that the future belongs to Christ and His disciples *because He belongs to God.* Go back to the time of Jesus and suppose that you were walking down the street, and you began to stop men and ask them, "Who of our time will the future historians remember?" What names do you think you would have heard? Pilate? He was a governor of that time. Herod? He was the king. Surely Caesar would be remembered. I'll tell you what name *you would not have heard:* Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth. No man would have named his name. But the strange thing is that the future did not belong to Pilate or Herod or Caesar. In fact, most of us do not even know which of the Caesars was on the throne when Jesus lived.

The future belonged to Jesus because Jesus belonged to God. And when you and I belong to Jesus, our future is every bit as sure as His was. When we belong to Christ, we have truly grasped what life is all about, because we are living our lives "with the grain" of God's truth rather than against it. Paul tells us precisely what Christianity is all about when he says, "All things are yours." **Count your blessings.**

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“SOMETHING TO TACK UP”



—CUT HERE

GOSSIP

Someone has said, “Gossip is like a blotter—it absorbs a lot of dirt, and gets it all backwards.” Webster defines gossip to mean: “A person who chatters or repeats idle talk and rumors about others.”

● **Gossip wounds.** “The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Proverbs 18:8). It can be often seen that the wounds of talebearing never heal. Sometimes the damage is so great that it can never be undone.

● **Gossip separates friends.** “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends” (Proverbs 17:9). Again, Solomon said, “A whisperer separateth chief friends” (Proverbs 16:28). A lot of friendships have been ruined by gossip.

● **Gossip sows strife and digs up evil.** “An ungodly man diggeth up evil; and in his lips there is a burning fire” (Proverbs 16:27). One who is eager to talk, he who must whisper, will find something to talk about—even if he has to dig it up! His lips burn with a message of gossip. Strife is the result.

● **Gossip ensnares the soul of the gossip.** “A fool’s mouth is his destruction and his lips are the snare of his soul” (Proverbs 18:7). The person who gossips is digging his own grave with his mouth.

● **Gossip is classed with the worst of evil.** It is mentioned with such sins as fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, murder, deceit, malignity, haters of God, etc. (Romans 1:29-30).

● **Gossip is dangerous.** “He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips” (Proverbs 20:19). Such is not of a faithful spirit (Proverbs 11:13).

● **The remedy.** “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 143:3). The Psalmist was having difficulty in guarding his words. David’s weakness is quite common with many today.

Johnie Edwards

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Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Walking By Faith, Not By Sight

In the early 1970's a tall, intelligent, cultured young Englishman made his way to South Africa where job opportunities seemed more promising than in his homeland. By 1977, he was back in London totally and unexpectedly blind. Just before darkness descended on his physical eyes, however, he met the Lord who opened his spiritual eyes. Now, the "Sun of righteousness" shines with ever-increasing brightness in his life.

In London, Peter Bentley searched out the disciples meeting in Kentish Town. The smallness of their number increased the warmth of their welcome and provided him with opportunity to use his talents as they developed. Charles T. and Sara Jones, Americans employed in London, offered Peter frequent hospitality and constant encouragement.

As Peter discovered available aids for the blind, he used each one first in his pursuit of Bible knowledge. The church had the Bible in Braille and a Ghanaian brother, who himself had been blind, transcribed the hymns into that medium for him. A tape recorder was next utilized to listen to Scripture, to sermons, and to commentaries which were available on tape. It was a happy day for Peter when he obtained a three dimensional map of the world and could trace with his eager fingers the mountains, rivers and borders of the ancient lands where God's people lived their lives. Most remarkable of all his acquisitions was a scanner which magnifies and raises the letters of an ordinary book so that they can be felt and read with the fingers. It was evident that Peter considered it well worth his investment as he put it to use on W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* and exclaimed victoriously, "Now I can see it for myself." From that point on, he began collecting a library of religious books.

An evangelist living thirty-five miles from London offered his assistance and Peter characteristically insisted on doing the traveling. Finishing his work as a hospital physio-therapist each Monday, he journeyed by underground to the railway terminal and then by train the seventy mile round trip. Assignments made the previous week were always prepared and most of the hours of study were spent discussing the numerous thought-provoking questions which he had carefully listed in Braille. During the months that this continued, the Old Testament was surveyed and many New Testament

books studied in detail.

Public transportation plus a half-mile walk brought Peter to every service of the church. One snowy Sunday morning when most of London gave not one thought to attending worship, Peter was seen making his way with his white cane along the icy sidewalks to meet with the saints. A hardened London cabby, deeply impressed, stopped and provided him transportation, refusing to accept pay.

Peter's increasing knowledge was put to work as opportunities were offered. Gradually, the depth of his presentations increased. Now, he teaches the adult Sunday morning class and takes his turn effectively in the preaching rotation at Kentish Town. In addition, he preaches every other Sunday for a new congregation which meets on Sunday afternoons nearer his home.

From the beginning Peter has been meekly, yet firmly, independent. He contributes liberally and accepts no pay from the church for his services. He has not only purchased his own books and equipment, but he often provides for the needs of others. Now employed in the computer field, he supports his family—a wife whom he converted before he married her and their fine baby girl. He is living proof that one can still hold a job and at the same time develop a fine knowledge of the scriptures and exercise that knowledge in teaching others both publicly and privately. The major reason for his success is that he does not waste time with as many non-essentials as most of us do.

The handicap of blindness seems often to enable individuals to develop through physical weakness an awareness of spiritual need. Those of us who see, need desperately to develop the attitude so beautifully manifested in Peter and so strikingly expressed by Fanny J. Crosby who was also blind:

Hold Thou my hand, so weak I am, and helpless,
I dare not take one step without Thine aid;
Hold Thou my hand, for then, O loving Savior,
No dread of ill shall make my soul afraid.

Hold Thou my hand, the way is dark before me
Without the sunlight of Thy face divine;
But when by faith I catch its radiant glory,
What heights of joy, what rapturous songs are mine!

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Rear Views



Ed Harrell

Souieeeee Razorbacks!

It is a bizarre feeling, but somehow captivating, to stand in the midst of 50,000 single-minded, unabashed adults and near-adults "calling the Hogs." I still find myself glancing away from the football field to survey my halloween-like surroundings complete with grandmothers coiffured in Hog-hats. Of course, I am no stranger to the madness of football fans, having viewed first-hand Oklahoma Sooners, Georgia Bulldogs, and Alabama Elephants. But there is something special about a set of fans who revel in being "Hogs." I know of no other place in the world where a young man could call his girlfriend a "pig" and receive a coy smile in return. These are Arkansans, and they are a bit different.

Students of the South in recent years have frequently referred to it as a "benighted" section, a region painfully self-conscious about its poverty,

educational inferiority and unsavory history of race tension. In so much as that theory holds true, Arkansas is perhaps the most benighted state in the South (or at least it would be Mississippi's competitor). Arkansas would be to citizens of Charleston and Richmond as the South is to New Yorkers. Every Arkie knows the jokes about his home state; he's traveled outside the state and seen folks glance downward checking to see if he wore shoes; he's watched the Beverly Hillbillies.

In a sense Razorback pride is more than football mania, it is a fierce expression of local pride by a people scorned. These people are proud to be Hogs. It is true that Arkansas is far behind most of the nation in average per capita income, that its state university is struggling to survive, that the state is justly uncelebrated for its artistic and literary accomplishments—not every Arkan-

san would admit all of that, but it is probably true. But the Razorbacks know some other things that many do not. Arkansas is also a state with clean air, beautiful mountain streams where thousands of outlanders come to canoe and glimpse the natural beauty; it is filled with little towns cluttered with pickup trucks with windows open and doors unlocked and packages resting in the seats unattended. *Souieeeee Razorbacks!*

It strikes me that the Razorbacks know something that Christians also know. The world frequently has its values askew. We have to have sense enough (or be spiritually-minded enough) to recognize what we have to be proud of.

Christians are not generally the most cultured and sophisticated people around. The Apostle Paul wrote: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty,

not many noble, are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26). If one is intent on running with the world's elite, he probably shouldn't seek them in Arkansas—or in the church of Jesus Christ.

But what Christians know is that there are countervailing values. Christians may not be the richest people in the world, but they are the most generous; they may not be the wisest in the world's ways, but they possess the wisdom of the revealed mind of God; they may not be mighty, but they are an ever-present source of comfort and relief to one another.

Christians see all of that. So they, like Arkies, to the consternation of the world, can glory in who they are. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). Stand up and yell it out: *I am a Christian.*

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SPIRITUALITY**
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Wisdom: Both Varieties

Wisdom, in simple terms, is the ability to handle situations, mainly with persons. To be truly wise requires a broad range of knowledge and experience. The wise person is one who is of necessity reflective, meditative; for right choices are based on right thinking. Likewise, the wise person is decisive, judicious, using his sound judgment to bring about the best end for all concerned with the situation or for the ones affected by his choice. Wisdom is greatly to be desired. Its possessor will be happier, more useful.

Wisdom is applied knowledge. It is not learning *per se* which constitutes wisdom, but the proper use of what is learned. Some of the most learned people are among the most foolish. They are possessed of great intellectual capacity but little ability to apply what they learn. On the other hand, there are some people who are more naturally inclined toward wisdom. Such folks are blessed with a temperament which is not easily disturbed and have an extra portion of what has come to be known appropriately as "common horse sense." Even the simplest person can be wise if he learns to apply the principles of God to his life situations (see Proverbs 1:4).

There is a worldly wisdom. That is, there are sensual, evil things that, put to work, will benefit the user. The young executive on his way up and in competition with one of his peers, can start a rumor, suggest a character flaw, or in some other subtle way indict his competitor and by it gain that much-wanted promotion. There are all kinds of this and other manifestations of human wisdom at work around us. We see it in frequency advertising where public saturation is used to sell inferior products or products not actually fitted for our best interests. It is sad, but true, that some things must be categorized as wise merely out of the fact that they work.

Earthly wisdom is motivated by "bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts" (James 3:14). That is, it is the application of a poor motive, usually engaged in order to achieve some sort of self-gratification. Selfishness is a

strong factor in human wisdom simply because it does not seek the general welfare, but is concerned only with doing its own thing. It will cause its adherent to boast that his way worked and since it worked it must be right. Such an attitude will likely result in strong assertions concerning the effectivity of human wisdom—boastful assertions like "I did it my way." Such wisdom is not "from above," but is seated in earthly, devilish origins. Furthermore, "where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there" (James 3:16).

But the wisdom which is sourced in God produces all manner of good things. *First, it is pure.* That is, it is without alloy; there is no admixture, it simply seeks after the good. When one applies God's principles to a given situation they will always tend to clarify, to enhance, to bring about an honorable conclusion—because wisdom is pure. *Secondly, the wisdom that is from above is peaceable.* Many times human wisdom, even though it is effective, brings chaos and confusion. Not so with God's wisdom; it begins with peace, works toward peace, concludes with peace.

The wisdom of God is gentle, doing its work with kindness and benignity as opposed to the brash, self-indulgent characteristics of the earthly variety. *The wisdom from God is strong, but controlled.* It is willing to acquiesce where truth is not at stake, to show itself merciful even when such is not deserved in order to bring about a conclusion that will be edifying to all concerned. But it will never, never compromise. It produces such good fruits without bias or partiality, knowing that all men everywhere are terminals of God's grand mercy and that He "is not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9).

Wisdom from above! Pure. Peaceable. Gentle. Yielding. Let us seek after its refreshing flavor, for it is not only functional, but palatable. Let us use it to the advantage of all. Let us rejoice in its availability and relish in its provisions for our safety.

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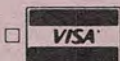
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Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 5235 94th St., Lubbock, TX 79424

Soundings is intended to be a true *reader response column*. We want to know what you, the readers, think about this paper and what we are saying. The reason is simple—our effectiveness depends on our capacity to determine that. Is it possible that those of us who preach and write are “answering questions which no one is asking?” We hope not, but we sure don’t want to be. And the only way we can know if we’re “on target” is to hear from you.

In the Prospectus of this premiere issue we have stated our intent of addressing the pressing practical problems of those of us who are trying to serve our Lord. What are those problems? Well, we are certain that you know them as well, or better, than we. So, we are hoping for a steady stream of feedback from you. *Why would you write to us?*

1. To suggest a subject. There may be some topic which you would like to see treated in the magazine. A portion of each issue of this paper will be on a particular theme. Those of us who serve as editors all have some ideas about themes. We think they are good ideas. But we would welcome suggestions from you. We cannot promise that we will follow each suggestion, but we will certainly value and consider each one.

2. To comment on an article. If we do the job we expect to do, we are going to “stir up your sincere minds” in each issue. You may want to write us in order to “amen” a particular

piece. “I enjoyed the article on such-and-such. I believe brother Smart got to the heart of the matter. Something else I would add is . . .” In the same way, you may wish to disagree. “I appreciate the article by brother Not-So-Smart on . . . However, I do not agree with his conclusion. It seems to me such-and-such.” All we ask is that you write in a brotherly spirit and keep it brief—under 150 words.

***This
is the
place where
you, the
reader,
have the
opportunity
to say
what’s on
your mind.***

3. To edify, exhort and encourage. You may have some beneficial and constructive observation that you believe needs to be stated. We cannot promise that every comment will be carried here, but those that we believe to be of enough interest and profit to others will be used. The format and nature of this magazine precludes the acceptance of unsolicited

articles. But this is a place where you can “sound off” on some things that may help others. You don’t have to be a preacher to say something that needs to be said. In fact, maybe you need to sound off about preachers! At any rate, please observe the 150-word maximum.

4. To comment on current events. Things are happening around us every day. We are all involved in them, to some extent. The things you read in the newspaper and see on television may cause you to want to speak out. You may want to call for others’ response on the same issue. This is the place for you to do that. We can all profit from your thinking.

Paul said, “For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself” (Romans 14:7). Those of us connected with *Christianity Magazine* recognize the many and varied contributions that others can make to this endeavor. We are not in this alone; we solicit your help, your cooperation and your participation.

Christians are all interrelated. Someone has said, “We can see that life is a cycling phenomenon which occurs in many forms within a single system. Nothing stands alone—no individual, species, or community; no rain drop, snow crystal, cloud or stream; no mountain and no sea—for in a cycle each thing in one way or another is connected with everything else.” We are connected with you. We value what you have to say. Let us hear from you.



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Christian Want Ads

I am always amazed to find classified advertisements in publications that profess to be "Christian." But one of the most widely-circulated magazines in the nation has just such a section. Here is a sampling:

* * *

EXTERNAL DEGREES FOR PASTORS AND TEACHERS. Would someone please tell me what "external" degrees are? And how they differ from "internal" degrees? And where do you hold the thermometer to tell the difference? There are indeed degrees of pastors and teachers, but anybody who answers such an ad hasn't reached the first degree on either chart.

* * *

STUNNING CHRISTIAN JEWELRY. FREE INFORMATION FROM YOUR CHRISTIAN JEWELRY SOURCE. Maybe this stuff has been baptized, but I wonder how they got it to believe and repent? I also wonder if the apostles wore "Christian jewelry" or just the regular old secular kind?

* * *

CHRISTIAN MAN, 40-50, WISHES TO SHARE LARGE ATTRACTIVE APARTMENT. Why not find a large attractive Christian woman to share it with—having taken care of the legal niceties, of course. Actually, what intrigued me about this ad was how one got to be 40-50 years old. I like that. I think I shall make up a vita advertising EXPERIENCED AND AMIABLE TEACHER AND PREACHER, 45-55 years old (or maybe 30-55 years old).

* * *

The absurdity of such nonsense is obvious, but there is an even more offensive facet to it. Such thinking makes

trivial the name "Christian." Whatever value one may put on degrees and jewelry in their proper places, they have nothing to do with the grand design of being a Christian. Pastors and teachers commissioned by God feel no need for the reinforcement of "degrees" and are openly offended by the shallow egotism which pretentiously parades an "external degree." As for the jewelry, make certain it is "modest." Let us honor the word Christian, casting the money changers out of the temple.

I did notice one ad that might be of use, however: OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS FOUND. Just in the unlikely case anyone is looking for one of my more obscure books. You could give the guy a run for his money if you made him hunt it.

Libel

Two preachers were recently successfully sued for \$150,000 because they erroneously told audiences that the author of a popular book had committed suicide. Their remarks were judged to be malicious and, thus, slanderous.

I have noted a tendency among some to be too quick to repeat every rumor about religious false teachers, often with only the flimsiest of evidence. Some such reports have been libelous, in my judgment, should the accused see them and choose to prosecute. Besides, rumor-mongering is not a Christian pastime.

In addition, an overemphasis on the moral degeneracy of false teachers (which is certainly sometimes readily apparent) can cause us to lose sight of why we oppose them—because they are false teachers. One who misleads people is not primarily wicked because he is insincere (he may be fanatically dedicated) or reprobate (he may be puritanical), but because he is wrong. He does not teach the truth. That test must not get lost in the midst of more sensational charges.

P. S. I confess I did wonder where those preachers got the \$150,000 granted them by the judge.

What Are Members of the Church To Do?

Claude Holcomb

Notice a few things which Paul says about the duties of members:

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:4-5).

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ . . . For the body is not one member, but many . . . But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body . . . Now are ye the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 18-20, 27).

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25).

In the first passage, Paul uses the various parts of the human body to illustrate how individuals make up the spiritual body of Christ. The word "office" is used in the sense of a function. Every member of a human body has a function to perform, but all members do not perform the same function. So it is in the body of Christ. Every member has his place in the church, with a work to perform; if one member fails to do his work, the church suffers to that extent. It is a serious thought.

This teaching is emphasized again by the apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. There are many members composing the human body, yet there is only one body. "So also is Christ." The lesson is plain. There are many members composing the spiritual body, yet there is but one body (1 Corinthians 12:20). And just as each member of the physical body has its own function or use, so it is in the spiritual body.

Christians must ever strive to maintain the unity God designed for the body of Christ, "for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25). Members of our physical bodies constitute a unit, and none of them rebels because it cannot perform the function of another. Nor does it withdraw from the body

because because it is not humored and pampered; it does not resent other members performing functions it is unable to perform; it does not seek to hinder the work of other parts because it dislikes them; it does not sulk and pout because it feels it has been slighted. "So also is Christ."

Members of the church have the obligation to work faithfully for the upbuilding of the Kingdom. Those who refuse to do so are under condemnation. Some of the parables of Jesus teach this lesson (the talents, the barren fig tree, etc.). Paul also emphasizes the thought in a number of passages. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Working members are usually happy, peaceable, joyful, fruitful Christians; never fretting, murmuring, complaining, criticizing, hindering—they have no time for such things. They are the ones who want to get things done for the Lord in the Lord's way, and they do not become discouraged because they cannot do big things. They just do all the little things they can in the biggest way of which they are capable, and in so doing they become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Lord, give us more members who are too busy to brawl, and too trusting to falter and fail!

Members of the body of Christ are to be holy in life. "Follow after peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). The church today is in dire need of men and women who will "follow after peace" in deed and in truth, rather than going about making divisions. Many pious platitudes are intoned with reference to peace that have no real meaning because the deeds of the propagators are inconsistent with their claims. When men accuse other brethren of being "poisoned" because they do not strictly conform to their own views, they have little place to cry consistently for peace. Genuine peacemakers do more practicing than prating in promoting peace.

Striving toward peace is an element of "holiness without which no man shall see

the Lord. It is strange that some brethren are so anxious to contend for the faith with reference to baptism, but are careless to the extreme concerning gospel teaching on holiness. If the church of the Lord is to prosper, its members must be holy in life. Those who are not striving to this end will not see the Lord.

Members of the church must love one another. How many are going to lose their souls because of failure here? Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you . . . By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). If you really want to know how our testimony appears to the world in this matter, go out and ask them! They will tell you the truth about it—the plain, harsh, indictive truth! But we are afraid even to ask ourselves! Some brethren seem to cherish the hope of heaven without practicing the principle of love toward the brethren. Do they not believe the Bible? I suppose we all think, however, that God will make an exception in our case, just to get us into heaven because of who we are. Some *must* feel that way, judging from attitudes that prevail. How bright is *your* hope of heaven in view of Bible teaching on love?

Members of Christ's body must continue in the faith. If at last they are to be presented holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in God's sight, they must be faithful even to their last moment on the earth (Colossians 1:22-23). Christianity is not a seasonal or intermittent religion—it is constant, steady, and unceasing; woven into the texture of the mind so as to become an innate part of the being of one who is a member of the body of Christ. The man who is not godly every day is not really godly any day. There is no stopping place in the religion of Christ.

Let every Christian renew his determination to perform faithfully the function that belongs to him as a member of the body of Christ, unto the glory and praise of Him Who loved us, and gave Himself up for us.

From *The Preceptor*, Vol. 5, No. 3, January, 1956

Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

The Importance of Self-Image

We have seen that pride is at the root of all of one's problems with brother or self. Pride receives a major defeat in our lives when we are converted to Christ—though it will be a factor to be reckoned with throughout life.

We now must look a little deeper into the problem of self and explore the subtle difference between humility (the opposite of pride) and *inferiority*. God intends for us to be humble (James 4:6), but He has never intended for us to feel inferior. Feelings of inferiority in any human life is a product of the work of Satan, not God. There are unfortunately many Christians who fail to see the difference between humility and inferiority, and are caught up in a stifling self-hatred which is totally unsupported by the Scriptures.

Those who study human behavior tell us that children develop an inferiority complex early in life. A young child has no clear picture of himself. He sees himself only in the mirror of his abilities, his appearance and his character. A child's sense of values is based on what any authority figure—such as a parent or a school teacher—tells him. The ideas he gets from such people help to construct his self-image.

A child is strongly affected by what others think of him—particularly the values that his peers place on his appearance or his abilities. Frequently while growing up, children with unthinking cruelty will say to another, "Why is your nose so crooked?" or "Did you know that your ears stick out?"

Some children are deeply affected, often for life, because they never receive any praise from their parents in the formative years. The father may tell a small child, "You will never be any good," and the child has no alternative but to accept the prediction as a fact. As parents, we need to recognize the extreme importance of the praise and encouragement we can give to contribute to the feelings of self-worth of our children.

While inferiority usually shows itself in the form of self-rejection, it can also appear in another form. Sometimes it assumes the manner of superiority. Many people

are afflicted with swaggering braggadocio only because they are attempting to cover the self-hate harbored deep within themselves. And they fail to see that their demand—"Look at me—see what a wonderful person I am"—only drives others further away and contributes to more feelings of self-rejection.

Our loving Father wants me to be happy, contented and free in this life. Self-hate shrivels my soul and makes me miserable. How can I begin to sweep it out of my soul and live my life free from its evil grasp?

Seeing Myself As Jesus Sees Me

I believe that Jesus gives us the answer to this problem in an incident involving the life of Peter found in John 1:42: "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A Stone." In the Greek text there are subtle shades of difference in the words "Simon" and "A Stone." This is best seen in a translation which reads: "Thou art Simon (a reed) but thou shalt be Cephas (a stone)."

It seems to me that Jesus gave Peter a whole new conception of himself. As men looked at Peter they saw instability and change; Peter saw in himself much the same; but Christ could see hidden depths that Peter and others could not plumb and He knew that by His love and power He could make Peter into the man he should be.

The ultimate answer to changing one's life from the suffocating curse of self-hate and self-rejection to self-worth and self-dignity is to see ourselves as the Lord sees us. With Him it does not matter about the shape of one's nose, or the capacity of one's intellect, or the size of one's estate. He merely looks at the strength of our character and the openness of our heart.

How can we begin to overcome feelings of inferiority and build up a positive self-image in which we see ourselves as complete in Christ? What are the principles of self-acceptance? We shall discuss these in the next article—but each of them has this key: we must see ourselves as Jesus sees us.

Parents' Page

Godly Parents

Roland Lewis

No job a Christian can undertake is as difficult as being a godly parent. It is natural that on occasions parents will be disappointed and at the verge of despondency. God's solutions for rearing children excel those of agnostic psychologists and humanistic baby specialists. This is not to say that no good books exist. Many are available and worth studying. When they conflict with God's instruction, however, the Bible is to be the guide.

Like a successful marriage, successful parenthood requires sufficient preparation. Young people need to learn what God's plans are for child rearing long before they become parents.

Whose Job Is It To Rear Children?

Some "his-and-her" jobs may exist in the family, but child rearing is not one of them. Neither parent can expect the other to accept all the responsibility, the blame, or the credit for parenting. As truly as marriage is a partnership, so also is child rearing. The prevalent tendency of expecting the mother to rear the children while the father makes the living does not agree with the scripture. Even preachers (sometimes it seems that especially preachers) seem frequently to expect their wives to be totally responsible for the children.

Fathers are the ones warned against provoking their children to wrath (Ephesians 6:4) that they may not be discouraged (Colossians 3:21). Fathers must have their children in subjection to qualify for the eldership (1 Timothy 3:4). Fathers are to nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4) and to chasten them while there is hope and not spare because of their crying (Proverbs 19:18).

The poorest way for a parent to control his/her children is to do it only occasionally. Persistent, regular, understanding control breeds respect while sporadic discipline tends to produce resentment or rebellion and causes confusion on the part of the child.

Some Bible passages instructing and/or suggesting the *team* approach to child rearing say that children who hear

the instruction of fathers and abide in the law of mothers, find parents are "fair garlands for their heads" and "pendants about their necks" (Proverbs 1:8-9; 6:20). In addition, Proverbs 30:17 makes no distinction between the punishment for mocking one's father or for despising to obey his mother. They are *both* to be honored and obeyed (Ephesians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:30). Death was prescribed for smiting *either* parent (Exodus 21:15) and for rebellion against them (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) or for cursing them (Leviticus 20:9) or speaking evil of them (Mark 7:10). Jesus was subject to *both* His parents (Luke 2:51).

**Some
"his-and-her"
jobs may exist in
the family, but child
rearing is not one
of them.**

To ignore God's plan of a two-parent team in child rearing is to invite disaster. No plan can justify a willful departure from God's pattern and only the direst necessity should call for even a temporary compromise of God's wisdom.

A "better education for the children," a "higher standard of living"—whatever takes the parents away from their child rearing responsibilities has the possibility of being a bad decision, of court-ing disaster in the final outcome of the children. Financial sacrifice is a small price to pay to give children the advantage of both parents assuming parental responsibility as many hours a day as it is humanly possible.

In the Chastening and Admonition of the Lord

What is included in bringing (nurturing, ASV) children up in the nurture

(chastening, ASV) and admonition of the Lord? First, regular Bible study. When a young couple gets married, or even when they become engaged, they should start regular Bible study. This should be continued, and the children should be made a part of it at the earliest possible age. The study periods should include discussions concerning practical applications of the lessons they read. Further, children and parents should memorize scriptures together that have particularly practical applications to the kinds of problems the family faces. One example is that parents should be able to quote or turn quickly to the passages that require parents to discipline the children. They can then explain to their children that the parents will stand in the judgment and be approved or condemned by how well they have tried to discipline their children. This takes discipline out of the "personal" or "personality" realm and raises it to a level that tends to earn the child's respect and understanding rather than his ire and resentment. Examples of such scriptures could include the following: *Proverbs 13:24*: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (margin: "diligently"). *Proverbs 19:18*: "Chasten thy son while there is yet hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." *Proverbs 22:6*: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." *Proverbs 23:13*: "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die"—either physically (if it is done reasonably) or spiritually. Deuteronomy 21: 18-21 required Jewish parents to have stubborn and rebellious children stoned to death, and Romans 1:28-32 lists "disobedience to parents" as one of the catalog of sins that are "worthy of death," which I understand to mean that if a civil government today should make willful, stubborn disobedience to parents a capital offense, it would have God's approval.

From *With All Boldness*, February, 1975



What Does God Want From Me?

In his little book, *Jesus Rediscovered*, Malcolm Muggeridge has confided that his earliest memory was of walking down the road in someone else's hat and wondering who he was. In a real sense the whole of humanity is walking down that same road, tormented by the same question. The question is built-in. The answer is not.

In order to be whole we need to know who we are and what is expected of us, but only God knows that. Men, being creatures, cannot answer such questions. American poet Theodore Roethke expresses in haunting words this profound human yearning:

"I close my eyes to see,
I bleed my bones, their marrow to bestow
Upon that God who knows what I would know."

Denying the existence of God not only solves nothing but reduces man to utter meaninglessness. Accepting by faith that God exists and wants men to seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), and that God has spoken to us in His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2) opens up all kinds of blessed possibilities. It is wisdom to listen reverently and learn our duty well.

"What does God expect from us?" It was evident from the very beginning that man, made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), was expected to honor his Creator with due reverence. God expected worship, but worship of a particular kind. Cain could tell you about that (Genesis 4:3-5). Not everything went. The foundation for worship had to be faith and the proper expression of faith was obedience (Hebrews 11:4). Saul, Israel's first king, learned an important lesson about worship (1 Samuel 15). He was told to utterly destroy the flocks and herds of the Amalekites but convinced himself that to spare some of the animals for sacrifice to God would somehow counter-vail his act of disobedience. He learned otherwise. As Samuel said to a chastened Saul, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). The God who made us does want worship (a needed lesson for the prayerless moralist), but He wants more. He wants a spirit of faith and absolute trust. We need to be very sure that what we offer to God in worship is not in itself an act of rebellion.

"What does God want from me?" The Old Testament prophets also speak to that question. When Israel complains of the impossibility of pleasing God however the many sacrifices offered, Micah responds that God's expectations are clear and attainable but they constitute far more than burnt-offerings ("do justly . . . love mercy . . . walk humbly with thy God." 6:6-8). Even more

pointed is the announcement by Isaiah and Amos of Jehovah's deep revulsion at the hypocritical shallowness of His people's worship (Isaiah 1:11-15; Amos 5:21-23), and the call for repentance from day-to-day ungodliness (Isaiah 1:16-17). "Let justice roll down as waters," urged Amos, "and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5:24).

Jeremiah's powerful sermon delivered at the temple gate makes clear that God had not delivered Israel from Egypt just to multiply sacrifices but to produce a people wholly obedient to His will (7:21-23). Hosea had earlier made the same point in words which Jesus was later to quote—"I desire goodness and not sacrifice and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings" (6:6; Matthew 9:13).

The message of the prophets is specially epitomized in Jesus' conversation with a scribe who inquired of Him which commandment was "the first of all" and was told the greatest command was "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." When the scribe commended the answer by saying that loving God with all one's heart was surely "much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices" Jesus observed that he was "not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:28-34).

It is very important to note that in the foregoing passages it is not being said that sacrificial offerings were unnecessary under the law, or that the law with its animal sacrifices were being done away. What both Jesus and the prophets were saying is that acts of worship, even those commanded by God, are not the point of it all. God did not deliver Israel so that they could offer sacrifices and Jesus did not die so Christians could sing psalms and eat the Lord's Supper. We must not make the means the end. God wants worship, and He wants it according to His will, but He wants more. He wants our lives, our very selves.

What is the lesson here? Do not try to turn God away from getting what He wants by offering a part for the whole—frequent church-going, money, or even zealous evangelism. The heart is hiding in whatever thing or attitude or practice we refuse to yield to Him. God does not always enter by the doors we open because what He is seeking is not behind them. The thing He wants from us is the one thing He has no power to take—our hearts—but He has moved in great wisdom to draw us to Him willingly. He has loved us beyond all measure in Christ and "we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

True Spirituality

In the frantic pace of today's living it is entirely possible that many of us who are Christians are relatively religious but not very spiritual. There is a difference.

Oh, we say all the right things. We attend the services of the church. We get our Bible class lessons. We pray at meal times.

But there is so much more than this that God desperately wants us to have. The apostle Paul sets a goal in Philipians three that rebukes our shallowness: "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." I'm afraid there are not many of us who *know God*—at least in the sense that Paul knew Him. And that is tragic. Our "spirituality" is too much on the surface and too little in the depths and on the heights that God has provided for us.

The one who is truly spiritual speaks of his Father more often than just at the services of the church. He reads his Bible to fill his heart, not to fill in the blanks. He prays purposefully, not perfunctorily; and in many situations, not just at meal time. He loves his brother and seeks his good beyond the meeting-house; and he senses his Father's

presence throughout every day.

It's not easy to live this way. One must work at it, but it's worth pursuing. The world crushes in on us and crowds God out. Many find it hard to take time for God even one time a week, not to mention several times a day.

Let me challenge you to take the road to knowing God—the path to true spirituality. We need to live our lives in close proximity to God, talking to Him often and listening to Him always.

I have been a Christian for thirty years. And I'll tell you frankly—I ought to be a better one. But what does it take to be a better Christian? Well, what is the difference between Van Cliburn and just anybody pounding on the piano? It's more than genius. It's *devotion*. It's *love* for the art. It's time and toil. *It takes time to be holy*. More than most of us are willing to give.

Paul Rees tells the story of an old preacher in India who was approached by a younger missionary. He said, "Sir, I have sought a deeper experience with God all these years and I don't have it. I have read books. I have read what to do and all the rules, but I am nowhere yet. Does God have favorites?" The old preacher said, "No, my son, God does

not have favorites. But He has intimates."

If you have settled down in your smug complacency, may God help you to set your sights on a better goal. You can read your Bible every day, seeking what God wants you to know. You can give of yourself to help some brother or sister in need. You can meditate on God's word and digest its truths by applying them to your life. You can yield your life to the Captain of your soul. You can find a quiet place and pray to God about whatever is troubling your heart. You can determine to be more spiritual and less carnal in your association with brethren in the church. You can try harder to remove every sin from your life.

Setting out to know God and His Son Jesus Christ is the greatest of all pursuits in this world. The man who does so never arrives; he keeps on arriving all the time. He never fully apprehends, but he keeps on apprehending. He never knows God completely, but each day he knows Him better.

Many Christians are acquainted with God, but only a few are intimates. The pages that follow will help you along the path that leads in the right direction.

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Doctrine: The Basis for True Spirituality

Robert Turner

SPIRITUALITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT context is clearly related to God, who is Spirit. W. E. Vine comments on Romans 7:14, "things that have their origin with God, and which, therefore, are in harmony with His character . . . are spiritual." The word is contrasted with *carnal*, so that when Paul writes, "are ye not carnal and walk *as men*" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3) he is logically saying "spiritual" is to walk *as God*.

The historically Christian world generally agrees with this, but divides sharply over the means by which man may become spiritually minded. Is man so depraved that God must, by direct and immediate operation, shape his will and mold his life; or, is man capable of being touched by God's revelation of

prophets are subject to the prophets;" i.e., God does not operate through man without regard for man's will. Further, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:32,37). God's revelations are unified; and inspired writing is the standard for determining truth (2 Peter 3:1-2; Ephesians 3:1-5). "Ye who are spiritual" must act in a manner specified by divine instructions (Galatians 6:1). To be "led by the Spirit" is to "walk" or "live" in keeping with the instructions of the Spirit; and "ye may not do the things that ye would" shows this is a life of self-discipline whereby we overcome the

I do not understand him to say his failures were not sin; but to say God knew the desire and intent which motivated his life, and hence heard his confession of sin and plea for mercy. In Romans chapter eight he beautifully relates the spirit of man with God's Spirit. We "walk" after the spirit to the extent our life is in keeping with the desire of our inward man to follow the law of God revealed by His Holy Spirit. In the absence of perfection on man's part (hence, no justification on a "law" basis), it is comforting to know God recognizes the strivings of our heart to serve Him. These strivings, plus their fruits in our life, are the marks of spirituality.

True spirituality (in harmony with God's character) is obviously impossible without the revelation of God's will and character; hence is inevitably dependent upon "doctrine." We may label as "doctrine" things that are only our opinions; we may require more or less than God requires; and if so, we will pay for it. But when we substitute our "feelings" and emotional "trips" for true spirituality, we enslave man, and authority in religion becomes purely subjective.

We must seek to be holy, for God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). We strive to be pure, even as He is pure (1 John 3:3); merciful, as God is merciful (Luke 6:36); and walk in light, for He is light (1 John 1:5-7). Practical application of these and many like passages are possible only as we know God through Jesus Christ and the divine word. We will never attain any of these goals in the absolute sense — but we cannot even strive for them if we ignore the teaching of His way.

True Spirituality proceeds from a heart wholly given to God; is the result of a close sharing relationship with God. It is the product of a fully humbled creature and his sincere desire to conform his life to the divinely determined pattern. It is the reflection of God Himself, mirrored in every facet of the life of one who endeavors to glorify the Father of Spirits.

"True spirituality proceeds from a heart wholly given to God; is the result of a close sharing relationship with God . . . It is the product of a fully humbled creature . . . It is the reflection of God Himself."

Himself in Jesus Christ and the divine message? Is spirituality the product of an irresistible force placed in a chosen few irrespective of their will; or, the product of response on the part of free-moral man to a free and universal invitation from God?

The first concept makes "doctrine" (teaching, instruction) from God an academic matter, having no essential effect on the elect since an operation wholly of God would certainly be consistent with His character. But the second concept makes the teaching from God His "drawing power," and demands that we "hear, learn, and come" (John 6:44-45).

When problems arose at Corinth over spiritual gifts Paul said "the spirits of the

inclinations of the flesh to satisfy sinful appetites (Galatians 5:16f). Spirituality must not be confused with perfection. The spiritual man still needs forgiveness through the blood of Christ, but he is consistently striving, reaching forth, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ (Philippians 3:12-14).

The New Testament affords no better example of spirituality than the life of Paul. He delighted in the law of God after the inward man, although at times he did not do what he *would* (Romans 7:18-25). Recognizing this weakness of his flesh, he thanked God (for forgiveness) through Christ. He could maintain his hope because he served the law of God with his "mind" (v. 25), "spirit" (1:9).

TRUE SPIRITUALITY



Seeking Spirituality: The Dangers

Dave Bradford

IN OUR EFFORTS TO BE MORE SPIRITUAL, it is altogether possible that we could lose sight of what true spirituality is and become sidetracked from attaining the ultimate goal. What are some of the dangers to which one might easily fall prey in his quest for spirituality?

The word *spiritual* has the basic meaning of "pertaining to the spirit." When used with reference to a person it is descriptive of one who first of all sees man not only as a living physical body, but who also recognizes that there is a spirit within which is of greater value than life itself. The spiritual person is not nearly so concerned with physical needs and desires as he is with the need of this spirit within to be in fellowship with God. Recognizing his own personal unworthiness and total dependence on God, he loves and appreciates God for all that makes fellowship with Him possible—and with grateful and willing heart he exalts serving God to top priority in his life. His spirit is led by the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the message given through inspired apostles and prophets, and spiritual fruit is evidenced in every phase of his life (Galatians 5:16-6:1; Ephesians 3:1-5).

True spirituality is not dangerous but is something in which we can and should grow. However, one danger we must avoid is confusing emotionalism with spirituality, and thereby falling short of true spirituality. The spiritual person will experience pleasant and rewarding emotions which are an integral part of such qualities as love, joy, peace, and zeal. The more spiritual one becomes the more he can "rejoice in the Lord," i.e., in his relationship with the Lord. Knowing that sin is forgiven, that one is a child of God, that he receives help to overcome, and that he will finally go to heaven—are blessings that bring joy and peace. In contrast, there are many today who seek shortcuts to joy by turning religious services into pep rallies. "Are you glad to be here? Shake hands with the one next to you, on the right, then on the left. Clap your hands if you feel like it! Are you happy?" Such people experience

some joy, but it is not the fruit of the Spirit.

Love is another part of the fruit of the Spirit and one who loves God will manifest it in many ways. However, it is possible that those who talk about loving God the most are those who "with their mouth . . . show much love but their heart goeth after their gain" (Ezekiel 33:31), or "their heart is far from" Him as they follow human laws rather than God's will (Matthew 15:8-9). Jesus said, "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). The spiritual person is not one who will play up love in general terms while playing down the

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and thereby
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spirituality.***

necessity of keeping commandments—for Jesus said, "These ye ought to have done (the meticulous tithing of mint, anise and cummin) and not to have left the other undone" (justice, mercy, faith, and the love of God—Matthew 23: 23-24; Luke 11:42).

I am not opposed to expressing love for God with words, whether to God in songs or prayers, or to others where it is fitting. I even believe that such expressions may help our love to grow. However, our goal should not be to verbalize love, but rather to express it in total obedience to His will. When one balks at certain commandments of God,

it becomes evident that his "love" of God is an emotional deception and that he lacks true love and true spirituality. Let us bring forth in our lives the balanced fruit of faithfulness, meekness, and self-control along with true love and joy.

Another danger is subjectivism. The will of God is revealed in an objective standard—the Scriptures. The Spirit of God "speaks" to us through letters penned by inspired apostles and prophets (Revelation 2:7; 1:1,10-11). We are "led by the Spirit" when we follow the word of God as revealed by the Spirit. Many today refer to that which "the Lord laid on their heart," or that which "the Spirit revealed to them," when the ideas advocated by them are not found in the complete revelation from God but are simply ideas from their own heart. The Lord has warned of those who "speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah." Though they say, "Jehovah hath said," God reveals "I spake not unto them" (Jeremiah 22:16-21). Today there are those who say, "Surrender the heart to Jesus," "Make Him Lord of your heart and your life," and "Be led by the Lord as He speaks to your heart." Such ideas cannot be faulted when properly understood, but when these ideas are embraced simply as generalities with the Scriptures played down as the means of our learning the will of God, and when adherence to the Scripture comes to be looked upon as a kind of legalism—then subjectivism is blinding hearts to the will of God under the guise of being "spiritual."

Let us experience the emotions that rightly come from understanding God's love for us and the blessings in which we share. Let us be certain that our spirit—our heart—is genuinely involved in every aspect of our worship and service to Him as we carefully worship and serve according to the will of God revealed in the Scriptures. Let us draw nigh to God and truly be led by His Spirit to attain greater spirituality in our everyday lives.

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Daily Bible Study: Hungering and Thirsting

Berry Kercheville

READING AND STUDYING THE BIBLE IS not only a basic requirement of Christian growth, but it is also one of the most enjoyable experiences of the Christian life. Think of it! We have before us the mind of Christ, the words of God. Our God thought enough of us to communicate to us His love and His desire that we live happily throughout eternity. Now for Bible study to be regular it must be enjoyable, it must be challenging, it must stir our emotions and direct our will. David said concerning the blessed man, "His delight is in the law of the Lord." Therefore, Bible study is to be delightful and one who hasn't enjoyed it, hasn't yet studied it.

In order to make Bible study enjoyable we must make some corrections in our approach to the work before us. We must tear down some of the old habits and poor attitudes and then rebuild with the proper foundation.

The first thing we must understand is that it is common for a great part of a Christian's study time to be spent in studying someone else's studies. The Bible class teacher gives the assignment to study the first chapter of Romans. So, we go home and pick out our favorite commentary on Romans and read it. We glance through the chapter, and we are done. Have we studied Romans one? No. Someone else studied it and we read what they studied. So, you say, what is wrong with that? What is wrong is that we have left out the most important part of Bible study: the thrill and joy of *firsthand* discovery of the Bible's priceless treasures. It is the difference between taking a pill that has all the nutrients of a New York cut steak, and actually eating the steak. I'll take the steak, thank you. It is no wonder that many in the church cannot be encouraged to study and that our young people have to be forced to do a Bible lesson. They have been taught that Bible study is a lesson book and that Bible study is reading a commentary. That kind of Bible study is not much fun, and what is not fun won't be done.

Let me mention one other correction

we can make that will aid our enjoyment of Bible study. Much of our study over the years has become *issue-* or *topic-* oriented. Sadly, preachers are partly to blame as some preach almost exclusively on an issue or a topic. Yet the Bible wasn't written in topics, but as an integrated whole. First and foremost, the Lord has desired that we learn the Holy Spirit's message in the way He wrote it, else He would not have written it this way. I cannot stress enough how important this is.

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The problem is made evident by the comments often made in our Bible classes. Instead of trying to see how each verse, each paragraph, and each chapter fit into the theme of the book, many Christians are turning every verse into a different topic to be studied. And when the book is completed, no one is able to tell what the main message was and how the Holy Spirit developed His points.

Again, this is a shallow type of Bible study, and a shallow study will not provide the long-lasting enjoyment that will keep us hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Let me suggest a way to make Bible study a daily part of our lives *because* we are hungering and thirsting for it as a result of the enjoyable benefits we are obtaining from it.

First, make the goal to read at least one chapter a day. Now, to simply read it would take only a few minutes and give little in lasting profit. Therefore, begin to read with purpose. To do this, it is necessary to read with a pencil and colored pencils in order to become a keen observer of every word and thought in the text. And since a pencil is the best "eyes" a Bible student has, use your pencils to underline, mark, color and make notations freely. (*Parchment Press* has an inexpensive wide margin New Testament that is excellent for this exercise.) Begin to journey through your text tasting and enjoying every thought in the same way that a traveler would absorb the scenery around him. Do not be afraid to read and re-read, to reflect and meditate, and above all to *write down* observations. And when the chapter is completed, write in a daily diary a summation of the chapter. By doing only this much, in just three years you will have allowed the whole Bible to journey through your mind and will have written a brief summation of every chapter. This is not all there is to Bible study, but certainly part of the foundation for it. We must enjoy our Bible study because we cannot hunger and thirst after that from which we do not receive benefit.

Finally, let me emphasize that whatever method we use to learn God's word, that method must primarily involve our own firsthand discovery of the riches of His word. That enjoyable, delightful taste of the bread of heaven will stimulate a hungering and thirsting after righteousness that God will fill in a most satisfying way.

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY



"I'll Be A Friend To Jesus"

Robert Gabhart

ABRAHAM WAS A "FRIEND OF GOD" (James 2:23); Jesus was a friend of Lazarus (John 11:11); we are warned about being a "friend of the world" (James 4:4). Christians need to live their lives with these relationships in mind. Being a friend to the world must be avoided, but James refers here not to the *people* in the world but to the *world system* ruled by Satan. Having friends like Lazarus makes the days and weeks of life seem shorter and easier to bear. Our main goal in life, however, is to cultivate a close friendship with Jesus Christ and His Father.

When Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for His friends" (John 15:13), He describes the central issue of His life. If we are to be His friends, it must be the overriding factor of our lives as well. Jesus was always laying down His life for other people. He was "a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners" (Matthew 11:19), but this was the very thing which got Him in trouble with the Pharisees and religious leaders. When Jesus became a friend to Zacchaeus, "they all began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest of a man who is a sinner!'" (Luke 19:7). In the face of opposition He spoke out for the downtrodden and reached forth to the outcast. And eventually it cost Him His life.

On many occasions Jesus laid down His life for sick people. He healed a woman who had lived for eighteen years unable to straighten her back and stand erect. "And the synagogue official" was "indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath" (Luke 13:14). The common people rejoiced over what Jesus did, but "all His opponents were being humiliated" (Luke 13:17). After Jesus healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, "the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him" (Mark 3:6). Jesus had laid down His life for other people perhaps hundreds of times before He ever made the final lonely trek to Golgotha.

If we would be Jesus' friends, we must help those for whom He laid down His life. We must be ready to help when people are hurting. Life is tough. Sickness, the death of a loved one, marital problems, financial reversals, and other pressures provide opportunities for the Christian to express Christ's love through serving and caring. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care! Each of us must win the right to be heard. When people know that we care about them, they will allow us ample opportunities to bring the good news about Jesus Christ into their lives.

I believe these opportunities are often

that I might win the more" (1 Corinthians 9:19). Attach yourself as a "slave" to the unlovable as well as the easily loved. Even though no one can obligate you, become a slave to others for Jesus' sake. That was His attitude—but He is now in Heaven, and only Christians are available to lay down their lives daily for those who are lost.

Become someone's slave to the point that you will pray for them diligently and without ceasing for their salvation. Become someone's slave to the extent that you will study to prepare yourself to teach them when you have won a hearing. Become someone's slave enough to listen to their troubles and

"If we would be Jesus' friends, we must help those for whom He laid down His life. We must be ready to help when people are hurting. Life is tough. Sickness, the death of a loved one, marital problems, financial reversals, and other pressures provide opportunities for the Christian to express Christ's love."

arranged by God Himself. We must be available for the Lord to do His work through us. A helping hand and sympathetic listening spirit toward others will give our beliefs validity and impact. Mowing lawns, taking over meals, babysitting, shopping, and driving are a few ways to help people in need. Those lost in the world are not the enemy. They have been deceived by the enemy. Jesus can reach them through us if we are available to be their friend.

Paul expressed the outlook that all friends of Jesus should have when he wrote, "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all,

listen to their pleas for help. Learn where they are hurting and be prepared to apply the balm of Gilead to their wounds.

Living like this will cause us to be taken advantage of from time to time. We will be used. We will be unappreciated. However, if we realize this ahead of time, we can be prepared to handle it when it comes. This should not surprise us. It cost our Friend His life. If we will give up our lives every day, He will use us to continue His work—and He will be our Friend throughout all eternity.

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Meditation: "Under the Fig Tree"

Charles Goodall

WHEN JESUS REVEALED TO NATHANIEL that He had seen him in the privacy of a fig tree, he exclaimed, "Thou art the son of God . . . (and) the king of Israel" (John 1:48-49). The Scripture doesn't say what Nathaniel was doing there, but he had taken enough precaution to be alone that he felt only God could have known about his solitude. On one occasion Isaac sought seclusion when he "went out to meditate in the field at eventide" (Genesis 26:63).

These instances stir our curiosity about meditation, its merit and its relationship to prayer. It seems we hear about prayer and supplication but little about meditation. As it turns out it is a kind of prayer but it is of a higher nature than a petition. Meditation is the putting aside of the world and ourselves to focus upon God.

For a moment, let us not use our imaginations to bridge the "Fantasy Islands" in this world but instead use our will to make resolutions to bring us closer to the throne of God. We can do so by suspending for the time being the outward struggle against worldly forces in order to experience the inward realization of the presence of God. We must seek first to be alone. A good way to do this is suggested by the familiar song penned by Will Slater:

Walking alone at eve and viewing
the skies afar
Bidding the darkness come to
welcome each silver star
Sitting alone at eve and dreaming
the hours away
Watching the shadows falling now
at the close of day.

We often make the same blunder with God that we do with our friends; we do all the talking! The heathen mistakenly thought they would be heard "for their much speaking" (Matthew 6:7). We can be rude to God by changing the Scripture from "Speak Lord, thy servant hears" to "Listen Lord, thy servant speaks." Why can't we learn to be still? The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 4:4, "Stand in awe and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and *be still.*"

Meditation helps us with maintaining the proper perspective. When we are busy, it seems harder to keep our priorities straight. By meditating we see ourselves as we really are and not as we think we are. It affords us an opportunity for genuine self-examination. When we work hard our friends tend to praise us highly and perhaps sometimes it is deserved. However, after a time we have a tendency to put more stock in the adulation than we should. During medi-

*In meditation we
cleanse our souls
much in the same
manner that the
sanitation workers
clean our streets of
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Have you ever
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condition?*

tation we are not as prone to deceive ourselves. Because we have a rational soul dwelling in our mortal body (1 Corinthians 6:19), we often seek to rationalize our lack of spirituality by accepting the praise of others as if it were fact. In so doing we deceive ourselves. Paul said, "We dare not . . . compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12). Alone

with the Lord we are face to face with reality. No one is there for us to impress. Our soul is laid bare and open in the presence of the eternal God.

In meditation we cleanse our souls much in the same manner that the sanitation workers clean our streets of trash and filth in the quietness of the night. Have you ever awakened during these hours and had the experience of clearly assessing your spiritual condition? Reflection of past sins is so painful at those hours. Insomnia strikes those who have a sense of guilt more often than those who have found peace with God. When that inner peace is found, the distractions are gone and our conscience is clear before God.

During the daytime, we can see our neighbor's faults so well because we have failed to meditate on our own. The more we meditate, the more our neighbor's faults look minute in comparison with our own. Isaiah once said, "All our righteousness are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Through meditation, we can remove the mote and obtain new spiritual heights. For example, the Lord taught that the one who had been forgiven the most should be all the more grateful. The humbler we are in meditation, the higher we can climb the spiritual mountain.

But sometimes we destroy or neglect what we are working for while we overpursue our own selfish interests. What good are luxurious possessions if we have no companion with which to enjoy them? For example, why labor and provide for children if they rise up to curse us because they've been neglected? Thus it is important that we find time to meditate on who we are, what we are doing and whether or not we are putting our energy in the right places to accomplish these objectives. If we find time alone with God, the knowledge of His word in our hearts—and if we will reflect on our lives—we can momentarily escape the relentless demands of this world in order to firmly determine the proper course to take.

(Continued on next page)

TRUE SPIRITUALITY



Offering Thanks in Public: Pros and Cons

Bob Waldron

PRAYER, LIKE ALL ACTS OF WORSHIP, IS intensely individual. No one has the right to decide for another when he should pray, how often he should pray, or exactly what he should say. Please bear these thoughts in mind as we consider the giving of thanks for food in public places.

Paul says that God created our food to be "received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (1 Timothy 4:3). Most Christians are constantly grateful to God for all His

blessings. Giving thanks for one's meals is, therefore, a prevalent practice among God's people.

In theory, we thank God for everything; in practice, we thank Him for our meals. We are more regular in our giving of thanks at meals because our meals are more regular than many of the other circumstances of life. Examples of men in the Bible, such as Daniel and Christ, as well as our own experience, teach that it is good to be regular in prayer. Haphazard prayer usually degenerates

into no prayer at all. So it is good to have a regular practice of prayer, but the Bible does not tell us when or how often.

The question is surely not: "Should I give thanks for my food?" but rather: "In a crowded restaurant or other public place, should I pray out loud?"

We are not to pray to be seen of men, are we? No. Jesus made that clear when He condemned the Pharisees who prayed to be seen of men (Matthew 6:5-6). But He did not teach that we should hide our good deeds. He said, "Let your light shine before men" (Matthew 5:16). The difference is between shining one's light and letting one's light shine.

Anytime, anywhere we pray, it should not be in order that men may be impressed with our righteousness. On the other hand, we need to be honest enough to recognize that the real source of our discomfort when praying in restaurants or other such places may be shame and self-consciousness.

The important thing is to pray effectively. In public places, there are several equally good alternatives. (1) Go ahead and bow your head and pray if you can do so effectively. Be sure not to wear your cloak of virtue and halo of self-righteousness, though. Also be careful that self-consciousness does not call your attention away from God to those who you fancy are watching you. (2) Pray silently, with none of the usual "attitudes" of prayer (bowing the head or folding the hands). Such a prayer, delivered sincerely, will be heard of God as quickly as another (Nehemiah 2:4). (3) Pray before entering the restaurant, or after the meal, when you get back to the car or to the room.

No one has the right to bind a certain procedure for prayer in a restaurant or cafe. Pray, and pray effectively and sincerely, in whatever way you find this possible (James 5:16). There is also no need for anyone to feel guilty because of failure to conform to the traditions of the Pharisees.

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What is your practice
in this matter? Why?
Let us hear from you
about this in "Soundings."

"Meditation" (Continued from page 16)

Meditation is a time for digesting God's law by calling into service our *memory*, our *intellect* and our *will*. David said that "the righteous man delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night" (Psalm 1:2). In our study of the Bible we often soak up factual knowledge, but fail sometimes to make the proper application to our daily lives. The difference between studying and meditating is like the difference between knowledge and communication. When we meditate it is different than when we study. In the latter situation we want to know about God. When we meditate we want to commune with God.

As a child I remember the cow we milked each day would quickly clip grass and later in the day lie in the shade of a tree to chew and digest it. There is a time for intense study, but there is also a

time for considering its application to our lives. James said pondering past Bible lessons was like looking into a mirror to see if we are really all we are striving to be (James 1:23-25). Thus we use our *memory* to recall God's blessings and His infinite goodness. We use our *intellect* to recall what we have learned about His life, truth, and love. By our *will* we strive to follow Jesus' instructions: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37).

For one to meditate it would seem that one should seek to find a place where he can comfortably be alone with the Lord. Perhaps in a rarely used room or patio, one could find his "fig tree" or "field at eventide." "Take time to be holy," the poet has said. The Lord "which seeth in secret . . . shall reward thee openly" (Matthew 6:4)

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Van Cash

"Churchanity" vs. Christianity

IN THE ACCELERATED PACE OF TODAY'S society, most people, either by choice or circumstances, seem to chop up their lives into orderly little compartments. Work, family, community, recreation, and maybe "church" are to name but a few items to which we give our time and attention. Even for many Christians, these and other matters of life are methodically pigeon-holed and allotted a certain amount of time. We allocate from eight to ten hours per day Monday through Friday for work, Saturday is saved for the wife and kids, a night occasionally for community activities, and yes, Sunday (at least part of it) for "church." Then Monday morning rolls around and the cycle begins all over again.

This routine may have variations, but a good number of us can fit our lives into the context of this description. While an orderly and well-planned life is certainly desirable, we wonder if something is being overlooked here. Has our concept of religion and our obligations to the Lord become so narrow that it includes only the activity that takes place "at church" (the place) and "on Sunday" (the time)? And when these acts have been performed, do we have the feeling that "our tickets have been punched?" Do we feel that now our "church obligations" can be put aside for yet another week and that we now can go about our *other* affairs unencumbered? Is "going to church" enough? What about involvement as Christians? How much must one give in time, talent, and money to satisfy the demands of God? In short, what are the obligations of Christianity?

To properly distinguish between "Churchanity" and Christianity, we must first grasp what it takes to be a Christian. Perhaps, too often, we equate *being* a Christian with the acts of *becoming* a Christian. I do not intend to minimize the initial acts of obedience, but it seems that for some these steps are only a parroted formula with which they are completely satisfied—but they are devoid of any continuing commitment

and involvement. Unfortunately, real spiritual development appears to be lacking by many. The so-called process of "becoming" a Christian may have been done, but what about actually "being" a Christian?

Just as Mohammedanism relates one to Mohammed and Buddhism relates one to Buddha, being a Christian relates one to Christ. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*" (Galatians 2:20). We now have an existing, continuing relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And, as with all relationships, we

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must be willing to accept a broad base of responsibility that carries over into every phase and facet of our lives. Again, "For as many as have been baptized into Christ have *put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:27).

Christ lives in me. I have put on Christ. I am now a willing recipient of His teachings. And now I yearn to apply these teachings and alter my life as needed. "He that abideth in the teaching hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). I sit at His feet. I cherish His word. I partake of His message. *I study!* I strive to become His true disciple. My love for Him transcends love for father

and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, even my own life (Luke 14:26). I forsake *all* that I have in order to be His disciple (Luke 14:33).

As Christians, we must begin to see that for the first time in our lives our relationship to Christ demands self to be relegated to the "back seat." The rich young ruler went away sad and grieved because he was unwilling to give up the one thing necessary for an eternal inheritance (Luke 16). And the one thing he was unwilling to give up was *everything*. Are we ready for this? Are we willing to give it *all up*?

A Christian then, is one who will put Christ absolutely first in his life. He will demonstrate his allegiance by learning and loving and doing whatever the Captain of his soul demands. "Let the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). He is our sovereign Ruler, our King, our *Lord!* He is the long-awaited Messiah, the Savior, the *Christ!* And through willing submission to the conditions of His will we have established a relationship of increasing faith that is demonstrated daily in our lives.

The doing of commands then becomes more than simply externals. They are more than sacrifices and burnt offerings. "And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength . . . is more than burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:33). The love that motivates us to action and the obedience that makes our faith perfect must stem forth from the heart. His cause is now our cause. His purposes have become our purposes. His goals are our goals. And there is absolutely nothing—including life itself—that will be held back. We have been transformed into His likeness, into His image. We are not simply *doing* something, we have *become* something and are going to *be* something. And that something is a *Christian!* Thus Christianity becomes our *very way of life*.

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY



Taking Time To Pray

Sewell Hall

WHEN A CRISIS AROSE IN THE JERUSALEM church in connection with the distribution of food to the widows, the apostles made the following proposal: "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:3-4).

Many preachers and elders complain of too little time for recreation, too little time for correspondence, too little time for visitation and even for study—but for *prayer*? This may explain some of our modern ineffectiveness.

What is true of elders and preachers is true of most other Christians. We don't value prayer sufficiently to make time for it, and if we do make time we don't know what to do with it. How can one spend all night in prayer? We know that Jesus did (Luke 6:12). Even the early church did (Acts 12:5). But we quickly run out of things to ask for and begin repeating ourselves.

Much of our problem lies in the fact that we think of prayer as reading off a shopping list for God to fill for us. We think through our problems, determine what will be required to solve them and then come to God with a request for the things we have decided we need. We need to back up and bring God into the search for solutions.

Prayer is more than supplication—even more than thanksgiving. It is the broad general act of talking to God. This is clear from Philippians 4:6. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

Talking out your problems with any other person can be helpful in finding a solution. Verbalizing our thoughts, explaining our situation, enumerating alternatives and analyzing them to point out the weakness and strength of each—all of this helps us to see the wisest course to follow. Our companion may say very little and may offer no advice, yet we thank him for the great help he has been.

My mother taught me a valuable lesson in the art of praying. "Son, whenever possible, talk aloud to God. It is better than silent prayer." I quickly learned that she was right. For one thing, I did not fall asleep so easily while praying. I must admit that at first I did feel a little silly "talking to myself." But that very feeling judged me; if I felt I was talking to myself it meant that I was not really aware of God's presence. Once I became conscious of a listening ear, God

My mother taught me a valuable lesson in the art of praying. "Son, whenever possible, talk aloud to God. It is better than silent prayer. I quickly learned that she was right. For one thing, I did not fall asleep so easily while praying. I must admit that I did feel a little silly "talking to myself." But that very feeling judged me . . . it meant that I was not really aware of His presence.

became more of a companion and prayer became more meaningful.

If talking to an earthly friend can be helpful, how much more talking to our heavenly Father! Some alternatives which I might propose to a human companion (especially a worldly one) I could not bring myself even to mention to God. And motives I might hide from a friend, I know are "naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). A decision

reached after literally talking it over with God will be a more spiritual decision for it will be modified by all that the Spirit has revealed to me concerning God. It will be the kind of decision, too, which I can confidently ask God to help me implement.

Quick petitions have their place. They can be made amid the din of traffic or the chaos of the market place. Nehemiah uttered a prayer between a question asked by the king and his own answer to that question (Nehemiah 2:4-5). We can, and should, pause to give thanks before meals (1 Timothy 4:4). But there are prayers which require more concentration than is possible with the distraction of blaring horns, tempting food or restless children.

The kind of praying that Jesus often did required Him to arise early in the morning, while it was still dark, to go out into a lonely place (Mark 1:35). The kind of communication with God that we are suggesting would be seriously interrupted by eating and is therefore logically accompanied by fasting (Nehemiah 1:4). It is the kind of exercise which might well prompt a devout husband and wife to suspend their normal relations "for a time that you might devote yourselves to prayer" (1 Corinthians 7:5). This kind of prayer takes time and it is this kind that is most neglected in our day.

What problems are troubling you just now? What decisions are you facing? Try prayer. Sometime today, find a quiet place—perhaps a park, a field, or if nothing else is possible, "go into your room, and when you have shut your door" spend at least thirty minutes talking aloud to God about the burden you are carrying. I predict that the blessing you will receive will make you want to spend more time in that way tomorrow.

From every stormy wind that
blows,

From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat;

'Tis found beneath the mercy-seat.

—Hugh Stowell

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality, Even in the Business Meeting

Jim R. Everett

A "BUSINESS MEETING," AS IT IS commonly practiced by a group of Christians, is a coming together of some members of a congregation to arrive at a unified decision and initiate "together work." Who these members are, how often they meet, and how they reach decisions is not the design of this article.

There is a very strong implication in the wording of the title that spirituality is sometimes missing from the business meeting. That is too often the truth of the matter and many consider business meetings a "necessary evil." In some hearts, painful business meeting experiences linger unforgettably like the odor of stale tobacco smoke clings to a woolen jacket. God be thanked that many churches are so unified that business meetings are a pleasure. While business meetings may be necessary—there must be some means by which the affairs of a congregation may be arranged—evil is not necessary. Therefore, we need to learn how to avoid carnality, which is commonly manifest in such gatherings, while promoting spiritual edification, brotherly love, and enthusiasm in the congregation's work.

Understand that suggestions made in the application of spiritual truth to this matter do not guarantee that *every* member will be agreeable to act maturely. That means that while some may seek to do what God says, there will be others who, not being so motivated, may cause difficulties. This does not excuse us from proper conduct and the continued pursuit of spiritual work—it only means that our tasks will be unpleasant at times but we must keep doing the will of our Father.

Business meetings always should be opened with a prayer for wisdom. If ever there is an occasion which demands the greatest degree of wisdom, it is a business meeting. God was truly pleased when Solomon asked, not for treasures, but for an "understanding heart" because it indicated that he cared more for the needs of his people than his own selfish interests. Rather than reflecting heavenly wisdom, business meetings are

frequently an exercise in carnal wisdom manifest by strife and contention which smother like smog in Los Angeles. Contrasted, heavenly wisdom is like a breath of fresh air from the Ouachita Mountains (see James 3:14-18).

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When we pray for wisdom, we are, by that prayer, indicating a willingness to conduct ourselves in a manner becoming to children of God. That kind of prayer, therefore, will cause us to pursue purity and peace; to speak kindly; and to be longsuffering.

Also, it appears to me that spirituality, even in the business meeting, can be accomplished primarily by planning and discussing spiritual things. Too much time is wasted talking about color schemes, padded pews, etc. A greater portion of time spent discussing carnal things presents greater opportunity for disagreement over personal tastes and judgments. Far better that one or two

men be selected to take care of those things and who, within a generally specified limit, see that the jobs are done than to promote carnality. Then let the one who may want to criticize take the job and do it himself. I never complain about the cooking when I go hunting with a group of men—and you know why.

Problems arise from materially-oriented business meetings because each of us, inherently, believes that his preferences and judgments make more sense than someone else's. That part of the "old man" must be conquered by a brotherly love that looks to the needs of a brother first and by each esteeming the other better than himself (Philippians 2:1-5). Do not, even jokingly, say, "Well, I guess he is entitled to his own stupid opinion." Business meetings should be approached by *all* with a mutual respect for each other's well-being. And since "together work" is being decided, care should be taken, if at all possible, to avoid involving a brother in a work that would make him a partner to something he cannot conscientiously do. Our own history in the benevolent controversy should verify that need.

Each business meeting should put emphasis on spiritual matters. Prepare beforehand to discuss such things as: "How we can improve our worship and our teaching work;" "how we can motivate ourselves toward better Bible study habits;" "ways of reaching the lost;" etc. Then *listen carefully* to each genuine expression of concern and *do something*. Spirituality comes from doing, not just talking (James 1:22f).

Finally, each Christian should go to the business meeting to discover what *he* can do in the congregation's work. Complainers are not doers and doers have no time for complaining. True spirituality is demonstrated practically in reflecting the love of our Father to our brethren and in the spiritual work we do.

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY



How Sin Kills Spirituality

James W. Ward

DEBATERS SAY THAT A PROPOSITION WELL defined is half argued. Let's try it with our theme. First, by the word *sin* I mean simply a positive (1 John 3:4) or a negative (James 4:17) violation of God's will; we usually call these sins of commission and omission. I am primarily concerned with the practice of sin. *Spirituality* is more difficult, but the meaning I intend in this article is "the state of being spiritual." *Spiritual*, in turn, refers to "things that have their origin with God, and which, therefore are in harmony with His character" (Vine). Pertaining to persons, it means those "in Christ who walk so as to please God" (Vine), or those who are "filled with and governed by the Spirit of God" (Thayer).

Given these definitions, it is easy to see how sin kills spirituality. It is opposed to the character and will of God, and it causes saints to walk so as *not* to please God—not to be "filled with and governed by the Spirit of God." In fact, sin produces carnality, the opposite of spirituality (1 Corinthians 3:1). But let's be more specific.

The spiritual person will long to bear in his life the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. But the practice of sin will negate all of these qualities and produce instead the works of the flesh: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revellies, and the like (Galatians 5:19-23). Did you notice that this list includes not just actions but attitudes as well? That is where carnality starts.

Besides the fruit of the Spirit, several other things in Scripture are said to be spiritual. Spirituality demands the proper appreciation for these. (1) God has a spiritual house, which is the church (1 Peter 2:5). (2) Christians are lively stones in that house to offer up spiritual sacrifices. (3) Their food is the spiritual meat of obedience unto God

(John 4:32-34). (4) Being filled with the Spirit, not wine, they will offer up spiritual songs to God (Ephesians 5:19). (5) They will relish and be motivated by the spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). (6) They will place the highest value in life on spiritual things, rather than physical or material ones (1 Corinthians 9:11; Romans 15:27). Do you see what the practice of sin would do to the Christian's attitude toward these spiritual realities?

The carnal person will despise all of them, though he may continue to go through the motions of service to God (1 Timothy 3:5). Are spirituality and

too inferior and too sickened to cope with sin. He has no self-control, and will not avail himself of the aid of Christ by which he might accomplish all things (Philippians 4:13).

Sin kills the love for lost people and the desire to restore fallen saints. That is a job for spiritual people (Galatians 6:1). The only sinner who tries to save other sinners is a hypocrite (Matthew 7:1-5), and we've already noted what hypocrisy does to spirituality, haven't we?

Sin kills the desire to worship God. Just as my children try to avoid me when they have misbehaved, so sinners try to avoid God's presence. They find no joy

"Just as my children try to avoid me when they have misbehaved, so sinners try to avoid God's presence. They find no joy or comfort in prayer. Their songs have a hollow ring. The Lord's Supper palls, and giving is out of the question. God is the Supreme Spirit; denying Him adoration is deadly to spirituality."

religiosity the same thing? Of course not! Religion without spirituality is hypocrisy, which almost by definition, does not seek spiritual rewards and blessings. The hypocrite seeks the praises of men (Matthew 6:2,5,16). Little wonder that hypocrisy stifles spirituality.

Sin kills the love of God's word. I read a story once about a man whose face was scarred so badly by a fire that he could not bear to look into a mirror and see his ugliness. Even so, sinners cannot bear to look into God's mirror for the soul.

Sin kills spirituality by destroying self-respect, which leaves the sinner feeling

or comfort in prayer. Their songs have a hollow ring. The Lord's Supper palls, and giving is out of the question. God is the Supreme Spirit; denying Him adoration is deadly to spirituality.

Living in sin destroys spirituality—but even worse, eventually, it destroys the sinner himself. The terrible irony of sin is that it promises great pleasure but gives only death. The sinner self-destructs. The ancient sage of God urged his son not to join up with sinners in these words: "But they lie in wait for their own blood, They lurk secretly for their own lives" (Proverbs 1:18).

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TRUE SPIRITUALITY

Developing Intimacy With God

Roland Lewis

IS GOD YOUR FATHER? IS HE REAL AND close, or a misty phantom far removed from your daily life? He is so deeply interested in you personally that every morning He recalculates the number of hairs in your head (Matthew 10:30). Nothing that concerns you is too small for His full attention. You are never out of His sight or out of His mind. He never turns His back on you. In an individual and special sense each of us is an "apple of His eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalm 17:8; Zechariah 2:8).

The more you understand the fondness of God's affection for you personally, the easier it is to believe He cares for you as a devoted mother does her first-born infant for whom she has prayed longingly (Isaiah 66:13). God rejoices at our successes and cherishes us even as the grandparent He described in Proverbs 17:6: "Children's children are the crown of old men."

Truly God is our Father. Even as He breathed His own breath of life into Adam, He also put in us a part of Himself, the part that will never die! We are part God (John 10:34f)! Is it any wonder He truly loves each of us individually, and jealously wants to make us Christ's joint-heirs of heaven with all its blessings? Moreover, *joy of joys*, we do not have to wait until we get to heaven! In this life also He hungers for us to let Him open up the windows of heaven and shower His blessings upon us (Malachi 3:10) even to a hundred-fold more than we can give up for Him and His "little ones" (Mark 10:29; Matthew 25:40,45).

Success in God's family requires communication just as much as success in any earthly family. Talking with God needs to be natural and satisfying. In a favorite scene of mine from "Fiddler On the Roof," Tevye walks along with his hand on his horse's bridle talking aloud to the horse about his daughter's marriage. Then he talks to God in the same tone, then to his horse again. Neither God nor the horse responds audibly, but his conversation with one is as relaxed, as natural and as informal as with the other.

What does one say when he talks with his Father? Whatever he wants to say! "God, I don't know what to ask for concerning Granny because I don't know what is best. Maybe she should get well. If You want her to, I surely do, too, and I hope You will make her well, but if You know it is best for her not to get well, please keep her from suffering. I surely hope You are willing for her to get totally well soon."

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Can't you just hear Enoch talking with God as he walked along plowing or looking for a stray lamb? "Please God, help me find that lamb before dark." I like the way a child told his teacher about Enoch when she asked, "God and Enoch just walked and walked until God said, 'Enoch, we are closer to my house than we are to yours. You just come go home with me,' and Enoch did."

The story is told about a heavenly tour guide showing a new arrival all the mansions and jewels of heaven. They came to a huge silver castle, much larger than any of the other buildings. He asked what it was, but the guide said he did not really want to know and he should never go in there. His curiosity was so great that before the tour was over he slipped away and ran into the building. The guide saw him entering and followed. His curiosity increased when he saw huge stacks of storage crates along aisles arranged by years. He hurried to the 1983 aisle and found names in alphabetical order. His own name was on an enormous box full of beautifully-wrapped packages. The guide explained that those were "blessings" God had wanted to give him on earth but because he had not prayed for them God could not give them to him.

Christians do not request enough from God. He is complimented and honored every time you ask for His help. That tells Him you really believe He can do what you ask and that He will do it if it is good for you. He is waiting and hoping you will ask.

Do you ever wonder why God wants us to ask? Suppose He should give me everything He wants me to have without my asking, then I will never know they came from Him. If I ask Him for what I want, and He gives it, then I know the power of prayer and who to thank. Personally, I have reached the place with God that when something good happens that I forgot to ask for, I quickly thank Him for it so He will know I know where it came from, and that I appreciate it.

God is our *Father*—a loving, caring, generous Father, who has unlimited power and willingness to do for us whatever we need, and much of what we want, if we will but cultivate that closeness, love Him as He wants us to, and let Him be a *very present* part of our daily lives.

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That's Life!



Dee Bowman

LOCAL CHURCHES, LIKE PEOPLE, HAVE LIVES. They are born, grow up, and die. In between there is periodic sickness and health, joy and sorrow, even sometimes a moment of glory.

* * *

I FLEW BACK TO HOUSTON FROM TAMPA, FLORIDA recently on an air carrier whose parent company was having considerable trouble. There was talk of bankruptcy and a strike was already in progress. There was general unrest and low morale among its employees. I noticed a young stewardess doing her job in a very efficient manner, apparently oblivious to all the hard times of her airline. She was courteous, smiling, obliging, interested. I commented on her excellent deportment. "I work, sir, because I care," she said. "I am here because I want to be." Does that say anything to you? It sure did to me!

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL, April 13, 1983: "Discouragement is a disease, a gnawing, spreading disease. People who are afflicted with it cannot see well. Their thoughts are permeated with negatives, a fact seen in their lack of attention even to important matters. Discouragement has robbed many a church of its life-blood by sapping its enthusiasm. Its victims are not just the poor and ignorant, but the talented and prominent as well. When I confront it I am faced with a formidable foe and I shudder at the thought of my obligations toward eradicating it. It is hard to see and is thus difficult to strike at. Its stratagem is subtle. Its many clandestine faces are difficult to distinguish. I do not want to fight with it, but I must. And with the same power which was the strength by which David overcame the Gathian, I shall attack it! And be it my discouragement or that of some church, I shall overcome it, for God is my helper,

my strength, and my life! Shrink discouragement! Get thee hence! There is no room for you here!"

* * *

A TRUE FRIEND IS A GRAND POSSESSION and should be appreciated with expressions of love and thankfulness. Diogenes Laertius relates of Aristotle that when asked what is a friend, he answered, "One soul in two bodies." If you have a true friend, you have a valuable thing. I like a quote used by G. Campbell Morgan: "Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them all right out just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away." Have you said thank you to a friend lately?

* * *

I AM TERRIBLY IMPRESSED WITH THE YOUNG PREACHERS we have scattered around the country. They seem to me to have good foundations, spacious vision, a youthful exuberance which has been tempered with close consideration of the gravity of their mission. When I see fellows like David Crawford, Chuck Durham, Marty Pickup, Tom Hamilton, Harry Osborne—fellows still in their twenties, but with fine maturity, an excellent attitude, and immense talent—I am almost envious of their great start. No, brethren, we're not "drying up on the vine," as some have said. We are just beginning to wade out of the negative attitudes and stunting dispositions of the last generation and get going again. And these young preachers, and a host of young Christians who will be elders and deacons (and their wives) will take the torch and carry it bravely and with honor. I salute the young preachers!

The Content and Structure of Revelation (I)

L. A. Mott, Jr.

Added to the decision regarding the right way to read Revelation (see article in January, 1984 issue) and due attention to the time element in the book (see February, 1984), a third insight which has opened some doors to this book for me relates to its structure.

The time references in Revelation prove that almost the whole of the action of the book—right up to the

thousand years (20:1-6). The persecutions would last for three and a half years. Then the enemies of the church would fall and the martyrs would reign for a thousand years.

An examination of the literary structure of Revelation reinforces this impression with regard to the time span of Revelation initially created by the time references of the book. In other

warning and preparing them for the coming crisis (chapters 2-3). Then come the visions of God on the throne (chapter 4) and of the crucified Christ then taking a book from the hand of God in order to bring its contents to pass (chapter 5).

This book contains God's purpose relating to the complete establishment of the kingdom of God and the putting down of the enemies that have arisen against the divine government—an explanation established by what happens when the book is opened (chapters 6-11) and especially the goal toward which the action is directed (10:7 & 11:15-19). The book was sealed with seven seals. As the seals are broken, things begin to happen. The first four reveal forces operating in the world under the control of Christ (6:1-8); the fifth, the cry of the martyrs for judgment on their enemies (6:9-11); the sixth, an anticipation of that judgment (6:12-17). Two consolatory visions provide reassurance for the servants of God in view of the terrible forces to be turned loose on the world (chapter 7).

The fifth and sixth seals have made us look for a vindication of the blood of the martyrs (6:9-11) and judgment on their enemies (6:12-17). But when the seventh seal is loosed and the book stands fully opened, judgment becomes a long drawn-out affair with a series of trumpets signaling various plagues affecting those dwelling on the earth, but from which God's servants are exempt (chapters 8-9). John is given a new commission to proclaim the consummation of God's purpose at the seventh trumpet (chapter 10). The experience of Christ must be repeated in His witnesses (11:1-13), but when the seventh trumpet sounds the cry of the martyrs is answered and judgment comes upon their enemies (11:14-19).

This sketch ought to show that the trumpets are included in the sealed book (chapter 5) and the trumpets begin to sound when the book is fully opened.

(Continued next month.)

"The time references in Revelation prove that almost the whole of the action of the book—right up to the binding of Satan (20:1-3)—takes place within a relatively short period that was not far in the future when John wrote. I do not insist on taking the numbers literally. Perhaps they are intended for comparative purposes . . . The structure of Revelation also suggests that the book deals with events falling into a relatively brief time span."

binding of Satan (20:1-3)—takes place within a relatively short period that was not far in the future when John wrote. I do not insist on taking the numbers literally. Perhaps they are intended for comparative purposes—"a little time" (6:11), forty-two months (11:2;13:5), twelve hundred and sixty days (11:3;12:6), three and a half years (12:14), "a short time" (12:12) as opposed to a

words, the structure of Revelation also suggests that the book deals with events falling into a relatively brief time span rather than action spread over a long period.

The book begins with a vision of the glorified Christ commissioning John to write to the seven churches of Asia (1:9-20). This commission is followed by messages to each of the seven churches,

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength, because of thine adversaries, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger" (8:2).

God Stills the Enemy

It is hard to conceive of strength coming from a weak "babe and suckling," but in the hands of God it can be so. Through the centuries the enemies of God have fought against Him—but they have lost every skirmish. God has always used the weak to confound the strong, the ignorant to baffle the wise. And the psalmist here says that the honor of God's name is so secure that He is content to let the defense of it be committed to babes. We understand that infants can and do speak eloquent and simple praise of God with their lips—and this is all the "stronghold" that God's honor needs.

This verse of Scripture is full of hyperbole, telling us that unbiased and uncorrupted minds—those that are simple like a child's—have no trouble whatsoever recognizing God through His creation (see the more familiar verse one). And whatever an "enemy and revengeful person" may say by way of a bitter attack upon the dignity of God's name—still, in the eyes of all impartial observers, the enemies of God are put to silence by the simplicity of every little child who praises God.

It is interesting (and helpful to the meaning of this verse) that Jesus used this passage in Matthew 21:16. The setting for His use of it is found in 21:12-17, where He entered into the temple and cast out the money-changers. Then the blind and the lame came to Him and He healed them. The chief priests and scribes complained, but the *children* cried out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" Jesus said, "Did ye never read, Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?" The children were praising Him, while the learned leaders of the Jews were despising and rejecting. How ironic! So, the Savior took these words of the psalmist, applied them to His adversaries, and by them "stilled the enemy."

Isn't it amazing how the grace of God appears so wonderfully in young children? Jesus extolled the humility and receptivity of the mind of the child in Matthew 18:3-4: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." We all need the attitude of the little child who has no trouble discovering and accepting God. Isn't it wondrous how God uses the voice of praise by the small child to answer the cries of the skeptic? It is all the "strength" He needs.

The Bible demonstrates time and again that God can take something weak and by it "still the enemy." The apostles were weak, but strong. "Now when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and had perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it" (Acts 4:13-14). Look at that; the enemy and avenger was stilled!

Even though the apostles were considered by their contemporaries as but babes—unschooled and illiterate—God was able to penetrate and finally destroy the devil's kingdom by the preaching of their gospel, even as He was able to crumble the walls of Jericho by the sound of ram's horns. It is no wonder that the gospel is called "the arm of the Lord" and "the rod of his strength" (Isaiah 53:1; Psalm 110:1-2). It is certainly true that "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings (God) has established strength." God ordained that this preached gospel would work wonders—not out of the mouths of philosophers or politicians, orators or statesmen—but from the lips of a company of poor fishermen and tax collectors.

Paul says it this way: "God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). What a God we have—one who can establish strength out of the mouths of babes and sucklings to still the enemy and the avenger! Glory to His name!

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol.1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Woman's World

Woman — An Exalted Creature

Ruth Thompson

God in His infinite wisdom made a "place" for every thing in His creation, and a "thing" for every place in His creation. In order for a business to operate smoothly and successfully, each cog in that machine must not only fill its place, but must function properly.

In the realm of nature, because it operates solely under God's direction, we can see the beauty and harmony of His wisdom. It is only in the realm of human relations that this harmony begins to crumble. Why is it that man, though the highest of God's creation, has

creation! It is too bad that she wants to throw away her only hope of happiness in this world, along with her only hope of being with God eternally.

Just note a few Biblical examples of the exalted position of woman:

Eve, the mother of all living, the creation of God as the *only* fit help for Adam. As we find in Genesis 2:18, Eve was given a position so exalted that henceforth man would leave his parents and cleave to the woman through life.

Sarah, the matriarch of the Jewish nation, the "freewoman" of Galatians

her homeland and family because of her love and devotion to her mother-in-law, Naomi. Without Ruth, Naomi would have remained a bitter, disappointed woman. With her, she was counted in the lineage of Christ.

Esther, a beautiful Jewish girl, who with other Jews was captive in Babylon. Esther became queen, wife of King Ahasuerus, and because of her love and respect for her uncle, Mordecai, she brought about the change in an edict which was to have obliterated the entire Jewish nation.

The "worthy woman" of Proverbs 31:10-31 beautifully illustrates the qualities and role God intended for woman. The "worthy woman" not only knew but accepted this role, so that it could be said of her (verse 29), "many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

And then, of course, the crowning example of all womanhood, Mary, the mother of Jesus the Christ. Through a woman—one who knew her role in life and who was faithful and obedient to God—was the promise of a Messiah brought about.

Now contrast these fine examples with those of other women of the Bible who might come to mind, women who chose to step out of the role God has planned for woman. The one example that epitomizes all others is that of Jezebel, the wicked wife of Ahab, King of Israel. It seemed to be a delight to her to do all the wrong things. She caused her husband, Ahab, to be even more wicked than he might otherwise have been. And what he couldn't accomplish in vileness she found a way to perform. How apt it was that John, in the Revelation, should use this vile woman's name to describe the wickedness in the church at Thyatira.

How simple our lives will be if we will accept our roles as women! Our homes will be harmonious, our lives will be a blessing to all, and our own feelings of inadequacy will be dissipated in a triumph of fulfillment!

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"Psychiatrists tell us that the hardest part of their work is getting people to accept themselves . . . I suspect that women seem to have the hardest problem of all. For many years they have wanted to usurp man's realm . . . Woman has such a beautiful role to play in God's plans for His creation!"

a tendency to want to usurp the plan God gave for harmony? If all performed their designated roles, complete harmony would prevail here also.

Psychiatrists tell us that the hardest part of their work is getting people to accept themselves and to deal with their problems accordingly. I suspect that women seem to have the hardest problem of all. For many years they have wanted to usurp man's realm, and this tendency has become increasingly dangerous. Woman has such a beautiful role to play in God's plans for His

4:22, whom God chose to represent the church and the new covenant in an allegory.

Rahab, who hid God's servants at Jericho and helped where she could in achieving God's plan for His chosen people. Joshua relates the story of her bravery that saved the lives of her family and won for her a place in the chronology of the faithful in Hebrews eleven.

The beautiful little book of Ruth tells us about a woman who cared, whose traits of character caused her to leave

Mining The Scriptures

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

The Sermon on the Mount

Beatitudes: "Nothing Succeeds Like Failure"

Perhaps there is no better statement of the message of the beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) than G. K. Chesterton's curious little maxim, "Nothing succeeds like failure." Of course, Jesus was not speaking of real failure even as Chesterton was not, but of what men have conventionally viewed as failure. The cross was certainly a colossal disaster by every conventional standard. It only seems "right" to many of us now because we have acquiesced in nineteen hundred years of well-established tradition. It is not so remarkable then that a kingdom destined to be hoisted to power on a cross should be full of surprises and that Jesus should say that only those who were apparent failures had any hope of its blessedness. In the following beatitudes the Savior makes very clear that the kingdom of heaven belongs, not to the full, but to the empty.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit" (5:3). Jesus begins by touching the wellspring of the character of the kingdom citizen—his attitude toward himself in the presence of God. Luke abbreviates this beatitude to, "Blessed are ye poor" (6:20) and records also a woe pronounced by Jesus upon the rich (6:24). In the synagogue at Nazareth Jesus had read Isaiah's messianic prophecy of the poor "meek," (ASV) having the gospel preached to them (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18) and was later to soberly warn that the rich would not come easily into the kingdom (Luke 18:24-25). But while it is true that "the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37) because the rigors of the poor bring them to humility more easily than does the comfortable affluence of the rich, Matthew's account of the sermon makes evident that Jesus is not speaking of economic poverty. It is not impossible for the poor to be arrogant nor for the rich to be humble. These "poor" are those who, possessing little or much, have a sense of their own spiritual destitution.

The Greek word here translated "poor" comes from a root word which means to crouch or to cringe. It refers not simply to those for whom life is a struggle, but to men who are reduced to the most abject begging because they have absolutely nothing (Luke 16:20-21). Here it is applied to the sinful emptiness of an absolute spiritual bankruptcy in which a person is compelled to plead for that which he is powerless to obtain (Jeremiah 10:23) and to which he has no right (Luke 15:18-19; 18:13), but without which he cannot live. Begging comes hard to men (Luke 16:3)—especially proud, self-reliant Americans—but that is where our sinful ways have brought us

and we will not see the kingdom of heaven until we face up to this reality with humble simplicity.

"Blessed are they that mourn" (5:4). Men have been brought up to believe that tears must be avoided if they are to be happy. Jesus simply says that this is not true. There is some sorrow which must be embraced, not because it is inescapable and the struggle futile but because true happiness is impossible without it.

Even grief that is unavoidable to mortal men whatever their station can have salutary effects on our lives if we allow it to. It can, as Solomon says, remind us of the wispy momentariness of our lives and set us to thinking seriously about the most important things (Ecclesiastes 7:2-4). The psalmist who gave us such a rich meditation on the greatness of God's law has linked pain and understanding. "Before I was afflicted," he reflected, "I went astray; but now I observe thy word." He then concludes, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I may learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:67,71). Tears have always taught us more than has laughter about life's verities.

But there is something more to the mourning in this gem-like paradox than the tears we cannot escape, the sorrow that comes unbidden and unsought. This grief comes to us by choice, not necessity. The Old Testament should influence our understanding of these words first spoken to a Jewish audience. Isaiah foresaw that the Lord's anointed would come to "bind up the brokenhearted" and "comfort all that mourn" (61:1-2). But these words applied only to a remnant of Israel which would come through the nation's affliction for its sins, humbled and grieved. Ezekiel's vision of God's wrath on a corrupt Jerusalem revealed that only those "that sigh and . . . cry over all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof" are to be spared (9:4-6). Zephaniah issued a similar warning (3:11-13,18).

The prophets would have us understand this mourning as the grief experienced by those who in their reverence for God are horrified by their own sins and those of their fellows, and are moved to tears of bitter shame and grief. This is the "godly sorrow" of which Paul writes, a sorrow that "works repentance unto salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). These are the tears we must choose to shed, renouncing our stubborn pride; and out of that choice will come the unspeakable comfort of a God who forgives us all, takes us to Himself, and will ultimately wipe all tears away (Revelation 21:4). Nothing save God's mercy can assuage a grief like this.

(To be continued.)

And Then Some...



Brent Lewis

Coals of fire in his ear?

The August, 1983 issue of the Southwestern Bell newsletter, *Telephone Talk*, carried an interesting little story on the front page.

It seems that a Houston customer had been bothered by a series of obscene phone calls that lasted, off and on, for over three years. If you live in a big city, you are probably well aware of the problem.

She finally struck upon a novel way to deal with the caller. "One night, as soon as I heard his voice, it dawned upon me what to do. I started reciting the Lord's Prayer. He listened all the way to the 'amen,' then quietly hung up and has never called back."

About a year later, she began receiving calls from a second heckler. This time, she said, "I got as far as 'hallowed be thy name' before he hung up." This one called back fifteen minutes later, and she started in once more. He immediately hung up and has not called back again, though it has been several months.

You know, she may really have something there. As she said, "I guess he figured that if he was going to get prayed at, he wouldn't bother."

Thinking About The Sermon

One Sunday morning the preacher got up in the pulpit and apologized for the Band-Aid on his face. He said, "I was thinking about my sermon while shaving and cut my face." Afterward he found a note in the collection plate. It said, "Next time think about your face and cut the sermon."

A Four-Letter Word

The worst four-letter word in the world today is not one that I cannot refer to on television or radio or in print, but it is a word that is used constantly: *SELF*. The primary cause of injustice, the primary cause of divorce, the primary cause of failure toward our children, the primary cause of failure toward God is *SELF*-glorification.

—Selected

Church By Mail

I knew that somebody was trying to get into my back pocket as soon as I took the envelope out of the mailbox. Did any of you get a letter from "Rev. Ewing's Church by Mail" of Atlanta, Georgia?

The letter said that "the Holy Spirit laid your address on our hearts," but I was pretty sure that a commercial direct-mail company laid a list on his desk since it was addressed to "occupant" by a computer on a carrier-route pre-sort label. Now, I know that "God works in a mysterious way"—but I don't believe He has (p)resorted to a computer, has He?

Anyway, all I had to do was return the postage-free postcard and Rev. Ewing would send me a "beautiful Golden Prosperity Cross." Then he gave a fantastic "testimony" about a woman who was having financial problems, the FHA foreclosed on her mortgage, she was eleven payments behind, she got one of the crosses and God blessed her with \$7,500!

They stress time and again that all they want to do is pray for you. But I have the feeling that once somebody returns one of the cards the only prayer they may pray goes: "Thank you, Lord—there's a sucker born every minute!"

To The Management

"He's got the whole world in His hands."

And now, Lord, You have my problems:

My seemingly insoluble problems which I have been worrying over incessantly, my own million-dollar, twenty-four carat problems and I leave them with You.

If You can keep the earth revolving

if You can keep the galaxies in place

if You can supervise creation I guess you can manage

my problems.

—Alex Beale

God's Providence

Dr. John Witherspoon was a great American and a very religious man. He was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and President of the College of New Jersey which later became Princeton. He lived about two miles from the college and drove over in his buggy each day.

One morning a neighbor came excitedly into his study and said, "Dr. Witherspoon, you must join me in giving thanks to God for His providence in saving my life. As I was driving this morning the horse ran away and the buggy was smashed to pieces on the rocks, but I escaped unharmed."

"Why," answered Dr. Witherspoon, "I can tell you a far more remarkable providence than that. I have driven over that road hundreds of times. My horse never ran away, my buggy was never smashed, I was never hurt. God's providence has been for me even more remarkable than it has been for you."

The Law of Small Potatoes

Many years ago, the Chinese farmers theorized that they could eat their big potatoes and keep the small potatoes for seed. Consequently, they ate the big potatoes and planted the small potatoes. As a result of this practice for many years, the Chinese farmers made a startling discovery: nature had reduced all their potatoes to the size of marbles.

A new understanding of the law of life came to these farmers. They learned through bitter experience that they could not have the best things of life for themselves and use the leftovers for seed. The law of life decreed that the harvest would reflect the planting.

In another sense, planting small potatoes is still a common practice. We take the big things of life for ourselves and plant the leftovers. We expect that by some crazy twist of spiritual laws our selfishness will be rewarded with unselfishness. But we cannot eat the big potatoes and have them, too!

What size potatoes have you been planting spiritually? "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

The Secret Ballot

A peasant in a Communist country went to the polls on election day and was handed a sealed envelope to drop into the ballot box. He began to tear the envelope open, but an official shouted, "What do you think you are doing?"

The peasant said he wanted to see for whom he was voting.

"Are you crazy?" exclaimed the official. "This is a secret ballot."

DON'T MISS THE UPCOMING ISSUES!

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Misconceptions About Grace—*Patrick Farish*

People Problems

Dee Bowman

Problems with "things" are really not too difficult to solve — but it's an entirely different matter with people problems. Here are some thoughts to help you recognize where these problems originate.

Problems with "things" are really not too difficult to solve. If we have problems with the drain we call the plumber. If we encounter some difficulty with the wiring we call an electrician. And while these and other similar problems are often perplexing and annoying, they seldom are the kind that bring discouragement, depression or bitterness.

It's an entirely different matter with people problems. Even the very smallest people problem seems to loom large in our minds, often causing mushrooming

than himself" (Philippians 2:3) just might be one of the most difficult of all commands to obey. But only as we develop the "lowliness of mind" assigned in the same enjoiner can we be pleasing to God and maintain good relationships among ourselves. Most people-related problems have some sort of connection to pride. And it impresses me that I have rarely seen what I would rightly describe as a "one-sided" problem. In almost every problem both parties feel that their pride has been trampled and their

you" is a tacit admission that we seek the best for ourselves. But how inordinate we become with our "selves." Self-justification replaces self-evaluation if we are not careful. Self-promotionalism is far more apparent in most lives than is self-devaluation. And self-gratification is far more important to most than is self-control. Until we are able to manage ourselves, we will continue to have problems with people, because they'll be in our way!

Many difficulties among people arise because of opinions. Not because opinions are wrong *per se*—they are necessary to progress—but because of improper emphasis. Most of us hold our opinions at the same level as our faith. We hold them with the same determination as we do definitive truth. But we must learn that opinions fall far short of being provable propositions and as such they cannot be legitimately promoted with the same intensity as we would some fact of truth. If we could learn not to push our opinions on others we would quickly solve a lot of people problems.

And how many problems among people can be traced back to an improper use of the tongue? I know a lady who built a bridle for her husband's tongue. And while it was done in jest, we should all have one. But don't rush out and try to market such a product, for no one will buy it! We don't want it! It imposes heavy requirements—hard to bear, difficult to fulfill—having to bridle one's tongue. A man can be sure of his spiritual maturity only when he has learned that "there is a time to speak and a time to remain silent," and has so disciplined his mouth that he is able to know the difference. In controlling the tongue we eliminate many people problems and at the same time preclude starting new ones.

Let us be careful of one another. Let us love one another. Let us seek one another's benefit. Let us help one another. Just because we are people does not mean we have to have problems.

"Most people-related problems have some sort of connection to pride. And it impresses me that I have rarely seen what I would rightly describe as a 'one-sided' problem. In almost every problem both parties feel that their pride has been trampled and their self-respect demeaned."

exaggerations and seething emotional contemplations which even tend toward vengeance and retaliation. An almost insignificant and sometimes unintentional word can send our minds on a mental mission which is calculated to inflict everything from verbal abuses to bodily harm. Yes, people problems are a test of our spiritual maturity and with it our patience, wisdom and true love.

One of the most common people problems is pride. I know of few of us who could not do with somewhat less pride. "Let each of us esteem other better

self-respect demeaned. When we become mature enough to allow both self-esteem and compassionate empathy to exist side by side, we will have found the solution to many people problems.

Then there is the problem of selfishness. It is a prime contributor to people problems. Every man, you see, has one—a self, that is—and it takes little or no training to convince him to care for it dutifully. In fact, the desire for self-preservation is at the base of what we describe as the "Golden Rule." "Do unto others as you would have them do unto

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Glenn Jones — Kiel, West Germany

Some men are uniquely qualified for the work they undertake in life. Glenn Jones, gospel preacher in Kiel, West Germany is one of these.

The strong faith that impels him dwelt first in his godly parents and grandparents. An outstanding German student in high school, he early combined his growing knowledge of that language with his study of God's word, bringing his German Bible with him to the services to follow the lessons. This is a commendable practice for any Christian studying a foreign language.

Studying accounting in college, Glenn demonstrated the keen disciplined mind which appeals to intelligent people of any nation, but particularly Germany. After two years at Florida College, he entered the University of Tennessee and was active in the West Knoxville Church. During this time he made a conscious and orderly investigation of all he had been taught in his youth, making sure that his convictions were based on God's word rather than tradition. He emerged from the university a stronger Christian than before, his hand firmly grasping the hand of the Lord.

Though planning a career in the Diplomatic Service, Glenn spent a summer working with the church then meeting in Framingham, Massachusetts. A similar period of work with the church in Fair Lawn, New Jersey convinced him that he would like to spend his life in gospel work and a visit to Dudley Spears in Germany convinced him that, with his knowledge of the German language, it was there that he should work. Marriage to Angelika Biedermann, an intelligent young German lady converted in the U.S. and serving as nurse at Florida College, completed his remarkable qualifications for preaching in Germany. Not only has she helped him with the language and culture of the German people, but she has also served as an effective teacher in her own right.

Converting souls to Christ in modern Germany is a very difficult task, especially for an American. Resistance to Americans has been largely overcome by becoming a German to Germans, but indifference to the gospel has been harder to deal with. His success, even in this, has been noteworthy.

A lesson learned in Massachusetts has served Glenn well. Realizing that New Englanders were noted for their skepticism, he went well armed with stock arguments for the inspiration of the scriptures and against modern unbelief. He quickly realized, however, that the arguments he had prepared did not reach most of the people

where they were. Faith, he found, did not come from scientific discussions of evolution or historical arguments based on archaeological evidence, but "by hearing the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Consequently, he developed a method of teaching which involves reading through the books of Luke and Acts and letting the Holy Spirit produce faith in His own chosen way. Glenn tells about it in his own words:

"We request a contact to read a gospel account (usually Luke) together with us in five or six sittings in order to note his reactions to the text during the reading and his final assessment of the whole at the end of the gospel. This is designed to be an introduction to the Bible for those thousands of Germans whose Biblical knowledge is extremely weak, and not a detailed exegesis for those already familiar with its contents. For some reason this method appeals to a wider range of Germans than previously tried methods of teaching.

"The fact that we come with the Bible, as opposed to our own study outlines, and that we ask for their considered opinion helps diminish the fear that we are trying to push some American sectarian system down their throats. This method causes the reader to reason with the Biblical text itself; and consequently, the reactions are directed to what the Bible teaches and not to what I personally believe. This helps avoid a spirit of conflict at the outset in which we are debating each other instead of investigating what Jesus taught."

Glenn and Angelika have now been working in Germany for nine years. The first five were discouraging, due in part to the location of their work, but they have not looked back. When it was evident that about all that was possible had been done in Bad Kreuznach, they made the decision to move to Kiel where no known effort had ever been made to establish the New Testament church. The past year there has been the most fruitful of their years in Germany. Laboring on with their faithful American co-workers, Gary and Kathy Martin, they hope that their increased experience and God's blessings on seed already sown will see an even greater harvest in 1984. Let us join them in prayer to that end. (Their address is: Ekener Platz 8, D-2300 Kiel 17, West Germany.)

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

Holiday Inning It

Last summer some of my friends noted that my behavior, always somewhat unpredictable, turned even more bizarre. I suddenly seemed to have a fixation on Holiday Inns. I juggled motel reservations and on one occasion ended up preaching in Paragould and staying twenty-five miles away at the Holiday Inn in Jonesboro.

The explanation for this aberrant behavior was that I have been participating in Holiday Inn's premium program which is called "Priority Club." If you collect 75 points (which is nearly impossible for normal people), you get two free tickets on Pan Am and a week's free lodging at any Holiday Inn in the world.

When I read about the program, my mind was flooded with images of the Scottish

countryside. I love Scotland—better than any place else in the world besides the United States. When the mist boils off the wild North Sea and blankets that cold and brooding coast, I can feel my roots going down. I love the golf courses, the weathered, garrulous people, the golf courses, the lonely castles, and the golf courses. I thumbed through my book and found a Holiday Inn in Aberdeen.

Last summer I went to work in earnest when Holiday Inn offered double points all summer for rooms with double occupancy. I begged someone in my family to go with me on meetings so I could get double points. Sometimes I invited local people to stay with me in a double room. I ended up spending the night with people I didn't particularly like so that I could get double points.

The good news is that in

April Deedie and I are off to Aberdeen. Because I have also earned a Delta Airlines premium, my daughter and son-in-law are going with us. And I'm already collecting points for next time. So, be careful, I'm liable to ask you to stay with me in a Holiday Inn.

Now, the moral of this story, of course, has to do with goal setting. If there is a prize we want, all of us know how to single-mindedly go after it. Which is why the Scriptures urge us to "set your affections on things above" (Colossians 3:1). Our goals determine our actions.

Heaven is surely where I want to go. More than Scotland. Its appeal is indescribable. There is a story of an American frontier preacher in the virgin bluegrass region of Kentucky who tried to explain to his listeners the grandeur of heaven with the pronounce-

ment: "Heaven is a Kaintuck of a place." It's more than that. It is a realm of glistening purity, of infinite wisdom, of unending companionship with the Creator.

Heaven is a premium well worth working for. I'm trying to collect all the points I can. Be careful, I'm liable to ask you to go along with me.

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**RESTORING
N. T. CHRISTIANITY**
THEME EDITOR: Ed Harrell

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Razor Straps and Restoration

The bathroom was a special place when I was growing up. Not so much because it was there that we learned and practiced personal hygiene, but mainly because that's where the razor strap hung. The razor strap was the scepter of my Dad's authority. It hung on a nail just to the left of the medicine cabinet and just the sight of it was enough to strike fear in a little boy's heart.

Mind you, the razor strap didn't have to do anything in order to be effective. Just the fact that we were acquainted with what it *could* do was a sufficient deterrent. Actually, the sound of the strap on the posterior regions of a little boy's anatomy was more startling than painful and just the sight of it being removed from its prominent place in the throne room was reason enough to tune up with short staccato whimpers for what was to become in just a few seconds a full-blown outcry.

I'm sure the razor strap served very well the need for which it was originally intended—to strop the straight-edge razor's sharp edge to a fine hone. But my recollections of the twin-strapped leather bands have nothing at all to do with whiskers and clean-shaven faces. It is still today a majestic symbol of discipline, that rare and mostly forgotten attribute so necessary to order and accomplishment. It represents to me honor and honesty, right and conscience, the necessity of truth and integrity, all those things which allow us to live life without fear and without an accusing conscience.

Discipline is involved in restoration. It was the failure of the early church leaders to be disciplined by a "thus saith the Lord" that brought about the need for restoration in the first place. If the first leaders had been properly disciplined by the doctrines of the gospel there would have been no deviation and thus no need for a restoration. The discipline of the New Testament precedent relating to self-government for each church was very early sacrificed to the pride of the leaders. This failure of the early Christians to subscribe to a "thus saith the Lord" philosophy brought about power disputes, struggles for both personal and geographic supremacy, and eventually not only division, but rank immorality as well.

Personal discipline is the beginning of restoration. Restoration must begin with the individual, for it is

persons who are the object of restoration. We do not seek to restore some institution; we seek to bring people to God by exposing them to the power of the blood of Christ through the gospel. And any endeavor to merely emulate the New Testament church in organization or work or worship in preference to concentrating on restoring individuals to fellowship with God is not only illogical and non-scriptural, but doomed to certain failure. The primary function of any effort to restore New Testament Christianity must be to bring sinners to God.

Furthermore, we are not finished restoring the New Testament arrangement until we have first disciplined ourselves in accordance to those personal assignments in it. Just the fact that we look like the New Testament church in work, organization and worship is not enough; we must also mold the character the New Testament assigns. To the Ephesians, Paul said, "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:1ff). We are not New Testament Christians and thus have not restored New Testament Christianity until we have adopted these attitudes. The adoption of such attributes as "lowliness" (one's recognition of his worth without his connection to Christ), "meekness" (disciplined strength), "longsuffering" (constancy in well-doing), and "forbearing one another in love" (being willing to endure one another's faults) is a sure sign of a person's desire for a character which is disciplined by scripture and is thereby to be viewed as the purest form of restoration.

When we lose sight of the individual in restoration we have lost the point of the restoration. A movement that seeks merely to copy the work, worship and organization of the New Testament church without restoring at the same time the attitudes and dispositions which are assigned by the scriptures for the persons who comprise that called-out body restores only a lifeless form and brings no aid to mankind, nor glory to God. True restoration is accomplished when persons seek the true gospel and bring themselves into agreement with it. When people discipline themselves to the word of God, there is real restoration.

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Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 5235 94th St., Lubbock, TX 79424

On reaching the lost through Bible studies

Congratulations! The first issue of *Christianity Magazine* is beautiful. My heartiest best wishes for the future success of this needed contribution to "restoration literature."

The fine article by brother Berry Kercheville on "Getting A Class" [January, 1984, page 9] deserves a special "thank you." No single effort by Christians can effect more results than the personal touch of a Bible study in the comfort and informality of one's home!

For several years I have concentrated on short-term, specific, yet informal classes, where the questions and needs of the student are my foremost concern. I am convinced that the tendency to "teach the material" rather than to "teach the student" is a grave problem in our many past failures. More of us need to take advantage of what I choose to call the "one-shot approach" in teaching those who may not commit to a continuing study. When the message is delivered with fervor, conviction, and respect for the hearer (I cannot help but think of Paul's respect for the Athenians in Acts 17:22f), God will give the increase, as Berry correctly observes. Perhaps we are too concerned about our own personal victory in teaching to let God perform His Own work in His Own good time.

Royce P. Bell
Sparks, Nevada

Wonders about CM's response policy

It looks impressive and I am much in favor of positive Christianity, especially the Paul Andrews article [January, 1984, page 31]. Surely no one wants to see the paper given over to constant wranglings on every issue; however, I hope you will elaborate more regarding your policy here at the beginning. [See "Soundings," January, 1984, page 7. Ed.] Some papers will not print both sides of an issue, or their restrictions are so rigid it is virtually impossible to answer something that needs answering. Their attitude is, "You can respond to our 700-word article if you can do it in 150 words or less, if your response does not have a negative 'tone,' if

you don't mention names, etc."

Papers have power and one could not begin to reply adequately to a brotherhood publication that does not provide for balanced coverage. This would border on censorship (or "quarantine") of any who disagree. Such an editorship becomes unapproachable.

More could be said but I have reached my word limit. Godspeed to you in His Work.

Dick Blackford
Owensboro, Kentucky

As brother Blackford notes, magazines have many different policies and goals. We think that is good. While we agree that debate is sometimes a useful tool for teaching truth, our intent is to keep Christianity Magazine positive, constructive and profitable for those not well-versed in polemics. If the magazine wanders far afield, we welcome remonstrance. None of the editors imagines that he will agree with all that is published, but rather than wrangle, we have agreed to quit if serious differences arise.

Perhaps this "unapproachable" policy will seem somewhat more palatable if we renounce any intent to be—or willingness to be perceived as—"a brotherhood publication." The articles are the views of the writers, nothing more, and we shall be sorely disappointed if anyone imagines otherwise.

Ed Harrell, Editor

A worthy brother needs our help

As many of you know, several people have been left with financial difficulties as a result of the recent demise of the Religious Employees Association, a group insurance plan administered by Garrett-Street Associates of Madison, Tennessee.

Dale Hendricks, a fine young preacher and the son of Roger Hendricks, a well respected preacher among us, has been left with a huge debt as a result of the bankruptcy of the Tennessee firm. His total expenses not covered by the insurance he thought he had amounted to \$14,800.00. Of this amount he has been able to pay about \$4,000.00, leaving a balance of \$10,800.00.

It would be a fine thing if people every-

where could help Dale and his family through this hard time. It is hard enough that he has faced two surgeries (one for his wife, Judy; another for his young son, Chad), but how sad that after having paid in over \$3,600.00 in premiums, he has been able to collect nothing from it. Will you help?

Dale said to me, "Though we don't feel responsible for creating the problem, we are certainly responsible for the payment of these debts and are determined to pay them." I believe him to be entirely worthy of our help.

Brethren, "let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." If you can help, please send any amount to: Dale Hendricks, 716 S. 8th St., Nederland, Texas. You can call him at (409) 722-8331.

Dee Bowman
Pasadena, Texas

Kudos

My week has been brightened with the reception of *Christianity Magazine*. Stimulating, exciting, positive, edifying, thought-provoking and practical—all describe your first issue. I see great promise and potential for your paper. My sub is in and I am encouraging everyone I meet to subscribe.

Ken Welliever
Pinellas Park, Florida

Thank you for sending me the first issue of *Christianity Magazine*. The format is superb.

I had to read the very first issue the day I received it. I have already called and placed my order so as not to miss a single issue. . . I especially want to thank the four Editors in that you included an article written by a Christian woman.

Arthur E. Heineke
Pasadena, Texas

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Before the Beginning

I have recently preached a couple of sermons on Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It is a handy place to begin a study of the Bible. We are all intrigued by "beginnings," whether our own, our nation's, or, when we extend our minds to their limits, "the beginning."

But however much one ponders the beginning, there remains that itch on the periphery of our intellect, that maddening echo which keeps ringing—"what was before the beginning?" The human mind has an exquisite capacity to ask questions it cannot answer—a divine vision wrapped in a mortal shroud.

My mind was running on these questions not long ago while I was on a Delta flight to Tampa for a weekend meeting at North Boulevard. Tiring of thinking, I began to search for something to read. The selection was ghastly (by my tastes)—*Popular Mechanics*, *Business Week* and *Science*. I'm no mechanic or businessman and I have had a solemn aversion to science since struggling to "Ds" in Physics and Chemistry.

Just before I leaned back for a nap, however, I noted the line on the cover of the February issue of *Science* 84 which read, "Before the Big Bang: A Weird New Cosmology." "Eureka," I thought. "That is my sermon." I had been straining my brain dangerously close to the point of permanent injury trying to contemplate the pre-beginning and here was an article—a "weird" one to be sure—on the very subject. The magazine was impressive, slick, and it sold for two dollars. This was bound to be good stuff.

It was, after a fashion. Written so well that even scientific dummies could understand, the article told of the mathematical calculations of a bright young professor into the mechanics of the Big Bang. In the first two paragraphs the author pointedly dropped the names of Harvard, Stanford, Cornell and Princeton—believe me, I was impressed. The gist of the discovery was that the "cosmic bubble" which formed the universe went through an "inflationary episode" which lasted 1/100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 of a

second just before the Big Bang.

"Of course," I thought, "but let's get on to the business at hand—before the Big Bang." The author slowly approached the moment. He described the "cosmic plasma" to within one second after the bang and, then, "before that, a fraction of a second after the Big Bang, a hail of free quarks had condensed into protons and neutrons. And before that . . ." That's it; my mind was racing. That's what I'm after. Before that. . . . "And before that, we run out of known physics. . . . This is as far back as the Big Bang model will take us. Except for a few educated guesses, no one has the slightest idea what went on in the first instant of creation."

You mean I read all of that just to find that nugget? I don't mean to denigrate the marvelous creativity of speculative science—actually it was the magazine editor who raised my expectations. Whatever the insights of Professor Alan Guth, they did not presume to reach back before the beginning. It is true, as the article noted, that "educated guessing is what the theoretical physicists do best," but somehow I felt as if I had been promised more.

I returned to Genesis. "In the beginning God. . . ." That awesome, spartan phrase reaches back into infinity, before a "cosmic bubble," a "cosmic plasma," or a "Big Bang." Our minds strain to conceive it, but the answer is pristinely clear. Before the beginning was God. He who had no beginning. He who said: "I am He; I am the first, I also am the last. Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call unto them, they stand up together" (Isaiah 48:12-13).

Outside the window, beyond the soft whine of the jet engines, lay the hush of the universe. And beyond, and before it, was God. To think of it is to grow tremulous and reverent. "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him" (Job 7:17)?

"All Spoiled . . ."

Jeffery Kingry

Robert Frost wrote a poem called, "Woodcutting" that reads like a nightmare. Frost graphically describes a family cutting wood out on the side of one of Vermont's rolling hillsides. The spirit of fun and warmth as the family works together in the pastoral setting makes one sort of long for the peaceful life he describes. Sharp fall colors, crisp blue sky, the hearty sound of thunking mauls in splitting wood, the whining roar of the smelly chain saw—all add an idyllic picture of rural Vermont ritual. Then, as the sweaty and weary family prepares to go home, attention slips and tragedy strikes. The chain saw jumps—like a perverse thing it strikes like a snake and takes off the hand of the youngest boy—his blood spills out and desecrates the mood. Frost paints a vision of a moment's carelessness, impossible to take back, impossible to change, hopelessly gone forever—a severed hand. The look of pain and anguish fills the boy's face—not for the pain but the loss. The family stares in disbelief, yet apart, at the boy as he holds his severed hand, and the boy says, "All spoiled . . ."

Things will never be the same again. All was lost. The tragedy killed the boy—not so much from loss of blood as the loss of a will to live. The boy just quit and died. It is a very moving poem—but is it true?

I recall brother Robert Turner relating about a saint he met during one of his gospel meetings years ago. Seemed that the fellow had lost both of his arms in an industrial accident. Robert stayed in his home during the meeting. The church loved him. They would put his hat on crooked, untie his shoelace, and other seemingly cruel things, not because of meanness, but because of the character of the man. He had a joy for life and a sense of humor that knew no bounds. Even with the loss of his arms, he rose above his infirmity. His sons loved and respected him. They did not view him as weak and handicapped. He disciplined his boys with character. When they misbehaved he told them to stand before

him and bend over. He then placed a few good kicks on their behind. As brother Turner put it, "The discipline had been instilled long before the kick." Here is a man who made a better, more meaningful life in spite of his handicap. Another, Robert Frost's young victim, saw only despair and hopelessness of the moment. One lived, the other died. What was the difference?

his own father's house, before his old friends, among his own family. In Mark 14:3ff we read that a woman came and broke an alabaster container of spikenard and anointed Jesus with the contents. Judas objected that her anointing was a prodigal waste. Jesus called him down, rebuked him in Judas' own father's house in front of his brethren, his friends, the other disciples. The very

**"Here is a man who made
a better, more meaningful life
in spite of his handicap.
Another, Robert Frost's victim,
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of the moment. One lived,
the other died. What was the
difference? Peter and Judas
are biblical illustrations
of the difference."**

Peter and Judas

Peter and Judas are biblical illustrations of the difference. Judas' action against Jesus was prompted by personal hurt. The Scriptures are quite plain. Judas was a selfish, self-centered man. John 6:71 says that the Lord and the twelve were in the house of Simon the Leper, and that Simon was Judas' father. Judas had Jesus and the other eleven in

next verse, Mark 14:10, reveals that Judas went out to sell Jesus to His enemies.

Judas is the Greek form of Judah. Judas was of royal lineage. He was from Iscariot, the area of Kerioth, a very rich suburb called Perea in that day. He was rich, spoiled, and selfish. John tells us something of his character. After the dis-

(Continued on page 9)

Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

The ABC's of Self-Acceptance

One of the deepest needs we have as humans is to feel of value and real worth. Some have felt that the Bible contributes to man's poor self-image by accusing him of guilt—but the Bible is only being honest about man's true condition. And man's guilt in the Scriptures is never presented in order to lead him to despair, but to deliverance.

It is true that all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), but this is only part of the picture. It is also true that God has in Christ paid the penalty for man's sin, and when man by obedience accepts the forgiveness offered him, he then (and only then) has the opportunity to function as God designed him.

God wants each of us to be happy in this life. The main dilemma of life is guilt, and the Father has made all the necessary provisions for us to be rid of that problem. All other problems come from our own failures and misunderstandings—at the behest of Satan. This is especially true in the matter of *self-hate* or *self-rejection*.

But how do we develop a proper self-image? Do we do it by "looking out for No. 1?" Does it come by overcoming our "erroneous zones?" Is it by convincing each other that "I'm OK—you're OK?" Those are popular ideas in our society and, though they may have some merit, they preach primarily a doctrine of *self-salvation*. I submit that the Christian does not need "assertiveness training" and the "self-realization" courses and all the other fickle fads of our aimless and wandering society. The Christian needs *Christ-realization*, not *self-realization*. Thus, a proper self-image comes by realizing that I am:

Assessed by God. The Scriptures tell us of the tremendous value God puts upon each of us. Jesus taught His disciples that they were of immense worth when assessed by their heavenly Father. He said, "What is the price of five sparrows? A couple of pennies? Not much more than that. Yet God does not forget a single one of them. And he knows the number of the hairs on your head! Never fear, you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows."

We can usually judge the value of anything by the price that a rational person places upon it. By that

standard man is the most valuable part of God's creation—for He allowed His only begotten Son to die for him. No man is to be despised (even by himself) when the eternal God was willing to die for him!

Befriended by the Father. It makes no difference to our true friends what we look like or what our imperfections are. Some Christians find it hard to give themselves entirely to God because of dissatisfaction with themselves. Many believers complain continually about their physical and psychological make-up.

One says, "If only I were taller." Another says, "If only I were shorter." A young girl looks in the mirror and says, "If only my eyes were blue instead of brown." On the surface these seem to be minor complaints, but in fact our failure to accept ourselves as God designed us can cause one to unconsciously build up a continued bitterness toward God which lies deeply hidden, but nevertheless reasons: "God, if I had been in your place when you made me I would have made a far better me than you did." This hidden resentment can lead to a lack of trust—how can I trust a God who slipped up on such an important matter as my appearance? I must accept the fact that none of this matters to God nor should it matter to me. If I cannot accept myself as God made me, then it is bound to show up in my work, my overall attitude about life, my attempts at prayer, my worship and service to God.

Custom made by the Creator. Matthew Henry said, "Consider the fact that you are 'custom-made' by God. Your genes, chromosomes, and all factors contributing to your being were governed by your Creator. All of this was done because you were designed to fulfil a specific purpose in history—a purpose which no one else can completely fulfil. The fulfilment of this ultimate purpose is left within your power. It depends on the way you respond to your Creator."

That is a marvelous thing to contemplate! There is no one else in this universe *exactly* like you! Just as no two snow flakes are the same, nor two blades of grass exactly alike, so no two human beings are identical to each other psychologically, physically or spiritually. Let me accept myself as I am—make whatever improvements I can—but glory in the fact that I am accurately assessed, bountifully befriended, and custom-made by the Father.

"All Spoiled . . ."

Continued from page 7

course on the Bread of Life in Capernaum (John 6:26-59), many of Jesus' disciples deserted Him and walked no more with Him (verse 66). When Peter protested the disciples' allegiance, Jesus objected that not all were of Peter's mind: "Did I not choose you twelve, and one of you is a devil? Now he spake of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for it was he that should betray him, being one of the twelve" (verses 70-71). Judas had become one of those in spirit who "walked no longer with him."

It was at this time that mention is made that he began stealing from the common purse for his own use, in spite of Jesus' warnings against greed and hypocrisy (John 12:5-6). It was love's last effort towards Judas that in the "Last Supper" Jesus washed his feet and gave Judas to sit at Jesus' right hand at the table. In spite of the Lord's honor and love, when Jesus lamented that one at the table would lift up his heel against Him, Judas hardened himself and inquired, "Lord, is it I" (John 13:21)? Jesus gave Judas the "sop," which again was considered an honor during the Passover feast. Judas spurned the opportunity and went out into the night to sell the life of the Son of God.

In Matthew 27:3-10 Judas is portrayed as feeling remorse for what he had done. He tried to give the money back that he had been paid for an innocent man's life. But the guilt did not go away. In despair, he hanged himself. As often happened in that day, the suicide was not cut down, and was allowed to hang until the corpse fell and burst like an over-ripe fruit beneath the cliff where he had hanged himself.

Judas was weak-minded and indecisive. His weakness led him to indulge himself at other's expense—money intended for need went for his own pleasure. Part of his weak-mindedness was his effort to throw off on the priests his own responsibility (Matthew 27:3-4). In his pain, he went to the power-brokers to set himself straight instead of Jesus.

A Different Man

Peter was no less a man of impulse and worldly background. He worked as a fisherman out of Capernaum. He probably had the foul mouth and manners of all fishermen and people of the sea. He cursed and swore when he was accused on the night of the betrayal. Satan sought Peter, just as he had Judas (Luke 22:31-34). After the resurrection

Peter went back to his old trade of fishing, and was sought out and restored by the tender and loving efforts of Jesus (John 21). Later in his life, Peter followed the same impulsive and emotional path. Paul had to withstand him to the face in a public way, and charge him for not "walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:11-14).

In the same night that Judas went and fastened a noose about his neck and in despair threw himself to his death, Peter also denied his Lord, and gave over to the Gentiles. Jesus had told him he

Forgiveness

The difference was basic—one loved God and Jesus personally, and realized who his sin was against. The other, Judas, went back to the Pharisees—his hope—and they rejected him. He didn't feel that he had anywhere else to go. Peter went to his quiet place and cried out in his anguish to God. Later he said, "Oh, Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You!" Jesus told him, "Then feed my sheep."

Jesus didn't want emotional cripples. He could not use a man destroyed by sin. He told Peter in effect, "If you love me, Peter, then rise above your hurt and

"Lord, give us the ability to forgive others as we have been forgiven, that we might be strong in your service. Help us to see how great our sin is and what we owe You for our forgiveness. Help us to be kind to one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us."

would—even as He had warned Judas—giving both men a chance to change. Mark's account is particularly brutal. When Peter had cursed and sworn and denied Jesus, Jesus turned and looked at him. Peter remembered His words, and "when he had thought thereon, he wept bitterly."

Yet, Peter went on to become the great Apostle of God's grace—sent to Cornelius, testifying in the Jerusalem conference, the writer of the epistles of encouragement in times of darkness and fiery trials (1 Peter 1:6-7). What was the difference?

serve me. Teach men, comfort men, encourage men, do my work!"

"Lord, give us the ability to forgive others as we have been forgiven, that we might be strong in your service (Matthew 6:12). Help us to see how great our sin is and what we owe You for our forgiveness (Matthew 8:21ff). Help us to be kind to one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:32). And thank you, Lord, for blotting out our sins, remembering them no more, that we might be made just in your sight before all men (Isaiah 43:25)."

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How Did Mark End His Gospel?

Mark 16:9-20, the end of the gospel of Mark as it appears in the King James Version, is not found in some of the oldest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. This has raised questions about whether it was a part of Mark's original work. The Revised Standard Version relegates these verses to a fine print footnote. Phillips calls them an "ancient appendix," and even those versions like the American Standard which include Mark 16:9-20 find some way to set the section apart and explain in a footnote that the two oldest Greek manuscripts omit it. In view of this uncertainty, perhaps it would be helpful to take a careful look at the evidence and determine as best we are able whether it argues for or against the inclusion of these verses in Scripture.

But first, before we begin, it is important to understand that this question does not involve the historical accuracy of the material contained in Mark 16:9-20. All the statements of this section are known to be true from other sources in the New Testament. Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene is corroborated by John 20:11-18 and her demon possession by Luke 8:2. Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus is even more fully treated in Luke 24:36-42. The Great Commission is easily authenticated by Matthew (28:19-20) and Luke (24:36-51).

As to the manuscript evidence that has caused some translators to place this section in a footnote, the following things are true. The Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts which likely go back to the fourth century A.D. do not contain these verses. Eusebius and Jerome, writers of the fourth century, give evidence that some or many of the manuscripts of Mark available in their own time did not include verses 9-20 but ended with the flight of the women from the tomb. This would appear at first blush to put this passage into serious doubt. But there is more to the story.

Although Mark 16:9-20 is missing from two of our oldest manuscripts of the New Testament, one very old one from the fifth century, Alexandrinus, does contain it. Even more important is the fact that this conclusion to Mark's gospel is cited by Irenaeus and Tatian in the second century and by Hippolytus and Dionysius of Alexandria in the third century. All of these men lived before the three oldest Greek manuscripts were written. Irenaeus specifically ascribes these verses to Mark. Of fourth century writers Chrysostom attributes the section to Mark and Ambrose quotes from it freely. And Jerome,

although he indicates the absence of this ending in many manuscripts of his time, includes it in his well-known Latin translation, the Vulgate.

It is quite true that the early "church fathers" are not the best evidence for the correct reading of a known verse since their quotations were sometimes quite free and their memories faulty. But when it comes to simply offering evidence for the existence of a certain group of verses in the manuscripts of their day they are excellent witnesses since they could not even quote badly from a non-existent text.

In addition to the evidence from the "church fathers" there is the fact that all the ancient translations of the New Testament, which existed before either the Vatican or Sinaitic manuscripts were made, include this ending to Mark. In this way they testify that these verses were in the Greek copies from which they were translated. The evidence for inclusion, then, is quite strong and comes from a period older than that of the manuscripts which leave the verses out.

As to how this end section came to be missing from some of the manuscripts of Mark, one guess may be as good as another. Some have suggested that its position at the end of the manuscripts may have made it subject to special wear and eventual loss. However that may be, the conclusion of the matter is this: The evidence for including Mark 16:9-20 as an original part of Mark's gospel is very solid and persuasive. And, in any case, their loss from the text, though significant, would not alter any of the details of the life and teaching of God's Son.

Could Mark have simply intended to end his story at verse 8? If so, it leaves his record strangely incomplete, without a single reference to that evidence which was critical to the validity of the gospel—the Lord's post-resurrection appearances (Acts 1:21-22). Moreover, it causes Mark to close on a note of perplexity and fear rather than triumph. At the same time, to hold that Mark did not conclude at verse 8 but that 16:9-20 is not an authentic text leaves two important questions unanswered. How could the original ending of Mark be lost apparently beyond recovery, and how did an early spurious addition by some unknown scribe gain such influence in so many of the ancient copies and translations? We are persuaded that both the textual evidence and the logic of the case support the inclusion of these significant verses as the very words of Mark and the Holy Spirit. They should be read with confidence and with reverence.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Ed Harrell

Restoring New Testament Christianity

The idea of restoring a purity lost in time and history is a part of man's permanent intellectual baggage. Men have labored to regenerate businesses, nations and countless other institutional forms by looking back to the ideas which gave birth to the institutions. Ask any political conservative about restoring constitutional government, or ask any political liberal about restoring man's individual rights and dignity.

Of all persons, the idea of restoration should appeal to one who would be a Christian. First, because of the exquisite beauty and power of the original message and the extraordinary simplicity and success of the early church. Second, the corruption and ineffectiveness of historic Christianity compels us to look back for divine directions. The name of Christ has been soiled by its association with greedy and self-serving institutions at worst and, at best, the misguided and inept efforts of

humans to improve on the incomparable biblical model.

Restoring New Testament Christianity is not only a good idea, however, it is (as the articles which follow indicate) a biblical concept. It is right to "speak as the oracles of God," it is fitting to "search the Scriptures" because we honor the New Testament as a depository of divine wisdom. Restoring New Testament Christianity is not so much a matter of restricting the conscientious creativity of man as it is an honoring of the divine wisdom of God.

In this theme section we address two basic questions. First, we note the necessity and possibility of restoring New Testament Christianity. We are convinced that God wants it done and that it can be done. We need to ask the right questions, to be concerned about those things that God has bound, and we need to avoid "foolish questions." If we ask the right questions (and the Scriptures give us guidance to determine

those things that God has bound) the New Testament is a complete and sufficient revelation to give us answers.

Second, the articles that follow ask and answer a series of just such pertinent questions. Some have to do with the gospel of salvation which was preached in New Testament days, a gospel which has been obscured and perverted by centuries of theological squabbling. Others have to do with the institutional form of the New Testament church, an institution, we are convinced, that grew out of the eternal mind of God for the protection and propagation of His work. The final two articles have to do with the impact of restoration on the spirit and life of the individual Christian.

We thus embark on the compelling journey to worship our Creator in spirit and truth. There surely could be no nobler nor more righteous pilgrimage.

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RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

The Idea

Earl Kimbrough

THE BASIC CONCEPT OF RESTORATION AS taught in the Bible is simply that of people astray from God returning to walk in His way. Jeremiah stated it plainly: "Thus says the Lord, Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). Embraced in this divine principle are four facts that must be known and applied, if restoration is to be a practical reality.

First, God has revealed the way man is to conduct his life. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord"

blessed exclusively through their loyalty to Christ and His word (John 8:31-32; Revelation 2:10).

Third, fellowship with God is broken when His children depart from Him to go their own way. He said, "Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38). The pre-Flood world reaped destruction for its unrepentant lawlessness, and many Israelites fell in the wilderness for rejecting God's guidance. Both events serve as warnings to Christians (2 Peter 3:1-12; 1 Corinthians 10:1-12). But

away (Acts 8:22; Galatians 6:1; 1 John 1:7-9), and it applies to a congregation of Christians who stray from the paths of righteousness (Revelation 2:5). But it also applies to people who have never walked in God's way. The way of the Lord may be restored in heart and life even after it has been forsaken for many generations, as Josiah restored the law to its rightful place (2 Kings 22:1f) and John the Baptist returned the hearts of many in Israel to the Lord their God (Luke 1:16).

The Lord made provision for the restoration of New Testament Christianity. He gave a perfect plan for His church and bound it for all time to come (Jude 3; Colossians 3:17; 2 John 9-10). He placed the life of His kingdom in His word (Luke 8:11). Because seed brings forth after its kind (Genesis 1:12), His word, "the seed of the kingdom," brings forth New Testament Christianity whenever and wherever it is planted in the hearts of God-fearing people. God also designed His word so that it serves as the standard by which Christians may continually measure themselves to see whether they are "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Whatever degree of success men have had in modern times in restoring New Testament Christianity has come through following the biblical idea. It was in pursuit of "the ancient order of things" based on this ideal that the nineteenth century restorers denounced all human creeds, names, organizations, and practices in religion to accept only those things that they understood to be divinely authorized. "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11) became the essence of their plea. It is still the plea of those Christians who delight in God's word and who are determined that their steps shall be ordered by Him.

"To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

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"God designed His word so that it serves as the standard by which Christians may continually measure themselves to see whether they are 'in the faith.' Whatever degree of success men have had in modern times in restoring New Testament Christianity has come through following the biblical idea."

(Psalm 37:23). This has been true in every Biblical age. God's will for people this side of the cross is fully revealed in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Second, divine favor comes only through walking in God's way. The blessed man is he whose "delight is in the law of the Lord" (Psalm 1:1-2). Abraham became "the friend of God" by his faithful obedience to all that God said (Hebrews 11:8-18; James 2:21-23). In order to keep the commandments of the Lord, Israel could neither add anything to nor take anything from His law (Deuteronomy 4:2). Christians are

many of them did not, and do not, heed. History shows that the departure from the faith foretold by Paul came to pass (1 Timothy 4:1-4).

Fourth, the return of the fallen to God's way is the only means of renewing fellowship with Him (Ezekiel 18:21-23). This is effected by a change of heart that leads to a change of life that conforms to God's will. It requires faith in God's word, an awareness of separation from Him, and the acceptance of His terms for returning.

This biblical idea of restoration applies to the child of God who falls



The History of An Idea

Steve Wolfgang

SINCE AT LEAST THE SECOND CENTURY A.D., people from many cultures have been intrigued with the idea of "restoring" various facets of New Testament Christianity. The pages of church history are footnoted with occasional references to the multitude of movements which attempted to restore the doctrines or practices of the Christians and churches described in the New Testament. For twentieth century Americans to imagine that they are the first or only to attempt "restoration" or "restitution" of the first century church would be an ignorant sort of chronological snobbery.

We would not leave the impression that such groups are to be applauded or imitated for their own sake. Many such attempts at restoration have had limited or even perverse notions of what should be restored. Others, with broader or nobler goals, have fallen far short of their ideals. Occasionally, those involved in such efforts have emphasized one item, or a small cluster, to the exclusion of other equally important elements of New Testament life and worship. Sometimes the adherents of such groups have seen "restoration" only as a way-station to some more exotic religious expression.

We Are Not the First

The main value of recalling such efforts lies not so much in what they accomplished, or in whether or not they were successful in their attempts, but rather in the direction in which they were looking and moving. We are not called to restore anyone's restoration movement, nor to exalt any of the leaders of such attempts, however noble they may have been. It may be encouraging, though, to realize that we are not the first to make such an effort.

One of the problems encountered in attempting to chronicle the various attempts at restoration is that so much of the information about them has long been lost in the backwater of history. Perhaps because such attempts would have been seen as minority rebellions against the religious, political or

economic "establishment," the records of such groups have been suppressed in much the same manner as the groups themselves. We do know enough to sketch an outline.

Some Examples

Though it would be a mistake to consider groups such as the Cathars, Albigenses, or even the Waldensians as "medieval restorers," they remind us of the fact that there have often been small bands of those who, believing some fundamental biblical truths, rejected many

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of the perversions and excesses of corrupt religion. Most of the records of these dissenting groups have survived, if at all, only through biased references by their tormentors, but the closer one comes to "modern" times the more evidence one discovers.

Although by the sixteenth century there were clear differences among individuals bent on reforming polluted religious bodies, as one historian has remarked, an idea common to them all was "that the Christians of the sixteenth

century were called to reproduce in thought and life the intellectual beliefs and usages of the primitive Christians" (T. M. Lindsay, *History of the Reformation*, II, 441). Thomas Grantham published a series of essays on *Primitive Christianity* in 1678 citing faith, repentance, and baptism for the remission of sins as "the way of incorporation into the Church of Christ" (preface). Benjamin Grosvenor's book of sermons, published in London in 1728, urged all to be simply "Christians only."

More Than Slogans

Not all such efforts produced desired results. In America, Nathan Bangs published a book entitled *An Original Church of Christ*, with the unfortunate subtitle, *A Scriptural Vindication . . . of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1837). Joseph Smith produced a Mormon church which even today styles itself a "Restoration Movement" (see essays by that title edited by F. M. McKiernan, Coronado Press, 1973). Both Smith's non-biblical revelations and the "charismatic church leadership" which produced Daniel Warner's "Church of God" at Anderson, IN (and another group of the same name at Cleveland, TN) demonstrate that lofty slogans are insufficient to produce true restoration of the Christianity outlined in the New Testament.

Extreme attempts to restore "primitive lifestyle" which have spawned countless Amish/Mennonite groups warn of the danger of isolating one item to be restored at the expense of others equally important. A restoration ideal which can be taken seriously by twentieth century humans is one which emphasizes a properly balanced search for the emotional, moral, doctrinal, and intellectual "ancient order"—individually and corporately (see Matthew 22:36ff). We are not the first to embark on such a journey, nor will we likely be the last. But we are called in our own generation to continue the never-ending task of becoming and being, truly, "Christians only."

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RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Ed Harrell

What Is Written?

IN LUKE 10:25 A LAWYER ASKED JESUS the question, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" In that brief exchange is established a principle of biblical exegesis sublime in its simplicity. The principle was immediately challenged by the lawyer in Luke 10, but in the parable of the Good Samaritan which follows Jesus insisted that the Scriptures answered the question and that the answer could be

intended.

The second assumption implicit in Jesus' exchange with the lawyer is a belief in the innate capacity of man to understand the scriptural revelation. Jesus promised, "Seek, and ye shall find" (Matthew 7:7). The highway that the Lord provides is so clearly marked that "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (Isaiah 35:8). Indeed, Jesus observed that while the "wise and prudent" might overlook the wisdom of

describe the marvelous workings of the human mind. Men do not create truth; they discover it. If we could construct a perfect logical model (which we cannot) for interpreting Scripture, we would not have discovered the key to biblical interpretation, we would have succeeded in describing the common sense capacity of every man to seek and organize information.

It must be so. Else scriptural interpretation becomes the property of the "scholar," the "expert." The Bible teaches the opposite. To understand God's directions one needs only to be a human being—with a "pure heart" and a "poor spirit."

All human beings habitually use their common sense to find answers for questions—often to reconstruct the past. There is no profound mystery about how we do it. We seek all the information we can find—instructions and examples from others' experiences—and we logically construct our answers. If I am writing a historical description of Arkansas in the 1890's, that is how I proceed.

So it is with restoring New Testament Christianity. First, we ask questions, understanding that we should "avoid" those which are "foolish and unlearned" (2 Timothy 2:23). We must use the Bible to determine whether or not our questions are relevant. We believe that the questions asked in this theme section are important; generally, each article makes clear why. It does not take a profound reading of the Scriptures, it seems to me, to determine that God cares about what men do when they worship; that the church was designed by the mind of God; that Christians are called to a life of personal holiness.

If the questions are good ones, we commend you to the corpus of divine wisdom to find the answers. When you find all that the Bible says, that is God's answer—all He says and all we need. There is no profound secret as to how to interpret the revelation; there is an eternal significance in whether we try.

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"If we could construct a perfect logical model (which we cannot) for interpreting Scripture, we would not have discovered the key to biblical interpretation, we would have succeeded in describing the common sense capacity of every man to seek and organize information."

understood.

To be a Christian is to acknowledge that God's word is the depository of all truth, given "by inspiration of God" and able to "thoroughly furnish unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). It is to believe that the faith has been "once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Whatever other questions a believer may have, he can hardly honor the Scriptures as the revelation of God and not believe it adequate to do all that God

God's revelations, He had "revealed them unto babes" (Matthew 11:25).

But the question is how? How can we use this body of divine revelation which is given to guide us? How can we tell what is binding? Theologians, philosophers and debaters have constructed complicated exegetical systems to tell us how we must read the Bible. At worst, their systems are convoluted, pretentious and confusing. At best, they are interesting and useful attempts to

RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY



The Gospel

Harold Hancock

THERE MAY BE MANY GOSPELS (GALATIANS 1:6-9), but there is only one Gospel of the New Testament. Other gospels may stir man's heart and satisfy a shallow desire for a form of religion, but the Gospel of the New Testament is God's power to save (Romans 1:16).

Peter preached the Gospel of the New Testament on Pentecost in A.D. 33. His message as recorded in Acts 2:22-40 was short and simple. When we read Peter's sermon, study it, and understand it, we can fully apprehend the Gospel of the New Testament.

The Gospel of the New Testament tells of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:1-3). It also tells us how to be righteous in God's sight (Romans 1:17). Peter addressed each of these points plainly and directly.

Jesus' life. He was a man approved of God (verse 22). The proof of this statement is found in the miracles Jesus did while He was on earth. No man could change water into wine, heal the sick, and raise the dead except God be with him. Nicodemus knew this (John 3:2). Surely we can see this, too.

His death. There was no need to elaborate. It was enough for Peter to state that Jesus was crucified (verse 23). None of Peter's audience dared take issue with the statement; why should we today? The crucifixion of Jesus had taken place just outside the gate of Jerusalem. Perhaps some in the audience had stood beneath the cross and witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus. They all knew of it.

The resurrection. "God raised him up" (verse 24). You can almost see the people gasp and mutter to themselves, "So that's what happened to Jesus' body!" The resurrected Jesus was seen by many (1 Corinthians 15:4-8). He lives and sits at the right hand of God.

It was the Messiah, or Christ, whom the prophets had said would be raised from the dead (verses 24-35). So Peter pierced the hearts of many of his hearers with an inescapable truth—"This Jesus . . . is Lord and Christ" (verse 36). Oh, how their hearts must have pounded within them at this mighty profession!

It is the foundation of the Gospel of the New Testament and of every conversion. It is a declaration fraught with meaning.

To confess that Jesus is Lord is to acknowledge Him as master. We should recognize that He has all authority and submit willingly unto His every command. Jesus, Himself, once asked, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). To avow that Jesus is Christ is to realize that

How simple. Believe, repent, and be baptized. How beautiful. Repentance is a change of heart, or will. Here man purposes to stop sinning. The man who truly repents will "continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Baptism washes away man's sins (Acts 22:16). He is forgiven of those things he has done wrong in the past. Not by any one of these, but by doing all of them God

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He is the one anointed of God to save man. There is not another savior. If we are to be saved, it will be by Christ and the things He tells us to do.

What is it that Jesus would have us to do to be saved? Some to whom Peter spoke asked this question. They said, "Sirs, what must we do?" (verse 37). Peter told them to "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (verse 38).

makes man pure and holy. This is the great blessing of the Gospel of the New Testament.

To some the story of Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection and His commands to believe, repent and be baptized are foolishness. But this is the Gospel of the New Testament. For those who want God's assurance of salvation, nothing less will suffice.

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RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Arvid McGuire

Baptism

THE BAPTISM OF PENITENT BELIEVERS WAS practiced by the church from the day of Pentecost onward (Acts 2:38,41). It was closely linked with the name of Jesus Christ and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Its purpose was for "the remission of sins." Every case of conversion in Acts mentions baptism; it followed "hearing," "receiving the word" and "believing." The immersion of penitent believers indicated their acceptance of the gospel message.

The conversion of the Ethiopian nobleman illustrates baptism's role in the gospel obedience. The encounter between Philip and the Ethiopian treasurer took place on a deserted road somewhere between Jerusalem and Gaza. The eunuch had been reading about Jehovah's servant who vicariously suffered and died on a cross. Jehovah raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to a position of power and great glory (Isaiah 53). The eunuch's pointed question was: "About whom does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Philip began with this scripture and told him the good news of Jesus. As they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?" And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." The eunuch commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:32-39).

From this narrative it is evident that baptism in water followed a confession of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and came up out of the water, which was necessary to effect immersion. Water, confession, faith, baptism and rejoicing are all involved in conversion.

The fullest New Testament exposition of the meaning of baptism is found in Paul's letters. The most representative

passages are 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:9-13.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13. Paul taught that baptism is the means of incorporation into the body of Christ. Through

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baptism the Spirit is received, and the barriers that divide men, whether of race or of class, are overcome.

Galatians 3:26-29. Paul drew out the connection of baptism with faith and sonship. Baptism is described as "putting

on" Christ. Again it is stressed that this union with Christ overcomes all human divisions, whether of race, class or sex.

Romans 6:1-4. Paul's vigorous exposition of the contrast between law and grace gave rise to the objection: "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul answered this objection by recalling to his Roman readers the significance of their baptism. When they went down into the water, they were buried (immersed) from which burial, they emerged to walk in newness of life. This Paul saw as a symbolic representation of dying, being buried and rising again with Christ. This "dying" is further explained as a death to sin, and this "rising again" as a resurrection to a new spiritual and moral life in Christ. For those to whom these things have happened, the very thought of continuing in sin is absurd. This view of baptism as the moral death of the old man and the resurrection of a new man in Christ is a common Christian experience indicated by Paul's question, "Do you not know?"

Colossians 2:9-13 is a part of Paul's answer to the false teaching at Colossae with the assertion that Christ is our all-sufficient Savior. He strengthened his argument by appealing to the significance of baptism, which is the act in which God circumcises the sinner's heart and cuts off his sin. Again he stressed that baptism means dying to sin and rising again to a new moral life. All things needful for salvation are given through our union with Christ in baptism; therefore, the Colossian insistence on ascetic rites were unnecessary.

These Pauline references to baptism, in one way or another, bring out that close link between baptism and the preached message of the gospel which we have already observed in Acts. But Paul sees the Christian life as the progressive laying hold on, the appropriation of, what was done for the Christian at his baptism. It is in this that faith consists and it is here that we see the import of Paul's teaching about baptism as a "dying and rising with Christ."

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RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY



The Local Church

Lynn D. Headrick

GOD DOES EVERYTHING PERFECTLY. HE devised a simple and sufficient organizational structure for His church. His plan calls for elders in every church (Acts 14:23) who oversee, feed, and tend the flock of God which is among them (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). God intends that the congregation be served by deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13). The original pattern is thus succinctly stated.

But now it is different, as even the casual observer can see. Priests, rectors, and other clerics control congregations. Above the congregational level, hierarchical systems, powerful councils, conventions, synods, and conferences dictate the activities of local churches. The original pattern is obscured by human additions.

Why this departure from scriptural simplicity? Perhaps the faith of some has weakened to the extent that they feel that God's first century organizational plan is inadequate for present-day churches. That bent is strengthened by the nature of the society in which we live. Americans are given to organizing. We must have line and staff charts and identify the chain of command. Indeed, the word *organize* is the badge of politicians, the hallmark of corporations and educational systems, and the distinctive feature of institutional religion. We organize, methodize, and systematize until we anathematize simplicity! Human organizational concepts are so constantly promulgated, so prominent, and so pervasive in our lifestyle as to make it appear incredible or ludicrous to say that God could outline the entire organizational structure of His church in one short statement. But He did! "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Philippians 1:1). Philippi is God's model for congregational organization. Our task is to restore this simplicity.

Pioneer preacher E. A. Elam wrote, "A simple church at a place—with its elders, deacons and other members—is all the organizing and centralizing God

has ever done for his church" (*Elam's Notes*, 1923, p. 127). Has not man's penchant for devising complicated organizational systems all but obliterated from the minds of professed Christians the simplicity of God's order? How great is the need for restoration!

The skilled artist can restore the masterpiece of art that has been defaced, obscured or mutilated. So, too, can faithful Bible students restore God's masterpiece of local church organization.

are to be used in the way the Bible uses them if restoration is to be effected.

Restoration can be accomplished only by reading and following the original blueprint. The New Testament is the blueprint and we must follow it as the faithful builder follows the architect's plans. The blueprint calls for more than one bishop, elder, or pastor to be responsible for the oversight of one congregation. Bishops, deacons and saints constituted a complete body of Christ at Philippi. It functioned independently of

"Human organizational concepts are so constantly promulgated, so prominent, and so pervasive in our lifestyle as to make it appear ludicrous to say that God could outline the entire organizational structure of the church in one short statement.

But He did!"

Restoration can be effected only when we use words in the same way that they are used in the New Testament. The words elders or presbyters, bishops or overseers, and pastors or shepherds all refer to the same group of men (Acts 20:17,28). These men are equal in rank. Bishops, elders or pastors are to be the husbands of one wife having children that believe (Titus 1:6). The vocabulary of the New Testament does not mention a presiding elder, general overseer, vicar general nor yet a rural dean! Bible words

all other local congregations such as Thessalonica, Jerusalem or Rome. The New Testament is silent about shepherds overseeing work outside the flock among them. All local churches are equal, governing themselves in obedience to the Will of Christ. Following the blueprint without addition or subtraction not only is a giant step for man in the restoration of local church organization, but it is the only step required of him.

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RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Steve Cawthon

Worship

I'VE BEEN TO HOLY GHOST REVIVALS IN Middle Tennessee which featured acts of worship ranging from hand-clapping to toe-tapping, from rolling on the ground to jumping in the air. I've heard the uncontrollable jabber of tongue-speakers. And I've heard music ranging from a mild a capella solo to the wild beat of a rock-and-roll gospel band. I have seen candles burning in St Peter's cathedral. I have heard pious pilgrims chant as they filed through the alleged tomb of Christ in Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I've seen people count beads and recite creeds. Some were loud. Others were soft. Some were laughing. Some were crying. But they were all attempting the same thing—worship to God.

"What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits toward me?" the psalmist asked (Psalm 116:12). Obviously his question has been answered diversely by worshippers through the centuries. But, in fact, there are only two basic ways to answer the question. One will either seek to worship God according to his own judgment, or he will endeavor to learn how God wants to be worshipped. Self-designed worship was condemned by the prophet Amos. The people brought unacceptable sacrifices and unwanted gifts to God because of their motive: "for this pleaseth you" (Amos 4:5). Jesus quoted a similar condemnation from Isaiah: "This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

Jesus announced to the Samaritan woman, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). The design of true worship is to venerate the Father, not to entertain the worshipper or his earthly audience. Worship is successful only if God is pleased. The only way we can know what pleases God is for Him

to tell us. God has revealed His will through the Scriptures. If we would worship God acceptably, we must restore the form and fervor of the worship rendered to God in New Testament days. By imitating the examples and following the instructions of inspired men, we, too, can worship the Father in spirit and truth.

What shall I render unto Jehovah?
"A sacrifice of praise to God continually,

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the Father, not
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his earthly audience.
Worship is
successful only
if God is pleased.
The only way we
can know what
pleases God is
for Him to
tell us.*

that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name . . . for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16). "Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward" (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). Thus, the fervent prayer of praise or thanksgiving is an acceptable offering to the Father, whether rendered by the lone disciple from his inner chamber (Matthew 6:6) or the entire congregation "continuing

stedfastly in . . . the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The inspired apostle Paul also directed that Christians should be "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). Restoring this New Testament item of worship involves both the proper form—psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and the proper spirit—with your heart. May we also worship God with instrumental music? On this question the New Testament is profoundly silent. Our answer, therefore, depends on our basic intent in worship. Are we trying to please God or ourselves? If we want to please God, then let's be content to render unto Him the worship which He has revealed to be acceptable.

Another item of New Testament worship is seen in the example of Paul and the church at Troas gathering together upon the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). The form of this worship is simple. It involves eating unleavened bread and drinking the fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:26-29). But essential to the proper observance of this weekly meal is the right spirit. Paul says it must be done in remembrance of Christ's body (bread) and blood (cup) which provided our salvation (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). The eating and drinking are done in "an unworthy manner" unless the worshipper proves himself and discerns the body (1 Corinthians 11:27-31). If the design of this activity were to satisfy our personal appetites, I would prefer German chocolate cake and Dr. Pepper over unleavened bread and grape juice. But since the observance of the supper is an act of worship to God, such a substitution would clearly be sacrilege.

The restoration of New Testament worship will not produce a flamboyant, sensuously-appealing extravaganza. It may not attract the masses of people. But for those engaged in true worship, there is an inner contentment that comes only from knowing that God is pleased.

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Edification and Teaching

Hiram Hutto

IT IS A STATEMENT OFT REPEATED, because very much needed, that God gave but one book (Acts) to tell us how to become Christians, yet he gave twenty-one books to tell us how to live after we have done so. In so doing, God has placed considerable emphasis on the fact that there is more to serving God than simply being initiated into His family. Additional teaching is needed. It is significant that the Great Commission includes the information that after a person has been baptized, he is to continue to be taught those things the Lord commanded the apostles to teach (Matthew 28:20). Newborn babes need to grow, to develop, to be edified (1 Peter 2:2).

In order that the saints could be edified, the Lord gave gifts unto men (Ephesians 4:8-12). It is interesting to note that while not one of these gifts involve entertainment, recreation, or social functions, every one of them (apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers) does involve teaching. It is by teaching that the Lord intends that the church, the local congregation, be actively involved in this teaching and edifying. Note that one of the gifts given is said to be "pastors and teachers." As may be clearly demonstrated, pastors are the same men who are elsewhere designated as elders. The elders of Acts 20:17 were told to "tend (pastor) the church of the Lord," and 1 Peter 5:1-3 makes the same point. This latter passage informs us that the province of elders has to do with the local congregation, that is, "the flock of God which is among you."

Surely God did not give this responsibility to elders just because they needed the exercise. No doubt, it is given because the recipients need the teaching. But if it is needed by them, it is needed even in congregations where there are no elders. In fact, it might even be more sorely needed, though surely it will be more effectively performed under the oversight of scripturally qualified men. The church has the responsibility of teaching, of edifying itself (Ephesians

4:16).

There can be no uncertainty about *what* the church is to teach. It is the "pillar and ground of *the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15). We need to realize that this is a grand charge. After all, if the word of God is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Acts 20:32), "able to save your souls" (James 1:21), and will furnish completely unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-18), what could be greater? Enticing as politics, entertainment, and social activities may be, the church must not deviate from its God-

ments by which this is to be carried out. These may, and probably should, take various forms: regular Bible classes, special studies, individual studies, gospel meetings, to name a few. But the function of one and all of them should be to teach the word of God.

According to Ephesians 4:16 each member should feel an individual responsibility to participate in all these activities. After all, why attend any of these services? Well, it certainly is not that God needs X number of people in attendance so that He can feel good. It is not that He needs Y number of songs

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given task—teaching the word of God.

Dare the church take lightly such an important assignment? It does so to its own peril. It would only seem the part of wisdom that considerable time be given to planning the teaching, to having definite purposes in mind. We might well ask ourselves the questions:

1. *WHY* do we exist as a church?
2. *WHAT* do we hope to accomplish?
3. *HOW* do we propose to do it?

While God has been very explicit as to what the church is to teach—the word of God—He has left the congregation free to choose various methods and arrange-

sung and Z number of prayers prayed. No, "He is not served by men's hands as though He needeth anything" (Acts 17:25). We won't make Him any richer by attending, nor will He be any poorer if we stay away. Each one of us needs to attend and participate because of the edification that we need. The church has a responsibility in teaching the truth and each one of us should feel a personal responsibility to share in it. As Moses expressed it, it is "for our good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24).

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RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Bill Hall

Congregational Benevolence

THE TASK OF RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT Christianity requires a careful study of the benevolent activities of the first century Christians. Whatever was true of their benevolence, as they worked under the guidance of the apostles, must be true of our benevolence today.

The Christians of the first century were benevolent people. The Jerusalem Christians sold possessions—possessions that were as important to them as ours are to us—that the needy among them might be cared for (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35). Macedonian Christians, out of their deep poverty, gave liberally for the care of other Christians whom they had

5:16). *Individually*, they provided for widows and orphans (James 1:27) and, in fact, for all men to the extent of their abilities (Galatians 6:10). *Congregationally*, they provided for needy saints or Christians (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-35; 11:27-30; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8, 9). There is no authority in the scriptures for congregational benevolence to non-Christians. A true restoration of New Testament Christianity demands a restoration of this distinction between individual and congregational action in benevolence.

The churches of the first century did all of their benevolent work in the

framework of local church organization. While these men are not called "deacons," they did the work of "deaconing" or "serving" (verse 2). Later, elders and deacons were appointed in every church (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1), and all benevolence (as well as all other congregational activities) was done under the oversight of the local elders assisted by the local deacons. A true restoration of New Testament Christianity demands a restoration of this local church organization for all congregational benevolent activities.

The churches of the first century sent aid to dependent churches, churches that were unable to provide for the necessities of their own members. The church in Antioch sent relief to "the brethren living in Judea . . . sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders" (Acts 11:29-30). Churches of Macedonia, Achaia, and Galatia sent a similar contribution to the church in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). There was no church or organization standing between the sending churches and the needy churches. In each of these cases (as in all scriptural transferring of money) the money was sent directly to where the need existed. A true restoration of New Testament Christianity demands a restoration of this sharing on the part of financially able churches with dependent churches.

There can be a restoration of congregational benevolence, but such depends on a restoration of: (1) love and concern for one another, (2) a willingness to sacrifice in behalf of the needy, (3) respect for the authority of God's word as it relates to benevolence and the God-ordained organization through which all congregational activities are to be performed, and (4) concern on the part of financially able churches for churches that cannot provide for their own. A restoration of New Testament Christianity is essential, but any such effort that fails to restore congregational benevolence is a movement that has missed the mark.

Jordan, Ontario, Canada, LOR 180

"Those early Christians sacrificed that every other Christian might have the necessities of life. They possessed a genuine love and concern for one another and for their fellowman. A true restoration of New Testament Christianity demands a restoration of this benevolent spirit."

never seen (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Those early Christians sacrificed that every other Christian might have the necessities of life. They possessed a genuine love and concern for one another and for their fellowman. A true restoration of New Testament Christianity demands a restoration of this benevolent spirit.

The Christians of the first century distinguished between individual and congregational responsibility. Paul wrote to Timothy, "If any woman who is a believer has dependent widows, let her assist them, and let not the church be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed" (1 Timothy

framework of local church organization. No boards of directors received contributions from churches. No boards were appointed to oversee church-financed benevolent organizations. The Christians at first brought their money to "the apostles' feet" that distribution to the needy might be accomplished through them (Acts 4:34-35). When the apostles needed assistance in this work, they suggested to the church, "But select from among you, brethren, seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task" (Acts 6:3). The men were selected and the work continued in the

RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY



Purity of Life

Wilson Copeland

SOME HAVE SUGGESTED THAT TWENTIETH century man faces a greater challenge to his moral purity than his spiritual brother of the apostolic age. One has but to open his eyes to see the variety of allurements that Satan puts before this present generation. Wickedness of every kind is rampant. Sexual lawlessness abounds. Drunkenness and drug abuse are at epidemic levels. Pornography is peddled to young and old through magazines, television, and movies. But are temptations any greater today than they were two thousand years ago? Are Satan's wiles more alluring in our present age? I doubt that they are. Historians have documented the great wickedness of ancient Greece and Rome. William Barclay states that chastity was a completely new virtue which Christianity introduced to the pagan world. Sexual relations before marriage and outside marriage were a common occurrence. Men had wives for the purpose of bearing and raising children, but kept mistresses for their pleasure. If the historian's analysis of those ancient cultures amid which Christianity was born even approximate the truth, the pagan world was truly decadent.

In the midst of this atmosphere, Christianity brought the highest standard of morality ever known to man. "Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desires" (Colossians 3:5). "Walk by the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). Twentieth century Christians can find encouragement in the fact that first century Christians overcame the world through their faithful obedience to the gospel of Christ (1 John 5:1-4).

And yet, in modern times worldliness is making a new assault upon Christianity. Such attacks have always come from two directions: "traditional worldliness" and "respectable worldliness." By traditional worldliness I mean those sins that one commonly associates with the word "wordliness"—fornica-

tion, adultery, lasciviousness, drunkenness, and other "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21). When I began preaching ten years ago, I felt that I did not need to address these topics very often, because "surely everyone knows that these things are wrong!" Unfortunately, I have learned that traditional worldliness still exists among God's people. We must continue to teach and admonish one another to "flee youthful lusts, and

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follow after righteousness" (2 Timothy 2:22).

"Respectable worldliness" may be defined as activities which are not in themselves sinful, but become sinful when they keep one from serving the Lord. Respectable worldliness was illustrated by Jesus by those who gave excuses for not coming to the great supper which had been prepared for them (Luke 14:15-24). There is nothing

inherently wrong with buying land, buying oxen, or marrying a wife. But if one allows these things to keep him from serving the Lord, he is guilty of respectable worldliness. This just may be the greatest problem faced by modern busy Christians.

When I think back about the young people who worshipped where we attended when I was in junior and senior high, I am saddened at the number of my classmates that are no longer faithful to the Lord. These young people were not lost to denominations. They did not join the Lutherans, Baptists or Moonies. They were lost to the world. They presently care more about their jobs, families, education, recreation, or pleasures of the world than they do about the Christ who died for them. In the eyes of the world, these are "respectable" people, but in God's eyes they are not worthy to partake of His supper (Luke 14:24).

If our lives are going to be pleasing to God we must determine to know His will and conform our lives to His pattern. Our outward actions proceed from the heart (Matthew 15:18-20), and this is where the transformation must begin (Romans 12:1-2). God's people of the first century had a God-centered attitude. They walked by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). They had the mind of the Spirit, realizing that the mind of the flesh is enmity with God (Romans 8:6-7). They set their minds upon things above, not on things upon the earth (Colossians 3:1-4). True followers of God will always have the attitude of Paul when he wrote, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20).

If we are to totally restore New Testament Christianity, we must restore more than immersion for the remission of sins and church autonomy. We must also restore purity of life. "Like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living: because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16).

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RESTORING NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

New Testament Enthusiasm

Jerry Fite

THE CHRISTIAN LIVES WITH EXUBERANCE and intensity. He serves his Lord with a "fervent spirit" (Romans 12:11). Luke-warmness disgusts his God. A Christian is not to merely do good works, he is to be "zealous of good works." He is not to simply love his brethren, he is to love them "fervently." These commands apply to all, not only to those with bubbling personalities. Enthusiasm is not merely a feeling, it is a decision.

Our word *enthusiasm* comes from a Greek term which literally means "god-insideness." By means of the gospel, God entered and encouraged first century hearts. Redemption from sin was ardent

Paul, we see ourselves as sinners, and break out in praise because our Savior is none other than "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God" (1 Timothy 1:15-17).

Men tend to become disinterested and lethargic toward their work when there are no more goals to reach. Also, enthusiasm dies when hope is gone. These two barriers to zeal in the Kingdom are avoided in the one hope of heaven. Throughout the Christian's life, the goal of heaven is always standing before him. He is constantly aware that a better life is awaiting his coming. With the resurrection of Christ, the Christian's

product that was designed for everyone in town? What true humanitarian would withhold information that he knew his fellow man could not "live without?" The gospel is the proven cure. Each person is a potential recipient. The Christian is excited by the limitless possibilities for eternal good.

The Christian does not lose his enthusiasm when setbacks occur. When he sins, he knows that true repentance and prayer immediately brings a new beginning. When he fails to convert sinners, and sees some of his fellow-servants fall away, the Christian remembers that there are limits to his responsibilities. He is not God, so he cannot change the seed. He is to spread the seed. He is to be an inviting light, not an interrogation-lamp forcing confessions. Paul knew that by giving himself and the gospel of Christ to others, he stood approved before God. Regardless of how others responded to the Good News, Paul knew that he was a "sweet savor" unto God.

Enthusiasm feeds upon itself. Whether Christians are worshipping together or living thousands of miles apart, their zeal can produce enthusiasm in one another. Paul, in the matter of giving, used the zeal of the Christians in Achaia to stir up eagerness in the hearts of the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 9:2). Enthusiasm can be productive in other areas of service as well. In one hour, a peppy song leader and a prepared teacher can relieve a headache that medicine could not accomplish in four hours. Enthusiastic singing, zealous teaching, and fervent prayers can turn scriptural songs, lessons, and prayers into edifying experiences. The Christian is not afraid to show his zeal, because he knows that his brother needs it.

The gospel is all one needs to create and sustain New Testament enthusiasm. By meditating upon its message and applying its principles, we can win souls to Christ, breathe life into dying churches, and turn worlds upside down. And that is exciting.

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"Enthusiasm is not merely a feeling, it is a decision. . . . By means of the gospel, God entered and encouraged first-century hearts. . . . Divine revelation was the substance of his passion, not misguided emotion. No gimmickry was needed to excite the Christian, for he enjoyed salvation in Christ."

news to souls condemned in darkness. Now, death could honestly be described as "gain." Divine revelation was the substance of his passion, not misguided emotion. No gimmickry was needed to excite the Christian, for he enjoyed salvation in Christ.

The Christian is enthusiastic every time he considers the attributes of the God who saved him. God did not need anything from man, for He created all things. With the Hebrew writer we marvel at the Creator, and with glowing appreciation we ponder, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" In his rebellion man did not deserve a second chance, but in Christ he had it. Like

spirits are raised because he knows that his hope is living and his inheritance is certain. Instead of being messengers of despair, trials and tribulations become stepping-stones to a stronger claim on heaven.

Since the gospel is for all men, and meets a need that we all have, the Christian is eager to share it wherever he goes. Every person he sees is a soul that needs saving. Yes, he is well aware that not everyone will accept the Christ. But he finds open doors because he concentrates on opportunities instead of being demoralized by adversaries (1 Corinthians 16:9). What salesman would not eagerly jump at the chance to sell a

That's Life!



Dee Bowman

IT SEEMS TO ME that if we spent as much time trying to find what's right about one another as we do trying to find what's wrong, we'd have so many friends we wouldn't have anybody else to fuss with.

* * *

EVERYONE ADMITS THE NEED FOR TRUTH. It suppresses ignorance, eradicates superstition, alleviates prejudice. It encourages progress, precipitates growth, promotes usefulness, and is basic to improvement. But for truth to be effective it must be applied to the little situations of life. It must come to affect our attitude on a daily basis and in the simplest circumstances. It must regulate our conduct even in the most volatile situations. And it must be carefully used so that those who come under our influence are constrained by it. It's really true that "little things mean a lot," isn't it?

* * *

THE FIRST NIGHT OF THE MEETING he came out and shook hands with me. After complimenting my effort and with a glint in his eye, he said, "I've got golf clubs and a tennis racket—take your pick!"

"I brought my racket," I said.

He picked me up on Thursday morning and we drove to the courts. They were nice. He looked almost comical in his little wrinkled hat and big-legged pants. "This will at least give me a little exercise," I said to myself.

Boy, was I wrong! Everywhere I hit the ball he'd been standing there ten minutes before it came down. And run! I ran all over the court only to have the dinky little shots he hit spin this way this time and that way the next. When the fracas was over I was beaten like the proverbial drum. I didn't know which fit the occasion best: "Never judge a book by its cover," or, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Both, you say? I guess you're right.

* * *

LIFE FOR ME is somewhat like maple syrup—sometimes a little sticky, but mighty sweet.

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL, December 29, 1981: "I praise God for:

my work;
my wonderful woman;
my wonderful children;
my friends;
my enemies.

My work is my joy; my woman is my help; my children bring me hope; my friends suffer me long, tolerating my successes as well as my failures; my enemies keep me humble. I thank God for them all."

* * *

A DEDICATED CHRISTIAN is not always the one who makes the most noise or is the one most visible or the one you hear the most about. The dedicated Christian is the one who lives his life for Christ without much fanfare and while seeking no accolades. He has time for the ridiculous questions of the little children. He is interested in those who are not popular. He loves the wealthy or the powerful or the popular, but not on account of what they have, or their prominent position, or what they can do—but because of who they are. He is a friend to the elderly, even to those who no longer have the physical or mental strength they once did. A dedicated Christian loves at all times, even when nobody's looking.

* * *

I LIKE WHAT SPIROS ZODHIATES SAID: "I am not what I ought to be; I am not what I hope to be; but, thanks be to God, I am not what I was."

The Content and Structure of Revelation (II)

L. A. Mott, Jr.

The trumpets were included in the sealed book (March, 1984). The rest of the action of Revelation up to chapter 20 does not advance beyond the seventh trumpet, but only amplifies what is already summarized in 11:15-19. But before this elaboration, the progress of the action of Revelation is suspended in chapters 12-14 in order to provide some information necessary to understanding the struggle between the church and its

The chief agents through which this wrath is expressed are a beast (king, 17:11) that comes up out of the sea (13:1-10) and another beast out of the earth that enforces the worship of the first beast (13:11-18).

Over against these enemies stand the Lamb and his faithful followers (14:1-5). The near approach of judgment is announced by three angels (14:6-13) and two visions of judgment are seen

proof that the bowls are an elaboration of the last trumpet lies in a comparison of 15:5 and 16:17-21 with 11:19. Every element of the judgment of the seventh trumpet reappears in the bowls—temple, ark of covenant, lightnings, voices, thunders, earthquake, hail.

Chapters 17-20:3 are a still further elaboration of certain details of this judgment—hence the fall of Babylon (chapters 17-18), the defeat of the beast and the false prophet (chapter 19) and the binding of Satan (20:1-3).

Are you beginning to grasp the structure of Revelation? It is like a great painting that covers a whole wall. You have to stand at the opposite wall to see it all. Then you walk up to it and get a closer look at details. Then you take out a magnifying glass and study certain aspects even closer.

So with Revelation. We are first shown the whole big picture—at least the main outlines. Then we are given a close look at details. Later some details will be magnified even more. Here and there visions are inserted to provide information needed for understanding the struggle the church faces.

Revelation is, therefore, not a continuous account of the history of the church through the ages. After 11:15-19, succeeding sections do not advance the action beyond the point reached there (until chapter 20), but focus in on details. The book provides an intensive treatment of a limited period of the church's history. It depicts the conflict between the church and its enemies, ending in the defeat of every enemy and with the martyrs, who only seemed to have met defeat, reigning on thrones for a thousand years (20:4-6). Then Satan is loosed only to be finally destroyed (20:7-10). Then comes the final judgment (20:11-15). The closing vision depicts the final realization of the purpose of the Creator (21:1-22:5). The Creator is on the throne (chapter 4). And He will not permit His purpose to be frustrated.

(Continued next month.)

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to grasp the structure of Revelation?
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So with Revelation."**

enemies.

This struggle is the earthly expression of the spiritual conflict between Christ and the devil. The devil is defeated at the cross (12:1-12)—so verse 10 explains the "war in heaven"—and is cast down to the earth where he rages against the church (verses 13-13:1a), "having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time" (verse 12). That explains the persecutions.

(14:14-20).

When the seven bowls of wrath are poured out (chapters 15-16), the wrath of God is finished (15:1). These seven bowls, therefore, are the final judgment against the persecutors. The seven bowls are not something entirely new. They are an elaboration of the judgment of the last trumpet (11:15-19). This judgment was not described in chapter 11 except for the brief summary at verse 19. The

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble" (9:9).

Is The Lord Your Refuge?

The word "refuge" used here in the familiar King James Version is translated by the term "high tower" in the American Standard Version; other versions render the original word as a "secure height" or "lofty retreat." The word literally means a "hill-fort." David uses it when he describes God in Psalms 144:2: "Blessed be the Lord, my strength . . . my goodness and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me."

David's use of the metaphor of God as a *refuge* or a *high tower* is likely due to his having often experienced safety in such places when he was fleeing from Saul. "And David abode in the wilderness in the strongholds, and remained in the hill-country in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand" (1 Samuel 23:14).

Have you ever felt the need of a place to escape, if only temporarily, from the pressing battles of life? The Christian life is a battle; sometimes we need to flee to the safety of God's refuge. God has always recognized this need of the faithful. They need a refuge, a place of safety to fly to in danger, where they may be protected, and escape from the enemy. God gave the Israelites cities of refuge (Numbers 35:13). He is described this way by Moses: "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee" (Deuteronomy 33:27). The Lord is truly a refuge as Isaiah said in his song of praise: "For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a

storm against the wall" (Isaiah 25:4).

What are some specific ways in which God serves as a refuge for me today? The Bible teaches that He is:

1. **A refuge against sin.** As a sinner I am helpless and undone before God. I can do nothing of merit to bring about my forgiveness. Therefore, left to myself, I am in the grasp of sin and the devil. But the gracious God has given me a *refuge* from this hopelessly lost condition. "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord" (Romans 7:24-25).

2. **A refuge against my enemies.** As a Christian I must fight the battle, and in fighting I will sustain some wounds. But God will not let me be defeated if I will fight faithfully. He catches me up above the battle; He protects me from the enemy. This is seen in the great statement of the psalmist: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies" (Psalm 23:5). Even while being surrounded by the enemy, the Christian is nevertheless sustained. His God provides a refuge! The riches of God's love are the provisions on which we feed; and these supplies are ministered to the soul in ways that the world cannot understand—even while the enemies prowl around. One of the greatest passages in all the New Testament is found in Hebrews 13:6: "So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what shall man do unto me?"

3. **A refuge from want.** The Christian has great promises from the Father. "Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5). As a Christian I know that God will take care of me. He will be a refuge in my life in times of trouble. All that I must do is love Him, trust Him and be faithful to Him. It is then that He says of me: "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name" (Psalm 91:14). Do you have troubles? Let the Lord set you on high!

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Woman's World

Equal Rights

Bette Wolfgang

Equal rights. The cause sounds noble, and is—if one understands some necessary limitations. Where can women turn to find equality? To legislatures and government agencies? While it is true that some kinds of inequalities have been redressed that way, ask any feminist if she's content—or ever will be.

Is there any other channel through which women may gain equal rights? Feminists and modernists scoff at the Biblical view of woman and her role. Their disdain arises both from their humanistic philosophy and from their failure to understand correctly the real meaning of Jesus' teachings about women.

(Galatians 3:26-27). Feminists who would retort, "How can you possibly be equal under a system which demands submission of a woman?" unfortunately misunderstand the New Testament idea of submission. We are *all*—male and female, old and young, rich and poor, great and small, master and slave—commanded to be in submission. Christ Himself was submissive: to God the Father, to His earthly parents, to religious leaders, to civil authorities (John 6:38-39; Luke 2:51; John 18:19-23; Matthew 22:15-22).

Submission is, partly, willingness to accept another's will and comply with it. Christ displayed such an attitude, not

By obedience and humility, Christ demonstrated His submissiveness (Hebrews 5:8-9). Because of His example, developing those same virtues in our own lives should not be burdensome, or cause for resentment and rebellion.

One reason that women have felt, erroneously, that submissiveness was solely their role, is that submission has too seldom been presented as a virtue necessary for *all* who would follow Christ. Christians in local churches are to submit to elders; children to their parents; slaves to their masters; citizens to civil government; and fellow Christians to each other (Hebrews 13:17; Ephesians 6:1-3, 5-6; Romans 13:1; Ephesians 5:21).

Some commands do apply specifically to women (1 Timothy 2:11-12). Wives are to be in subjection "to their own husbands" (1 Peter 3:1; Colossians 3:18). Again, choices are available. If one does not wish to be submissive to a husband, she can choose to remain unmarried. Submission implies voluntary action since no one can force another into an attitude of submissiveness (though forced, physical subjugation is possible).

In any system, order must be maintained, or chaos will result. God's order is given in 1 Corinthians 11:3, where Paul explains, "But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ" (NASB). Though certain specific instructions are given to women regarding the public worship of the church, she, on a personal level as an individual Christian, is the spiritual equal of man. She must turn to no mediator other than Christ, and is viewed as every other child of God, not according to her femaleness.

Where then is equality found? Only in Christ, in whom John says, "Beloved, now are we the children of God" (1 John 3:2, NASB). Rather than restriction, women in Christ can achieve true equality, freedom, and peace (Galatians 3:28; John 8:36; Philippians 4:7).

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"Where can we possibly go, then, to obtain equal rights? Only to the Lord, in whom 'there is neither male nor female' since 'all of you who were baptized into Christ . . . are all one in Christ Jesus.' "

Equality, when you really think about it, is largely a myth. Humans are, despite the noble phrases of our national documents, created quite unequal: in age, intelligence, beauty, health, strength, wealth—and rights. Women are bound by natural laws of biology, reproduction, and function to be different—usually, to fulfill the primary function of caretaker of children. Equality, in this life, on this earth, is a mirage.

Where can we possibly go, then, to obtain equal rights? Only to the Lord, in whom "there is neither male nor female" since "all of you who were baptized into Christ . . . are all one in Christ Jesus"

considering equality with the Father something "to be grasped" or tenaciously retained at all costs, but rather voluntarily divested Himself, humbled Himself, and "became obedient to the point of death" (Philippians 2:5-9). Was this a "natural" inclination which came easily to Him? Was He in any way inferior to the Father? Was He less intelligent, less capable of making decisions? Did God force Him into a lesser position? Not at all—Christ had a choice. He voluntarily chose to fulfill the Father's will and submitted Himself, trusting the Father to reinstate Him at the proper time (Philippians 2:9-11).

Mining The Scriptures

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

The Sermon on the Mount

Beatitudes: A Gospel for Losers

"We become forgetful," writes Malcolm Muggeridge, "that Jesus is the prophet of the losers', not the victors' camp, the one who proclaims that the first will be last, that the weak are the strong and the fools are the wise" (*The End of Christendom*, p. 56). Nowhere is this fact more evident than in the beatitudes. As we have already noted in our preceding study, emptiness, not fullness, is the key to happiness.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness" (5:6). The word "hunger" in this beatitude is the same as that used by Matthew in the preceding chapter (4:2) when speaking of Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness. Since such desperate hunger is largely foreign to our experience, much in this metaphor may be lost on us. It speaks of profound spiritual starvation which is leading to death. But the parallel is not absolute. There is a fundamental difference between being stomach-hungry and heart-hungry. Even the most insensitive people are moved by the hunger of the body, yet there seem to be few who recognize the hunger of the spirit and the void that sin produces. Spiritually speaking, men resemble the half-dead corpses of Dachau and Belsen, but they stubbornly refuse to acknowledge the haunting meaninglessness of life without God. Not all those in the "far country" have the sanity to confess, like the prodigal, that they "perish here with hunger" (Luke 15:17)! Such individuals continue to search mindlessly for some better "husk" to fill the emptiness. Those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" have chosen to face their desperate need for what it is, and to seek the food that answers to it.

The "righteousness" these displaced and sin-burdened souls seek is first of all the righteousness of a right relationship with God through forgiveness and justification (Romans 5:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:20-21), and, secondly, the concrete righteousness of a transformed life (Romans 6:8; 8:29). They not only want to feel right but to do right. Both these ideas of righteousness are present in the sermon (5:7 and 5:10, 20-48; 6:1). God is determined not only to forgive us but to change us, to make us partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). And he has assured us that we are going to be like Him (Matthew 5:48). What a wonderful hope!

There is in every human being a built-in and inescapable need for God. This God-hunger is movingly expressed by David while a fugitive from Saul: "My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, In a dry and weary land, where no water is" (Psalm 63:1). Sin has put in every man a God-shaped emptiness. Characteristically,

we try to ease our pain by pouring in all kinds of unbelievable trash. But we had as well try to pour Niagara Falls into a tea cup as to seek to satisfy our God-akin spirits with mere "things" and carnal thrills. Unable to meet our fundamental need, money and pleasure and even worldly wisdom become the basis for an insatiable appetite that leaves us empty, unfulfilled and burnt-out (Ecclesiastes 5:10-11). We will never be able to have enough, feel enough, or know enough, to find contentment without God. What we need is righteousness and, as Jesus says, those that long for it are destined to know a transcendent satisfaction and peace—"they shall be filled" Matthew 5:6).

There is in this beatitude a call for a change of priorities. For many of us a right relationship with God is seen as an important part of "the good life" which every well-rounded individual should address, but it is certainly not the whole of things. Jesus says that it must be more than a vital interest—it must become the reigning passion of our existence. All that truly hungry people can think of is food.

"Blessed are the pure in heart" (5:8). J. B. Phillips translates this phrase, "Blessed are the utterly sincere," and this would appear to reflect the true meaning of our Lord's words. The purity in this beatitude certainly does not refer to perfect righteousness of life, and given the fact that attitudinal qualities (things we must do as opposed to what God does) dominate this part of the sermon, it is unlikely that it refers principally to the purity of a forgiven heart. It is far more probable that it speaks of the purity of a single-minded devotion (Matthew 6:22-24; 2 Corinthians 11:2), an attitude which is possible even for sinners (Luke 8:15). James makes this use of purity when he urges: "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts ye double-minded" (James 4:8). The true vision of God will not be granted to the shrewd and calculating who play dishonest games; or to the double-minded who can never quite put both feet in the kingdom (James 1:7-8), but to those who are absolutely honest and single of heart toward God. They will see God (5:8), not as the Jews at Sinai, but in the full understanding of an intimate relationship with Him (John 3:3-5; 14:7-9). It is an old question with an old answer. "Who," says David, "shall ascend into the hill of the Lord . . . and . . . stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:3-4). If you want to see God with your whole heart, you will. People like that don't let *anything* stand in their way.

(To be continued.)

Ways That Work

Darrell Hymel

If we are making an attempt to restore the Christianity of New Testament times, we must not forget to imitate their methods of evangelism and making disciples. If the New Testament is a book authored by the Holy Spirit and therefore a book for all centuries, the ways that worked then, will also work now.

There is a simple but yet dynamic pattern laid out in the Scriptures that will guarantee our acceptance with God as laborers in the kingdom. Our first point to understand is this: our acceptance with God is not dependent upon the number of souls that are harvested, but whether we have planted the seed. Paul was just as much a bond-slave of Christ at Athens, where the response was minimal, as he was at Ephesus where the "word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing" (Acts 19:20). We must sow the seed "in season and out of season," when it is convenient and when it is not, when dozens are being baptized and when there are none. How many times have we sowed some seed and then when we do not see immediate results, we stop laboring stedfastly? How successful would a farmer be if he ceased his labor when he did not receive a harvest immediately after sowing? If we would learn how to measure success, we would not grow weary in well-doing. Our job is to plant and water, not to give life. We can no more force a sinner to live, than we can force the green stalk out of the grain. Let us sow in faith, knowing that His word will not return unto Him void (Isaiah 55:11). The great success story of the church in the first century which we are to imitate, is not that every person was converted—they were not—but that every creature heard the gospel story (Colossians 1:23; Acts 19:10). The key to successful Christian labor today is to "be stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The success of Paul's labors is outlined for us in Acts 14:21-23: "And after they had *preached the gospel* to that city and

Preach the Gospel

had *made many disciples*, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, *strengthening the souls* of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.' And when they had *appointed elders* for them in every church, having *prayed* with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." To follow Paul in these five steps will insure God's approval of our labor and most certainly will produce the same results.

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If the results are not the same today, we can be sure that something in this plan is being left out. In my judgment, it is needless to talk about the last four points if we are failing to preach the gospel. Many times the gospel is not preached as it should be by each Christian, simply because we don't think it will work in the twentieth century like it did then. Maybe we think it was easier during a time of miracles. It is true that multitudes flocked after Jesus when He fed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, but not very many were true disciples (John 6:66). Jesus made it plain that if men would not listen to the writings of Moses, they would not listen

even if someone rose from the dead (Luke 16:31). We must comprehend that in the first century, the gospel was God's power to save, and we have the same gospel today. The power is the same, man is the same, and the obstacles are the same. If the results are not the same it is because we are not sowing.

When the Sanhedrin summoned Peter and John, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:18). If the apostles had obeyed that command, the resurrection of Jesus Christ would have had no power, the blood of Jesus would have been shed for nought, the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ would have died right there. No government official has given such a command today, yet the gospel remains locked in our buildings. We must become convinced of this cause-effect relationship: when first-century Christians taught the word, the number of disciples increased. Compare Acts 4:2 with 4:4; 5:25,28,42 with 6:1; and take note of 6:7.

Too often when our hearts are moved to want to convert the lost, we want to "organize." "Personal" work begins and ends with a "group" meeting at the building to discuss how to visit a cold, two-year-old list of names. Effective teaching of the gospel in the first century did not result from "grouping together," but from being "scattered abroad" (Acts 8:1-5). We must stop emphasizing "how to," and start emphasizing faith as the chief ingredient of successful soul-winning. We need to have the same spirit of faith that was in the apostles: "We also believe, therefore also we speak" (2 Corinthians 3:13). As important as knowledge may be, it cannot replace the spirit of the Samaritan woman who with limited knowledge said, "Come see a man" (John 4:29) and many believed in Him because of the word of the woman (verse 39). The simple knowledge of the great need of salvation led Cornelius to to "call together his relatives and close friends" (Acts 10:24). This is the way that works.

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Some Observations On The Canon

Luther W. Martin

The word *canon* means a reed or a measuring-rod, similar to a "cane pole." It has become specifically applied to the closed list of the books of the Old and New Testaments, those inspired of God. Thus, the "canonical books" are those whose contents came from the inspired minds of the prophets and apostles, while the non-canonical or "apocryphal" are spurious or of doubtful authenticity.

There were numerous apocryphal writings that were widely circulated in the centuries before Christ, as well as many spurious writings that were composed and circulated in the several centuries following the birth of Christ. But there is much evidence that the Old Testament canon was completed with the writing by the prophet Malachi. The Hebrew canon never did include the additional books that in 1546 were decreed as "canonical" by the Catholic Council of Trent.

Testimony of the Historian Josephus

"We have not an innumerable multitude of books, disagreeing from, and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain the record of all the past time; which are justly believed to be divine. And of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws, and the tradition of the origin of mankind until his death. This interval of time was little short of 3,000 years. But as to the time from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, King of Persia, who reigned after Xerxes, the Prophets, who were after Moses, wrote down what was done in their time in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. It is true, our history hath been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but hath not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers; because there hath not been an exact succession of Prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to these books of our own nation is evident from what we do; for, during so many ages as have already past, no one hath been so bold as to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or

There are good reasons
for accepting the present
books of the Bible.

to make any change in them; but it is become natural for all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them" (Josephus, *contr. Apion*, book i. sect. 8. This quotation is also to be found in Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* lib. iii. c. 9,10). It is interesting that the twenty-two books of the Old Testament accepted by the Hebrews corresponded with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Cardinal Bellarmine's Testimony

"All these books (i.e., Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and the Maccabees) are rejected by the Jews, as the blessed Jerome testifies. Almost all the heretics of this time follow the opinion of the Jews" (Bellarmine, *de verbo Dei*, lib. 1. c. 10. de libris Tobiae, Judith, Sapientiae, Ecclesiastici, et Maccabaeorum). Bellarmine lists among the individuals who followed the opinions of the Jews Luther, Calvin, and other Protestant reformers.

Testimony of

Roman Catholic Historian Du Pin

In Du Pin's work entitled: "Complete History of the Canon," he suggests that the Canon of the Jews was probably drawn up by Ezra and Nehemiah. He further states: "There are some authors who pretend that the Jews have since made one or more canons; that they have added to the former books of Tobit, Judith, Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom and the Maccabees; but this is not founded on the testimony of any creditable author; and to me it seems plain that the Jews had no other canon besides that of Ezra, nor acknowledged any books as sacred but what it contains. For what can be opposed to the testimony of Josephus, St. Jerome, and St. Epiphanius, who assert this in positive terms?" (Du Pin's *History of the Canon*, book i. c. 1. sec. 2).

Testimony from The Catholic Encyclopedia

In an article under the heading "Canon of Holy Scriptures, the *Encyclopedia* states: "St. Jerome cast his weighty suffrage on the side unfavourable to the disputed books. In appreciating his attitude we must remember that Jerome lived long in Palestine, in an environment where everything outside the Jewish Canon was suspect, and that, moreover, he had an excessive veneration for the Hebrew text, the *Hebraica veritas* (Hebrew truth) as he called it. In his famous 'Prologus Galeatus', or Preface to his translation of Samuel and Kings, he declares that everything not Hebrew should be classed with the apocrypha, and explicitly says that Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobias, and Judith are not in the Canon. These books, he adds, are read in the churches for the edification of the people, and not for the confirmation of revealed doctrine" (*Catholic Encyc.*, Vol. III, p. 272.).

Further Considerations

Other early writers, called by the Roman Church "Fathers," who rejected the apocryphal books, included: Melito of Sardis, 170 A.D.; Origen, 200 A.D.; Athanasius, 330 A.D.; Hilary of Poitiers, 350 A.D.; Epiphanius, 360 A.D.; Gregory Nazianzen, 390 A.D.; Amphilocheus of Iconium, 390 A.D.; and Rufinus, 400 A.D.

The Roman Catholic Council of Trent that finally decreed that the apocryphal books should be added to the Old Testament Canon, met in three sessions. The first segment of the Council of Trent, April 8, 1546, was the occasion for the Decree that was the "first infallible and effectually promulgated declaration on the Canon of the Holy Scriptures" by the Catholic Church. This decree blindly endorsed the Latin Vulgate, including its errors, and pronounced an anathema upon anyone who concluded otherwise. In the following seventeen Sessions, this Council contributed more to the formation of the Roman Catholic Church as it is now designed than perhaps any other event in history.

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Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Reared To Be A Soldier

Timothy—perennially young on inspiration's page, ever "an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). We marvel that one so young would be chosen by Paul to accompany him on his journey (Acts 16:3). We marvel at his willingness to go after seeing Paul stoned and left for dead in his own home town, knowing the strict discipline Paul would expect of every companion and realizing that he was abandoning whatever career he had in mind to suffer hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

As we admire his unfeigned faith, however, we must not forget that it dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). What questions must have filled the heart of Eunice as her son, probably in his late teens, was considering Paul's invitation! "Where will they go? How long will he be away? What will he have to eat? What kind of accommodations will he have at night? What dangers will he face?" No answers were available, even if she asked the questions. Some of her friends, even in the church, may have fanned her fears and questioned the wisdom of his going. Yet, if she raised one objection there is no indication of it. Doubtless, she gave him her blessing and her prayers. Considering Eunice, Timothy becomes more believable.

Our modern world is not without its Timothys. Most older preachers can name some—young soldiers fighting the good fight of faith, serving the King sacrificially, scarcely known by the multitudes yet far more worthy of honor than heroes of the athletic field or TV screen.

Have you heard of Tommy Holley? Tom grew up in the church in North Birmingham, Alabama. Becoming a Christian early in life, he used every opportunity to increase his usefulness in the Lord's church. Finishing his college course, he began work in a rubber plant but he knew from the beginning that this was not what he wanted. He wanted to preach the gospel and when an opportunity arose he eagerly accepted, though the post of duty was relatively isolated and the pay barely sufficient for a meager livelihood.

As Tom increased in experience, he sought greater opportunities for usefulness. When Gardner and Beverly Hall decided to go to Argentina to establish a church in Buenos Aires, Tom, still single, began preparing himself

in Spanish to go with them. After the church was begun and the Halls returned to the States, Tom remained to work with the little group meeting there. His friendly way has endeared him to the people of the community and all that is necessary for a visiting American to find a welcome among them is to be identified as "Tom's amigo." He is now in his fifth year of work in that country.

If such young men are worthy of more honor than they receive, so also are their mothers in whom, so often, their unfeigned faith first dwelt. Many wondered how Tom's mother, Faye, would react to his initial decision to go to South America. Then, when she announced that she was going to visit him, the questions were multiplied. You see, Tom would not meet her in a fine car to drive her about the city; Tom has no car. She would not find him living in a comfortable air-conditioned house or "ministering" to a large congregation of which she could return and boast to her friends. Rather, she would find him still struggling a bit with his Spanish, preaching to a congregation of six members meeting in a store-front, and living in the back of the store in quarters that would hardly be acceptable to any preacher in America. Surely enough to try the faith of any mother!

"I'm so thankful for what Tommy is doing," she exulted as she returned home. "He gets discouraged at times, but I don't know what would happen to that little church if he came home. I hope he can stay until it is strong enough to stand on its own."

There are Timothys today because there are Loises and Eunices. Paul wrote to Timothy: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control" (1 Timothy 2:11-15). Many today wonder what was meant by these words. Timothy must have known. Was not Paul saying that womanhood, though forbidden the public platform, may still be saved as, in the faithfulness and fruitfulness of her offspring, her own faith and influence are reflected?

God bless mothers like Faye as through sons like Tommy they "shine as lights in the world."

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

My Friend, Steve

A Good Name

I recently made the mistake of asking my friend Steve Cawthon, who works as an evangelist in Fayetteville, to write a recommendation for me. I had been asked to perform a wedding ceremony and I had to offer some evidence to the state that I was a preacher. Steve provided me with the following testimonial: "We, the undersigned, do hereby verify, however reluctantly, that David E. Harrell of Fayetteville, Arkansas, is an evangelist of sorts, and as such is somewhat qualified to perform the duties thereunto appertaining. We must acknowledge that those who hold such an opinion of Mr. Harrell are less numerous than those of contrary opinion. Although we do not allow Mr. Harrell to preach from our pulpit, we do not object to his

preaching from someone else's pulpit. Nor do we wish to prevent him from conducting wedding ceremonies. We do not want him preaching our funerals."

The moral, you ask? "He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction" (Proverbs 27:10). Or, maybe, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25).

Remembering "The Blazers"

Speaking of Steve Cawthon, the following is another of his renditions:

"Do you remember 'The Blazers'?" They were a rock-and-roll band of the 1960's, contemporary with the Beatles and the Beach Boys. Actually, not many people remember us.

We were all Christians and high school students when we formed the band. We would frequently get together after worship services and practice the latest numbers. We got pretty good. At least, we thought so, and so did our mothers. We were just waiting for the rest of the world to recognize our talents. Then it would be on to the recording studios, concerts, sports cars, fame and fortune.

"While we waited on our big break to stardom, we played at little get-togethers, parties, and school functions. Then one day the big opportunity knocked at our door. We were invited to play at the local country club dance. We all had serious scruples against attending dances and other parties where liquor was served. But this seemed different. This was our big break. In the future we could be

more choosy, but when you're on your way up, you have to make a few allowances here and there. Of course, we had to figure out how to do it without our parents finding out.

"In the midst of our fervent calculating, our drummer clumsily blurted out a statement which jolted us all—'It still wouldn't be right.' I wish all young people could have such a friend. He did for me what probably could not have been accomplished by any parent, preacher, or elder. 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend' (Proverbs 27:6).

"We turned down the invitation to play at the dance. I've felt good about it ever since. But that's why you've heard of the Beatles and the Beach Boys—but not The Blazers."

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In Search of a Better Me

The number of health spas in this country has increased significantly in the past several years. The number of persons involved in body building programs is on the rise, and especially among women, say the experts. People everywhere have become health food advocates and there is a new emphasis on proper nutrition in nearly every household. Vitamin sales are at an all-time high. Cosmetics of various sorts for both men and women are being sold even in discount and convenience stores. There are products for healthier hair, whiter teeth, prettier feet, stronger nails, softer lips, and firmer thighs. And the tummy tuck and face lift have created such a demand that there are now doctors who specialize in such cosmetic procedures.

Why all of this? Is it in search of a better me? Or is it just that we are afraid of growing old?

It is right and advisable to keep ourselves fit, not only to be acceptable to others, but also to protect our own very sensitive self-image. But at best it seems to me a futile exercise. Age causes the eyes to begin to have that tired-but-wise look, no matter what you do. By exercising everyday for perhaps quite a lot of time a 60-year-old man can have a flat tummy like Jack LaLanne. But when he does, what happens is that he looks like a 60-year-old man with a flat tummy just like Jack LaLanne. And actually, he looks out of place because 60-year-old men don't have flat tummies—at least most of them don't. And who wants a 30-year-old cosmetically-reconstructed face on a 50-year-old body? It just doesn't match up. Furthermore, I worry about the fellow who can't distinguish between hair that just didn't get gray yet and the kind furnished by some Macedonian formula.

Besides, what's wrong with getting old? What's wrong with playing in the over-40's tournament, or having grandchildren? Why should I be so concerned about my bald spot that I can't enjoy the wisdom acquired while I was getting it there? I don't like glasses,

but it's better than not seeing. I don't like dental work, but I sure do like steak. I hate the body aches I get after I play tennis, but I don't dislike it enough to stop playing. And once in awhile I beat somebody younger than I am. Boy, what a kick!

The church needs older people. And it gripes me that older people do not offer themselves more willingly than they do. Why is that? Mainly, it's because, as Dr. Doris G. Jonas has said, "we are immersed in a cult of youth." We should not feel guilty for being over forty. But we do. Almost every health care product on the market today is intended to "make you look years younger." It's a shame how much wisdom and experience goes to waste because of the psychological inferiority created in older folks by today's advertising. According to them it's almost a sin to be old! And so those who have crossed over into that geriatric land of protruding waistlines and wrinkled visages decide that their value to the cause of Christ just eroded away along with their youth. Who said so?

Doesn't anybody ever think about character? It seems to me that what you are should be eminently more important than how you look. And that integrity, benevolence, and faithfulness ought to be a better criterion for judging a man than whether or not he can still wear a size 34. I know some mighty good folks who are not particularly pretty. Do you know Ed Harrell? And no matter how slick your suits are, if there's not something inside the suit, you've just wasted your money.

So stand up, all you people over forty! You're important! We need you. Whoops! I mean *they* need *us*. Stop apologizing for your age and get to work. Find a place for your abilities and experience and fill it. Look out of yourself and begin again to be a part. And, another thing—stop faking it and act your age!

Well, I'm off to the spa. I've gotta do something about this ponch. Honey, have you seen my glasses?

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Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 5235 94th St., Lubbock, TX 79424

Clarifying our concept of business ethics

Dear brother Osby Weaver,

I read your article on business ethics with some interest [February, 1984, page 12]. I appreciated your comments. I would like to add to it, though, something noted in another article by Almon Williams in the same issue: "Secularism is a much more subtle enemy to true religion than false religion." The error associated with some "religious" concepts of "business" in our culture is indeed a most subtle attack on the Christian's thinking.

The concept set forth by your illustration on *generosity* actually conveys a false idea of the Bible concept of generosity and sacrifice. I do not know if you intended it to, and I would rather think charitably than not. So take my observations here as exhortation rather than any kind of a rebuke.

First, the concept of Matthew 5:38-41 does not require a Christian to endure evil or overlook it. Neither does it require the Christian to give approval to behavior displayed in the illustration—seeking to take advantage of another—by deference and accommodation to evil intent (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13). The passage enjoins a willingness to sacrifice and not to demand what is our right. That is something only the individual can give. It cannot be demanded by another. Jesus was teaching the concept of grace in our treatment of others. We overcome evil by the practice of good behavior; wholesome, useful, beneficial behavior that will influence and change other's behavior (Romans 12:21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15).

An illustration that might demonstrate this comes from a brother in my own experience. He rented his house, and when he later sold the home, his renter sued him over what the renter felt was a breach in contract. Actually the renter wanted a percentage of the sale value of the home because he felt his improvements had been responsible for the increase in the property's value. Not content to sue, the renter also began to cast aspersions upon the Christian's dedication to the Lord. He spoke evilly of him in the community, and degraded the church for having such "lying thieves." In court, the judge, after hearing the case, found on the Christian's behalf and rebuked the renter for malicious prosecution. As the two men went

out of the court, the Christian stopped the renter. The renter was still angry and mumbling at the decision.

"What do you want?"

"Here's the \$500 you wanted, Jim."

"What for? You heard the judge!"

"Because I want to show you something about the grace of God. You're wrong, as wrong as can be. But, don't ever call me a liar or a thief. This gift to you is to show you that my name, and my relationship with you is more important than money."

The man did not appreciate it—and there was no financial return for his generosity. The value was for the Christian in acting like God, "that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye?" (Matthew 5:45ff?)

The service station owner may get the idea that being generous and sacrificial "pays dividends" as I heard one businessman put it. Jesus was paid no "dividend" for his sacrifice. All it got him was the contempt and spite of his enemies, and the disappointment of his friends. More people have rejected God's grace than ever appreciated it. The "return" for giving away our rights is that we become "partakers of the divine nature." Keep up the good work.

Jeffery Kingry
Milton, VT

The one page in our Bible that is not inspired

We all know the Scriptures are inspired but we all have at least one page in our Bibles put there by man. It most certainly is not inspired and at best some of us might suppose that its placement is the result of the Providence of God. Of course, the page to which I refer is the page separating the Old Testament from the New Testament. As far as I can determine nothing like it existed in the original.

My question is very simple: Should this page be here at all and, if so, is it in the proper place?

There are several reasons why I ask this question. I will only give a couple here. It seems to me that the baptism of John is certainly not New Testament doctrine. But if we say this New Testament title page is in

the right place then the baptism of John ends up in the New Testament.

I have come to believe that the teaching of Jesus during his personal ministry applied with equal force (all except the institution of the Lord's Supper the night before he died) to those to whom he preached and to us today. I believe this because no one has been able to convince me that the Son of God spent his entire public life preaching something which was not applicable to those to whom he preached! If the teachings of Jesus apply with equal force to both those under the Old Testament and those under the New then it seems to me to be some kind of error to put all of this teaching behind the title page of the New Testament.

I have spent a lot of time studying this question and have not come to any conclusion which completely satisfies me. Perhaps you can help me. I not only enjoy your magazine, but better than that I believe I am getting a lot out of it.

Bill Geren
Fayetteville, AR

Editor's Note: Anyone out there want to tackle this one?

Information sought

Anyone who knows of any brethren who live in or near State College, Pennsylvania, please contact Ross Spears, Rt., 1, Box 121A, Alvaton, KY 42122. Phone (502) 781-4947. I will be studying at Penn State University and would like to work and worship with brethren who do not support or endorse institutionalism and the social gospel. Anyone who knows of the nearest local church to State College, PA, please let me know that also.

Ross Spears
Alvaton, KY

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

It's All in the Mind

Everyone who reads the Bible does not come out at the same place. That is an indisputable fact. We may speculate about why it is so — whether the book itself is unclear or contradictory, or truth is multi-faceted and subjective, or human beings are incapable of acting on commonly understood instructions.

I suggest another possibility — a kind of psychological determinism. What one understands from any communication is determined by the character of his own mind. As ideas and objects filter through our minds they have their own identity but they are shaped by the mind that receives them. One mind sees grandeur and challenge in a forlorn and chilling fog or the music of Wagner, another is moved to despair. In Matthew 13 Jesus told a story on this theme — a story about psychological determinism. The message He preached, He said, would be differently received by different minds. It was and it is.

It is clear, I am convinced, that all major religious controversies are only half-rooted in the Bible. They are half-rooted in men's diverse minds. In my book, *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ*, I observed that the fragmenting of the restoration movement in the nineteenth century signaled not a breakdown in the restoration concept but, rather the dividing of the mind of the movement.

For instance, in 1885, conservative preacher James Thornberry announced: "The only way to sustain Christianity . . . is for all of us to say and believe that all God's statements are facts and truths . . . and that all his commandments are to be believed and obeyed literally." A more moderate view of scriptural authority was presented by Missouri preacher M. M. Goode: "The Bible contains but few specific details. . . . In regard to the methods employed for preaching the gospel to the world, and all benevolent ministrations of the church, and all

aids to its service and worship, Christians have no positive specifications and they must be governed by general laws and principles applied according to their best judgment." A genuinely liberal attitude was expressed by Missouri preacher George T. Smith in 1893: "A principle may set aside an apostolic precept. It may brush aside an apostolic decree. We do that constantly. We follow the apostolic example whenever we like it; when we do not, we depart from it." (See Harrell, *Social Sources*, pp. 8, 10, 14.)

It could hardly be a surprise to us that people with such different minds would eventually end up in different churches. The conservative attitude led people to practice only those things they believed were specifically authorized — confident that God had provided for all of man's needs. The moderates continued to mouth the old slogans but they no longer looked to the Bible for the same sorts of instruction. Liberals openly affirmed that reason ruled revelation.

Major divisions in God's kingdom have always been rooted in such fundamental differences in attitude. It is true that people of like mind often squabble, quibble and split, but those massive generational rifts that periodically divide Christians come when churches become uncomfortably filled with conflicting mindsets.

The Bible is replete with the descriptions of those minds which God finds acceptable and unacceptable — the "high-minded," "double-minded," "pure in heart" and "poor in spirit." Fortunately, we are told that character of our minds is not predetermined, nor is it irreversible. We can change our minds and control them — countless reformed derelicts attest to it. Anyone who understands, honors and is led by the Scriptures will have listened to the call: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

A Good and Happy Thought

EDITOR'S NOTE: On April 2, 1855, from the Steamboat "Sciota," Charles D. Hurlbutt wrote to Alexander Campbell, expressing his appreciation for the blessings of God. The letter is expressive, touching. I could not but share it with our readers.

Beloved Brother Campbell,

My reading, this evening, has supplied me with the following reflections, which I convert into an essay under the above heading.

We should reflect on the superiority of the bounties of our heavenly Father, over those of our earthly friends, not only in their number and quality, but especially in their unremitting constancy. The dearest friends only think of us occasionally; nor can we be so unreasonable as to expect to be the constant object of their attention. If they assist us under the immediate pressure of distress, their cares are afterwards remitted.

Many, besides us, have a claim upon their kindness, and they could not invariably attend to us without being unjust to others. If a man were to lay out his whole stock of affection upon one individual, how many duties must he neglect; how many claims must he slight; how much injustice must he commit; of how much ingratitude would he be guilty! And as an earthly friend cannot divide his benefits, or even the common acts of kindness, among an indefinite number, and as human means have limits, so his benevolence can generally be little more than good will. But the exhaustless fund of infinite love can never be diminished. Though the distribution is universal; though the diffusion is as wide as his rational creation; though the continuance is as durable as his own eternity, the beneficence of Almighty power needs not, like his creatures, deduct from one because it is liberal to another.

Our kindest friend may not always know our secret sorrows, and with the utmost goodness of intention, cannot apply a balsam where he does not know there is a wound: or it may be a wound deeper than human skill can reach, or human kindness cure. Again: our weaknesses may often weary, and sometimes disgust, even an attached friend; but it is the feeling of these very infirmities, with which our divine High Priest is so tenderly touched. His compassion arises from a deep and intimate sense of sympathy; for he was in all points tempted like we are, yet in no point did he sin.

It is, in this view, that we become so personally interested in the attributes of God; that they come in so completely in aid of our necessities, and to the supply of our comforts. As his omniscience brings him fully acquainted with all our wants, and his omnipotence enables him to relieve them, so his immortality is pledged for ours, and ensures to us the perpetuity of our blessings. What a glorious idea, that the attributes of the self-dependent and everlasting God are laid out in the service of his children!

In gratitude for all his mercies, I abide.

Affectionately yours in his beloved Son,

Charles D. Hurlbutt

Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

Allowing Christ To Control Our Lives

When one becomes a Christian he experiences a wonderful release. He honestly opens himself up to Jesus Christ and confesses his sin, but as he progresses as a Christian he sometimes tries to cover up his self-conflict. This is futile, for we must deal with who we are, face the truth about ourselves, and realize that the Christian life cannot be lived by our own power. It *can* be lived in the *power of Christ* (Galatians 2:20; Philippians 4:13).

Paul seems to have faced the same problem that every Christian experiences: "For what I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do . . . for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Romans 7:15,18,NKJV).

According to Paul there are within every Christian two very powerful forces at work. One seeks to drag us downward; the other seeks to lift us upward. This dichotomy—this inward struggle—can only be resolved when we allow Christ to reach deep into our lives and free us from the bondage which sin brings.

The Bible uses several terms to describe our carnal nature. Sometimes it calls it "the flesh" or "the old man." Paul explains it this way: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Paul says that the only way out of this dilemma is "through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 7:25).

A modern-day Christian has said: "At first I thought the Christian life was *easy*. A little later on I came to see that it was *difficult*. Finally I became so frustrated that I discovered it was *impossible*!" Do you see living the Christian life as *difficult* or even *impossible*? If so, it may be that you have not really given your *self* to Christ—you have not relinquished to Him the control of your life.

Think for a moment of the life that Christ lived on this earth. What was the secret of His relationship with His Father while He was here? It can be summed up in one phrase—*complete submission*. The success of Christ's life was His total dependence upon His Father who worked in and through Him. In every situation He related

it to His Father's ability; thus He told the people who complained about His healing on the Sabbath, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John 5:19).

We need this same submission to Christ in our own lives today. John says, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). As God lived through Christ, so Christ longs to live in us. This is the beating heart of it all. Christ in us, living at the center of our being, displaying His power in every area of our lives.

Doesn't that take a great load off our personalities? No frantic effort or grinding struggle—simply letting Christ live His life within our beings. When we really allow Christ to have absolute control over our lives, we enjoy a spiritual freedom which enables us to live with poise, dignity and power. Christ's personality so penetrates our own that we need less and less to pull our own wills into harmony with His. The two wills mingle and move as one.

Problems with self often come because we are carnal Christians. When we allow self to be in control, we necessarily experience conflict, bondage and despair. We become fragmented persons trying to make the best of both worlds. Someone has described it this way: "This is how the carnal man makes decisions. He calls all his fragmented selves to a committee meeting. He has a religious self, a social self, an economic self, a family self, and others. He seeks to chair the board' but no one seems to agree. Whatever is under consideration, his various 'selves' pull in the direction of their own interests. What seems to be best religiously is a poor move financially. A decision is reached but it is never unanimous. He has sought to have a *democracy* in his inner life. What he needs is a *Christocracy* (total Christ rule)."

What is the secret of overcoming the downward pull of the carnal nature? It is simply letting Christ live His life in me! I must stop fighting, stop vacillating, stop struggling. If I will simply let Christ rule at the center of my being He will sustain me every single moment of my day.

Understanding the Bible

Luther G. Roberts

From the various opinions concerning what the Bible teaches and from the religious state of the world, it is evident that people do not understand the Bible or all see the Bible the same. Why is this? It is not because God is unable to give a revelation of Himself, for He is all-powerful. It surely is not because God is unwilling to give a revelation of Himself and His will, for He is a merciful and beneficent heavenly Father. The truth is that when the Bible is understood it will be understood alike by different people. When people see the teaching of the Bible differently at least one and perhaps all do not understand the Bible. God is not a God of confusion and He has not given a book that causes confusion. The cause of the confusion is in men and not in God's revelation.

Man is commanded in the Bible to understand the will of the Lord. Paul wrote to the saints of Ephesus, "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). Would the Holy Spirit command people to understand the will of the Lord if it could not be done? Surely He would not. Again, Paul commanded Timothy, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). These scriptures demand an understanding of the will of the Lord. They show that the word of God can be understood by men.

But *why* do men not understand the Bible alike? Well, there are different reasons:

1. One is that people do not study the Bible. The Bible cannot be understood unless it is studied. It must be read and we must think and meditate on the Bible. We are "to give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13). "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God," Jesus said (John 6:45). The Psalmist said the "blessed man" is the one whose "delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2). Hosea, the prophet, said concerning Israel, "My people are destroyed for

lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). We should no more expect to understand the Bible without studying it than we could expect to understand mathematics or chemistry without study. One of the sadly neglected things of this generation is the neglect to study the Bible to show ourselves approved unto God.

2. Another reason why men do not understand the Bible is that they do not study with an open mind. Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables and when the disciples asked Him why He did this, He said: "Because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, 'By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them'" (Matthew 13:13-15). These people had closed their minds against the truth and, therefore, they could not understand it because they would not. The apostles of Christ and some others were open-minded and they could understand the teaching of Christ. Only those who come to a study of the Bible with open minds, unprejudiced hearts, and without preconceived ideas and notions can understand the Bible and be saved.

3. Still another reason why people do not understand the Bible is that they come to the Bible with an idol in their heart. By this I mean that people are taught and accept some religious doctrine of men and they try to study the Bible to make it fit their doctrine or the teaching of some men. We study the Bible through colored glasses as it were. We have been taught the doctrine of some church and when this doctrine is not found in the Bible we say we cannot understand the Bible. We need to dismiss from our minds the theories and opinions of men and study the Bible with an open mind to learn what it says.

4. There are others who do not understand the will of the Lord because they are blinded by the god of this world. Paul said, "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). The god of this world or age is Satan. He has blinded the minds of men who are lost by the things of this age. The traditions and philosophies of men have been used to blind men to the truth of the gospel of Christ. Jesus said of tradition-bound, yet religious people of His day, "Full well do ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition . . . making void the word of God by your tradition" (Mark 7:9,13).

Worldliness, love of the world—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"—has been used by Satan to blind the minds of men to the truth. Albert Barnes in his commentary on Second Corinthians says this blinding is "by the blinding influence of passion and vice . . . Vice always renders the mind blind, and the heart hard, and shrouds every thing in the moral world of midnight. And in order to blind the minds of men to the glory of the gospel, Satan has only to place splendid schemes of speculation before men; to tempt them to climb the steep of ambition; to entice them to the scenes of gaiety; to secure the erection of theatres, and gambling houses, and houses of infamy and pollution; to fill the cities and towns of a land with taverns and dramshops; and to give opportunity everywhere for the full play and unrestrained indulgence of passion; and the glory of the gospel will be as effectually *unseen* as the glory of the sun in the darkest night."

These are some of the reasons why men do not understand the Bible nor see it alike. May the Lord help us to open our minds to study the Bible carefully.

From *The Preceptor*, Vol. 5, No. 2, December, 1955



On Worshipping Snakes

Serpents have played a rather important minor role in Bible history and I'm not quite sure they have received due attention. Evil made its first entry into the human story in the form of a serpent which Moses described as "more subtle than any beast of the field" (Genesis 3:1). A Satanic presence in that first reptile is indicated by John's reference to Satan as "the old serpent" (Revelation 12:9).

But serpents have also been direct instruments of God's purposes. They were used as signs to deliver Israel from bondage (Exodus 4:2-3; 7:10) and sent nearly forty years later to chasten the same people for their rebellion (Numbers 21). The Bible also contains some interesting serpent metaphors. Wine, said Solomon, goes down smoothly but at last "biteth like a serpent" (Proverbs 23:32). John the Baptist described the Pharisees and Sadducees as the "offspring of vipers" (Matthew 3:7).

All this is merely preface for an interesting if almost obscure detail about the reign of Hezekiah. Amidst a description of the king's destruction of idolatrous altars, 2 Kings 18:4 records, almost incidentally, that "he brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it."

Now this brass-serpent-turned-idol had had a very honorable beginning. Moses had fashioned it by divine command during the infestation of fiery serpents which God brought on Israel in the wilderness (Numbers 21:4-9). It had served a high and redemptive purpose then. The Israelites, traveling through the barren wilderness of the Arabah south of the Dead Sea, had grown testy and complaintful. Earlier gratitude for the daily manna had turned to contempt for this "light bread." Their words became bitter against Moses and against God. But the lethal bites of the poisonous serpents soon brought many to repentance (21:7). With a multitude of dead bodies reminding them of their own impending fate they pled with Moses to intercede with God to take away this deadly infestation. It was then that God instructed Moses to fashion the serpent and hoist it high upon a pole. By divine arrangement all those bitten, when they looked upon the brazen serpent, lived.

There is no indication that any of these now desperate people quibbled about the method of their healing. No one laughed cynically at such a preposterous formula for curing snake bite. No one raised the question of why God with all His power couldn't heal without a brass snake. No one asked if this didn't blaspheme God's power or limit His grace. And the reason is that, with a

full realization of their peril, they turned to God out of a penitent faith. They obeyed because they believed.

It is possible that the reason for this strange device is seen not so much in healing snake bite as in foreshadowing the One who was to be lifted high for the salvation of His people. Jesus used this incident to give one of the first dim views of His own destiny. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," He said, "even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

We who are sick with sin are promised if we look upon God's crucified Son with faith, we shall live. That look of faith is fleshed out in Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and in Acts 2:38: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Many sinners balk at these words. They wonder aloud why God can't forgive their sins without water. They suggest that to require baptism for forgiveness is a denial of God's grace. Perhaps the reason for their questioning ways is that they don't know, like those in the wilderness, how desperately sick they are. Nor, like the ancient Israelites, do they have a simple unquestioning faith in God.

But we have not yet made the point our title suggests. Isn't it interesting what some people can do with the instruments of God's grace? There is no indication that any of those fortunate people who were cured by gazing at Moses' brass image were disposed to embrace it as if the healing power resided in it. They evidently understood that God, in His wisdom, had simply used it as an instrument of His mercy. Later generations seem not to have realized this. They took to worshipping snakes.

We have a few "snake worshippers" today. Some have turned "faith" into an idol. To them the power is in believing rather than in believing God. For others the power is in "positive thinking" rather than in the promises of the Almighty. Sincerely believing that God is a fried egg won't make it so, nor will a generous optimism about the future outweigh a life lived in disobedience to God (Romans 10:17). It is faith in God, not faith, that has power. Without the promises of God's word we could go on believing for ten thousand lifetimes and it wouldn't save us. Don't select one command of God and begin to worship it. Worship God, and then keep *all* His commandments (1 John 5:3). This is the way to life.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Dee Bowman

The Problem of Temptation

Temptation is as old as man. The devil used it to try the faith of the first man and woman in the garden of Paradise. It is still effective today and even the strongest persons experience difficulty with it.

I am not sure why the forbidden is so alluring to man. It seems that if a thing is off limits, it enhances the value of that thing and man just cannot rest until he has secured it. It was Mark Twain who said, "Adam was but human—this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden." If you want a thing to sell, just be sure that it is slightly tainted or lies on the shadowy edge of what is acceptable.

We live in a world where the lights of the far country are ever beckoning. With television promoting and our peers motioning for us to come on because "everybody's doing it," we run an obstacle course whose difficulty is probably unparalleled in the history of morality. Never has sin been more enticingly presented than in this generation. Never has immorality received the advertisement it has received in this time. The forces of evil have devised in this era a stratagem that is cunning and inviting and almost everyone is at some time or the other drawn to it.

Such promotion of evil wears at our resistance. Almost without knowing it,

we are drawn toward courses which, given time to reflect and apply the principles of the divine mandate, we would certainly expulse from our thoughts. But their presentation is so lavishly displayed and their proposal so often repeated, that almost without knowing it we are mesmerized into thinking it's all right. And it seems that there is no area where the devil has not devised some sort of seductive ploy with which to tempt us. If a man is an extrovert he is tempted toward excessive pride or an uncontrolled tongue. If he is an introvert, he is tempted toward envy or perhaps he has such a poor self-image that he must ridicule others to satisfy his own diffidence. If he is young, he is tempted toward recklessness and youthful desires. But if he is old he becomes at the same time lethargic and critical of those who are not.

Temptation is a part of life. We must learn to handle it. We can if we try. In this edition you will find articles which define what temptation really is, as does Jay Bowman's. Homer Hailey's piece on the temptations of Christ, how they were just like ours, will help you to have the confidence you need to overcome. Harold Fite examines the problem of immoral sexual gratification and how to overcome the temptations that pertain to it. Connie W. Adams has an excellent article in this section on the problem of

private lust and how to deal with our own desires. But the abiding theme in all the articles is the affirmation that we can overcome temptation.

No matter the project, the tools to accomplish it are absolutely necessary. There is great comfort in the affirmation of Paul that "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). This assurance applies to all men of every age. But every man is responsible for the ascertainment of the way of escape. He must learn himself; find out in what areas he is vulnerable. He must learn the word of God; it is the means by which he will overcome. But that isn't all. He must be courageous enough to apply the principle of that word to the situation. He must develop the presence of mind that no matter the size of the temptation, nor in what situation that temptation develops, he will be able to bring to mind the solution from his experience with the word of God.

Yes, temptation is all about us. But we are equal to it, because God will not allow us to be tempted to a point where we can no longer resist. It's up to us to find the way to escape. We can.

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION

Jay Bowman

Oft Made To Wonder

**First of all
we need a good
definition of temptation.**

"WHY ME, LORD? WHAT DID I EVER DO TO deserve this? Why are you *punishing* me? I try to live right. I go to church. I resist temptation. Why don't things go right for me?"

"The song says, 'Farther along' we'll know all about it. 'Farther along' we'll understand why. But, that is a small comfort to me *now*. I want to know *now* why my efforts are not accorded some recognition in heaven, why resisting temptation doesn't help. In fact, it seems that those who yield to temptation have an easier time than the righteous.

"It is the *pointlessness* of it all that aggravates me. I could stand it better if there were some *purpose* to it. I feel like the policeman who has courageously fought crime all day. He comes home for rest and refreshment only to be assaulted by a multitude of new annoyances. Work deserves rest! Why does the soldier have no rest?"

"It could be, my guns are trained on only part of the enemy. I may be neglecting an important front in this war. My definition of temptation is inadequate."

What is "temptation" anyway? What is the difference between a temptation and a trial? Temptation is a trial. Trial is temptation. Money problems, family grief and personal irritations are *tests* or temptations by which our character is revealed. They disclose weaknesses that need correction.

We often misuse the word "temptation." A look at the original terms will put the matter into perspective. The principal Old Testament term for "temptation" is *nissah*. When David went out to fight Goliath, a grateful King Saul offered his own armor. But David refused the implements because, he said, "I have not *tested* [tempted] them (1 Samuel 17:39). David would not risk his life using weapons he had never tried. (The English word "tempt" formerly meant to try something out by handling it.)

When the Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's wisdom, she journeyed to Palestine to "try" him with hard questions (1 Kings 10:1). She did not tempt him in the modern sense. She made trial

of his wisdom to see if it was exaggerated.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* says that the first English Bible (Wycliffe's) used the word like this. When Daniel and his friends were urged to eat the king's dainties, they refused. "Tempt us with pottage and water for ten days," said Daniel, and see if we are not healthier than the other young men (Daniel 1:12,14). For sure, pottage and water were no temptation in the modern sense. But it was a "test" of two different diets. "Temptation" is a trial; putting something to the test.

Our English Bibles still use "tempt" in this way. Notice Genesis 22:1. God did not "tempt" Abraham to evil. He tested his faith. After the test, God responded, "Now I know that you fear God" (verse 12). The Bible also teaches that man can tempt God. How, when James said that God is untemptable? Man makes trial of God. He tries His patience and disbelieves His promises. See Deuteronomy 6:16; Exodus 17:2,7; Numbers 14:22, etc.

The Greek word for tempt is no different. When Paul said, "Try [*peirazo* — 'tempt'] your own selves," he meant, "Put yourselves to the test. See whether you are in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Revelation 2 has two good illustrations of this term. "You have tested those who say they are apostles" (verse 2). "The devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested" (verse 10). Revelation 3:10 promises, "Because you have kept my command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial (*peirasmós*) which shall come upon all the world, to test (*peirazo*) all those who dwell on the earth." Even James 1:14 is set in the context of the hard times the Christians were experiencing (verses 2ff).

So, when we think of temptation, we need to include those endless and commonplace *tests* that are put upon our character every day of our lives. These are temptations. It is not the titillating lure of sensuality that threatens our faith. Everybody sees that as temptation. But it is the sinister and secret enemies of the soul, the discouragements and frustrations of life that threaten our relationship to God. If Satan can convince me that God is not treating me right, he has destroyed my confidence in God. If he can convince me to quit trying, he has won the battle for my soul. These are the missiles of Satan. These are the warheads that make shipwreck of the faith. We need to be aware of their source and their impact on our lives (2 Corinthians 2:11).

When a soldier does battle, he must know who the enemy is. He must know the enemy's strategy. He is foolish to mistake friends for enemies or enemies for friends. Satan is my enemy. God is my Friend. Everything He does is designed for my good (Deuteronomy 8:2,16). I may not understand temptation but, if I believe God, I can accept it as something with a purpose in the general scheme of life.

Temptation is a *trial* that reveals what we are made of—to ourselves, to God and to the world. Like Peter, we may think we *know* this. The trial will show the truth. Like the pure, harsh light of day, temptation reveals my character. I may not like the revelation or welcome the test. But it is necessary for reaching maturity. He chastens every son (Hebrews 12:6). And, we should remember that every temptation affords opportunity for approvedness as well as failure (Romans 5:4).

"Forewarned is forearmed." If I know who the enemy is and how he attacks, I can muster my defenses and stand my ground. With an informed perspective, with hope and resolution, I can fight the battle and win. With the help of God, I can prevail. He is an ever-present help in time of need.

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION



The Temptations in Eden

Martin Pickup

A TALKING SERPENT, A GARDEN PARADISE, a conversational relationship with the Maker of all things. These were the conditions in the beginning when man and woman first tasted the bitterness of sin. How different Adam and Eve's circumstances seem from our own. Ours is a modern, fast-paced world of hustle and bustle. Theirs was a quiet, tranquil existence. Their only duty—tending the garden. Their only restriction—the fruit of one tree. Today's child of God may find it difficult to relate to the predicament of our forebears. The trials and temptations we encounter seem so much more formidable. But appearances, like the devil himself, can be deceiving. The trickery Satan used in Eden he continues to employ today. His methods are perennially effective against the unwary.

Satan attacked Eve's mind. He tried to deceive her about truth. "Indeed," he asked her (the Hebrew interrogative here suggests surprise), "has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" (3:1). The answer was "No," as Satan well knew; only one of the many trees in the garden had God denied them. Satan wanted to confuse the woman, and plant in her mind a seed of doubt. By misrepresenting God's actual words and displaying amazement at what he felt was an absurd command, Satan called into question the rationality of God's prohibition. If it would be absurd for God to ban the other trees of the garden, why was it reasonable for Him to forbid this one?

Eve's response was that, according to God, death would be the consequence of eating from this tree (verse 3). "The serpent said to the woman, 'You surely shall not die!'" (verse 4). These words were a flagrant denial of a divine statement of fact. But notice, to make the lie more palatable, Satan sprinkled it with a pinch of truth: "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (verse 5). By eating the fruit Adam and Eve did gain an understanding of right and wrong and, in this sense, became like God

(verse 22). Satan, though, was impugning God's motive, implying that ill will toward Adam and Eve, not love and concern, prompted the restriction. Eve was convinced. She ate the fruit and displayed her lack of confidence in God's words.

In a very similar way the faith of today's child of God is being attacked by the erroneous philosophies of men. Satan's offspring (see Genesis 3:15; John 8:44) are busy undermining plain biblical teaching. These are the instructors on university campuses who pass off evolutionary theories as reliable fact.

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The media has also become a most effective Satanic tool, transmitting humanistic ethics into Christian homes. In general, Bible ordinances are scoffed at today, discarded by a society enamored with its supposed advancement. Paul's first century warning to the Corinthians concerning the vanity of human wisdom is pertinent to any age (1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

Satan and his followers want to convince us that we can violate God's directives with impunity. Behind the guise of truth, modern religionists frequently deny clear biblical statements and com-

pel us to follow suit. The falseness, for example, of "he that believes and is not baptized shall be saved" is less obvious when surrounded by passages affirming salvation by faith. Tactics such as these give sin easy access into the Lord's body. An overemphasis on the need for love and unity among brethren allows many churches to rationalize their way out of heeding other passages which forbid fellowshiping sinful brethren. Mark it down: every lie contains some truth in order to make it believable (see Galatians 1:5; 2 Peter 3:16). The more truth a lie contains, the more dangerous it is.

Satan attacked Eve's mind via deception. But it was Adam's will that was conquered. He was not deluded by Satan's arguments (1 Timothy 2:14). He understood and recognized the certainty of what God had said. Why then did Adam not obey? To put it simply, he did not want to. The woman's companionship had come to mean more to him than God's. It was her favor he desired most (Genesis 3:18).

If the devil cannot deceive a person concerning truth, he will try to wear down his regard for it. Peer influence is perhaps the most effective means. That Christian is foolish who thinks only the young are susceptible. All of us need to constantly reexamine ourselves to ascertain just where our true loyalty lies. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "Am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (1:10). If we would but make Paul's words our words, we would thwart one of the devil's oldest ploys.

In many ways the world of Adam and Eve was different from our own. But forbidden fruit exists in every generation; it merely takes a different form. In Genesis three God has shown us Satan's methods, so that truly "we are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Let us then be on our guard. Let us not allow the Eden scenario to be reenacted today by you and me.

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION

The Temptation of Jesus: In All Points

Homer Hailey

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS WERE REAL as those of you and me—not imaginary or allegorical. In what manner Satan appeared to Him is not revealed, but that he was the tempter and that the temptations came from without, appealing to the will to make a choice, is certain. In order to become the Saviour of man, a merciful and faithful high priest, and one who can succor man when he is tempted, "it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren [fellow-men]" (Hebrews 2:17f). Thus coming as a man and sharing human experiences, He can "be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" because He "hath in all points been tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

The word *peirazo*, from which our word "tempt" comes, may be used in a good sense—to try or test one to determine his character, faith, or claims. In a bad sense the word means to tempt or test in an effort to entice an individual to sin, to violate the standard of right. God may try us, put us to the test—but only Satan tempts us to sin. Jesus experienced both: in all points His claims were tested, and in the midst of these Satan tempted Him to violate the principle of right.

Some question whether Jesus could sin, being deity; but it must be remembered that He was also a man, made like us, subject to the same needs, passions and desires. We raise this question: can there be obedience where disobedience may not or cannot be? Man, to whom was given will and the power to exercise that will by free choice, can obey or disobey. Jesus, who called us "brethren," and like us, put His trust in God (Hebrews 2:12f), and in all things was made "like unto his brethren" (verse 17), must exercise that same choice in the exertion of His will as do we. Through the right exercise of choice and will, though "tempted in all points like as we are, [it was] yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Immediately following His baptism, "He was led up of the Spirit [Mark: the Spirit driveth him forth], into the

**Jesus' temptations
were just like ours.**

wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matthew 4:1). The Spirit's role in this indicates that the occasion was ordered by the Lord. The wilderness, though not identified, was probably the region south of where He was baptized, somewhere in the locality of the Dead Sea. The area is a dread, desolate and lonely place, so symbolic of the world's spiritual and moral waste created by Satan, into which Jesus entered to conquer. And except for the wild beasts (Mark 1:13) and the angels who ministered to Him at the end of the temptation, He was alone. Luke and Mark indicate that the temptation continued during the forty days (Luke 4:2; Mark 1:13), but it was not until after the forty days that He sensed the severe pangs of hunger. In this weakened state Satan made his master move.

The first temptation was to turn the round, flat stones into bread. He was hungry; why not? He had the power—or, did He? As yet He had performed no miracle; was He really the Messiah? Is it not possible that in this weakened condition such a doubt may have tempted Him? It does us. Yes, He had the power, but this would be a misuse of it. It was a temptation to take into His own hands that which belonged to God, one common to us all. It would have been to withdraw Himself from "his brethren"—fellowmen—exercising a power that mankind does not have. This was another temptation common to us all: the misuse of our powers given for one purpose to gratify another. His triumph was one of trust—"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." He committed Himself wholly to His Father, a point at which we are also tempted: a partial commitment instead of a full one.

Whereas the first temptation was one of question and doubt, the second was

one of overtrust. Seek your end by doing something spectacular: cast yourself off the pinnacle of the temple, for has not God made an extravagant promise? The devil then quotes Scripture (Psalm 91:11f). But he made a misapplication of it. Here was an appeal to vanity, the lust of the eye, a short-cut to fame—gaining an end by trusting in a misapplied Scripture, or a misunderstanding of it. This would have been an appeal to God to suspend His natural laws for Him, again taking Him outside the realm of a true relation to us. It is a sin to presume on the mercy and providence of God by ignorance, misunderstanding or misapplication of His word—a common temptation. Jesus met it with the correct application of truth: "Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God."

Jesus had come to establish a universal kingdom. The third temptation of the devil was that of using the world's methods—my methods: Consider Caesar, great, powerful ruler of the whole Roman Empire. In his position one can gratify all human desires and lusts. Serve me and these shall be yours: the end justifies the means. But good ends do not justify evil means, for evil means bring evil ends. To establish a Messianic kingdom by worldly means would produce a worldly kingdom. So the church: a church established by worldly means produces a worldly church. His reply was: Only by worshipping and serving God can a right end be attained.

Satan's work was not complete, for when these were finished, "he departed from him for a season" (4:13). Space does not permit a consideration of the temptation by the Jews through false religion, the temptation through suffering and the cross. Suffice it to say that by the things which He suffered He was made perfect, and "became unto all them that obey him [follow His ways] the author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9f). When tempted, He conquered by an absolute trust in God—and so must we.

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION



Flee Fornication

Harold Fite

STATISTICS REVEAL THAT OVER FIFTY PERCENT of girls ages 15-19 have had premarital sex. Seventy percent of young men ages 17-21 have had sexual experience before marriage. It has been said by a few who are familiar with campus life that if one could put the average state-run university under one roof one would have the largest brothel in the world!

But this shouldn't surprise us, what with the constant bombardment of sensuality we are receiving these days. Such sexual stimuli serve as launching pads for fornication. Let me count the ways: newspaper ads, billboards, T.V. commercials and programs, bumper stickers, X-rated movies, pornographic magazines, sex education in the schools, and yes, even family magazines contain pornographic material. Moral blight is rapidly moving across our nation as the sand moved across the Texas-Oklahoma plains during the dust bowl of the 1930s. The Lord's church has not been spared.

Sex *per se* is not sinful. Our sexual drive is part of our nature. For every desire which is a part of our nature God has provided the means whereby it can be satisfied. Sex is to be expressed in the marriage relationship. Fornication is a sinful use of a normal desire. It is not "doing what comes naturally." Fornication is neither normal or natural. It is abnormal, unnatural, sinful. Those who practice it "shall not inherit the kingdom of God." For these reasons the apostle Paul wrote, "Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). Never in my lifetime is the warning more needed than now.

Should the Christian be discouraged by the animalistic behavior of our society? Absolutely not! The greater the challenge the sweeter the victory. Ours is an aggressive faith. To ignore fornication and become passive toward it is to lose one's spiritual sensitiveness and eventually to accept fornication as the norm. The word "flee" implies the possibility of escaping the sin of fornication. Joseph literally fled from the fevered grasp of Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). God has provided us with the

weapons with which to gain the victory. There is not any temptation but what man can bear. God always provides a way of escape.

Besides actually fleeing from an unwholesome situation and using great foresight and judgment in guarding against placing oneself in a vulnerable position, there are other things we can do to avoid fornication.

We can exercise mental discipline. Fornication does not begin in the loins, but in the mind. It does not suddenly and surprisingly overwhelm us without thought. There is the willful stimulation

our sexual appetite by controlling our mind. We can refuse to think on those things which produce sexual excitement and make us vulnerable to fornication. Pornographic material—written, spoken, and acted out on the movie screen—must be avoided. We diligently keep our heart by thinking on those things which are honorable, just, pure, and lovely. When we learn to discipline our mind, we have taken a giant step toward fleeing fornication.

We can memorize the text. If we can remember "Jesus wept," we can remember "flee fornication." If you, dear

"Fornication does not begin in the loins, but in the mind. It does not suddenly and surprisingly overwhelm us without thought . . . We can refuse to think on those things which produce sexual excitement and make us vulnerable to fornication . . . When we learn to discipline our mind, we have taken a giant step toward fleeing fornication."

of the desires by means of sensual thoughts, words, pictures, and so on, which leads to the act. In most cases fornication has been carefully planned. What we think controls what we do. "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he." If we think evil we are going to be evil. "Deeds are but thoughts in action." Here is our leverage: we can control our thoughts. We can only think of one thing at a time and we can determine what that shall be. We can't prevent impure thoughts flitting across our mind, but we can quickly dismiss them. What I am saying is that we can control

reader, will commit this verse to memory, should you ever be tempted to commit fornication, you will remember it. It will flash upon your mind as a red signal light—and for the same purpose.

We can pray. Pray that you may not be led into temptation. Pray for strength and help. The Lord is our helper.

Practice this simple formula. I think you will be pleased with the results. You will feel good about yourself. The Lord will lead you in one triumph after another. Go with God.

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THEME

THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION

Pride: Its Connection to Temptation

Ernest A. Finley

THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH PRIDE IS good and does not lead to sin. In fact, it has the opposite effect. It is good when manifest as wholesome self-respect. This permissible and proper self-esteem may relate to the fact that we are creatures formed in God's image, or to the fact that we have been born into His spiritual family: we are "children of God" (1 John 3:1), we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:16-17). Let us never forget who we are and let us never cease to take legitimate pride in this fact.

But, without doubt, there is a sense in which pride is wrong. I know it is because God hates "a proud look" (Proverbs 6:17, KJV). We must hate it, too. God does not give support to the proud man. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6). Solomon wrote, "Pride goeth before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). Jeremiah charged, "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud; for Jehovah hath spoken" (Jeremiah 13:15).

It is in this evil sense that we want you to take a look at pride. In this sense "pride" is defined as: "Inordinate self-esteem, conceit, arrogance, insolence." It strongly evidences its presence in gross disrespect for authority and disdain and contempt for others.

A spirit of pride is the absolute opposite of the attitude one must possess to properly relate to God and man. Pride is the anti-God disposition. Such a disposition will keep one from yielding to God and living to His glory. The proud heart has no such concern.

When we are overcome by sin and we check out the cause, we will usually uncover the fact that pride was in some way involved. Pride is not only a sin in itself, but it is also the root-cause of so very many other sins. In this article we wish to observe the connection between pride and temptation.

"The pride of life" (1 John 2:15-17, KJV) is one channel through which Satan tempts man to sin. This was demonstrated in Eden when Eve was tempted and fell. She desired the

wisdom of discerning good from evil to the point of disobeying God. In this she manifested vain-glory or pride (Genesis 3:1-6). Cain's pride was hurt when God accepted Abel's sacrifice and rejected his. His pride moved him to slay his brother. Thus, the first man that was born into the world became a murderer of his own brother because of pride (Genesis 4:1-8).

A sensual woman may be heard to say, "I can seduce any man alive." In this statement she not only clearly shows that she is living after "the lust of the

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flesh" but that she is also the victim of "vain-glory" or "pride." She takes pride in her ability to lead others to sin. A young man may, when out with a gang of his friends, boast of his latest (or his many) female "conquests." He, too, is a victim of pride as well as lust. Thus, the connection between pride and temptation.

Inordinate pride in one's physical beauty or form—often referred to as vanity—may move one to make an immodest display of the physical body. Such is a violation of God's will (1 Timothy 2:9-10). This immodest display

may be the cause of another's lusting in the heart (Matthew 5:27-28). Thus, pride leads one to follow a sinful course of action in which another is led to sin.

We may also see a manifestation of pride in a contentious spirit and a party spirit. These often result in a rending asunder of the body of Christ. Diotrophes was undoubtedly possessed of a proud spirit. He was determined to rule at all cost. He worked ruin (3 John 9-10). James tells us that where jealousy or envy and a factious spirit are, "there is confusion and every vile deed" (James 3:16). Jealousy and a factious spirit are often the result of pride. So, again, we see the connection between pride and temptation.

A man's falsely boasting of talents, powers, or attainments that are not his may be an indication of pride (Proverbs 25:14). It is his pride that causes him to lie. Further, pride may move one to make an attempt at pulling others down in an effort to pull himself up. Such an attitude may take the form of slander which is often a product of pride (Psalm 119:69). A denial of the actual talents or accomplishments of another is a lie—one which may proceed from pride.

Living above one's means in an effort to keep up with one's neighbors or to make an impression on others stems from pride. Such over-spending is a form of dishonesty and thus pride has found another way to lead one to sin.

Pride may be the initial cause of one's rebelling against divine authority, rejecting the will of God. And that same pride may keep one from saying, in genuine penitence, "I have sinned"—even though he knows he has. But one must humbly confess his sins to be forgiven (1 John 1:9; James 5:16).

The answer to the evil of pride is to humble one's self before God and man (1 Peter 5:6; Philippians 2:3). But beware! It is possible for a man to be proud of his own humility. So be on guard against pride. The fruits of pride are evil. Certainly, there is a connection between pride and temptation.

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION



The Appeal of Things

Jack L. Smith

WE ARE BLESSED TO LIVE IN A MARVELOUS country during what is, generally speaking, the most prosperous era the world has ever known. Because of technological advancements we have ample time and financial resources to enjoy leisure activities undreamed of a generation ago. We should be ever thankful for these blessings, and enjoy them as the gift of God, but unless we exercise caution the gifts can come to dominate our thoughts and actions. Israel of old was warned that if they forgot God, He would curse their blessings (Malachi 2:2). The material prosperity of this life, our passion for things, can control and destroy us if we lose sight of eternity.

The attraction of the things of this world begins at an early age. Watch Saturday morning cartoons with your children for an hour. There are pressures placed on them that will last a lifetime. First is the physical appeal to have something "new" or "better," complicated by the knowledge that "all" our friends have "it," and we're not "loved" unless someone buys it for us. Everything from toys to the brand of cereal we eat becomes a criteria for happiness. How many times have you heard someone exclaim, "I'll just die if I don't get . . ." Several years ago I was driving down the road with several friends. We passed a small but adequate house when one commented, "It must be awful to live in a place like that!" Of course, when we talk about "a place like that" we don't consider the love a family can share in "that place." We're dominated by the physical. How many people have sacrificed a home and family for a larger house?

Do you find yourself making the decision to purchase some new "thing" not on whether you need it or can use it, but on "we can afford it." Of course if we can afford it, we must have it to show the world that we can afford it. Something for every wall and corner of the house till we must have more room, not for living, but for things. We must have name brands and designer labels, because "clothes make the man."

Divine wisdom warns us: "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing; there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great wealth." "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and use profanely the name of my God" (Proverbs 13:7; 30:8-9). We have certain physical needs that must be met if we are to enjoy life, and the Lord taught us to

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pray for our daily portion; but we need to notice the danger of prosperity. When we are secure and the future is bright, why do we need God? The more we have the happier we will be, we seem to think. We strive for outward signs of success, but really live a hollow existence.

Note the beauty of the Lord's teaching about wealth, earthly security, and happiness in Luke 12. Two men come to Him arguing about an inheritance. (It

takes a surprisingly small amount to make us bitter against one another.) If we could just appreciate the truth of the Lord's statement that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." To illustrate this statement He taught the parable not of the rich man, but of the rich fool, who thought his future welfare was assured. (Isn't it ironic that he left his wealth for his heirs to fight over?) Again, Jesus emphasizes "the life is more than food, and the body than raiment."

There is no special virtue in living an ascetic existence just for the sake of austerity. Paul assures us that God "gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). The secret seems to be to learn to use our possessions—not to be intimidated by them. We know a couple who built a new house, but never have company for fear of soiling the carpet. They never build a fire in the fireplace because the chimney would get sooty. How many of us are like that? We live in dread of a scratch.

What is "life indeed" that Paul mentions in verse 19? Is he suggesting that if we have, but do not use our possessions that we may be missing something? Someone said long ago that life is what happens to us while we're making plans for tomorrow. "I'll never be happy until I get . . ." Should we base our success and happiness in life on what we have, what subdivisions we live in, etc.? The "abundant life" the Lord promised (John 10:10) does not guarantee abundant possessions.

The day of our new birth should be a spiritual independence day. On that day we were freed from the bondage of material lusts. We are free to enjoy and use what we have for beneficial purposes. Should a "stranger and pilgrim" burden himself with excess? Having been freed from greed and covetousness we can measure our happiness and success by a higher standard than the dollar sign. May we always use our earthly treasure to lay up heavenly treasure.

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION

Dean Bullock

The Inducements of Worldly Wisdom

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF WISDOM. ONE is earthly and human; the other is heavenly and divine. There are two classes of wise men—those who are “wise after the flesh” and those who possess the wisdom which comes from God. The New Testament speaks of “man’s wisdom,” “the wisdom of the world” and “the wisdom of the wise.” This is human wisdom. It also speaks of “the wisdom of God” and “the wisdom that is from above.” This is true wisdom.

Worldly wisdom attracts and influences multitudes of people. It is vocal, ostentatious, pretentious and subtle. However, Christians recognize that it is

He made a doctrine they considered absurd and foolish. And it is this doctrine that enlightens and guides lost humanity.

Worldly wisdom can never save or redeem one soul. “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching [the thing preached] to save them that believe.” The “content” or “message” of the preaching was God’s power to save sinners. That which the wise of the earth called foolishness was the power that God used to redeem lost humanity. It is the gospel then, not human philosophy and speculation, that enlightens, convicts, and converts man.

wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

Worldly wisdom produces confusion when injected into the church. James addressed some who claimed to be wise, skilled and knowledgeable teachers. Yet their attitude and conduct demonstrated that they possessed a wisdom “not from above.” Their wisdom was earthly (worldly), sensual (carnal), devilish (demonic). Bitter jealousy, selfish ambition, strife and faction produced disorder, disarray, “confusion and every evil work” (James 3:15-16). What a contrast between this and the wisdom that “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17).

Worldly wisdom glories in wealth and rank. There always is the temptation for one to glory in that which is of no intrinsic worth—in wealth, rank, titles and mere external accomplishments instead of that which constitutes real greatness in the estimation of God. “For that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

The spirit of the world and the spirit of true obedience are not cohabitants. They do not dwell together. They do not dwell in the same heart. While the gospel is for all, we must recognize that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). Men rich and powerful on earth often find it difficult to humble themselves “in the sight of the Lord.” A glance at Christians of our own acquaintance is enough to show that the gospel has its greatest appeal to people in the common walks of life. It is God’s power to save all—rich and poor, high and low, educated and uneducated—but only a few in the higher echelons of society find it in their hearts to surrender to Christ.

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“Worldly wisdom attracts and influences multitudes of people. It is vocal, ostentatious, pretentious and subtle. However, Christians recognize that it is opposed to the very genius of the gospel . . . A glance at Christians of our own acquaintance is enough to show that the gospel has its greatest appeal to common folks.

opposed to the very genius of the gospel.

Worldly wisdom can never make known God nor the things of God. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21). Experience had shown that worldly wisdom was insufficient to make known Deity. The wise men of the earth sought for thousands of years to explain God and the things of God but utterly failed. Thus, God set aside worldly wisdom as worthless and revealed Himself in His Word. He did not consult the Greek philosopher and the Jewish scribe in devising the gospel.

Worldly wisdom appeals to pride and arrogance. It seeks to set forth the gospel as just another system of philosophy. It seeks to speak “with enticing words of man’s wisdom.” It depends on the devices and techniques of oratory to induce human minds. It attempts to attract with superior rhetoric and a lot of high-sounding diction and phraseology. It adorns itself with sublime and awe-inspiring verbalism—expressions designed to astound and overwhelm. It appeals to egotism, vanity and worldly pride. And, it is opposed to the very fiber and substance of the gospel of Christ. “And I . . . when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of

THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION



Flee Youthful Lusts

Patrick Farish

SINFUL YEARNING IS LUST. IN 2 TIMOTHY 2:22 the Holy Spirit pinpointed a particular problem ("youthful lusts") and prescribed the infallible solution ("flee"); and that problem and solution have our attention now.

"Youthful lusts" to many who have commented on the passage are the lusts of the flesh with particular reference to sexual misconduct. Certainly the volatility of sexual passion in everybody, combined with the newly-awakening appetites and curiosity of the young, would qualify such for identification as youthful lusts—but not as the whole story. I suspect that the true common denominator in youthful lusts is going to be found to be inexperience, with sexual sins joined by impatience, pride and the like, as specific manifestations of that inexperience.

Other age groups—adult, elderly, etc.—are susceptible to temptation; but only the young are warned as a group: "flee youthful lusts." That tells us something. One of the hardest lessons the young must learn is that there are lessons which only time can teach. So: youth's *impatience* with the rule of others—parents, elders—may well be not simply a sign of able eagerness but of an uninformed rashness. Youth's disapproval of the shortcomings of others may be out of concern for them; but it may just be *conceit*, thinking more highly of himself than he ought. Youthful disregard of wise warnings regarding behavior with the opposite sex reveals a green lack of understanding of the intensity of the appetite and the sometimes treacherous frailty of self-control in the face of it.

What should one do about youthful lusts? "Flee." This is the instruction Paul gave as the right reaction to fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18), and idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14) and the "many sorrows" to which those are prey who are minded to be rich (1 Timothy 6:11).

Well, does "flee" just mean, take to your heels? Yup, sometimes—it meant that at least once to Joseph, you remember. Potiphar's wife wanted to

have sexual relations with Joseph; she asked him repeatedly and he refused. Then, "she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me; and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out" (Genesis 39:12). Sometimes we just have to forget cool and make tracks.

But there is another aspect to "flee," I think. We also flee when we take steps of prevention against hurtful things occurring or becoming a problem. The

God sees us and pleading, "God, be thou merciful unto me, a sinner." We flee the youthful lust for *fornication* by thought-control—thinking on good things; and by circumstance-control—avoiding as much as possible those people and places and practices which calm and cool contemplation tells us would give momentum to hot-blooded, panting passion and regret.

Listen: have a good time being young,

"I suspect that the true common denominator in youthful lusts is going to be found to be inexperience, with sexual sins joined by impatience, pride and the like, as specific manifestations of that inexperience."

"blessed" man of Psalm 1 is the one who is fleeing—by precautions—the occasion of sin. The progressiveness of sin is revealed incidentally in what he does *not* do: "walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers." So, we flee the youthful lust of *impatience* by looking to ourselves lest we also be tempted. We flee the youthful lust of *arrogance* by seeing ourselves as

but while so doing remember that God is and God sees, and that will help you to "remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh" (Ecclesiastes 11:10).

"Flee youthful lusts; and follow after righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION

Examine Yourself: Key to Overcoming Temptation

James Sanders

IN THACKERY'S NOVEL, *VANITY FAIR*, Becky Sharp says of herself: "I could be a good woman if I had five thousand pounds a year." We are too often like that, believing that better circumstances could somehow make us into better people. Victims of life, of bad fortune, of irresistible forces beyond our control is how we see ourselves. But it is all an illusion like some distant mirage in a desert.

and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). (And men have been blaming their wives ever since: "My problem is my wife—if only I had married a redhead!") It's true that Eve did wrong. True that she influenced Adam to do wrong. But Adam's sin was Adam's fault—not Eve's. Adam was responsible for his own conduct, his own affairs, his own life. Adam pleaded victim of circumstances, but somehow God did not agree.

We say that we have no sin when we excuse ourselves—"I just didn't feel well." "The pressure of living was getting to me." "No one can live in a place like Houston and be a Christian." We may not care to honestly look at ourselves, to confess our sins, to admit that we are responsible—but that is what must be done. There is no other alternative.

But another part in overcoming temptation is looking at ourselves from a different perspective. Temptations that confront us are uniquely common. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). Our problems are not all that different from the problems other people face. We may think that other people do not understand, that we are the first ever to feel as we do, that our situation is special. But this is not so. Even someone like Elijah had his moments, just as we do. James points out that he was subject to like passions as are we (5:17).

Our problems are unique only because they are special to us. (Men are tempted in different ways and have different burdens in life; but the results of pain are the same.) Elijah may have thought that he was alone, but there were seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. We are not alone in facing what must be faced. God will see us through. The truth of the matter is that problems that drive us to our knees, drive us to God. "My brethren," writes James, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (1:2).

So, dealing with this thing called sin is not an easy task. We have to learn to accept responsibility for what we do, for who we are, and for what we must face in life. Personal responsibility is the key. As Nathan accused David, so we must point the finger at ourselves and say, "Thou art the man!"

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"Our problems are unique only because they are special to us. Elijah may have thought that he was alone, but there were seven thousand who had not bowed to Baal. We are not alone in facing what must be faced. God will see us through."

Sin is our real problem. It's just that we find it difficult to admit it. We look for a change in outward circumstances when what is really needed is inner resources.

Our delusion is no big surprise. It has been that way from the beginning. When God confronted Adam, Adam hastily explained that it was Eve's fault—"The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree,

Admitting personal responsibility is the key to overcoming temptation. It sounds strange that confessing wrong and weakness could somehow make us stronger. But this is what is needed. The cry throughout the Bible is that of "repent." Change your life. Understand that you are wrong. And John in writing to Christians is very clear: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION



The Problem of Private Lust

Connie W. Adams

LUST HAS GONE PUBLIC IN AMERICA. NO subject is too delicate for a television or movie script. Pornography is big business. Absolutely nothing is left to the imagination. Yet, this business would utterly fail were it not for the fact that it feeds the private yearnings of corrupted hearts. It is from this private cesspool of defilement that this flowing well of licentiousness comes. Polluted minds demand a diet of contamination to gratify illicit hunger. This creates a climate in which the problem only feeds on itself.

No man ever rises above the quality of his own mind. One cannot be more perverse than his heart allows him to be. Conversely, pure and noble words and deeds first proceed from hearts that are pure and noble. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

The potentiality of private lust was recognized by Jesus when He said, "Whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). In this context Jesus not only condemned the act of adultery, but also the progressions of thought which culminate in this forbidden act. It is not wrong to recognize beauty. Some have a charm and grace which is at once attractive and appealing. But it is a far different thing to allow the mind to descend to the level of fantasizing about sexual relations with one we have found to be appealing. So then, the heart must keep a distinction between admiration and lust. It is first in the heart that reserves are broken down and that schemes are devised to gain attention, then seduce the one who has become the object of our obsession. Adultery committed in the heart, but which proceeds no farther, may not have the frightful consequences which the overt act does—but it is still an affront to God and destructive to the character of the one who entertains it. Recognition of the wrong and repentance are surely required.

The problem is pervasive in our

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society. Many streams strive to erode a channel into our hearts to pervert them. Modern television programming, to say nothing of the movie industry, grind out a continual stream of coarseness, vulgarity, sexual innuendo and compromising scenes which could wear down the best defenses of the most godly were these allowed constant entry into the mind. The print media carry reports which often titillate the senses. Even television news programming often resorts to this device, I suppose to add what is conceived to be "spice" to an otherwise dry business. The music of our time, with incessant beat, preaches moral permissiveness and does much to break down convictions and moral reserves. Perhaps the two worst offenders in this area are today's rock and country-western music. The lyrics are not even subtle. They are brazen. How can any of us listen repeatedly to such lyrics without being affected to some degree?

What about pornography? Is it nobody's business what a person reads or views in his own home? Should he have the Playboy channel hooked up to his cable TV? First, those who defend such right are the losers because they defile and debauch their own hearts to the destruction of their souls. Next, they contribute to a sordid business which promotes vice of every kind. Then, they run the risk of reaching a point where they cannot separate fact from fantasy and that can lead to criminal action. Unrealistic expectations develop which create disillusionment between spouses. The price for gratification of mental lust can become very expensive.

The divine mandate to "flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18) must surely include flight from whatever channels of thought might lead us to this tragedy.

We must not be "filthy dreamers" (Jude 8) with defiled minds. In contrast to that, "Unto the pure all things are pure" (Titus 1:15). It is not enough to root out impurity of thought. These must be replaced with that which is decent, ennobling, gracious, uplifting and pure. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). "Whatsoever things are . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report . . . think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Ultimately, the victory over private lust is bound up in the admonition of Paul to bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Christ must not only be Lord of my external conduct; He must rule my mind. "For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). Paul wrote, "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:23). Folks, this is a war we *must* win. Shall private lusts conquer us, or shall we bring our thoughts into captivity to our Lord Jesus Christ?

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psalm 42:1).

Indeed, "a mind is a terrible thing to waste!" It was God's purpose to put His law into our hearts and write His precepts in our minds (Hebrews 10:16). When the mind is so filled with the knowledge of truth and right, then whatever thought-form is inconsistent with that divine system is rejected as repulsive. It cannot grow in unprepared soil. The antidote to private lust is a constantly growing knowledge of the will of God accompanied by an active life of service in which the fruits of righteousness may be seen by others.

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THE PROBLEM OF TEMPTATION

How To Recognize Temptation

Dudley Ross Spears

"HOW TO" ARTICLES ARE USUALLY written by experts who know "how to" do whatever it is they write about. I doubt that there is an expert on "how to" recognize temptation. Satan, the tempter, is not easy to recognize. A friend recently told me, "If temptations were easy to recognize, they wouldn't be so tempting." Satan can "fashion himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). The fact that Satan has not changed his basic procedure (Genesis 3)—and it still works—certifies that mankind has not learned to recognize temptations. Satan began by appealing to the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the vainglory of life" (1 John 2:16) and has stayed with it. Like a football coach who devises a play that scores points until a successful defense is found, Satan doesn't change his game plan.

One must first recognize the source of temptations. The chief goal of Satan is to lure mankind to him and away from God. He prevailed with Adam and Eve failed with Christ, and has held his own with the rest of us. His effective appeal is to lust and pride. Astoundingly, through man's history, he attacks the same areas. In his attack, he covers the entire spectrum of man's being. The "lust of the flesh"—an area that entices us to do something that lures us from God; and "lust of the eyes"—an area that tempts us to have something that interrupts our relation to God; and "the vainglory of life"—an area that entices us to be something other than a child of God, just about covers man's existence.

Knowing these areas of temptations, consider how deceptive Satan is. He does not attack everyone alike. He cleverly takes our pulse, prescribes for us a cup of pleasure and waits to see if we take it. Like a farmer, he knows the right seed for the right soil and puts it in our heart. He knows that each of us has our own Achilles' heel and he is a marksman who has never missed. If immoral things are distasteful to us, he tries to fascinate us with those wonderful things we want at any cost. But if that doesn't

work he urges us to be somebody in this world, no matter what the price tag for success is. He is so deceptive that he never starts with something we detest. It is always within our reach and desirable.

I wish it were possible to give a guaranteed formula for recognizing temptation. Unfortunately, I can't. I can

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us a cup of pleasure
and waits to see if
we take it. Like a
farmer, he knows the
right seed for the
right soil and puts
it in our heart.
He knows that
each of us has
our own Achilles'
heel and he is a
marksman who has
never missed . . .
He never starts
with something we
detest. It is
always within
our reach and
desirable.***

only suggest some guidelines by which each individual may detect the siren calls of Satan. They are:

1. Look for something that will damage your relation to God. No matter what it is, if it tends to come between you and God, Satan is behind it. It may be money, pleasure, personal ambition

or even religious error.

2. Look for something that will harm your influence for good. If a desirable thing will hamper your ability to encourage others who look up to you, resist it, avoid it and know it is a temptation. It may be just a little "harmless social drink," or being seen in some questionable place, but if it impairs your influence for good, don't do it.

3. Look for something that may ruin your ability to do God's work. Everything right helps you do God's work. But if there is something that keeps you from doing the work of the Lord, avoid it. It may be a great opportunity to get rich—but involve a job that keeps you from serving the Lord. If so, it is likely a temptation you need to shun.

4. Look for something that enhances your standing with godless people. The wrong things make you look good to people who are wrong. Maybe just "going along" with friends, associates and even family is enough to make us look good to those who care less about serving God. Again, stay away from it.

5. Look for what is, beyond doubt, not wrong. You remember the old river pilot who said, "I don't know where them snags is—but I sure know where they ain't." Fill up your heart with things that are good, pure, wholesome and pleasing to God and you can surely recognize a thing that is opposite to it when you see it.

A temptation that is so subtle is the one that urges us to take the lesser of evils in this life. That is like trying to find the best rotten apple to eat. We do not have to accept any evil in our lives, but we have to be tempted. Satan never lets us rest. Someone said that temptations are like one cigarette to an addicted smoker—one cigarette pleases, but a carload won't satisfy. So it is with temptations—once we succumb, they come again, and again, and again, and . . .

So, be on the alert for the signs suggested above. There are more, but these should help.

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That's Life!



Dee Bowman

ONE WAY TO MEASURE your sincerity as a giver is by the graciousness with which you receive gifts from others.

* * *

WOULDN'T IT BE NICE if television directors could learn to keep their cameras off the faces of the athletes who apparently can't suppress their tendency to express four-letter expletives when they miss a pass, or a field goal, or a tackle? Why should we be subjected to the garbage-mouth antics of these spoiled brats? It's revolting!

* * *

DID YOU EVER NOTICE that when you look at yourself in the mirror it's only after you have turned whatever way is necessary so that you reveal your best side? Or after you have tucked in your tummy just a little? And when you weigh yourself, do you add or subtract if the indicator on the dial is in between two numbers? It's really hard to be totally honest about how you look, isn't it? And it's the same with looking at yourself in the mirror for the soul. It takes lots of courage to view yourself as you really are.

* * *

I REALLY LIKE what Alexander Campbell said about the tendency of some preachers: "We have sometimes heard men, called 'Christian Ministers,' stand in what they call the 'sacred desk,' and in the confidence and spirit of a warring sectary, from their theological batteries pour into or upon the auditory volumes of fire and smoke, as if in the belligerent spirit of a crusade, waging a war of extermination upon the forts and garrisons of hostile legions, to whom they would show no quarters, no mercy, and seem as elated at the sound of their own cannon, and the broken legions that fled before them, as a Wellington or Napoleon, contending for the empire of the world"—which is just another way of saying that we sometimes talk just to hear our own voices, and roar just

to watch the hearers quake, and that's a poor motive for preaching.

* * *

WHEN I WAS A KID growing up, Sundays were special. I can still remember the smell of the building when you entered on a Fall Sunday morning—not musty, but different than other smells. I remember the care the people seemed to have for one another, and that was impressive to me even as a little boy. At times I used to wonder why we couldn't do certain things on Sunday, but I always knew that it was a special day, a day for special considerations, even special clothes (we called our best clothes "Sunday clothes" or "church pants.") We usually had someone over for lunch, some visitor or some folks from church. We had roast on a lot of Sundays, and mashed potatoes, brown gravy and sometimes hot rolls. And my Mom made the best chocolate pie in the whole country—and the whole country knew it. In the summertime we made homemade ice cream after the evening services or maybe we had watermelon. We'd sit on the cool Bermuda grass in the yard and listen to the older folks swap tales or tell about the old days. I loved all these things about Sunday. But what I remember the most about Sundays was going to services, being with the people of God, having part with them in praise to God, sharing with them the good things of the gospel. All these things were not always well done, but one thing was never in doubt—the people who did them wanted to do right! No pretense, no show, just do right. I still like that.

* * *

IT IS A FACT OF HISTORY that whenever the ceremonial is elevated to a rank above the moral, the moral will soon disappear. We, by multiplying ritual observances, have, I am afraid, explained away or de-emphasized many of our moral obligations—kindness, integrity, honesty, etc. We say, "I attend!" as if to answer every obligation. With such affirmations of faithfulness almost any vice can be excused.

The "Waterloo" of Modern Speculation on Revelation

L. A. Mott, Jr.

My first proposal [January, 1984] was that we should first read Revelation to see what John expected to happen in the future rather than looking back on it through two thousand years of history;

frame within which John expected his prophecies to be fulfilled. The evidence of Revelation is that everything up to the thousand-year-reign (chapter 20) was expected to occur not long after

We may not find explanations for some of them, but we know where to locate them in history.

This one point stops fanatics and speculators dead in their tracks. Consider some examples:

1. Though some questions about the thousand-year-reign (20:1-6) may remain unanswered, we do know where to put it in history, for the binding of Satan was not far future when John wrote (6:9-11; 12:12 with 20:1-3; 13:5 with 17:7-11; see February, 1984).

2. If the persecuting monster expected by John was not far future when Revelation was written (17:7-11) and would continue for only a short time when he arrived (13:5), then we must not look for this beast in the twentieth century or at the end of time.

3. Whatever the explanation of "Ar-Magedon" (16:12-16), we know its place in history.

4. The United Nations came ages too late to be found in Revelation 17 (Jehovah's Witness' view).

5. Revelation 11:3 cannot be evidence in support of the expectation of prophets in the twentieth century (as one man argued). Even if we cannot identify or explain the two witnesses, when proper heed is given to the time element contained in Revelation itself, we will certainly know better than to look for them at a time so remote from the first century.

In short, learn the references to time in Revelation and you will be able to shut the mouths of fanatics, speculators and futurists. The importance of this point in its bearing on dispensationalism alone can hardly be overstated. Revelation 20 is the only reference to a "millennium" in the Bible. Take that away from the dispensationalists and they will have to reconsider every biblical passage and revise every chart they have ever used. While they are busy with their task the silence on the air waves will be golden.

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"Learn the references to time in Revelation and you will be able to shut the mouths of fanatics, speculators and futurists. The bearing of this on dispensationalism can hardly be overstated. Revelation 20 is the only reference to a "millennium" in the Bible. Take that away from the dispensationalists and they will have to reconsider every biblical passage and revise every chart they have ever used."

then look at history in the light of Revelation rather than interpreting Revelation in the light of history. The application of this principle leads us to the more or less definite time

Revelation was written. See February, 1984, for details.

This attention to the time element in Revelation fixes some limits within which details must be understood.

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"In Jehovah do I take refuge: How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" (11:1).

Fleeing—To What Mountain?

The time of this psalm appears to be when Saul was maliciously seeking David's life and his well-meaning but timid friends offered this advice: "Flee as a bird to your mountain." David was having nothing to do with such cowardly action. He had already been anointed by God to succeed Saul as king. And he had not forgotten it. Thus remembering, he put his trust in God.

It seems to me that in the face of the dangers and difficulties of living the Christian life, there are some human "mountains" to which we are in peril of fleeing instead of taking refuge in God. All of these are firmly rooted in *human reasoning*—which is trust in oneself rather than trust in God.

1. Multitude mentality. "Everyone is doing it." It is so much easier to give in to the pressure to conform—especially peer pressure—than it is to stand against it. The fact that "everyone is doing" something gives an automatic stamp of approval in the minds of most humans. Everybody cheats on their income tax. Everybody in the business world lies. Everybody exceeds the speed limit. Reasoning such as this carries a lot of weight in our society. The Christian must not be caught up in the "multitude mentality" of this age. If we are not careful this may become a human "mountain" to which we flee. Rather, we must do what is right and trust in God to see us through—even if we suffer because of it. God's clear declaration about this is: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exodus 23:2).

2. Compromise cop-out. Another human "mountain" we are in jeopardy of fleeing to is the short-cut—the easy way out. It reasons: I will continue to serve God but it needs not to be so costly nor too severe. It's easy to think this way; it is appealing. Nominal Christianity salves the conscience and calls for no real commitment—nothing too drastic. This kind of service, however, will not do. Trust in God—making God our refuge—calls for serious resolve. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself" (Luke 9:23). Jesus says again, "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). One simply cannot serve God and do it half-heartedly.

3. Tolerant Thinking. We may also flee to the human "mountain" of tolerating and excusing sin in our minds and lives. It takes courage to stand up against wrong-doing. Some of us don't have enough of it. Paul said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). I know of no one who would *rather* reprove them, but reprove them we must! If we are not careful, our thinking may allow for the tolerance of sin, and lead away from total trust in the Lord. James cautions: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

David had put his trust in the Lord and he was not about to flee to any other mountain! He probably was not so much concerned that to flee now would show cowardice on his part, unbecoming of a soldier—but that it would show unbelief and be unbefitting of a saint who had often said: "I put my trust in the Lord." Let us reject all tendencies to flee to human "mountains" today. Determine that you are going to repudiate every form of human reasoning that leads away from trust in the living God. "In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 56:11).

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Parents' Page

Elaine Jackson

The Trying Times of Young Mothers

A young woman lies curled upon her bed. Her shoulders shake as she sobs into her pillow. Thoughts race through her head like sparrows darting through the trees. Her depression and confusion are so great she is unable to grasp the elusive ideas, she is unable to right her reeling world. She knows that if any one were to see her they would not understand, for she does not understand herself. She has everything in the world to be grateful for and yet, at a time when she desperately needs spiritual food, she is receiving none. She continues to cry and dwells in confusion.

This is a common scene for a young mother. Motherhood is packed with confusion. Great changes have occurred in her life. She not only has a new child, which boggles her mind, but the enormous job of rearing that child to be a Christian is a heavy and frightening responsibility. She has experienced great physical changes and an entire upheaval to her former way of life. Everything is different. And, to top it off, she is getting nothing out of the services she used to enjoy so much. She cannot hear the sermons for the child. She is afraid she is disturbing the entire congregation. Her personal work has also diminished as she does not have as much time as she once did, and she is afraid to take the baby to visit the sick since the baby might become ill.

Almost every new mother experiences some or all of the feelings expressed above. It is not unusual. And that is the first step toward recovery. There are ways to help if you only know where to look.

First, do not be down on yourself. Matthew 5:6 tells us that those that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled, while Luke 11:9 tells us that those who seek shall find. If you were not interested in the Lord, you would not be concerned. That in itself should cheer you. Also we know, for Hebrews 13:5 tells us, that God will never leave us nor forsake us. He is beside us at this time, as we deal with these problems.

Secondly, the most important job a mother has is to return her children to the Lord. God has entrusted these precious souls to us and it is our duty to return them, just as Hannah did in 1 Samuel 1:27. This does not deny the father's responsibility to God concerning his children, as pointed out in Ephesians

Motherhood is packed with confusion. Great changes have occurred in her life. She not only has a new child, which boggles her mind, but the enormous job of rearing that child to be a Christian is a heavy and frightening responsibility. She has experienced great physical changes and an entire upheaval to her former way of life. Everything is different. And, to top it off, she is getting nothing out of the services she used to enjoy so much.

6:4. However, Titus 2:4 instructs women to love their children and what greater love than to open their eyes to the joy of loving the Lord? Do not feel guilty when you must take time and effort to be a good mother. Motherhood is a full-time job.

Another thing a new mother can do is

attend the services of the Lord without fail. Never say to yourself, "I get nothing out of the services and surely the baby does not either; besides I am disturbing everyone else. I'll just stay at home." We are commanded in Hebrews 10:25 to assemble and to exhort one another. If you are not present, how can you exhort someone else? Your answer might be, "Who am I? No one notices me." Wrong. Your presence encourages other young mothers and Christians in general. Your baby may occasionally disturb the assembly. That is no problem, and the child can be taken out if necessary.

A fourth hint for the young mother is not to go directly into the nursery and bury yourself there. A nursery is a noisy place. No matter how good the audio system, babies distract. Women tend to talk when sitting in such close quarters and even if you do not join in the conversation, you cannot listen as well as you can in the auditorium. I have been in nurseries where the sound system was completely turned off (so the babies could sleep, of course). When a child is constantly taken to the nursery, placed on the floor, and allowed to play, they do not learn about the worship service. They think church is play time. If you are concerned about the disturbance your child makes, remove him when necessary and then return to the auditorium as soon as possible. Let your child see that worship of God is important to you.

The last thing we can do is learn to count our blessings. When we realize how blessed we are it is easier to put our problems into perspective. Remember that with the aid of the Lord we can accomplish all our tasks.

It is difficult sometimes to be a young mother. However, each area of life has its challenges and difficulties. If we look to God and see the problems as challenges that are to be met and overcome, then each day is better, each mountain is easier to climb, and we move closer to our goal—heaven.

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The Sermon on the Mount

Beatitudes: The Strength of "Weakness"

The second basic statement of the beatitudes is that the kingdom of God does not yield itself to the "mighty" who seek to take it by force, but it is easily accessible to the "weak" who yield their cause patiently to God and abandon their own rights for the sake of others. The world in which the beatitudes were first spoken was not a hospitable place for such an idea. Seneca, a prominent first-century Stoic philosopher and brother of Gallio (Acts 18:12), gave expression to the sentiment of his times in the following words: "Pity is a mental illness induced by the spectacle of other people's miseries. . . . The sage does not succumb to mental diseases of that sort" (Arnold Toynbee, *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, p. 68). Wholly outside the spirit of His age Jesus announced the blessedness of the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers and the persecuted. It was not an idea "whose time had come." It still is not.

"Blessed are the meek" (Matthew 5:5). In a world of harshness and cruelty, meekness would appear to be a quick way to commit suicide. The violent and self-willed prevail. The meek are summarily run over. The truth is that in the short run that may indeed be so. People that are drawn to the kingdom of God must face this. The gentleness of Jesus did not save Him from the cross. But, ultimately, Jesus teaches us, it is meekness alone that will survive. The challenge for us is to understand what true meekness is.

Meekness is not a natural disposition. It is not an inborn mildness of temperament. It is not the obsequious behavior of a slave whose powerless station forces him to adopt a servile manner which he despises and would abandon at the first opportunity. Meekness is an attitude toward God and others which is the product of choice. It is a disposition held by a steely moral resolve at a time when one may have the power, and the inclination, to behave otherwise.

Meekness is not an indifference to evil. Jesus endured with much patience the assaults made on Him, but He was strong to defend His Father's name and will. He hated iniquity as much as He loved righteousness (Hebrews 1:9). Moses was the meekest of men when it came to abuse offered to him (Numbers 12:3) but his anger could burn hot against irreverence offered to God (Exodus 32:19). The meek man may endure mistreatment patiently (he is not concerned with *self-defense*) but he is not passive about evil (Romans 12:9). There is in him a burning hatred for every false way (Galatians 1:8-9; Psalm 119:104).

Meekness is not weakness. There is no flabbiness in it. The one who had 72,000 angels at His command (Mat-

thew 26:53) described Himself as "meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). The depth of meekness in a man may indeed be gauged in direct proportion to his ability to crush his adversaries. Jesus was not meek because He was powerless. He was meek because He had His immense power under the control of great principles—His love for His Father (John 14:31) and His love for lost men (Ephesians 5:2). It would have been far easier for Him to have simply annihilated His foes than to patiently endure their abuse. He took the hard road.

The meekness of the Son of God is powerfully demonstrated in His attitude toward the privileges of His station ("who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself," Philippians 2:6-7), and in His submission to His Father ("though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered," Hebrews 5:8). He came into the world as a servant. He emptied Himself for the sake of others.

Although kingdom meekness derives from a new view of oneself in the presence of God ("poor in spirit") its primary emphasis is on a man's view of himself in the presence of others. "Meekness" (Greek, *praus*) is found in the constant company of words like "lowliness," "kindness," "longsuffering," "forbearance," and "gentleness" (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:12-13; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; Titus 3:2; 2 Corinthians 10:1). Even when applied to our Savior the word seems to speak to His relationship to men rather than to His Father (Matthew 11:28-30; 2 Corinthians 19:1). "Meekness (*praus*)" had a special use in the ancient Greek world. It was applied to an animal that had been tamed (Barclay, *New Testament Words*, p. 241). The meek man is one who has been tamed to the yoke of Christ (Matthew 11:29) and, consequently, has taken up the burdens of other men (Galatians 6:2). He no longer seeks to take by force even that which is rightfully his nor attempts to avenge the injustices done him—not because he is powerless to do so but because he has submitted his cause to a higher court (Romans 12:19). Instead he is concerned to be a blessing, not only to his brethren (Romans 15:3) but even to his enemies (Luke 6:27-28).

The meek man has had enough of himself. He has felt his own ultimate spiritual emptiness and yearned for a right relationship with God. *Self-righteousness* has become a disaster and *self-will* a sickness. The very ideas of *self-confidence* and *self-assertiveness* have become a stench in his nostrils. He has emptied his heart of self and filled it with God and others. Like his Master, he has become the ultimate servant. And for this very reason the future belongs to him.

(To be continued.)

Woman's World

Marilyn Hardage

It's My Choice

Jesus once told a woman that He would give her living water. This woman's life, as we read in John 4, had evidently been neither easy nor good. At first she was surprised that this Jewish man had ignored the prejudices of His people and addressed her; then she was awed by the words He spoke.

Yet, in spite of all the hardening influences that had been in her life, a spark of truth-seeking was fanned as she heard of "living water," "salvation," "worship," "spirit," and "truth."

When our hearts are stirred. It may be that one of the most useful weapons in Satan's store of temptations is the lure of the loss of wonder. Of course, he doesn't call the temptation loss of anything; he prefers that we not even see it as temptation. As women of this age, if we named the lure anything, we would say it is "accepting reality" or "enjoying the good life" or "fitting in with the Joneses." It is the recognition that so much without and within is false and that some paths are easier than others to walk.

"It may be that Satan is tempting us when we fill our lives with the inconsequential till we have no life of meaning. But we have a choice. Jesus gave us one. We can choose to turn our eyes from the glitter of tinsel and see with eyes open to wonder at the Savior of the world. We can sit quietly at His feet and learn in awe the lessons of truth."

At the end of this conversation Jesus went home with the Samaritans and stayed in that city two days. "And many more believed because of His word."

Life is hard, isn't it? I suppose this woman at the well had known her share of toil, sorrow, strain, and sin. And most of us today know our share—and sometimes it seems more—of the stress and disappointment of the world. But life is wonderful, isn't it? This woman saw enough of the wonder that her spirit was quickened as the thoughts awakened within her. And we see the awe of beauty and joy when our hearts are stirred.

After all—cosmetics create charisma, deodorants deliver delight, Miller's makes men, wonderful waxes win women. I love chocolate and I love Jesus. We all know the foolishness of such rhetoric but a constant barrage of stupendous, fabulous, magnificent nonsense dulls our minds and hearts against the real and the true.

Jesus thought the woman of Samaria was worth His words. Some of the most profound truths of all time were presented in this conversation. I understand that Jesus thinks we, too, are worth His words, His time, and finally His life. The matter seems to be left to

me. How much do I think I am worth?

The world says I'm worth a nice house, some fancy gadgets, a sports car, and self-fulfillment. Jesus says that I'm worth an eternal life of joy and glory. He says that He will give me living water and teach me about salvation, worship, spirit, truth.

This woman at the well may have been uneducated, coarse, burdened—but she had sense enough to choose to discuss things of the spirit and to see in Jesus the "Savior of the world." It was hard to be a Samaritan at that time, it was hard to be poor, it was hard to be a woman, it was hard to have had the circumstances which had led her to where she was.

In the twentieth century we have great advantages and disadvantages. Yet it's still hard to be an outcast, it's hard to be poor, it's sometimes hard to be a woman, and often it's hard to be me because of my circumstances. And most of all it's hard to think of the things that Jesus was talking about because I'm so busy. There are so many places to go, so much to do, so many needs and pleasures of family and friends. And if time is not filled for us with the requirements of the moment, we deserve our leisure and fill the hours (even when we find it boring) with TV and idle chatter. Who has time to reason and meditate? Who has time to think the long thoughts of eternity and beauty and goodness? Who has time to wonder; to be filled with awe till our hearts are stirred?

So it may be that Satan is tempting us when we fill our lives with the inconsequential till we have no life of meaning. But we have a choice. Jesus gave us one. We can choose to turn our eyes from the glitter of tinsel and see with eyes open to wonder at the Savior of the world. We can sit quietly at His feet and learn in awe the lessons of truth. We have been offered a gift beyond words.

I choose Jesus. Come and let us follow Him.

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'SOMETHING TO TACK UP'



CUT HERE

TIPS FOR THE RACE

The apostle Paul likens the Christian's trek toward Heaven to that of a race (1 Corinthians 9:24). Some seem to have construed from this metaphor that Christianity is like a short distance sprint. For this reason many start rather quickly only to fatigue in like manner. This concept of "the race" is enlarged in Hebrews 12:1 when we are encouraged to run this race *with endurance*. This heavenly event, then, is much more akin to a marathon than a dash. Perhaps these hints will prove helpful for encouraging and producing a successful run:

1. A one-hundred mile journey starts with a step. Whether you are thinking about Bible study, personal evangelism, or some other spiritual activity—no matter how ominous or large the task may appear, get started! Remember, Noah had to fell that first tree . . . Beethoven started with do, re, mi . . . John Milton with a, b, c . . . Einstein with 1, 2, 3 . . . You and I with "Lord, help me."

2. Work for discipline before distance. Some, because they can't go out on the first day and run 10 miles in 50 minutes, never go out at all! They expect too much, too soon. In the same way, many Christians never start a spiritual activity simply because they can't do as much as they would like to do as soon as they would like to do it. Just do the best you can—*regularly*.

3. If every little bit helps, every little quit hurts. Surely no one will deny the first half of the above statement. Yet we often live as if the second half does not follow, when in fact it does. I need to view one day without prayer and study as damaging to my spiritual well-being. Believing this tip to be true will breed consistency in my activity and behavior.

4. Focus on the potential glory, not on the actual pain. Present aches and pains are but small thorns on the rose that we are nurturing. When temporal hardships are compared to eternal joys one finds that there is really no comparison to be made at all—only stark contrasts. In the final analysis there will be neither comparisons nor contrasts, for that which would be held up beside eternal joys will have been forgotten.

5. Constantly increasing your goals will keep complacency minimized. Fortunately, for the Christian, mastering God's demands is a life-long task, and then some! The problem is that too many become self-satisfied, then bored, then finished (or so they think). Always demand more and more of yourself, because God does.

6. Today's agony will be tomorrow's warmup. That is, you will get stronger as you run, drawing strength from God's vast reservoir of power and might and energy. As this process continues, you will find that it takes more and more to tire you, until in the strength of God you open wide your arms to break the tape at the throne of the Almighty Himself.

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David Crawford

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Citizenship in Heaven

Many Americans have difficulty conceiving of the Lord's church as anything but an American institution. We feel that the gospel has gone out from us and that if the churches are to survive in foreign lands American brethren must keep in close touch with them.

Mature Christians in other countries find this difficult to understand. It is often observed in Britain, for example, that efforts to be simple New Testament Christians were under way there before they were in the States. Even those who have been taught the gospel by Americans no more consider themselves members of an American church than one in this country would consider himself a member of an Alabama church just because the preacher who baptized him was from Alabama. Their citizenship is in heaven.

Talking recently with Gene and Betty Tope, veterans of twenty-four years of preaching in South Africa, we were impressed with their comments regarding the attitudes of Christians in that country:

The brethren who have given it any thought at all recognize that the church is a universal thing and not related to any race or color. The Africans and Indians more than any others recognize this. Thinking especially of the Indians among whom we have worked the last few years: as you get out among them you see their very strange customs, ideas and mannerisms; and when they come together as the church, there is nothing American about what they are doing.

Neither is there anything American about the following prayer by a brother in a black congregation in South Africa as reported by Ray Votaw:

"God, you are so big and strong. You know everything and all things belong to you. You have so much love and you are always fair and just. But—look at us. We are so bad and so weak. This place is so little and crowded. Our clothes are not nice and we are not even very clean. We are so heavy with problems and sin. But, God, do not despise us. Remember, we are your very own children. You are our heavenly Father and we are truly your kingdom on earth. You must not turn your face away from us, because we belong to you."

The Topes report numerous individuals whose personal devotion to the Lord motivates them to remarkable efforts to share the gospel with their countrymen. Among the Indian brethren, for example, there is one who works hard as a building contractor, laying personally as many as 1,000 bricks a day. Each day, on the job he uses

business contacts as opportunities to share the gospel and each evening when he arrives home he is ready to go somewhere for a class with a prospect. Tope's assessment:

The reason the Indian work has grown and continues to grow is not because there have been two or three preachers among them; it has been the fact that they have taken hold on their own. They teach their own families and they do not feel that they have to get acquainted with people and know them for years before they talk to them about the gospel. When they have talked to a person about five minutes, you know that the next subject of conversation will be Christianity. Because of such people, that work is spreading up the North coast and down the South coast. Even though, in a short time, Basil Cass will be the only one working in those areas where there are six or seven congregations, those brethren will move right along.

The work among the black population of South Africa is much older and more widely scattered. There numerous individuals, without American training or support and often without the knowledge of Americans, show remarkable devotion to the spread of the gospel. Gene tells of a brother in Soweto (the great black city near Johannesburg) who makes no claim to being a preacher and would not know how to talk of "doing personal work" who yet is solely responsible for the existence of a church of about forty members in his home village more than 300 miles to the north. He has accomplished this over a period of years by spending his annual leave in that village preaching. He has also accomplished it without ever talking of being supported by brethren. "In fact," Gene observes, "he would probably be insulted if you ever suggested getting support for him." How many more such men there are among the Africans and how many congregations they have established, the Lord only knows.

Brother Tope reports that it is fairly common for Americans to be told by the Indians and Africans: "Look, we really are not going to follow your way or that other fellow's way. We have just decided we are going to go ahead and do what the Bible says as best we can understand it. We really don't feel we need you; but if we do, we will let you know." This can be very deflating to an American's ego, but it is clear proof that the lights that are shining in South Africa are not mere reflections of something in America.

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

Dull Sermons

Have you ever sat through a tedious, anesthetizing, vacuous sermon? I have. And I have also preached some.

What should one do when trapped for an hour under the monotonous pounding of pure froth? I noted recently that someone had written a book entitled "101 Things to Do During a Dull Sermon." It seemed a stroke of genius to me, addressing one of those unspoken questions we all are hesitant to raise.

The author proposed some novel, but unfortunately, impractical and impious solutions. One could hold up cue cards for the preacher—"Get to the point" or "Tell another joke" or "Your pot roast is burning." All of which reminds me of a story Harold Dowdy tells of a sister who persisted in knitting while he preached. When he asked her why she brought her knitting to church, she replied: "I just wanted to be sure it wouldn't be a total waste of time."

All of us have surely devised our own ways to deal with this trying predicament. I can tell you that one way to stay awake when all else fails is to hold your feet slightly off the floor—and it is good aerobic exercise. Harder than keeping one's mind awake is keeping it on the business at hand. Too often one finds himself tuning the preacher out and mentally wandering through the ball scores and other trivial matters.

I have a couple of more serious suggestions about what to do during a dull sermon. The first is—listen. There may be something there. There are few deserts completely devoid of uncharted oases. I have learned some powerful lessons (sometimes they were lessons the preacher had missed) in the midst of tedious sermons.

My second suggestion is to consider the preacher and not yourself. I can remember well how nervous my mother and sisters would grow when I preached as a youngster—and

Deedie later. And how elated they were when I finished without falling out of the pulpit. It didn't take much to satisfy them. Because they were interested in me as well as in my preaching.

When one of the younger (or older) inexperienced brethren speaks in Fayetteville, I'm pulling for him all the way. I appreciate his effort, his desire, and I usually learn something, or am refreshed in spirit, by what he says. There is an intensity in my listening because I am concerned for the person.

It is true, of course, that I sometimes listen to sermons that simply should not be preached. Worst are those with no apparent design but to feed the ego of the preacher. That is bad preaching, not just dull, and I write no brief in defense of vanity and bombast.

It is also true that some dull sermons are incurable. And some dull preachers are incurable. One must admit that not everyone is well-fitted for

public proclamation. Of course, such judgments are difficult to make, and should not be made hastily; I have seen some pretty unlikely buds blossom into fine preachers. But, in a sense, every sermon remains a "try out" sermon—if they don't work they need to be discarded. If none of them work, one probably needs to find another place of usefulness in the Lord's kingdom.

In short, in the midst of a dull sermon, lots of different things are going on. There is what is being said (it is probably not completely empty); there is a speaker (a person to be considered and appreciated for his effort); and there is me (reflecting a good or bad attitude about what is going on). When the dull sermon is over, I can probably thank my brother—though I may instruct him or even try to get him a job at Sears—and I certainly can appreciate the effort he has expended.

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Broadcasting

It is probably because of my background in the electronic media, but I believe the word "broadcast" more aptly gives the sense of the Greek word *euangelizo*, or its companion word *kerusso* than any word I know. The concept of evangelization is best seen in Luke's narrative in Acts 8:4, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word."

What he is saying I don't take to be a formal preaching of the word in the sense in which we know it today with an audience, a pulpit, a preacher and a formal discourse, but rather a declaration of the good news based on the burning desire that all should know about the risen Savior. It was the spontaneous reaction of an efflorescent faith. Their conviction toward their new profession would not contain. It overflowed. And in spite of persecution. So intensely involved were they in their new way that "they went everywhere preaching the word," which is as much an expression of what they were as of what they did.

The requirements for broadcasting are simple. There must be a transmitter, a receiver, and a message to distribute. Even if the transmitter is engaged and the receiver in tune, there can be no broadcast without the message. Paul refers to the message of God as "the dispensation of grace" (Ephesians 3:2), a terminology which we generally use to describe a period of time. Such metonymous use is proper, but the pure form of the word has to do with dispensing, or the distribution of a thing. When Paul refers to his mission as a "dispensation of grace," he is speaking of his responsibility to distribute the grace of God—that is, preach the gospel. Here, then, in Ephesians 3:1-3 we see the three necessary elements of a broadcast: the transmitter, Paul; the receiver, the Gentiles; and the message, the gospel of God.

Mission work (a term I don't particularly like, though I don't know a better one) is more efficient when there is a personal involvement. Too long we have sought to do it by proxy. We pay people, we have even built organizations to do it for us. And while I would never want to detract from our work in foreign or difficult fields, I am of the notion that the most fertile mission fields are likely to be found across backyard fences and down country lanes. When our people are convinced—

really convinced—they'll tell people about the gospel. They'll get involved. Then they will tell their neighbors, co-workers, schoolmates—and such actions will quickly cross oceans and traverse national boundaries, just as it did in the first century.

We need to set in motion God's "chain reaction," as described by Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2. "And the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." It is the most efficient and economical missionary machine. It requires no great organization; it only requires the zeal of both teacher and taught. The only cost is the sacrificial expenditure of oneself because of his own commitment. But there must first be a missionary spirit before there will be any missionary work.

The result is assured if the love of truth is the motive for such endeavors. When we desist from trying to make "church of Christ's" out of people and seek rather to help people know how to have remission of their sins and how to go to heaven when they die, we will see an upturn in our evangelistic endeavors. The message of the gospel is salvation, forgiveness, acceptance by God. The people on Pentecost were not asking what they must do to become a member of the church, but what to do in order to be saved. A person is not in the church to be saved, he is in the church because he is saved. The church is the saved (Acts 2:47). And when we begin again to do as they did in the early church, that is to show people how they can have release from the guilt of their sins, and then entertain the prospect of eternity in heaven, we will see evangelism that is effective and easily encouraged.

Our results are slow only because we are slow to believe in what we've got. Broadcasting is what evangelism is all about. But if there is no message, or if the signal is weak, there will likely be little communication, and so little result. And if the message is some "canned," hyped-up sales pitch just like all the other "commercials" we hear, it likely will turn people off (no pun intended). But if there is a crisp, clear signal, an honest and sincere presentation of the saving message, accompanied by the testimony of a life of righteousness, there will be enough antennae out to insure the result.

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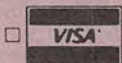
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A divergent opinion about rock music

I'd like to comment on the article entitled "Today's Music" by brother Eugene Britnell [February, 1984, page 15]. Now I am sure that the article was written in all sincerity to warn parents and young people against what he considers to have corrupted the minds and morals of youth.

Yet, in reading the article, I couldn't help but get the impression that he is not clearly informed on the subject of "rock music" and perhaps colored the article with a bit of his own personal preference. "A hungry calf, a pig in a gate, and billy-goat on a tin roof" are terms of opinion and are not even completely factual if we ascribe it to all music which the world today groups under the heading of rock.

After stating his *opinion*, brother Britnell then turns to Dick Marcear to relate to us information on his insight into today's rock music and culture. If bro. Britnell has the facts, couldn't we have heard it first-hand? Bro. Marcear takes us on a journey to a "rock concert" where he tells us the antics of KISS and the Plasmatics. . . . As for the groups he saw, I have kept abreast and very informed on rock music for about 20 years now and very rarely did I ever meet anyone who liked KISS and I never met anyone who liked the Plasmatics. The followers of these groups are labeled "punk" by the rest of rock society and the music is garbage. It receives virtually no air play on rock radio stations. These groups do not truly represent the rock scene. They are the worst of the worst and it appears that they were used to portray the image of all rock-and-roll musicians.

I am a Christian who likes to keep informed on what young people are into, not to encourage them in evil, but in order to present factual information rather than scare tactics. I have been to over 20 rock concerts, and unlike what Dick Marcear says, they are not all the same. All rock music is not the same.

If bro. Britnell will take the time to investigate, he will find many exceptions to the message of "sex, drugs, immorality and rebellion" conveyed in the music. Let us beware lest we slant things to the point of misrepresentation when all of the facts are not in.

Young people are very impressionable and quick to look for any error or prejudice in their elders and use this as a basis for rebellion. We can avoid this danger if we state all that we say factually and in the light of God's word—not on personal opinion and lack of information.

Glen Wilson
Oroville, CA

The need for practically applying the truth

I rejoiced over the excellent content and quality of *Christianity Magazine*. Its scriptural insight is edifying, practical and refreshing.

God's bottom line of faithfulness isn't just how many Bible facts or arguments refuting error that we know, but it is how the truth bears fruit in everyday life (Matthew 7:20). The best Bible translation isn't the KJV, NASB, or NIV, but it's the Bible translated into daily living that glorifies God. "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (John 15:8). Only then will the world marvel as they see Jesus Christ created and living in us. It's such a joy to be God's children. We shouldn't look like the Spirit's fruit of joy tastes like a lemon.

I pray *Christianity Magazine* will continue to teach the balanced truth of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Knowing *how* to practically apply the truth is just as important as knowing what the truth is.

W. Frank Walton
Charlotte, TN

A reader's thoughts on "practicing Christians"

I came across a news item today in the *Milwaukee Journal* and it started the wheels turning. It seems that a Milwaukee woman is undergoing some very difficult times. The newspaper refers to it as "a test of faith." The 43-year-old grandmother was in court Tuesday, April 3, to plead for leniency in the sentencing of her daughter's ex-boyfriend on drug charges. Later that same day the ex-boyfriend shot and repeatedly stabbed both

the woman's daughter, age 25, and her granddaughter, age 9. Their bodies were found in the grandmother's car on Wednesday. Incidentally, the man who murdered these two is the father of the young girl whom he slew.

But here is my point. When the woman was interviewed, she said that she could forgive the man because she was a "practicing Christian." To go along with all the other "hyphenated" Christians ("Catholic-Christians," "Lutheran-Christians," "Methodist-Christians," "Baptist-Christians," "Jehovah's-Christian-Witnesses," "born-again-Christians," etc., etc., we now have a "practicing-Christian." A practicing Christian!! Is there any other kind? Please see Matthew 7:20-21 and Matthew 5:13-16. A non-practicing Christian is about as useful for the Master, and as helpful to a dark world as a flashlight with a burned-out bulb! Please see Philipians 2:14-15. Now please see 1 Corinthians 15:58 and Colossians 3:23-24. Isn't that more like it?

A wise man once said, "All it will take for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." Thank you for your time. May our God richly bless you.

Andrew G. Berendt
Milwaukee, WI

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Anti-Institutionalism

I am opposed to local churches supporting organizations which ostensibly exist to help them do their work.

The appearance and proliferation of such institutions was, I believe, the chief cause of the nineteenth and twentieth century divisions in the restoration movement. It is a repetitious theme among all groups that consider themselves Christian.

The scriptural basis of my objection is simple—such institutions were neither used nor needed by the church in New Testament days. A consistent restorationist approach simply will not allow such basic additions to the local church organizations which functioned in the first century. If early Christian beliefs and actions are binding, there is no place for religious institutionalism.

But I confess I have other prejudices against religious institutions. While many such organizations may have been well-intended when founded, they inevitably come to exist for their own benefit. They are created to serve, but in the end they live to be served. History is replete with the evidence that religious institutions do not build churches, they destroy them.

The appearance of institutions also signals the emergence of an elite within a religious group, offering specialized services previously unavailable. They provide expertise that "little" churches and "little" preachers need but do not have. This new elite has seen beyond the vision of those who work within the framework of a local church. I confess that such thinking stirs up my populist ire as well as my scriptural sensibilities.

When I peruse the writings of those struggling with the nineteenth century division in the restoration movement, I am amazed at their insight into all of these anti-institutional arguments. The opponents of missionary societies were mostly farmer-preacher with limited educations, but they perceived that these societies were not only unscriptural, they were also condescending, presumptuous, and self-serving. Consider the following:

"What politicians call paternalism in government is

the very warp and woof of this whole board business in religion, its inevitable tendency is to exalt those who are on the boards to the oppression of those who are under the boards. It fattens the classes, but impoverishes the masses" (Fletcher Srygley, *Gospel Advocate*, Oct. 7, 1891, p. 626).

"Last week about a hundred preachers and fashionable women assembled at Gainesville, Texas, in a state convention, and wasted enough of the Lord's money and time to have held a hundred protracted meetings, and converted a thousand sinners. They also spent enough money for extra fine toggery, to appear in style, to pay the expenses of a half dozen evangelists to preach the gospel in destitute places all summer. What was their business at Gainesville? Principally a good time and a fashionable blow-out, and in addition to this, an effort to push forward the furor for societies and fads in religion, and to supplant the Lord's plan of work and worship in the churches" (T. R. Burnett, *Gospel Advocate*, July 4, 1895, p. 419).

"As time advanced such of those churches as assembled in large towns and cities gradually became proud, or, at least, sufficiently worldly-minded to desire popularity, and in order to attain that unscriptural end they adopted certain popular arrangements such as the hired pastor . . . man-made societies to advance the gospel, and human devices to raise money to support previously mentioned devices for similar origin. In so doing they divided the brotherhood of disciples" (Daniel Sommer, *Octographic Review*, Oct. 5, 1897, p. 1).

And yet we never learn. Sociologists testify that institutions invariably become deadly drains on churches. Historians tell us that each new generation breeds its new idea-men intent on taking the church down the same road to institutional strangulation. The gullible follow them down that well-worn suicidal path.

Joy

Dale Smelser

The young bride had tried being a Christian, she thought. But back home for a visit with her family, lounging with them in a bar and taking in an "adult" movie, she decided it was too much trouble. She wanted out. Not only out of Christ, but out of her marriage to a Christian. There were too many joys she was missing. Her perception must have been similar to someone's estimation of the religion of Robert Burns—it seemed to haunt him more than help him.

Many today have the idea that sin is fulfilling and righteousness is depressing; that joy is a Saturday night fling. The wise man identified the same disposition when he said, "Folly is joy to him that is void of wisdom" (Proverbs 15:21). Modern values are so askew that the vain follies of late twentieth-century despair seem joyful.

I know a growing Christian who knows better than all that. He used to judge how good a time he had the night before by how bad he felt the next day. He thoughtlessly took any seeming pleasure as it came. But the fruit of an irresponsible life eventually brought him to his knees. There, from that humbled perspective, he was able to see God. Having seen, he has no inclination to look back. His buoyant faith and joy in a new life enable him to recognize the joy of righteousness and say with David, "The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:8)—not oppressing or vexing—but rejoicing the heart. But such a past has given him some problems to contend with as a Christian.

Or there is the college student, the sum of whose moral training regarding drugs and sex was, "Just don't get busted, and don't get pregnant." Astoundingly, her sense was better than her training and Christ found her responsive to His will. I remember pleurably an evening when she accompanied Marlene and me to a meeting where a handful of mostly young and nationally diverse Christians meet in a section of Brooklyn where the tree *didn't* grow. The service was long. The sermon lasted an hour. Afterward,

discussion lasted another hour. Conversation continued back across Manhattan and the George Washington bridge to the comparative normalcy of northern New Jersey suburban sprawl. As she got out of the car she said, "Thank you for letting me go with you. I had a wonderful time." The gospel has brought joy to that life. But, you know, being Jewish has added some stressful moments to her life.

The fact is, in all our lives joy is not a constant unabated exuberance, but rather a summary of our experience. And there is certainly not, by contrast, a constancy of euphoria in the lives of those out of Christ. There is ample sin around to curse periods of every man's

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being, whether he is good or bad. Thus, in a surprising number of New Testament passages where joy is mentioned, it has a curious companion—affliction. But the thrilling paradox is that a Christian can know joy in difficulty. As James tells us, trials even occasion joy. They do so because they result in steadfast faith and spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4).

But whoever heard of joy coming through difficulty, grief, or stress? Who indeed? Did you ever see a mother hold her newborn in her arms after the ordeal of childbirth? The joy Jesus has in what He became to us came through the shame and suffering of the cross. And look at the apostles' response to being beaten (Acts 5). In bearing that they had

stood the test—they knew they could take it. No more running away. No more denying. This was triumph. They rejoiced.

Accordingly, the word James uses for trials refers to those things that test us, that improve us. As a young bird "tests" his wings, flying free from the confinement of the nest—so our trials are not to cast us to the ground but to make us soar.

But trials carry hurt and pain, you say. Tell that to the athlete whose training pushes his lungs and muscles to agonizing extremity, who masters ever-tougher obstacles until he reaches the top of his sport and can do what few others can. Tell him to stop all the pain and agony, and you tell him to fail.

As the tested wings fit the bird for what birds were made, as the athlete's pain perfects him, so our trials perfect us—that is, they make us "fit." As only animals without spot were fit for sacrifice to God, and as only men without disfiguring blemish were fit to be priests, so our endurance and triumph over trial fit us for God's use, and for glory.

Do you sometimes feel spiritually inadequate? Do you now know a way to perfection, fitness? Would you rejoice in something that could give you that? If so, then you appreciate what James meant when he said to count it joy when we fall into trials, seeing they perfect us so that we lack nothing.

See trials as a challenge. Face them determined to conquer them for Christ. Do not duck every challenge to faith and righteousness. If you compromise and give in to sin, or shy away from the test, you will never soar.

The Christian is such a creature of joy that he knows joy even in affliction. And that, because he knows something the world does not. He knows that there is light after darkness and that each problem can end in spiritual triumph. Be a Christian unashamedly, courageously, winsomely, unafraid. Rejoice. Hallelujah. Glory.

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Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

The Call of Conscience

I would not give you a plugged nickel for most psychiatrists and psychologists. The reason is that most of them operate upon the anti-scriptural assumptions of Sigmund Freud, the "father of modern psychiatry." They treat the symptoms rather than the causes of mental problems—and such will never work. Fortunately, in recent years a number of men have come on the scene who at least believe in the God of the Bible and have parted company with conventional, godless psychiatry.

One of the most notable of these is Dr. William Glasser. In his book, *Reality Therapy*, Dr. Glasser contends that most emotional disturbances stem from a *conscience* that has been violated, and he advocates therapy that sets about to deal with the guilt itself rather than pursuing only the guilt feelings.

We need to understand that when God designed us in the beginning, He equipped us for success—and thus made no provision for us to live comfortably with guilt. Someone has said, "Guilt is God's way of saying, 'You have broken one of My principles.'" We simply cannot enjoy complete freedom of mind until we are released from the burden of guilt. This takes place initially, of course, at conversion. The feeling that follows is somewhat like the effect of a tranquilizer, with this distinct difference—the relief is immediate, permanent and free from hangovers.

What Is Conscience?

The word *conscience* is a compound word consisting of *con* meaning "in conjunction with" and *science* meaning "knowledge." It is therefore knowledge held in conjunction with another—God. A clear conscience is vital to our moral and spiritual freedom. If we are going to be free from guilt, we must have transparent hearts toward God, ourselves and others. How do we secure this?

First, let's look at how conscience operates in our lives. When God created man, He built into him a special alarm system which was intended to ring whenever he crossed the limits God had set for him. His violated conscience protested his action and caused an awareness of personal responsibility before God. This is why Adam

and Eve tried to hide from God in the garden and attempted to cover their nakedness with leaves.

The human system is simply not designed to carry guilt. Some effort has to be made to deal with the emotional strain that occurs. Man will either do this in the right way or in the wrong way. Adam sought to rationalize his guilt by blaming the woman whom God had given him.

The right way to respond to the demands of an outraged conscience is by an act of repentance (and restitution, if possible). Unless this happens the inner release which comes through pardon and forgiveness can never be experienced, and the person concerned is left with feelings of insecurity and despair. Some people try to compensate for this by attempting to deal with the pain of guilt in some other way. They may become full of good works, give generously to charitable causes, or otherwise try to "make up" for what they know in their heart is still not right.

The power of a clear conscience is seen everywhere in the Bible (Hebrews 5:13; 1 Timothy 1:19; Proverbs 28:13). Maintaining a clear conscience is absolutely necessary for one to live peaceably with himself. Every day we must be sure that we have not hurt God or others and as soon as any violation is noticed we should then, *without delay* set the matter right. Have I lied to anyone and never taken steps to correct it? Have I stolen anything and never returned or restored it? Have I lost my temper with anyone and not yet apologized? Have I slandered the reputation of anyone and not corrected it? Have I harbored bitterness in my heart against another and refused to forgive?

These are not easy matters to deal with, but it is essential that I do if I would have a clear conscience. Guilt, when repressed in the mind, will only store up trouble for the future. A clear conscience should be the aim of every Christian. Without it we are like ships with a faulty compass trying desperately to chart a course through stormy seas—and headed for the rocks.

God's Law Written On Our Hearts

Robert E. Waldron

Jeremiah lived under the law of Moses. He was a priest (Jeremiah 1:1), and he was faithful to God under that law. Therefore we are amazed to find in the writings of this man the prophecy that God was going to make a new covenant.

"Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them forth out of the land of Egypt" (Jeremiah 31:31-32).

The words are unmistakable. God would make a new covenant. It would not be merely a remodeling of the old. How would this new covenant be different? Obviously, in God's view, it would be a *better* covenant; otherwise there would be no point in replacing the old law. Notice these points of the new covenant:

1. I will put my laws in their hearts (31:33).
2. They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, saying, 'Know the Lord;' for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them (31:34).
3. I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more (31:34).

The most tangible and substantial difference between the two covenants is the difference between the blood of bulls and goats which could never take away sin (Hebrews 10:4), and the blood of Jesus through which we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our trespasses (Ephesians 1:7). Because of this superior sacrifice, we have a superior covenant enacted upon better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

I want to emphasize the *first* point of difference mentioned: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33). This difference between the covenants was to be a matter of emphasis. God wanted His law to be on the heart of His people in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:6). They failed to absorb His law. They allowed the law to remain engraved on stones rather than engraved in their hearts. Under the New Covenant, God stresses that His law

must be written on our hearts. In other words, the revelation of His holy character expressed in positive and negative commands must not remain mere external rules but must become the principles of behavior by which each man's conscience is guided. Instead of being "set before" them (an expression often applied to the Law of Moses), God's revelation is to become the values by which men live. Consider for a moment the meaning of "law" in Jeremiah 31:33. Was God saying that under the new covenant, He was going to put His law of *Moses* in their hearts? No. The term law in this passage does not refer to a specific system of law in a particular dispensation. Rather it refers to the expression of God's eternal nature. The business of men in this world is to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4).

The revelation of God was intended to help men become like Him, but due to the weakness of the flesh, the old law could not accomplish this end because there was no forgiveness by the terms of the law—but "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 8:1-4).

The point emphasized in the law's being put in our inward parts is that we cannot view the New Testament as a list of 492 commandments, and think that the whole task of being a Christian is to make a checklist and mechanically tick off each item of obedience. These commandments remain only commandments when treated in such a fashion. They must become principles of living. In other words, we must learn to do these things not just because God wants us to but because we want to be like God. When we love God (love means to greatly respect and admire with appreciation) then it is inevitable that we will want to be like Him (John 14:15).

Jesus taught that if we live by external rules, we will be inconsistent and disobedient. Men must live by principles. Let's illustrate by the sermon on the mount. Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, 'Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment,' but I say unto you that everyone who is angry with his brother without cause shall be

in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22). Similar points are made through the rest of Matthew 5.

What was Jesus saying in all of this? Let's approach it this way. You remember Pavlov's dog, the one that was conditioned to salivate when he heard a bell ring? Most people now and in Jesus' day operate in such a fashion. There were certain things the Pharisees were conditioned to think of as important (tithing), but other things they neglected completely (showing honor to their parents; Matthew 23:23-24). Likewise, many Christians are conditioned to have a few points that they emphasize. They take great pride in their hearts at being the soundest of the sound because there are certain very sound things that they do—but there are enormous gaps in their service to God.

The problem is that when we live by rules, we practice only the rules that have been specially impressed upon us, that we have been conditioned to do. Our service then is haphazard and contradictory. On the other hand, if we live by principles which become a part of our conscience and system of values, the principles will lead us to keep the rules. I am not minimizing the keeping of rules. I am trying to show that the rules must become principles of behavior. They are related in turn to comprehensive principles which, if we commit ourselves to them, will insure that our service to God is total and consistent. This was exactly the thing Jesus meant when He said that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and mind, and the second is like unto the first, to love thy neighbor as thyself (Matthew 22:34-39).

The writing of the law upon our hearts is an emphatic feature of the new covenant. It refers to a way of living that is worthy of those who live at the end of the ages. Let us commit ourselves to the imitation of God's holy nature. Let us determine to love God and our fellow man and do the things that love leads us to do. "On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

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Marriage Is A Radical Act

Marriage as an institution was not in especially healthy shape in this country twenty years ago, but the Vietnam War years saw an already rising divorce rate take flight. By 1970 there was one divorce for every three marriages and by 1979 one for every two. There is not much expectation for lasting marriages left among American young people. Social analyst Daniel Yankelovich has recently determined that "60% of those marrying in the United States this year do not expect to remain married to that partner." Clearly, "happily ever after" is a dying dream.

There are no doubt many reasons for this social phenomenon. It is evident that the stigma once attached itself to divorce has long since evaporated. James Dobson has observed that divorce is almost as serious a problem among those that consider themselves Christians as among the general population. Two years ago, Robert J. Stout, writing in *Christianity Today* (2-5-82), estimated that divorce rates among American preachers had quadrupled since 1960. But again, these statistics are probably gratuitous. Most of us have experienced this growing social tragedy in our own families, churches or communities.

Social mobility, the anonymity of large cities, the collapse of extended family influence on young marriage partners, have all no doubt played their part in destabilizing the American home. But, as simplistic as it will seem to some, the real cause is a careless ignorance of and indifference to God's law. Our growing lack of reverence for God has made us a nation of self-indulgent covenant-breakers with no sense of integrity or self-discipline. One social force that did much to produce this attitude was the upsurge of individualism that attended the Vietnam War years. Everyone began feverishly trying to "fulfill" himself without regard to the cost to others.

The idea gained vogue in the 1960's that it was a very revolutionary thing to dispense with wedding vows and marriage licenses and to live in a grand, free way "without benefit of clergy." In this way and others the counter-culture of the times sought to declare their freedom from the traditional values of their elders. Taking up casual liaisons with the opposite sex was held to be a most radical gesture. It was here that the rebellious individualists of the 60's fell into the most egregious blunder. They committed the ultimate conservative act. There is nothing more conservative and self-serving than an arrangement without commitment and devoid of risk. When all the rhetoric is stripped away what you have is an adolescent device calculated to provide instant gratification without

responsibility. Human beings are treated as consumable, expendable objects.

Now if you would like to commit a truly radical act, I recommend marriage. It is a human relationship based on a life-long commitment. It is fraught with all kinds of risks and vulnerabilities. It hangs you out naked before the future. But on the other hand, for these very reasons, it opens up the possibility for such an intimate and satisfying union between two people—the melding of two personalities into a profound companionship—that the risks are reduced to inconsequentiality.

Marriage is not the kind of relationship you can "try out." You cannot experience marriage without the commitment that makes it marriage. Unless you are willing to take the risks you can never experience the joys. As God knows, institutionalized affairs will not satisfy the human spirit. The initial romantic thrill will soon be gone, and without the strong undergirding of an unshakable commitment the relationship can never advance to anything more. This is the reason that Hollywood's serial polygamists (and their imitators) move from one marriage to another seeking to renew the adolescent thrill of being "in love" when the former romance has died. They are children playing in the marketplace.

Romance has never been a sufficient foundation for a truly profound relationship between a man and a woman. Feelings are too fickle. It takes an uncompromising commitment to open up the remarkable joys of marriage. Paul speaks to this when he *commands* husbands to love their wives (Ephesians 5:25) and wives to love their husbands (Titus 2:4). This love is not emotional but volitional—a deep resolve to live unselfishly for the partner's good. If before God you have promised to love your mate then do so "till death do you part." If you have wavered in your commitment, repent. God does not tolerate the easy abandonment of these vows (Matthew 19:3-12; Mark 6:17-18); not because He wishes to rob us of happiness but because He desires to bring us true joy. His rather stringent law protects us from our own lust and stupidity until we learn that real fulfillment in marriage is built on faithfulness to a life-long pledge.

A wife, meditating on why she loved her husband, observed: "I used to think I loved Jack because of certain things about him—his good looks, his winsome personality, his dedication. But it didn't take long to see through all that. I found out over the years there can be only one reason to make me love him. The reason is: because I want to." Marriage is a radical act, but it is a blessed one if we discipline ourselves to the will of God.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

Amazing Grace

God's grace is indeed amazing. It is amazing that God could love man enough to send His own Son to die for him—while man was still in his sins.

Of course, God's favor upon man was shown in Old Testament times in many ways (page 13). Adam and Eve received it. So did Noah and Naaman. The nation of Israel experienced God's grace over and over again.

Man needs God's grace because he is unable to save himself. "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Without God, man is undone and hopeless. He has sinned, violated God's law—and man cannot save himself (page 14).

God's grace has been shown to man in many ways, but the supreme expression of it is found in the sending of Christ to die for man—the innocent dying for the

guilty (page 15). Never has God so loved as when He gave His only begotten Son.

The grace of God is also seen in that He communicated with His creatures (page 16). He revealed His desires, His will in written form so that all men for all time could receive His grace. Men can read that will and receive it today—and they will be able to do so two thousand years from now, should the world stand that long.

But all men will not be saved. Even though "the grace of God has appeared to all men"—still all will not be saved. God has *provided* grace for all, but only those who meet His conditions will *actually receive* that grace (page 17). Even when someone gives us a gift, we must still reach out and take it (page 18).

We need to understand that grace and works and faith all fit together in God's plan (pages 18 and 20). Not one of us can be justified by works of human merit or by perfect law-keeping—but

only by God's grace through faith.

And the Bible plainly teaches that one can fall from grace (page 19). That is, we can receive God's grace and then turn away from it. Some people don't believe this, but the Bible plainly teaches it (Galatians 5:4; 1 Corinthians 9:27). Yet, there are some who have a distorted concept of grace. They would have grace be everything (page 21).

God's grace is wonderful and marvelous. But we must all heed the fearful fact that in spite of all the abundant provisions God has made for man by His grace—man can nullify it all by failing to personally obey the gospel or by falling away after obeying.

Our plea to you is this: don't receive God's grace in vain (page 22). Appropriate it for yourself. Any sinner can be saved by God's grace at any time if he but will. And that's amazing.

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AMAZING GRACE

Ferrell Jenkins

What Is Grace?

IT'S PROBABLY JUST A PREACHER'S STORY, but it conveys the right idea about grace. I heard the lamented Jack McElroy tell it when I was yet a teenager. An old Indian was asked to explain grace. He made a circle of dry straw around a bug and lit a fire. The bug moved first one way and then another, but there was no way he could escape. Then the wise old man took a stick and placed one end within the burning circle. The bug soon climbed on the stick and was lifted to safety. Said he, "That's grace."

The grace of God makes possible all kinds of blessings, both physical and spiritual. In Him we live, and move, and have our very being. In this sense God blesses all, sending rain, sunshine, and fruitful seasons upon the just and the unjust. It is the spiritual blessings, however, in which we are most interested now. Perhaps no passage of Scripture more clearly demonstrates what grace is than Ephesians 1:3-14.

In Ephesians chapter one the apostle Paul shows the ways in which God has

1 Peter 2:4). We may choose whether to be in Christ. Without God's grace there would have been no choice.

2. He foreordained (or predestined) us (verse 5). This was not done on an individual basis, but in Christ. The saints have been foreordained unto adoption as sons of God through Christ.

3. He provided redemption (forgiveness of sins) through the blood of Christ (verse 7). Note that this was according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us.

4. He made known to us the mystery of His will (verse 9). God's secret plan for the salvation of man, which had been hidden for ages, is now revealed to the saints.

5. He made us a heritage (verse 11). Rather than the concept that we have obtained an inheritance, the footnote (and the American Standard translation) seems to be the correct idea. God has made us His own possession. This same thought is brought out in verse 14, "the redemption of God's own possession." What a tremendous thought! We belong to God. Out of all that He created, only the saints will live with Him throughout eternity.

6. He sealed us with the Holy Spirit (verses 13-14). As a result of our having heard the word of His grace, and having believed it, God has sealed us with the Holy Spirit. This means that He has marked us as His own. From our viewpoint the Holy Spirit is a pledge or earnest of the inheritance we will someday receive.

It is no wonder that Paul three times exclaims that all of this is according to the grace of God (verses 6,7,14). "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound." Joseph Scriven said it for many of us in his beautiful song:

When we've been there ten thousand
years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's
praise
Than when we've first begun.

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"The word 'grace' means undeserved or unmerited favor. Grace is the opposite of merit. God's mercy, grace, love and kindness are closely associated in providing salvation for man. . . . It is the spiritual blessings in which we are most interested now."

Most illustrations have their weaknesses. God did not start the fire around man; man sinned in violation of the clear law of God and is responsible for his own lost condition. It is God who provides a way of escape when man is incapable of devising one for himself. The word "grace" means undeserved or unmerited favor. Grace is the opposite of merit. God's mercy, grace, love and kindness are closely associated in providing salvation for man (Ephesians 2:1-10).

shown His grace toward man. It must be observed that Paul is writing to saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus (verse 1). The things he says are true of those who are already Christians. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (spiritual or heavenly realm) in Christ (verse 3). Notice some of the ways in which He has blessed us.

1. He chose (or elected) us in Christ before the foundation of the world (verse 4). This election took place in Christ who is God's elect (Luke 9:35;

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God's Grace in the Old Testament

Boyd Sellers

I HAVE A FRIEND WHOSE CONCEPT OF GOD is divided. He sees God in the Old Testament as an intolerant, vicious "warmonger," without mercy, offering no grace, and leaving death and destruction in His path. Then, in the New Testament, he sees God as an over-tolerant "Father" whose only characteristic is "love," who endures and accepts any belief or action, and would never punish anybody for anything.

Of course, both views of God are extreme and false. Though His covenants have changed, God's nature has not changed. He remains, as always, the gracious God who rewards obedience and punishes rebellion and disobedience.

One of the clearest examples of God's grace in the Old Testament is that of Noah and his generation. The people of Noah's day had become so wicked that they *deserved* to die—"every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). The situation "grieved" God and He determined to give man what he *deserved*—"I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Genesis 6:7). "But Noah found *grace*" (verse 8). And even though the men of his generation *deserved* to die, God provided a way through Noah for them to be saved. In His grace, God gave them *time* to repent. He provided a *man* with a message of salvation (2 Peter 2:5) and He devised the *means* by which they could avoid certain destruction in the flood. Keep in mind: They deserved death! But the amazing grace of God held out an offer of salvation to wicked, rebellious men.

Noah's example also illustrates the fact that God's offer of grace can be refused. The fact that God provided a *way* for lost men to be saved did not mean that all would be saved. In fact *most* refused His gracious offer. Peter tells us that "few, that is eight souls were saved by water" (1 Peter 3:20). Only eight people accepted the gift of God's grace.

From a more "general" standpoint there are at least four basic areas where the grace of God stands out in His

dealings with His Old Testament people, Israel.

First, it was grace that provided them with a law that showed them how men ought to live. Knowing that "the way of man is not in himself" (Jeremiah 10:23), they, like men in every age, needed a word from God to show them how to live. Though some may have viewed it otherwise, God's law was not given to unduly restrict or to keep them from "enjoying life." In fact, just the opposite

Some of the estimates of the daily requirements of food and water for the traveling Israelites are astounding. But the gracious God provided. . . . If it had not been for God's provision, they would have perished! And His provisions were not out of debt—He OWED them nothing! His provisions were unearned, unmerited, undeserved.

was true. Moses said, "And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes . . . for our good always" (Deuteronomy 6:24). God knew what they needed! He knew what was best, and He graciously gave them a law for *their good*. Here was the word that would keep them from the pitfalls that were destroying the heathen. It was not merited, deserved, or earned. The Law of God to guide was a gift of God's grace.

Second, it was grace that provided for their necessities. Some of the estimates

of daily requirements of food and water for the traveling Israelites are astounding. But the gracious God provided. Jeremiah observed that it was Jehovah who "brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt" (Jeremiah 2:6). If it had not been for God's provision, they would have perished!! And His provisions were not out of debt—He *owed* them nothing! His provisions were unearned, unmerited, undeserved. It was often the case that if God had given this rebellious, faithless, stubborn people what they *deserved*, He would have left them alone to perish in the wilderness. But He provided. Amazing grace!

Third, even in chastening, God's grace was evident. David was thankful for it (Psalm 119:71) and Asaph, though he had difficulty learning to appreciate God's chastening, was made to realize how essential it was for his well-being (see Psalm 73). When the Kingdom of Judah had filled to the brim its cup of iniquity, God chastened severely with the 70-year Babylonian captivity. But even in chastening, God said, "I know the plans that I have for you . . . , plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11, NASV). There would have been no hope without the chastening of the gracious God.

Finally, God's grace is nowhere more evident than in His willingness to forgive when an erring son repented and returned humbly to Him. Whether it was the people of Nineveh (Jonah 4:2) or a "man after God's own heart" (Psalm 32:5), Jehovah waited with open arms ready and willing to forgive.

The amazing grace of God is written on every page of the Old Testament. With David all could say, "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities" (Psalm 103:10)—"Gracious is the Lord" (Psalm 116:5).

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Man's Plight Without God

Jerry Fite

"FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH" (Romans 6:23). The deadly consequences of sin should alarm all men, for all have sinned. The results of sin may be observed with the eye or perceived with the heart. They will always affect man spiritually, and sometimes even physically. Sin's bitter fruit may be tasted in time, but most certainly in eternity. Sin has its season of pleasure, but always returns for just payment. Man always pays dearly: He exists separated from God (Isaiah 59:2).

Until one knows his condition without

nor renewed promise can change the fact that sin has occurred. Yet, after "missing the mark," what more can man offer God? Bondage in sin becomes his wretched fate (Romans 7:14,24). God cannot overlook sin. He must be just. Man cannot plead innocence. He must have mercy.

When Jesus looked at men, He saw darkness, sickness, and death. These folks had the ability to see (Matthew 4:16). They possessed good appetites, and were physically active (Mark 2:15-17; Luke 9:62). But they were lost

(Ephesians 4:22). His ways may be in step with the age, but he fails to perceive that Satan has inspired their direction (Ephesians 2:2). Man may become more sophisticated without God, but never better.

Without God, man's reasoning becomes so dark that God gives him up to experience the degrading consequences (Romans 1:26-32). Sexual perversion becomes worse until the worldly sages can distinguish between "softcore" and "hardcore" pornography. Man soon loses "natural affection." The worldly-wise will allow murder, if committed in abortion clinics. Making money takes precedence over creating strong families. Occasional lying finds acceptance alongside good business ethics. Man's values are twisted. His life is confused.

Living without God, man tends to finally view his life as God viewed it all along: "vain," void of lasting good (1 Peter 1:18). He views life as "living on the perfume of an empty vase"—or "a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities." His "good life" has become a facade hiding his crumbling hopes. Faith, hope, and love are borrowed words with empty sounds, because he has denied their true substance and power.

Such are the sad results when man plans his way without God. Man's road is paved with neglect and ingratitude. It always ends in degradation and despair. With sorrow, man can look at his road and honestly say, "I did it my way."

Helplessness and hopelessness characterize man's condition without God. But it is when he sees the vanity of man's wisdom that he longs for the grace of divine teaching. It is when he sees his true helpless condition before his Creator that he yearns for the terms of reconciliation from his merciful Judge. He follows closely behind his Deliverer, for he knows that without his gracious Savior, he is lost.

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"Without God, man's reasoning becomes so dark that God gives him up to experience the degrading consequences. Sexual perversion becomes worse until the worldly sages can distinguish between 'softcore' and 'hardcore' pornography."

God, he cannot properly appreciate God's grace. The extension of grace implies need. As long as man feels self-sufficient, he has no need. But let him begin listening to the commentary of God upon man's sins. Let him start paying attention to the symptoms of emptiness that self-indulgence fails to fill. Then, grace will begin to glisten as never before.

Sin cannot appear without arousing God's judicial wrath. Because God is holy, He must punish sin. So when man sins, his relationship with God is one of enmity (Romans 5:8,10). No penitence

in sin. No greater picture of man's helplessness could be drawn. For we never expect life to spring from a corpse, health to emanate from a disease, or light to issue from darkness. God wants us to know that we still need deliverance from above though we may be functioning well according to worldly standards.

Man can choose to live without God. He begins by eliminating God from his thinking and enthrones himself. Instead of a God-centered life, he possesses a Self-centered life. The result is never pretty. Obeying the mandates of his lust, he soon "waxeth corrupt"

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Christ—The Ultimate Expression of God's Grace

David Barnes

THE WORD "ULTIMATE" IS SOMEWHAT overworked in our society. Anywhere you might care to look you will find folks attempting to provide some kind of "ultimate" expression. We have all heard of "the greatest game ever played" or "the supreme work of art." It may be the ultimate for awhile, but before long someone will replace it with another. Religion has not been excluded from these attempts. In Micah 6:6-7, we read of human attempts to provide the ultimate sacrifice for sin. These attempts began with a calf and progressed to human sacrifice. Those sacrifices resulted in failure for two basic reasons: First, none of the sacrifices mentioned in this passage were really man's to give. Everything on earth belongs to God. We are merely stewards entrusted with a few possessions during our lives on earth. Second, none of these sacrifices had the power to atone for sin; therefore, man has nothing to offer and, even if he did, what he gave could not remove his sin. Man alone cannot provide the ultimate sacrifice to God. He is lost in his sin and personally helpless.

God, however, knows of man's inability to atone for his own sins. God had this knowledge from the beginning and thus planned to make provision for His creation. This knowledge of our weakness, coupled with His love for us, prompted Him to make a sacrificial gift of His only begotten Son. This magnificent display of love shows how important man is in the eyes of God. God gave Jesus, a perfect, innocent lamb, for the sins of wicked man—the innocent dying on behalf of the guilty. Here was the sacrifice that could remove the guilt of man and atone for his sin. In the giving of His Son, God provided the ultimate expression of love.

An examination of John 3:16 reveals the pertinent facts about this great gift of grace in simple, thrilling language. In this passage, Jesus claims that the *origin* of the gift is "God." This is the God who created, revealed His will, and blessed humanity. God's *motive* is simply 'love,' a love which is of such quality and depth

that we really only begin to comprehend it. Furthermore, Jesus says that "God *so* loved." The word "so" indicates the *intensity* of the love. He did not merely "love," He "so loved!" The quality of the love corresponds to the quality of the gift. We understand God's love through Jesus Christ. The *recipient* of the great love is "the world." The *action* God performed is seen in the word "gave." He makes no demands of repayment and He requires no overwhelming burdens for men to bear in payment for His grace. He "gave" us a gift in the purest sense of the word. The gift was "His only begot-

may obey and be saved, or disobey and be lost. Jesus, then, is expounding the positive side of God's gift in this passage.

This gift of God's Son is the focal point of all human existence. Everything that God has revealed to man relates to the gift of Christ. It is this event that gives the Old Testament purpose and the New Testament authority. This gift is the very thrust of all revelation. The sacrificial Son is the reason we sing, pray and rejoice with unspeakable joy. His gift is the reason for all commands, promises and attendant blessings that God expresses in His Word. Without it,

"The gift of God's Son is the focal point of all human existence. Everything that God has revealed to man relates to it. It is this event that gives the Old Testament purpose and the New Testament authority."

ten Son" and the *purpose* of the gift was "eternal life" for you and me.

God does not rejoice in the prospect of anyone perishing. His aim for man in Eden was paradise and eternal life, but man lost this by sin. He regained it in the forgiveness of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ. In this way God becomes the Justifier of mankind through the provision of Christ. The purpose of the gift of Christ at Calvary was the redemption of man. It is the offer of eternal life. The circumstances of our eternal life depends upon our reaction to God's action. Throughout the whole of Scripture there are only two reactions possible—we

we would still be groping—searching for an "ultimate expression" that would repair the breach in our relationship with God. We would ever be searching, never finding, and always failing. With this gift, we can express ourselves completely as we frame our lives within the supreme and final statement of God's gracious love for man. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ—the ultimate expression of God's grace.

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THEME

AMAZING GRACE

The Bible—God's Grace Communicated

Vaughn D. Shofner

MAN IS THE PARAGON OF ANIMALS, THE acme of God's creation. "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion . . . over all the earth. . . . So God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27). In revealing the qualifications of man in order to possess sovereignty and similarity to God, Genesis 2:7 says, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

When man was created of the dust of the ground, his tangible form was only a composition of atoms, physical matter, and was not the likeness of God who is a spirit. But when the breath of God animated him as a living soul, then man was endowed with the likeness of God. He had received a direct afflatus from the Spirit of Elohim, and had conferred upon him a *communication* from the whole personality of the Godhead.

Since man was thus created and endowed with rational intelligence, man must be accountable to rational intelligence. Thus, by God's laws of procreation, man reached the place of creation's completeness and was able to understand intelligible information—to think connectedly, to reach rational conclusions, to exercise volition and to direct his behavior accordingly. In the God-planted garden the orally-communicated information from God gave man whatever was necessary to the exercise of his intellectual abilities and his complete happiness and welfare. But when contrary information was given by the Serpent, the use of it in man's reasoning process produced incorrect conclusions that led to sinful behavior. Man lost his personal communion with God as he was driven from God's presence because of his sin.

Though man was lifted by God's grace to the highest echelon of creation, he was now separated from the association and communication with his Creator. He faced impenetrable perplexities all around him. He beheld the symmetry of the universe: the uniformity that guides

the succession of seasons and controls the constant rotation of night and day; he learned the exact motions of heavenly bodies, the ebb and flow of the seas, and he concluded that there were great powers and wisdom in such marvelous works. But when he observed the air in destructive whirlwinds, and the earthquakes which threatened to reduce all nature to chaos, his thoughts and imaginations were frustrated.

With no information supplied but from the natural universe, man saw that the earth was supplied with many good things and that he enjoyed sovereignty in this natural palace. He saw how minutely power and wisdom tailored the things of nature to the makeup of the human body—air to the needs of breathing, things tangibly visible to the eyes, sounds communicated to the ears. He noticed that his nature connected him to his own species instead of animals of another kind, and he understood the distribution of abilities which required some to seek the assistance of others, and that sympathy leads to the relief of others in pain or need. He must have concluded that wisdom and power behind all of these realities comes from a being of great beneficence. But when he met the innumerable miseries to which man is subject, and attempted to reckon with the maladies that consume man; when he was faced with the terrors of death which lowers the loftiest head, dissolves the strongest ties, and destroys the highest positions—then without help of comforting information he wondered about the purpose of existence.

However, man was not left to an enigmatic existence troubled with doubt, dismay and frustration. There can be no friendly existence of animation without direction, order, and therefore at the very instant the all-wise Creator endowed man with His likeness He *communicated* to him with intelligible utterances which appealed to his intellectual makeup in the appointment of laws of duty and privilege: "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it: and have dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth"

(Genesis 1:28). Thus from the beginning man has been given the privilege of exercising his abilities by the intelligible appointments of his Creator.

Today the communicated intelligence of Jehovah God reveals that humanity is both physical and spiritual; that is, "The dust shall return to earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it" (Ecclesiastes 12:7). The Bible unfolds the mystery of the duties of man, attributes the way of corruption to the deceptive plots of the devil, and reveals the knowledge of the duration of man whose living spirit need not be involved in the decaying ruins of matter.

God's revelation dissipates all our obscurities and informs us without doubt that our Creator wills for us immortal bliss rather than eternal punishment. By this communication our thoughts are transported to a future and eternal state to which the plaintive pleas of God's warnings and promises tend. It commands us to accept the blessings of this life, but at the same time to reject the most magnificent earthly objects—the world's pride in crowns, scepters, kingdoms and pleasures—as being unfit to provide the felicity of souls created in the image of the blessed God.

So, gentle reader, as our earthly existence is by the excellence and favor of God, our salvation from the soul-destroying shambles of sin and failures is by the grace of God. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

O Lord, give us strength that we may never forget the exalted privileges granted by Thy excellence and favor to man from creation; and that now we are permitted to live in the full light of Thy glorious gospel, and can come boldly to Thy throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to bear us through our trying times.

AMAZING GRACE



Conditional Salvation

Charles L. Morton

"FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGETH salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12).

Man's need of divine grace is affirmed in the foregoing passage, for it is by the grace of God that salvation is brought to a lost and dying world. Salvation is restricted, however, to those who *receive* God's grace—and all other accountable people are yet lost in sin. Divine grace is universally available, for the text affirms that the "grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men."

It must also be emphasized that our text, Titus 2:11-12, affirms with equal force that salvation by divine grace is conditional, for the grace of God *teaches* that we should deny ungodly lusts and live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Uninspired men cannot improve upon the text for plainness of speech and clarity of language. To be saved by grace, saint and sinner alike must respond to God's teaching by renouncing the allurements of this world and living in a positive, forthright manner as children of God by their obedience to the gospel of Christ. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

That salvation by grace is *conditional* is a major New Testament doctrine. Along with the text cited above, we invite your serious attention to some additional passages:

1. In Titus 3:5, Paul declared, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." The "works of righteousness" of this passage are *not* the conditions of obedience to the gospel, but are the works of human merit—the "works of righteousness which *we* have done." These are the type of works of which Paul wrote in his

condemnation of the Jews: "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). When Paul declared in Titus 3:5 that "according to his mercy he saved us," it is evident that this salvation is conditional, for in the same passage

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of language.*

while on the same subject, the apostle wrote: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men" (Titus 3:8). Indeed, salvation by grace is conditional.

2. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul wrote, "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." This passage affirms (1) that there is the divine side to salvation: "By *grace* are ye saved;" and (2) there is a human side to salvation: "By *grace* are ye saved *through faith*." Now this passage does *not* teach salvation by grace *unconditionally*, nor does it teach salvation by faith *only*, for it must be understood in the light of all New Testament teaching. The Bible says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:26). Indeed, salvation by grace through faith requires obedience.

Consider the case of the Ephesians themselves. The New Testament declares that the Ephesians had heard and believed the gospel (Ephesians 1:13). These same Ephesians had repented of their sins and confessed their faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 19:17-20). They had also been baptized into Christ (Acts 19:1-5). These were the ones of whom Paul wrote, "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

3. A clear illustration of the fact that salvation by grace is conditional is the case of Cornelius. Now Cornelius was a Gentile, and the Bible teaches that Jew and Gentile alike are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:11-18). When the apostle Peter preached the gospel to this Gentile, his inspired sermon was introduced with the statement: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and *worketh righteousness*, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

On the day of Pentecost, the Bible says of the apostle Peter, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). All today are likewise exhorted to respond obediently to the grace of God.

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THEME

AMAZING GRACE

Country Ham and God's Grace

Royce Chandler

GLADYS CALLED FROM NASHVILLE AND said, "There'll be a box for you at the Cincinnati bus station tomorrow morning; all you have to do is go get it, but don't wait too long because it's full of country ham!" Why did she do it? "Just because I love you!" I don't mind telling you, amigo, that I believed her. I drove twenty miles to the bus station, and I got that ham! I didn't deserve it. I did nothing to provoke its being sent. But I *did* eat it!

Friends, that's "receiving grace," pure and simple. It was an unmerited favor received by acting upon faith in its giver. And may such grace abound!

Israel was offered the same sort of grace in Joshua 6:1-7. Jehovah said, "See, I have given into thy hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor." He didn't send them to the bus station, but He did send them to "compass the city" and to march, blow trumpets and shout. They believed Him, they marched, blew and shouted—and they took the city!

Why did God do it? "Because I love you," He explained in Deuteronomy 7:7-8, and because He intended to keep the oath made to Abraham. It wasn't "because ye were more in number than any people," nor "for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart" (9:4-5). They didn't deserve it. They had done nothing to provoke its being given them. But they *did* accept it! It was an unmerited gift received by acting upon faith in its Giver.

And such is the grace of God that "hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). To be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:23), we are sent neither to a bus station nor to compass a city. But we are "instructed" to deny certain things and to live a certain way—based upon becoming "obedient from the heart to that form of teaching" which makes us "free from sin" (Romans

6:17-18). The Romans believed Him, they were baptized into Christ, and thus they became "servants of righteousness."

Why did God offer to save us? Why did He give His own Son as an atonement for our sins? Certainly not because of "works done in righteousness, which

salvation in Christ is an unmerited gift received by acting upon faith in its Giver.

God's saving grace is not a reward, it is a gift. It is neither earned nor deserved—it is merely accepted or rejected. But—like that ham—God

"Gladys called from
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go get it, but don't wait
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of country ham!' "

we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us . . . through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 3:5-6). It was because He "so loved the world" (John 3:16). We surely didn't deserve it. We've done nothing to provoke God to offer it. But I, for one, *have* accepted it! My

requires that we "go and get it." As Festus on the old Gunsmoke show would say, "Why, Matthew, grace alone won't put no ham in yer belly; ya gotta fork it, chew it and swallow it yerself!"

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AMAZING GRACE



Can One Fall From Grace?

Robert Jackson

THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS QUESTION THAT needs to be settled in the minds of religious thinking people. First, we must make our appeal to the word of God for the answer. Secondly, the answer can be understood. I realize that some can cloud the issue with their mishandling of the Scriptures. Yet, the truth is clear. Let us consider the following things:

study of this reveals how one has access to the grace of God. When one obeys the faith, he becomes a child of God, and thus stands in the grace of God. Paul stated it another way in 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The man in Christ is a

teaching one how not to fall. Notice 1 Corinthians 15:2, "If ye keep in memory." What if they forget? Would they still be in grace? Look at Hebrews 10:26: "For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Here we are taught that one can wilfully turn from Christ as a sacrifice. The apostle Peter said that if the child of God did not add certain things to his faith, he would fall (2 Peter 1:5-11). In 1 Timothy 4:1, it plainly states that one will fall: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Was Paul wrong? Was the Spirit wrong in guiding Paul? No. The truth is that one can fall from grace.

Consider 3: The consequences of falling from grace. It would do us all good to stop and consider the grave consequences of departing from the faith. It means that one is out of fellowship with God. He is missing the joy and peace of mind that comes from serving God. He has brought shame and disgrace to himself and to the name of God. He lives daily in fear of death, knowing that he will fall under the condemnation of God. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

If the doctrine be true that one cannot fall, just think of the time wasted in teaching people how to live. I grant that it would be a very easy doctrine to believe, but it is just not in harmony with the teaching of our Lord. It is true that some fall, and then come back. Others fall and never come back. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Hebrews 6:4).

I believe that a person with an open mind and an open Bible can see that one can fall from grace.

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"It would do us all good to stop and consider the grave consequences of departing from the faith. It means that one is out of fellowship with God. He is missing the joy and peace of mind that comes from serving God."

Consider 1: One must first be in grace. It is evident that in order for one to fall from grace that he must first be in grace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2). A careful

new creature. He is a recipient of the grace of God. The man who is baptized upon his faith in Christ becomes a child of God (Galatians 3:26-27). He is in grace.

Consider 2: Can he fall? If one cannot fall from the grace of God, then the writers of the Word, guided by the Holy Spirit, wasted much space and time in



AMAZING GRACE

Grace—The Basis of Justification

Grover Stevens

IN EPHESIANS 2:8-9 THE INSPIRED WORD of God tells us: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

That salvation from sin is by God's grace is positively affirmed and clearly stated by the inspired apostle (Ephesians 2:1-3), and then to make sure that there be no misunderstanding he adds negatively that salvation is "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." The word "grace" means not deserved or unmerited. The word "gift" likewise

saved and we would have universal salvation. But the apostle Paul tells us that we become the recipients of God's saving grace "through faith." The eminent Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson, says in commenting on this passage: "Through faith: This phrase he adds in repeating what he said in verse 5 to make it plainer. 'Grace' is God's part, 'faith' ours. *And that (kai touto)*: Neuter, not feminine *taute*, and so refers not to *pistis* [faith] (feminine) or to *charis* [gift] (feminine also), but to the act of being saved by grace *conditioned on faith on our part.*"

the ten commandments) and you will go to heaven" are all included in this class. (3) **The works of Satan, darkness, and the flesh** (1 John 3:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Romans 13:12; John 7:7; Galatians 5:19ff). Certainly we are not saved by any of these kinds of works.

Working God's Righteousness

The fourth kind of works are the **works of God, faith, and righteousness**. In John 6:29 the Lord Jesus said, "This is the *work of God*, that *ye believe* on him whom he hath sent." Clearly, *faith* is a work, and is a work that we must work in order to receive God's gift of grace, salvation. Galatians 5:6 says the faith that avails is the "faith which worketh by love." And James 2:26 tells us that "faith without works is dead." In Acts 10:34-35, the inspired apostle Peter says, "God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and *worketh righteousness*, is accepted with him." 1 Thessalonians 1:3 speaks of "your *work of faith*." Philippians 3:9 says, "And be found in him, *not* having my *own* righteousness, which is of the law, but that . . . *righteousness which is of God by faith*." Romans 10:1-3 teaches that salvation is not by the establishment of our *own* righteousness, but by *submission unto the righteousness of God*. Romans 5:1-2 teaches that it is "by faith" that we "have access into this grace wherein we stand" (are saved); and verse 21 says that "grace reigns through righteousness."

No Cause To Boast

God's grace provided Christ and the gospel. In the gospel God has revealed His righteousness or commandments (Psalm 119:172). These commandments are faith, repentance, confession, baptism and godly living. When man has submitted to (obeyed) all of these, he still has done nothing of merit nor of which he could boast. He has done no works of his own righteousness, but has simply submitted to the righteousness of God—God's conditions of acceptance (Acts 10:35). His salvation is merely by the grace and mercy of God (Titus 3:5).

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"When man has submitted to all of God's commandments, he still has done nothing of merit nor of which he could boast. He has done no works of his own righteousness."

indicates something received without compensation, unearned. It is abundantly clear that God's grace alone is the very founding stone on which man's salvation from sin rests.

By God's Grace—Through Man's Faith

However, this passage also informs us that this grace saves us "through faith." The apostle Paul says in Titus 2:11-12, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to *all* men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." If our salvation is solely by grace on God's part and there is nothing that man can do to receive that gift of God's grace, then *all men will be*

"Not of Works"

When Paul says "not of works" he does not mean that there is nothing that man can or must do, as some loudly insist. There are four classes of works revealed in the New Testament: (1) **The works of the Law of Moses**, by which man cannot be justified as it demanded perfect obedience (Galatians 2:16-21; Acts 13:39). (2) **The works of man's own righteousness**, works commanded by men (Colossians 2:21-23; Titus 3:5; Romans 10:1-3; 1 John 3:12; Acts 7:41). Obviously, these are works of man's own devising. Such teaching as "join the church of your choice" or "worship in the way of your choice" or "believe in the faith of your choice" or "live good (keep

AMAZING GRACE



Misconceptions About Grace

Patrick Farish

THERE IS NO GREATER GOOD THAN THE grace of God, personified in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote that "the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11)—but then we read of "ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 4). Our desperate need of the true grace of God makes it essential that we be aware of, as well as able to oppose and to expose any misconceptions about grace.

One misconception about grace leads some to minimize sin. Paul, teaching that "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly" (Romans 5:20), anticipated an objection by asking in 6:1, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Would one, from misunderstanding or malice, say, "Hey, if so much sin means so much *more* grace, then we give God an opportunity to be even more gracious by our sin; so, let's just sin more?" No matter; the refutation in 6:2 is unequivocal: "We who died to sin, we cannot any longer continue therein"—we *died* to sin, we cannot continue in it any longer, for any reason.

Romans 6:15 asks a similar question: "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" Paul had just taught that "sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace" (verse 14). Now, sin *dominates* sinners under a law system, because a law system cannot make alive (Galatians 3:21). Under grace, however, God "justifieth the ungodly" (Romans 4:5); so the misconception is, "Since we can be forgiven under grace, sin is no big deal; why worry?" Again, the pointed refutation: "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servant ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16).

A contemporary misconception about grace which minimizes the seriousness of sin construes "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7) as offering cleansing from sin apart from a conscious reaction of the erring Christian. The fact is that we "walk by

Our desperate need of the true grace of God makes it essential that we be aware of, as well as able to oppose and to expose any misconceptions about grace.

faith" (2 Corinthians 5:7) when we instruct Christians as to the necessity of repenting and praying (Acts 8:22) and confessing our sins (1 John 1:9); and assurance beyond that we cannot give, and still walk by faith (Romans 10:17). Can we walk in the light, and not at the same time walk by faith?

Another misconception about grace involves God's forgiving us and reckoning us righteous. The Bible teaches that God became man, and tells why: "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). He became man so He could die; and His death was *substitutionary*, i.e., "Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6); "Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8); "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3), et al. The misconception is that Christ *lived* for us: that the perfection of His flawless life is transferred to me to cover for, not blot out, my imperfect life; and thus I am "home free" even in my sin. The passages thought to prove this notion about the life of Christ do not; they allude rather to that which He *now* does for us: having been "reconciled through the death of Christ we are 'saved by his life'" (Romans 5:10)—for He "ever liveth to make intercession" (Hebrews 7:25). The perfection of Jesus' life was to qualify Him as a sacrifice—the "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). When God imputes (reckons) righteousness today, it is because one has been cleansed, *forgiven*, by the blood of Christ (Romans 4:6-8).

Still another misconception about grace deprecates man's duty. Some read

"by grace have ye been saved . . . not of works" (Ephesians 2:8f) and conclude that "not of works" excludes obedience. Wrong. The purpose of the exclusion of "works" is "that no man should glory." In what "works" might man glory (boast)? In Romans 4:2 Paul said, "if Abraham was justified by works, he hath whereof to glory;" and in verse 4 he tells what is meant in that context by "work"—"Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt." The "work" that justifies is therefore the flawless work that would *deserve* the reward, so a person could brag about it. Grace excludes such works, not arbitrarily but because if man has *earned* his reward it *cannot* be "unearned favor" (grace). Mark this: man's search for grace is an admission of *sin*, a confession that his works have not been perfect. The obedience of faith is non-meritorious but still an *essential* element of access by faith into grace (Romans 1:5; 5:1f).

Some want to hear more about grace, and less about duty. And, "Having itching ears, [they] heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts." We need to remember that "Old, Old Story"—but it is indisputable that the New Testament gives significant, emphatic attention to the duty of man, reminding him repeatedly of his responsibility. God does not need to be urged to save us—He is faithful. Man *does* need to be urged to the obedience of faith to convert; and he *does* need to be exhorted to faithfulness. Just before the warning about "itching ears," Paul had told Timothy to "preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). We may not like to be reminded of how far short we fall; but if we are prone to become "partakers of the divine nature" we must be receptive to being "put in remembrance of these things, though ye know them" (2 Peter 1:4-12).

Let us not be ignorant of the devices of our adversary, the devil; let us continue in the grace of God.

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AMAZING GRACE

Receiving God's Grace In Vain

W. C. Hinton, Jr.

IN THE POWERFUL FIFTEENTH CHAPTER OF 1 Corinthians Paul refers to certain basics of the gospel, to his preaching to those brethren, and to the appearances of the Lord. Then he gives an exclamatory statement of his own condition: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain" (verse 10). God has favored mankind exceedingly by making it possible for him, as well as Paul, to learn to love and obey the truth that makes men free. How grateful we ought to be!

God's grace meets our greatest need—salvation. "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). Urgings, facts and beauties of this salvation are communicated through the Word "which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Demands are made of the committed so that they are neither dull nor bored. A life of labor must follow one into the realm of salvation (see 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 2:20-21; Titus 2:11-12; Ephesians 2:10). What God does, He does extremely well; so that His grace is sufficient—more than adequate to meet our needs as seen from Romans 5.

But our attention needs to focus on Ephesians 2:8-10. In speaking of salvation, Paul says "for by grace have ye been saved through faith." We must appreciate the stress made on the fact of the two sides of salvation. Salvation in God's way clearly takes two. A clear-cut example is seen in Jesus' lament over the city of Jerusalem: "I would have gathered . . . but ye would not" (Matthew 23:37). Or again, in the familiar story of Naaman, the cleansing (grace, if you please) was effected only after the one in need had complied with the specified conditions. Grace—the divine side—shows us God's love. He planned/purposed and developed the means to redemption and spiritual blessings found in His Son. But Paul also said "through faith"—and here we see the human element. Rewarded faith is always live, active, working and obedient. It is by the means of this faith that we gain for

ourselves the divine blessings. By the grace of God adequate provisions have been made, but men are not saved by mere provisions. God provides food and water for man but if he will not, for whatever reason, eat or drink—he will die. In Acts 2, Peter declared the provisions made by God and then urged them to "save yourselves." Peter also observed, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35).

It is hard for people to admit that they are, or might be, lost. *Lost* is a dreadful word that stirs up chilling thoughts. Lost in the midst of a blinding blizzard, off the charted path in the churning, raging seas, or the lone pilot with dead instruments in the center of a storm cloud frantically searching for the airport are mild and can in no way be compared to one being lost eternally. But what does it mean to be lost? It means all the forethought, energy and yearning of the heavenly Father and His Son is thwarted by one refusing to accept God's loving offer in His Son to renew a relationship, to pick up the pieces of life and self and become a child of the King—worthy of life eternal. On the other hand, we see that punishment of the lost is demanded by the righteousness of God—justice must be served. Two powerful forces act upon the stubborn will of man—love and goodness. "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4). Both of these forces are seen in the scene of the cross and thus make its drawing power tremendous (John 12:32). Yet, some hearts are too tough to be touched by the tenderness of love and need to be shocked. To so move people was Jonah's task in Nineveh; "in forty days Nineveh will be overthrown" brought them all, king to peasant, to repentance. The punishment of the impenitent makes us know that "God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

And it means that the sinner is ruined. You know, life is not easy. There are

bitter trials, financial reverses, sicknesses, accidents, disloyalty of trusted friends, unrequited love and other trying experiences. Still, these cannot be compared with the horrors of hell. Standing there on the brink of eternity, lost, one might well reflect on Jesus' penetrating question: "What will a man give in exchange for his soul?" The rich man of Luke 16 cried out in pain, being in torment. It does not cease—"they have no rest day and night" (Revelation 14:11). And, although millions will be in hell, there will be the utter and complete loneliness, each engrossed in his own suffering with no thought or time for others. The final decree will echo in one's ears, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire" (Matthew 25:41). Then think of the regret and remorse. Abraham told the rich man of Luke 16, "Son, remember." Memories will drive us up the walls! Wasted years! Unaccepted opportunities! And worst of all, perhaps, is the hopeless despair of no relief or end in sight. Hell is eternal!

It is a frightful thing to think that God has made such abundant provision of His grace, and yet we can void it all. Paul said, "We . . . beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). Being lost is such a tragedy, such a waste, so unnecessary—for Christ died to prevent it from coming to pass in our lives. What are *you* doing about it? Are you maybe not far from the kingdom? Hasten to activate your faith, commit your life, strike out for the high ground of mountain-top living. Or have you once been in the kingdom, enjoyed the blessings, experienced God's generous grace—and for thoughtless reasons of little value turned your back on God? If so, it was the poorest decision you ever made. Retrace your steps and reclaim the crown so that you will not disappoint yourself or God. Dedicate your life to helping others, "snatching them from the fire"—and give thanks to God that you had the disposition and determination to come to your senses and set in order the proper priorities. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift—the Son of His love!

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That's Life!



Dee Bowman

DO YOU THINK LIFE MIGHT BE EASIER IF EVERYTHING YOU DID HAD MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT, like on the movies and TV? I guess when you get to thinking about it, what music supplies in most productions is that part of the emotion that the acting cannot. What makes bad play acting is that there is no emotion behind it. The more emotion the actor brings to the part, the better the acting—and the less propping up is needed. Good acting doesn't need much music at all.

Hypocrites are just actors—people playing a part. They must constantly have some assistance to make their performance believable. So they surround their plot with all kinds of extras, just to make it appear real. Sincere folks, those who just live the truth, don't need any musical accompaniment at all.

* * *

LIFE IS FILLED WITH NICE THINGS. Flickering fires and an angry sea. Little babies' wrinkled noses and old men's mis-shaven faces. The smell of newly-plowed ground in Spring. Tuned wind chimes that play crazy songs in the breeze. Booming Summer thunderstorms and cold water after a long walk. Last year's calendar and a sweater on a cool day. A favorite pencil or an unexpected call from a friend. Creamy ice cream that disappears as you force it toward the roof of your mouth with your tongue. A moment of solitude with which to talk to God and thank Him for all these things. Any one of these things can make my day.

* * *

MOST HUSBANDS AND WIVES JUST NEED TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER. Your wife may still be one of the most interesting persons around once you get to know her again. How do you start? By listening. And watching. And being interested. Again. Look at her when she talks. Watch her eyes; they speak. Watch the corners of her mouth turn up when she's mischievous. She has her own kind of melancholy; learn to recognize it and help. Sometimes it's good to turn off the TV or put down the book and just visit—just talk—with someone you love.

* * *

DO YOU EVER GET THE FEELING THAT YOU AND RODNEY DANGERFIELD ARE ON THE SAME TEAM? Or maybe kin?

* * *

MY DAD DIED IN JANUARY THIS YEAR. He was a wonderful man—quiet, honest, hard-working, and with a sparkling wit. When I was home once he was relating some incident from out of his past. My Mom would frequently interrupt, either adding some detail or making some little correction. With that wonderful glint in his eye that always accompanied his penetrating and wry wit, he said, "Since we got old, me and Mom can't tell a story by ourselves. I just take it as far as I can go and then pass it off to her and she runs with it for a while, and then passes it back to me." I loved him for that.

And I'll tell you another thing I loved about him. He never quit trying. He was 82 when he died and he was still trying to overcome his faults. Those of us who loved him didn't see many faults in him. But he did. He saw them as things which needed his daily attention. And he worked on them. I sure will miss him.

* * *

I TOOK NORMA'S CAR TO THE CAR WASH RECENTLY. While using the vacuum I accidentally passed the nozzle over a box of pop-up tissues she had left in the front seat. The rushing air rapidly sucked the tissues out of the box, one at a time. I lost almost a whole box of "Puffs" before I could get the vacuum stopped. It was rather humorous. But it proves something, too. When things are made to be very convenient they very often don't provide much resistance to pressure.

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL, April 28, 1981: "If a man marries, the chances are very good that he will have a mother-in-law. Mothers-in-law have been maligned and abused by poor reputation. I could ask for no better one than Sophia Kraft Fullington. Besides, Norma Fullington Bowman is so much like her mother—how could I love one and not the other?"

The Beast of Revelation

L. A. Mott, Jr.

The chief agent of the devil in his persecution of the church was a wild beast that came up out of the sea (Revelation 13:1-10). The beast represented a king (17:9-11). The evidence of Revelation is that the beast was not far future (17:7-11) and would have only a short career (13:5). With the time frame in which we should look for historical applications established [see *February, 1984*], may I point out some interesting coincidences between Revelation and first century A.D. history without seeming to be too dogmatic?

Death-stroke of the Beast

The beast had seven heads (13:1)—one "as though it had been smitten unto death," but the "death-stroke was healed" and the world was amazed (13:3). This description is in all likelihood an allusion to the events of 69 A.D.—the "Year of the Four Emperors." The mismanagement of Nero's last years had bred revolt and Nero's suicide in 68 A.D. was followed by civil war. Four different emperors claimed the throne in 69 A.D. The empire was shaken to its foundations. Order was, however, reestablished under Vespasian. The death-stroke was healed and the world marvelled.

The Nero Legend

"The beast," John was told, "was, and is not; and is about to come up out of the abyss . . . he was, and is not, and shall come" (17:8). The seven heads are seven kings—"the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come." The beast is himself an eighth king and "of the seven" (Verses 10-11). I have considerable confidence that this description somehow relates to the so-called "Nero" legend.

After Hitler's suicide the rumor was circulated that he was still alive, perhaps hiding somewhere in South America, planning a second effort. Similar rumors followed Nero's death. Some would not believe he was dead. He was supposed to be in hiding, soon to return and reclaim the throne. Pretenders arose, claiming to be Nero, and gathered a following. This "Nero legend" is documented by the first

century Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius.

In 69 A.D., wrote Tacitus, "four emperors perished violently. There were three civil wars, . . . and thanks to the activities of a charlatan masquerading as Nero, even Parthia was on the brink of declaring war" (*Histories*, i. 2; *Penguin paperback*, 21f).

About this time Achaia and Asia were upset by a false alarm. It was rumoured that Nero was on his way to them. There had been conflicting stories about his death, and so numbers of people imagined—and believed—that he was alive. . . . On this occasion the man concerned was a slave from Pontus, or, according to other accounts, a freedman from Italy. The circumstance that he was a harpist and singer by profession, when added to a

A persecuting monster like Nero was on the horizon. Not Nero himself, but a second Nero would appear—another king in whom the spirit of Nero would be revived.

facial resemblance, made the imposture all the more plausible (*Tacitus, Histories*, ii. 8f.; *Penguin paperback*, 85f.).

After Nero's death, wrote Suetonius, his friends . . .

even continued to circulate his edicts, pretending he was still alive and would soon return to confound his enemies. . . . Twenty years later, when I was a young man, a mysterious individual came forward claiming to be Nero; and so magical was the sound of his name in the Parthians' ears that they supported him to the best of their ability, and were most reluctant to concede Roman demands for his extradition (*Nero*, 57, in *The Twelve Caesars*; *Penguin*, 240f.).

John did not, of course, believe such a fable. But he does seem to make use of it, for it contained an element of truth.

A persecuting monster like Nero was on the horizon. Not Nero himself, but a second Nero would appear—another king in whom the spirit and character of Nero would be revived. He would be an eighth king, but "of the seven," a second Nero—likely Domitian.

Number of the Beast

"Revelation 13:17f., 15:2 refer to numerology which was quite familiar to the people of ancient times; according to it, since each Greek letter has a numerical value, a name could be replaced by a number representing the total of the numerical values of the letters making up the name" (Arndt & Gingrich, *Lexicon*, 106). One love-smitten fellow scribbled on a wall in ancient Pompeii a Greek sentence which translates, "I love her whose number is 545" (Adolf Deissman, *Light from the Ancient East*, 277).

In the light of the evident allusion to the Nero legend discussed above, perhaps we should consider the solution to this riddle given in Grimm-Thayer, *Lexicon*, 669. The number 666 is called "a mystical number the meaning of which is clear when it is written in Hebrew letters . . . 'Nero Caesar.'"

Date of Revelation

Debate over the date of Revelation will continue. But does not the book itself demand a date *between* the persecutors, one past and one future, rather than during the reign of either? And should not this internal evidence take precedence over any external testimony?

Roman Caesars of the First Century	
Augustus	27 B.C.-14 A.D.
Tiberius	14-37 A.D.
Caligula	37-41 A.D.
Claudius	41-54 A.D.
Nero	54-68 A.D.
Galba	68-69 A.D.
Otho	69 A.D.
Vitellius	69 A.D.
Vespasian	69-79 A.D.
Titus	79-81 A.D.
Domitian	81-96 A.D.

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The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"The words of Jehovah are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times" (12:6).

The Words of Jehovah — Pure As Silver

Do you believe everything you hear? If you do, you have probably been disappointed many times. Men do not always tell the truth. It is hard to know who to trust.

The psalmist draws a sharp distinction in Psalm 12 between the words of Jehovah and the words of men. Men, he says, flatter with their tongue (verse 3) and they boast of great things (verse 4)—none of which are true. God's word, however, is true in every way. Man's word may be filled with vanity, duplicity, flattery and undependability—but God's words are as free from all of that as silver that has been refined is free of all impurities. There are some vital lessons to be learned here.

1. The purity of God's word. Since there is no base alloy in God's word, His word is to be *trusted*. His words are "purified seven times." "As for God, his way is perfect: the word of Jehovah is tried" (Psalm 18:30). "The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8). "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it" (Psalm 119:140).

2. The Bible has been tested and proven to be true. Jehovah's words today are found in the Bible. They are tested and proven on the earth every day by the *experience* of those who have trusted it and followed it in their lives. God's word is true. This has been my experience in life and it has been the experience of millions of others throughout time. Then the Bible has

also been tested and proven by the *hostile criticism* which has been heaped upon it by its enemies. Many men through the ages have tried to destroy the Bible—but it still stands. One of the greatest tributes to the Bible ever written by man says:

"Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;
When looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

" 'How many anvils have you had,' said I,
To wear and batter all these hammers so?
'Just one,' said he; then said with twinkling eye,
'The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.'"

"And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon;
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed—the hammers gone!"

God made some promises and assurances about this: "... the word of God, which liveth and abideth. For, all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever" (1 Peter 1:23-25). Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). I am sure that good arguments can be made for the canonicity of the Scriptures (which books should be in the Bible), but that question ultimately comes down to one's faith in God preserving His word just as He said He would do.

A precious metal, such as silver, must be proven to be genuine before real value can be attached to it. It is the same with the word of God. The words therein are precious because they have been tried again and again. I concur with the psalmist when he says: "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold or silver" (119:72).

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Woman's World

Woman — An Exalted Creature

Ruth Thompson

Fulfilling Her Role by

"Loving Her Husband" (Titus 2:4)

The exaltation of woman is the subject of a series of articles I shall be writing from time to time. The "amazing grace" bestowed on the human race by a loving heavenly Father has exalted woman to the sublime state she now holds, not from the modern-day concept of "women's rights" but from the proper concept of God's plan for her in accepting and fulfilling the role into which He has cast her.

We plan to point out in this and subsequent articles that woman has a definite role to play. Only in performing this role can she truly achieve the exaltation and the heights she so richly deserves. If women generally could understand that God wants her exaltation and that He knows the best method of achieving it, the problems of her field of operation would become simple.

The more one studies the word of God, the more one realizes the grace of God is truly amazing! Especially so since more often than not it is directly opposed to what man thinks would bring about his exaltation. We think of its achievement in terms of power and prestige. God sees it in terms of service rendered with deep humility.

Titus 2:3-5 gives women the basic requirements for a life of service befitting our role as women. It reads: "That aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor, not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

God knows our frame (Psalms 103:14). He desires our good (Deuteronomy 10:12-13), and yet the first statement in the passage from Titus demands that we "love our husbands." More than any other comment I have received from young (or older) women concerning this statement is: "I just wish I could have known years ago what it means to really

love your husbands." It does seem that when a young couple marry, when their eyes are filled with stars and just being together thrills them both, that this admonition is unnecessary. But, of course, God knows best. He knew that the first flush of a dream-world of marriage would soon fade into the harsh realities of day-to-day living. Socks have to be mended, meals prepared,

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grouches and bad dispositions dealt with, moods learned and overcome, floors have to be mopped, and dirty diapers washed. This is when young women come to realize that just being married to the "man of one's dreams" is not what songwriters lead us to believe.

When we get down to the basics of "making" a home we learn that God has ordained that man should be at the head

of the household, and should "rule over it" (Genesis 3:16). We learn that God said, in Ephesians 5:22-23, "Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church."

When we have accepted these commands from the Lord we are then ready to learn how to "love our husbands." We learn to accept him for what he is, not what we "thought" he was; to appreciate his good traits, and dwell on them, rather than on his less noble characteristics. We learn to really look at him, listen to him, get to know him for what he is, deep down, and learn to bring out those good qualities in him. Your admiration and deep concern for his welfare will increase his manliness and good attitude toward you, thus enhancing the possibilities of a good marriage.

Wives need to learn early in marriage that they cannot have everything they want in the way of material possessions. Be thrifty, be saving, help him stretch that dollar. Hidden expenses are coming that require all the patience and love both of you can muster in order to keep your marriage on a smooth path. Do your part by not demanding more than he is able to provide. Learn to wait for better times. It may be that your parents were well able to supply some things that your husband cannot at this present time. But remember that they had many years in which to accumulate. Give him a chance to do likewise.

Learn to recognize his need for leadership, and turn the reigns over to him. They rightly belong to him.

Above all, we should be cheerful, willing, agreeable companions, making our homes places of refuge for our husbands—a place to which he *wants* to come home. These are the qualities that make a good marriage. When we have learned these, and put them into practice, then can it truly be said that we are "worthy women" (Proverbs 31:10-31).

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The Sermon on the Mount

The Beatitudes: A Surprising Conclusion

With this article we bring to a conclusion our study of the beatitudes. They end as they began, in a startling way.

"Blessed are the merciful" (Matthew 5:7). Mercy is a quality not wholly unknown even in a world of basically self-seeking men. But it is a selective, capricious mercy that does not move from principle and is not a settled disposition of the heart and character. The same man who is capable of occasional compassion still finds the sorrows of others too burdensome and revenge too sweet.

The mercy which Jesus praises is borne of the penetrating awareness of one's own desperate need of mercy, not simply from men, but specially from God. It is a mercy that shows compassion to the helpless (Luke 10:37) and extends forgiveness even to the one who gives repeated offence (Matthew 18:21-22). This compassion is not prompted by the appealing qualities of the offender (How would we treat the "ugly" sinner?) but rises from our own sense of gratitude for that mercy which God has shown us. We also were not appealing when God sent His Son to the cross (Romans 5:8). Citizens of heaven's commonwealth have not forgotten which side of the tracks they came from (Titus 3:1-5). One of the greatest expressions of this kind of mercy is its selfless concern for a sinful and unattractive but lost world (Matthew 9:36-38). It is a driving force in gospel preaching.

Mercy toward men does not *merit* mercy from God, but it is an evidence of the penitent spirit which is a divine condition of forgiveness (Matthew 18:23-35). Kingdom citizens live among their fellows, not as an arrogant spiritual aristocracy, but as forgiven, and forgiving men.

"Blessed are the peacemakers" (5:9). This beatitude is not without its challenges. Men are tempted to apply it to those irenic spirits whose gift for negotiation and compromise pours oil on troubled waters. But the whole context of the sermon rebels against it. These are not peacemakers in the ordinary sense of mediating human disputes, but in the ultimate sense of bringing to men the peace of Christ (John 14:27). What is the value of peace bought at the price of principle or of a momentary tranquility that is not grounded on reconciliation with God? The true peacemakers are those who are themselves at peace with God (Romans 5:1) and men (Romans 12:18) and who preach in the world a gospel of peace and reconciliation (Ephesians 2:13-17). No other people could be called the children of "the God of peace" (Romans 15:33). When men are reconciled to God and the peace of Christ rules in their hearts, the spirit of compassion, meekness and forgiveness produced in them ministers reconciliation

with all men (Colossians 3:12-15). If, in spite of all, others are still disposed to see such people as enemies, the fault does not lie in them. They are the true servants of peace in the world.

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake" (5:10-12). Here is a concluding surprise. These peacemakers have become the persecuted! Jesus, having now dealt with the attitude of kingdom citizens toward God, themselves, and others, now turns to consider the attitude of the world toward them. One would have thought that such people as Jesus has described would be received with great rejoicing in the world—a humble people, heedless of themselves, given to the needs of others. To the contrary, the Lord now reveals that they will stir the world to a bitter animosity and hatred.

The Son of God has never sought to withhold the realities of suffering from His followers. His candor with those who enthusiastically sought Him is remarkable. He urged them even in their ardor to soberly count the cost (Matthew 8:19-20; Luke 14:26-33). The Lord will have no disciples out of their naivete. He wants no sudden shocks to destroy their faith. He has spoken plainly so that when His disciples suffer they can know that it is just as He said it would be and take heart with the assurance that their Master's promises of glory are just as sure—"for he is faithful that promised" (Hebrews 10:23).

And what is the cause of this hateful, knowing persecution of a humble, gentle people? Not some secret malignant conspiracy. Not the clandestine practice of unholy and immoral rites. Their crime is simple. They have chosen to be righteous in an unrighteous world. They are too much like their Master (John 15:18-20). Their love and simplicity only serve to throw into harsher relief the dark selfishness of an ungodly generation which hates the light and feels keenly the silent judgment of the Christians' contrasting innocence (John 3:19-20).

The Lord's disciples should rejoice at an opposition which reveals that the spirit and character of their Savior has been seen in them. They should rejoice because they have been granted the privilege of suffering for one who endured such abuse for their sakes (Philippians 1:28-29; Acts 5:41). But, most of all, they should rejoice because their suffering is not empty. They can embrace it joyfully, knowing that it transforms the character (James 1:2-4) and works for them "more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). No temporal threat can intimidate the one whose true treasure is secured in heaven. As one has observed: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

(To be continued.)

Parents' Page

Roland H. Lewis

More On Godly Parents

As I work regularly with young people, I find them asking at what age or stage in life does youth graduate from the responsibility of acquiescing to their parents' wishes. The frequency of the question seems to imply that neither their parents nor their teachers have told them what God has said on the subject.

It is true that a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, but he does not cease to be a son. He becomes responsible for his own life and his own family, but he does not, with God's approval, cease to maintain a parent-child relationship with his parents.

Eli was responsible in God's sight "because his [grown] sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Samuel 3:13). (Read 1 Samuel 2:12-17 and 27-36 concerning the wickedness of Eli's sons. Also read 1 Samuel 4, how God executed them.) Samuel likewise restrained not his grown sons (1 Samuel 8:3,5) and they gave Israel's leaders the excuse they wanted to ask for a king to replace God's judges.

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9, parents were required to teach God's laws to their children and, figuratively or literally, to put the laws on the doorposts of their houses and as frontlets between their eyes. Christians are under the same law stated differently, "... nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). The nearest I have seen to a literal practice of this was in a home where the diligent mother of a large family had a freshly written, carefully selected Bible verse in her own handwriting taped to the mirror of the children's bathroom every morning for them to memorize.

In the forty-second and forty-third chapters of Genesis, Jacob's grown married sons obeyed, in great measure, their father and did his bidding. In Leviticus 19:3, Moses wrote: "Ye shall fear every *man* [adult person?] his mother, and his father . . . I am the Lord your God." Matthew Henry commented about the word "fear" as follows: "The fear here required includes inward rever-

ence and esteem, outward expressions of deep respect, obedience to the lawful commands of parents, care and endeavor to please them and to make them easy, and to avoid everything that may offend and grieve them, and incur their displeasure . . . If God provides by this law for the preserving of the honour of parents, parents must use their authority over their children for the preserving of the honour of God . . ." This, then, presents grown children's continued obligation to honor their

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parents. Proverbs 23:13-14 directs, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die [spiritually, nor as required in Deuteronomy 21:18-21]. Thou shalt beat him with the rod [without provoking him to wrath (Ephesians 4:6) or to the point of discouragement (Col. 3:21)], and shalt deliver his soul from hell [Dr. Spock, or your favorite psychologist, to the contrary notwithstanding]."

Moses quotes God on the affirmative side of the discipline issue in Genesis

18:19 when He predicted the greatness of Abraham's influence throughout the future dispensations by saying, "For I have known him, to the end that he may command his children and his household after him [his children's children even after he was dead], that they may keep the way of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice; to the end that Jehovah may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

In all that I am saying, my emphasis is upon what God requires of parents *now*. Paul wrote that the things which happened to Eli and his sons "happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Rearing children whom we do not restrain "while there is hope" makes us as displeasing to God as Eli was. (Matthew Henry says, "they make themselves accessories.") We cannot ignore the attitudes God has revealed concerning sin without bringing to ourselves heartaches comparable to Eli's—plus, we will have done a great disservice to our own children, and in a larger and very important way, to society, as Eli and Samuel did by letting their sons dishonor the Tabernacle and the judgeship of God's people. Careless, negligent Christian parents with a lack of Bible knowledge, who rear disobedient children, help destroy the Lord's church and even the greatest of nations.

God apparently believes parents *can* rear responsible children and expects Christians to do so, no matter how many "reasons" can be cited to exonerate parents who fail. Children never graduate from their responsibility to listen to their godly parents and to serve God by honoring them.

Again, I repeat, child rearing is the hardest job there is and parents should not let their children get to marriage (and some marry by 16 or earlier) without having prepared them by instruction and example how to become parents. Preparation for marriage should begin in the cradle. Do not wait until tomorrow!

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(Taken from *With All Boldness*, Vol. 1, No. 3)

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Add To Your Faith . . . Brotherly Kindness

Bill G. Echols

As one grows in Christ he cannot be selfish or isolate himself from others. Faith in Christ involves contact with and concern for fellow Christians. Among the traits we must develop is brotherly kindness (2 Peter 1:5-7). The same word is used by Peter in his first epistle and is translated "love of brethren" (2 Peter 1:22). God has always required His children to show kindness to one another (Deuteronomy 22:1-2; Zechariah 7:9-10).

This characteristic seems to come easier to some than to others, but it is one that can be cultivated by each of us. We need to ask God's help in developing this desired attribute. We have no doubt that God wants us to be kind and gentle, therefore He will grant our petition for brotherly kindness. We should want to be loving as much as God wants us to be.

We can develop this grace by studying the life of Jesus. There has never been a more kindly person. He never treated one soul in an unkind way (Acts 10:38). He came to leave us an example (1 Peter 2:25). Jesus would never think of being unkind to others, nor should we. When we consider how God treats men (Matthew 5:45), and compare how we sometimes treat each other, we must determine to add brotherly kindness to our faith.

We live in a world where kindness often gets overlooked and left behind. Politeness may often seem to be dead. Expressing thanks to others has lost favor. These and many similar things are part of brotherly kindness. Let us each increase in showing these. It will make us and the world a better place.

God's people are especially to think of and be concerned about their fellow saints. Over and over we are taught to show kindness (Ephesians 4:32; Philippians 2:4). No person can claim to be a follower of God's Son and fail to be kind to his brothers. If we are to develop brotherly kindness, we must weigh our every thought and word (Proverbs 15:1; 25:11). Those who bruise hearts with words are not practicing brotherly kind-

ness.

In conversation, Christians should speak kindly of one another. Sometimes we hear such terrible things spoken by one brother against another. What is the motive? Certainly it is not kindness. Are not bitter words the result of a carnal spirit? The tongue is a member of the body that is hard to control, but love of brethren will suppress it (Colossians 4:6; Ecclesiastes 10:12).

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We show brotherly kindness in rejoicing and sympathizing with others (1 Corinthians 12:25-26). We should be happy when a brother is fortunate in earthly affairs. If he is unfortunate, we should suffer with him. Too often the attitude of the world enters our hearts and we are envious when another is doing well. The body of Christ is one body, but with many members. The pain of one part is felt by all. The spirit

of Jesus was moved with compassion upon those who suffered. His spirit in us will move us accordingly.

Brotherly kindness is shown by efforts to restore those who fall into sin (Galatians 6:1). When a brother stumbles, our first thought should be to restore him to the Lord. We need to show kindness and true concern for the fallen one. Our attitude is to be one of gentleness. We want to correct the situation with no resentment, no thought of punishment, and with the single hope of helping. We must not condone the wrong, but understand the situation and seek to offer a scriptural solution to our brother's life.

When we practice brotherly kindness we will respect the consciences of others. Christians must not allow their liberties to become stumbling blocks (1 Corinthians 8:9). No Christian is free to assert his "rights" if that means doing harm to others. We must sacrifice our rights and privileges to avoid putting a stumbling block in the path of a weaker saint. Paul is an example (1 Corinthians 8:13). The apostle was more concerned about the well-being of his brethren than his own rights and comforts. We must not sacrifice the gospel, but we must be willing to give up personal wishes for the salvation of our brethren. This principle has wide application in the church. Its use in the past would have prevented many divisions and disruptions.

Brotherly kindness is applying the golden rule (Matthew 7:12). I must act toward others the way I desire they act toward me in my right mind. To do this I must put myself in the other's place. Thus, brotherly kindness is demonstrated in a willingness to forgive (Matthew 6:14-15). The need to practice forgiveness is abundant.

When we help or fail to help a brother, we have done the same to Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46). Each time we fail to show kindness to a fellow Christian, we have failed to show it to Jesus. Let us put children of God in the proper place in our lives (1 John 4:21).

5396 Winchester Ave., Portsmouth, OH 45662

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Saints in Switzerland

The simple gospel seems to have little appeal to modern Europeans. For this reason many individuals and congregations in the United States have written off Europe as unworthy of our efforts and money. What we have often overlooked is the quality of the relatively few who have been converted.

Twelve years ago, Jerry Earnhart was living and preaching in Bern, Switzerland. Many who read his reports still remember his vivid word portraits of Christians there. In November, 1972, he wrote:

Of Rosa

"Having long since completed her 'three score and ten' this widowed great-grandmother is well into the last half of her eighth decade. She lives in a small one-room apartment on the limited resources of her husband's teacher retirement. With the help of a cane she can walk, but she is in constant pain.

"Nevertheless, Rosa is one of the most active and useful servants of the Lord here in Bern. The young as well as the old seek her counsel and presence. When the members make plans for a trip, Rosa is one of the first to be asked to go along. Typically Rosa insists on taking her turn at cleaning the meeting place and usually—by choice and discreet manipulation—ends up taking someone else's turn as well. Her zeal in this and similar realms is exceeded only by her hospitality.

"True she loves to cook, but Rosa is not looking for praise of her culinary mastery. She cooks with a purpose to serve, either a physical or spiritual need, or both. For over a year three new converts attending teacher's college here in Bern were weekly guests in her home. Such are typical of countless individuals who have placed their feet beneath her table."

Of Margrit and Ernst

"After completing her training as a postal clerk and finding no personal fulfillment in her work, Margrit turned to nurses' training. Here she excelled and found

her place of service in life—that is, until her obedience to the gospel and the subsequent acquaintance with Ernst changed all that. Not that these decisions were easy for her. Her conversion was years in the making. And when she exchanged her beloved work for a home, it was only because of its prospects for service to the spiritual needs of people.

"Ernst was destined for a very responsible position in his firm's plans for foreign expansion. During a stay in Tel Aviv he became aware of how his work hindered his own spiritual growth and contribution to the Lord's cause. In the months after his return to Bern he made a very difficult decision and asked to be transferred to a job with regular hours which would be more conducive to family life and an active role in the local church.

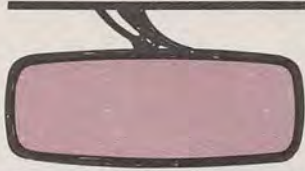
"The Lord has blessed this decision. Both he and Margrit have applied themselves to the task of becoming teachers. Both are now teaching classes. As the need has arisen Ernst has preached both here and in the neighboring city of Biel. Margrit and Ernst recently moved into a larger apartment, not only to make room for a growing family, but to have more room for showing hospitality to strangers. This young couple who celebrated their second wedding anniversary in September are important pillars in the work of the Lord in Bern."

Twelve Years Later

The Earnharts have just returned from their annual evangelistic trip to Europe made possible by funds supplied by the church in Bern. Asked about these Christians whom we had come to know through his reports, he replied: "I spent the week in Bern in the home of Ernst and Margrit and once again happily ate at the table of Rosa, now in her late eighties."

Thank God, the Earnharts and those supporting them did not despair because of the difficulties in Europe.

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

A Matter of Taste

WHILE TEACHING IN INDIA I was struck by the remarkable beauty of the slim, brown and delicately featured girls who attended my classes at Allahabad University. After some months I initiated a conversation on this subject with the slim, brown but not so attractive to me, young Indian men. Our judgments frequently disagreed and I finally asked what criteria they were using to determine beauty. Their reply, in essence, was color. Like other cultures where light-skinned invaders have subdued darker natives, beauty had come to be identified with power. I was astonished that the ungainly light-skinned girls were preferred over their beautiful, but darker, sisters.

Of course, American blacks have long been aware of such cultural prejudices. In countless subtle ways American

society glorifies whiteness. The "Black is Beautiful" movement was a stubborn protest against that cultural judgment.

There are many variations on the same theme. My father was born into a dirt-poor South Georgia farm family, in a society constantly at war with disease and hunger. He somehow, improbably, struggled his way out of it to become a successful physician. But he kept many of the values learned in that harsh environment. Never one to talk much with his children about personal matters, I can remember only one beauty tip he ever gave me. While riding in the car with me one day, he turned and said: "Son, I just have one thing to tell you about getting married. When you get ready to get married, don't marry one of those skinny, sickly ones, get you a big, fat, healthy one." I did.

But there is another standard of beauty which must in a Christian's judgment obscure all others. It is the one standard which can solve the problems of infidelity and divorce in our sick society, that can assuage the discontent and unhappiness that plagues so many marriages. "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart . . . even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

It is not so much the negative parameters of that adornment which intrigues me (though they are important), but the positive. The only beauty that is lasting is a virtuous character. Happy is the young person in our time who can see such beauty.

SPEAKING OF TASTE, OUR friends Darrel and Mackie Roberts in Tulsa recently had their home burglarized. The thieves were thorough, taking nearly everything of value, including their tape player. The Roberts had been listening to one of my sermons and the tape was still in the player. The hooligans took the tape out and left it. Tasteless!

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The Problem of Sin

There are two things which cause people to commit sin: characters and circumstances. Far too often it is the case that we are led away from righteousness by some person for whom we have an inordinate amount of esteem. In other instances circumstances tend to dictate our course of action and out of some motive of self-preservation we are led away from our moral moorings. But in both cases it is "the soul that sinneth" which is guilty and the blame is purely personal.

Sin is described in Scripture as "transgression of law." It occurs primarily in two ways. By a blatant disregard for duly constituted authority. Or by a failure to affirmatively respond to that which we understand to be right (see 1 John 3:4; James 4:17). In either case, the sin results from a selfish choice of one's own desires and purposes rather than a subjection of one's self to the law of God.

Humans have a moral sense which is indigenous to their nature. The cognizance of right and wrong is as much a part of the human family as is hunger or fear of falling. Even if left unattended by some formal declaration of law, humans will, by themselves, concoct some means of moral guidance. No person in his right mind considers himself to be purely autonomous. Rather, he understands intuitively that he has obligations and responsibilities to other than himself. In his earliest years he is impressed with parental as well as sibling responsibilities. He sees that these relationships, if they are to produce any good or happiness, must operate under some system of guidance. Paul refers to his recognition of moral obligation in Romans 2:14-15. The Gentiles did "by nature," or as a result of who they were, "the things contained in the (written) law," and thus became obligatory.

Sin behaves in certain predictable ways. These predictable reactions are obvious because we have a method of ascertaining them by the revelation of God (see 2 Timothy 3:16-17). If we personify (make a person of) sin, we see it as it does its work in the kingdom of darkness in much the same way as love personified operates in the kingdom of light. While love is building up, sin is destroying. While love is encouraging, sin is spreading gloom. While love is busy reconciling differences, sin is engaged in causing separations. Love

promotes courtesy, sin encourages obstinacy. Love is kind; sin is malevolent. Anything love does, sin does the opposite, because sin is the opposite of love (see 1 John 5:3).

But sin promotes its own kind of "morals," too, a kind of counterfeit ethic that promises much and delivers little. Sin has its own "love." It is unrestrained passion, a kind of animalistic lust that knows no bounds of law. Sin has its own brand of "success." Its version allows (even encourages) cheating, stealing, slander in order to achieve, for after all, success is the important thing. Sin even has its own kind of "peace." Its variety is bought; that is, you get together as much as you can, no matter the moral price you pay, and all those things you have accumulated will bring you peace. Sin even has its own sort of "benevolence." Its kind is philanthropic all right, but its intention is mostly self-aggrandizement, not relief of human misery and suffering.

Sin is seldom seen naked, devoid of its garb of enticement and deceit. It has so many faces that no one can, by himself, identify it with any degree of certainty. That help comes from the Scriptures. One purpose of the Scriptures is to point out what sin is so that we can, in a very personal way, see it for what it really is. "I had not known lust, except the law said . . ." (Romans 7:7). The Scriptures are profitable "for correction, for instruction in righteousness . . ." (2 Timothy 3:16-17). When right is defined, sin is identified simultaneously. The Scriptures are the means by which both are accomplished.

Sin separates man from his Maker (Isaiah 59:1-2). It will cause his eternal demise (Ezekiel 18:20). We should not flirt with it. We should not give it a place in our lives (James 4:7; Ephesians 4:27). We should run from it while we can. We should seek a place of safety where it will be less likely to get to us (Hebrews 10:23-25). Jesus came to save us from sin (Matthew 1:21) and we should seek to gain our release from it (Acts 22:16). Having, by the grace of God and the blood of Christ, obtained our release from its guilt, we should so walk as to have the constant availability of forgiveness by walking in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:6-10).

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A response to "The one page in our Bible that's not inspired"

[See "Soundings," May, 1984, page 5]

Various copies of the Bible contain several things that are not inspired: cross references, dates, footnotes, italicized words, section headings, numbers marking chapters and verses and everything else which was not a part of the signature copies themselves. The placing of such extraneous things in copies of the Bible is generally helpful to Bible study. However, there are notable exceptions: The italicized words "unto him" (John 3:34, KJV) and marking Acts chapter 5 as beginning right in the very middle of a contrast. Yet, all in all, these additions of men are understood to not be a part of the revelation itself.

Let us now consider an objection made to such an addition. In the May issue of *Christianity Magazine* brother Bill Geren objected to the adding of a page between the Old and New Testament. My first knowledge of brother Geren was my noting that he was the author of the objection. Thus, there is nothing personal in my response to his objection. It may be that he reached his conclusions without the aid of others, but such conclusions have been drawn by others in the past, who also have contended that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John should not be considered a part of the New Testament.

A page between every book in the Bible and the next book in the Bible would neither add to nor detract from God's revelation. Thus it is apparent to me that the real objection is to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John being considered a part of that portion of the Bible called the "new testament" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

In this response I want to consider the relationship of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John to the New Testament; brother Geren's comments regarding the baptism of John and his conclusion regarding the application of "the teaching of Jesus."

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John sustain the same kind of relationship to the New Testament that Genesis and the first nineteen chapters of Exodus sustain to the Old Testament. These books contain a record of events which occurred prior to the giving of the law to which they pertain. Logic demands that those who object to Matthew,

Mark, Luke and John being considered a part of the New Testament (covenant) also object to Genesis and the first nineteen chapters of the book of Exodus being considered a part of the Old Testament (covenant). Why then do some object to one but not to the other?

Does the record of the baptism of John (which brother Geren says is not New Testament doctrine) mean that the gospels should not be part of the New Covenant? If so, the same logic would cause us to decide that the baptism of Israel in the Red Sea would mean that Genesis and a part of Exodus should not be a part of the Old Covenant. No Israelite had to be baptized in the Red Sea, after the law was given by Moses.

Brother Geren has reached a wrong conclusion about the application of "the teaching of Jesus during his personal ministry." That teaching did not apply "with equal force . . . to those to whom he preached and to us today." Jesus preached "the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14). That which Jesus preached did not apply with equal force to those who were not in the kingdom of God as it does to those in the kingdom of God. Jesus said to those who could hear Him, "There be some . . . that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1).

Much more could be written about each of these points and numerous observations could be made, but space in "Soundings" is very limited.

Fred A. Shewmaker
West Lafayette, OH

From God or man?

And a disciple asked, "Tell us, sir, the page in our Bibles that is titled *New Testament*; is it from God, or man?" "Hmm," the scholar thought. "If I say it is from God, the 'Conservatives' will say I am liberal and acting apart from authority. But if I say it is from man, the 'Liberals' will say I am an 'anti' and I'm straining gnats!" So he thus answered: "I cannot tell, I'll have to do some more study on the matter."

Brother Bill, I agree with you completely, as you have well stated: "If the teachings of

Jesus apply with equal force to both those under the Old Testament as those under the New Testament, then it seems to me some kind of error to put all of this teaching behind the title page of the New Testament."

While we understand that while Christ taught on this earth, He also enjoined His listeners to follow after the Mosaic Law (Matthew 23:1-3), the Bible also teaches that while Jesus was alive and teaching, the "New" Covenant or Testament was not yet in effect (Hebrews 9:16-18). But what we must understand is that Christ did not *destroy* the old law, rather he *fulfilled* it (Matthew 5:17). Christ fulfilled the law by doing that which was before ordained that He should do. Christ did not destroy the old law, He completed it.

The New Testament teachings are not the ending of an *old book* and/or the beginning of a *new book*—rather it is a *completion* of the *same book*. The New Testament separation is an expediency of man, to aid him in his study of the Scriptures, just like the chapter and verse separations we find in our Bibles. I wonder why we don't have another of these "expediences" to separate the patriarchal from the Mosaic age? We could call the patriarchal period "The Testament of Antiquity."

Kenneth A. Folsom, Jr.
Fairfax, VT

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Republican Churches

In his book, *Religion in the United States*, published first in 1844, Robert Baird described an interesting practice then common in the South:

In some places in the south-western States, the primitive and temporary churches built for all denominations in the new villages or settlements are called "Republican churches;" that is, churches for the accommodation of the *public*, rather than any one sect. Large school-houses, also, erected for the double purpose of teaching and preaching, are called Republican meeting houses. . . . But it will not be very long before the Presbyterians, Methodists, or Baptists feel that they must have a minister on whose services they can count with more certainty, and hence a church also for themselves. And, at last, the house, which was a joint-stock affair at first, falls into the hands of some one of the denominations and is abandoned by the others who have mostly provided each one for itself. Or, it may remain for the occasional service of some passing Roman Catholic priest, or Universalist preacher.

Necessity is the mother of invention; the idea of "public" churches still sounds like it has merit to me. What if circumstances forced all professing Christians to meet together? Could we do it?

Obviously, such cooperation would require serious consideration of one another's convictions. We would have to abandon the denominational names which divide us. Being a life-long Democrat, I don't particularly like "Republican." Maybe we could just call ourselves Christians.

We could not agree on the creeds and disciplines

drafted throughout human history that have divided men rather than unite them. Maybe we could agree to study and follow the Bible only, seeking together with minds freed from all other loyalties those things which are clearly taught. Whatever the question, we could all go to that common source.

But what would we do in this "public" church? Every denomination has its own forms and rituals—its liturgy—as well as its distinctive organization and mission. Maybe we could just do the same things in the same ways that churches did in New Testament days. It would limit our activities, but it would give us a common model.

I am not certain that Republican churches always worked in the way I have described. But in that nineteenth century frontier religious laboratory the plea to restore New Testament Christianity did flourish. Independent men and women pushed aside centuries of accumulated religious dogma and institutions and sought the more primal beliefs that united them. It was the type soil in which New Testament Christianity could take root.

Of course, such lofty ideas have difficulty surviving in the self-serving world of human religion. But the lure reappears in each generation to once again return to those truths that can be "publically" held.

"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:12-13).

Something Practical

James W. Ward

My little red knife is mighty handy. Practical—that's the word for it. Within its two-inch, pocket-fitting size, it's got a nail file and cleaner, tiny scissors, tweezers, a toothpick, and a cutting blade. I just don't see how I could beat it. Obviously, I like useful, well-designed things.

That's one—only one—of the reasons why the gospel appeals to me. Christianity is a practical religion. There's that word "practical" again. Perhaps we should let Webster define it for us: it means "that which is capable of being put to use, disposed to action as opposed to speculation or abstraction." When we say that the gospel is practical, then, we mean that it is not speculative, that it is not vague—and most central to our study, that it is usable and active.

Many of Paul's letters illustrate this very well. They are divided into two sections: doctrine and application. I use the word "application" because I want to avoid the notion that doctrine is impractical, that doctrine and life have no relation to each other. That error is very common among religious people, both in and out of the church. That is why much religion has turned into mere ritualism and much living, into selfish expediency. Paul shows that the gospel is a unity, that doctrine and practice are one, that doctrine is to be lived by Christians.

Consider, for example, the book of Ephesians. Through chapter three, Paul teaches that the church (Jew and Gentile united in one body) is "the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (1:23b). The application portion (chapters 4-6) begins with "therefore," which links the two parts of the book. In effect, Paul says, "Since the doctrine I have written you is true, here now is how you are required to live as Christians." Also note the book of Colossians. There Paul stresses the doctrine that in Jesus "dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (2:9). Then (chapters 3-4) he tells how to apply that doctrine to all of life.

Perhaps, however, the strongest example comes from the book of

Romans. At length Paul deals with "the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (1:16). Having discussed fully how God makes men righteous, he begins chapter twelve with the words, "I beseech you therefore, brethren . . ." He then shows how men made righteous by God are expected to live. God transformed us, he says, now here is how to live the transformed life.

The transformed life requires that we present our bodies to God as a living

one for whom Christ died," but "bear with the scruples of the weak" (chapters 14; 15:1-13). We must care for the needy among us (15:14-33).

The transformed life takes the proper view of sinners, even our enemies, forbidding us to return evil for evil, but requiring that we "overcome evil with good" (12:17-21). The overriding obligation that we owe our neighbor is to love him as we love ourselves (13:8-10).

The transformed life constrains us to obey civil government and pay our taxes because God ordained the higher powers

When we say that the gospel is practical, we mean that it is not speculative, that it is not vague—and most central to our study, that it is usable and active. Many of Paul's letters illustrate this very well. They are divided into two sections: doctrine and application. I use the word "application" because I want to avoid the notion that doctrine is impractical.

sacrifice, that we maintain our transformed status by renewing our minds (12:1f). Our service must be constant, day in, day out; I believe that is the significance of the word "living."

The transformed life demands a proper view of self. If we understand that we are "individually members one of another," each one of us will humbly use his gifts fully for the good of the one body (12:3-8). We will not be puffed up.

The transformed life requires us to be "kindly affectionate to one another" in Christ, "giving preference to one another" (12:9-16). We must not destroy

for the protection of lawbreakers and the protection of the innocent. To resist civil authority is to disobey God (13:1-7).

The transformed life strives for moral purity, making "no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lust" (13:11-14).

Considering all these matters makes it apparent just how practical the gospel is, doesn't it? And I thought my little red knife was useful. Why, it cleans only fingernails. The gospel purifies souls and transforms lives. How practical can you get?

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Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

Understanding Guilt

Guilt takes three forms in human experience—civil guilt, spiritual guilt and psychological guilt.

Two of these are determined objectively, while one is very subjective. *Civil guilt* is the violation of human law. When we drive down the freeway at ninety miles an hour or park our car in a no-parking zone, we are guilty of breaking the law. We may not *feel* guilty, but feelings really have nothing to do with it. Civil guilt is an objective fact. *Spiritual guilt* is the violation of divine law. We may not feel guilty about breaking God's divine laws, but nevertheless we are still guilty before God. Paul says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). That's true—whether we feel that way about it or not. Then there is *psychological guilt* (sometimes called "pseudo-guilt"). This is the violation of self-established law in our conscience. It is not objective but subjective and needlessly causes painful feelings. Many people are plagued by feelings that are not of a spiritual nature but come from emotional and environmental causes.

Where does pseudo-guilt come from? Dr. Bruce Narramore says that psychological guilt develops because of a wrong relationship between what he calls our ideal self, our punitive self and our loving-corrective self. The *ideal self* is that part of our personality which develops soon after birth—the part which contains our ideals, our goals and our aspirations. Our parents establish expectations. They expect us to be smart, pretty, well-mannered and obedient. Some families place a high value on athletic ability; others pride themselves on academic attainment or financial prosperity. Of course, we learn these values from other facets of our environment. Television projects a number of distorted images to a developing child, but mainly the idea that the "successful" person is pretty or handsome, intelligent, athletic, affluent and personable. All of these influences, along with peer pressure, are absorbed into our personality. They come together to form a picture—a mental image—of what we want to be, or ought to be. When these thoughts crystallize, this set of expectations and aspirations become our ideal self. It is the self we believe will make us happy and it becomes the standard by which we measure ourselves and our performance. If we meet our ideal standards we tend to like ourselves; we have

self-esteem. But when we fall short of our ideals, we feel discouraged and dissatisfied. This ideal self is formed early in childhood, and becomes a set fixture in our personalities. When we become adults, we generally continue to judge ourselves by the standards we accepted as children and young adults.

But another self is forming in the personality—the *punitive self*. In the same way that we absorb the ideals, goals and expectations of our parents, we adopt their methods of discipline. If our parents said to us, "You idiot," "You stupid kid," and so on, we learn to repeat these statements to ourselves whenever we fall short of our expectations. Children are to be disciplined, but the way it is done is very important—because it is often at the root of neurotic guilt feelings. If parents attack a child's self-esteem when he fails to live up to their standards, when he becomes an adult he will likely apply the same discipline to himself for falling short. To the degree that our parents used harsh, demanding, judgmental and punitive attitudes and tones, to that same degree we tend to exercise our punitive self whenever we fall short of our internalized standards and ideals.

Fortunately most parents know enough to not just give negative and punitive messages to their children; they also dispense encouragement, love, acceptance and support. If parents lean more toward harshness and criticism when disciplining their children than they do towards acceptance and encouragement, then the child tends to do the same thing in later life in relation to his own mistakes and failures. But if the child is corrected in such a way that he still feels loved, accepted and valued for what he is, he develops a *loving-corrective self*. And when he becomes an adult he finds that he has internalized the same set of loving, corrective attitudes which his parents showed toward him. Thus, when he fails or makes a mistake, he says: "This mistake is something I regret, but it is not the end of the world. I know that I can overcome it and do better in the future."

In order to understand guilt, we must see that it sometimes is nothing more than pseudo-guilt. We should each be able to live our lives without a great deal of self-condemnation and guilt. Surely we all have our weaknesses and limitations, but we can still maintain self-esteem and self-acceptance. And God would have it so.

Refreshing Our Spirits

Don Givens

Spiritual refreshment. Adoration of heart. Quickening of conscience. A mind being fed with the beauty of God; a heart being opened to the love of God. Such are the beautiful results of a Christian worshipping the Lord his God.

"Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;

The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide!

When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, O abide with me."

—H. F. Lyte

It is in weariness that we turn to God for rest. We all have burdens to bear and crosses to carry, and how sweet it is to receive the help of the Lord. In weakness we turn to God for strength. There are moments when we feel "small" and insignificant, but in worship of the Lord we realize that truly in His sight, *there are no "little people"* (Psalm 42:1-5).

In loneliness we turn to God for companionship. In the midst of millions, the human spirit sometimes cries out for intimate relationships, and is answered with cold shoulders of indifference. But the Lord "is touched with the feelings of our infirmities" (Hebrews 4:15). Oh yes, He cares!

In the enticement of temptation, we turn to God for deliverance. He is needed at the critical hour (Matthew 6:13). What a joy for the child of God to know that no onslaught of the devil is irresistible because we have a faithful God who *will not* let us be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). We can stand because He has prepared a way of escape.

In sorrow, we turn to God for comfort, and the Lord we serve is full of compassion for heavy hearts. He will "halve" our burdens by sharing them, and will "double" our joys by participating in them. As Charles Wesley aptly observed:

"Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit
Into every troubled breast;
May we all with Thee inherit
May we find the promised rest.

Take away the love of sinning,
Take our load of guilt away.
End the work of thy beginning,
Bring us to eternal day."

To a heart filled with the adoration of God, worship is not a cold, mechanistic

Powerful, meaningful worship will mean powerful, purposeful living. Godly worship evolves from a godly life, and a righteous life will be fortified by righteous worship.

What refreshment is ours to commune with God in prayer, to praise Him in song, to express gratitude in giving, to remember His Son on the resurrection day in the memorial feast, and to become co-workers with Him in proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation.

Worship is inseparably tied to all the affairs of daily life. One cannot isolate worship from life, or life from worship. God is not locked up inside church buildings on Sunday night. Our worship is not confined to what happens inside four sanctuary walls. Truly, the lover of the Lord walks hand-in-hand with Him every minute of his earthly sojourn.

formalism. Rather it becomes an act of devotion willingly given from a person seeking intimate communion with His creator.

Worship is inseparably tied to all the affairs of daily life. One cannot isolate worship from life, or life from worship. God is not locked up inside church buildings on Sunday night. Our worship is not confined to what happens inside four sanctuary walls. Truly, the lover of the Lord walks hand-in-hand with Him every minute of his earthly sojourn.

Our spirits are refreshed when we praise our Father and thank Him for His showers of lovingkindness, and when we study more of His word, we partake more and more of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4-11).

"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come" (Revelation 4:8).

In worship, our faith looks up, our spirits are refreshed, and we grow closer to heaven.

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Who Is Jesus of Nazareth?

“Who say ye that I am?” is the question with which Jesus confronted the twelve at Caesarea Philippi. Men and women of our day are no less challenged to answer the same question, a question upon which hangs the very meaning of life itself. Who is this man whose influence has cast itself powerfully across nineteen centuries?

The only Jesus we may know is the one whose story is written in the New Testament by his close companions and disciples. This is the “historical Jesus.” If we attack their simple, straightforward accounts as unreliable, we have burned the only bridge by which He may be known. We have also assumed the burden of proving what hoped-for reward could have moved these men who spoke so often of truth to enter into a gigantic hoax, and to sacrifice their lives rather than confess it. We must accept or reject the Jesus of the New Testament simply because there is no evidence or testimony for any other.

The Christ of Prophecy. The best way to get an answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?”, is to let Jesus speak for Himself. When the Samaritan woman assured Jesus that she knew when the Christ (Messiah) came He would declare all things, He replied, “I that speak unto thee am he” (John 4:25-26). To His disciples just before His ascension, He said, “These are my words which I spoke unto you, while I was with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets and the psalms concerning me . . . Thus it is written, that the *Christ* should suffer, and rise again the third day” (Luke 24:44,46). Whatever we may think of it, Jesus clearly claimed to be the promised Christ of all the Old Testament prophecies.

Several hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah declared that the Christ would be descended from Jesse and David (Isaiah 11:1-9; 9:6-7; John 7:42) and be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-23). At the same time the prophet Micah spoke of Bethlehem as His birthplace (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:3-6). Yet, in spite of His human birth, Isaiah spoke of Him as “the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6-7); and Micah said his goings forth were “from everlasting” (5:2).

More than four hundred years before His conception the prophet Zechariah spoke of His entrance into Jerusalem riding on an ass (9:9-10). Isaiah chronicled His suffering and death for the sins of the world long before they occurred and spoke beforehand of His burial with a rich man (53:1-9). David revealed the details of the crucifixion fully one thousand years before it transpired (Psalm 22:1-18), and prophesied of the resurrection that would

follow (Psalm 16:9-10; Acts 2:25-32). A scheming deceiver might have contrived to seemingly fulfill some of the Messianic prophecies, but, however shrewd, no man has control of the circumstances of his birth and death.

The Son of God. Jesus also made a clear claim to being, in a unique way, the Son of God. To Nicodemus He spoke of Himself as the “only-begotten Son of God” (John 3:16). He made the same clear assertion to a man He healed of life-long blindness (John 9:35-37) and blessed Peter for declaring Him to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:15-17). His other claims reflect His deity indirectly. He claimed to be eternal (John 8:58), sinless (John 8:46), able to forgive sins (Mark 2:5-10) and give life to the dead (John 5:21,28).

No mere man could make such claims as these unless He were mad or an arch-deceiver. If we reject Jesus as God’s Son we are compelled to place Him in one of these categories. We are left to decide if we are willing to attribute to insanity or wicked deception the finest hour of human history.

Jesus is also declared to be the Son of God by His resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). And the evidence for His resurrection is formidable. Both His friends and enemies agree on three facts: He died, was buried, and the tomb was empty. His enemies, unable to produce the body, bribed the sepulchre guards to tell the puerile story that “while we slept” His disciples came and stole the body away. Is it conceivable that men who ran away in fear while Jesus was alive would afterwards risk their lives for possession of His corpse? There is only one explanation of the empty tomb which answers to all the facts and explains the testimony of the disciples and their transformation into a joyous, militant band of preachers. Clearly, as they said, He had risen from the dead and they had seen Him!

The Lord of lords. From His position as Christ and Son of God, Jesus claimed supreme power over every person and force in the universe (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22). Jesus also claimed that He was the very embodiment of truth and life and the only means of access to God (John 14:6; Matthew 11:27). It should be no surprise then that He demanded from all men a supreme and absolute loyalty (Matthew 10:37-38).

We would do well to ponder carefully the question, “Who is Jesus of Nazareth?” It is not the kind of question we can escape, and it sounds very much like our answer will determine our ultimate destiny (John 8:24).



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

The Tongue: Its Potential

The potential of the tongue is truly incomprehensible. It has as much capacity for evil as it does good. The Christian must determine to use his tongue for good.

Words are vehicles of thought. The process of communication between men is amazing indeed. We can take a single word like "stop!" or "help!" and stir immediate action in others. We can take a series of words and convey lofty ideas—or we can wreak havoc in others' lives, and our own, leaving scars which may never heal. Words can lift us to the heights of ecstasy or drive us down to the depths of despair. They can wreck or revive—ruin or restore. This month's issue considers both sides of the tongue's mighty potential.

When we speak it should be plain. Some of the Jews once said to Jesus, "If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly" (John 10:24), and though their motive was not right, there was nothing wrong with the request. One of the characteristics of the false teacher is that he cannot be understood because he "speaks great swelling words of vanity" (2 Peter 2:18).

We need to speak plainly. And even when we do, we will likely be sometimes misunderstood. Like the famous bishop of the Swedish church who came to America and had been warned before his boat docked at the harbor in New York to be careful of what he said; that the newspaper reporters had a way of

twisting things around. He vowed to be careful. When they docked, he was not surprised to see many reporters. Before long one of them asked, "Do you intend to visit any night clubs in New York?" He smiled slyly, and said, "Why, *are there* any night clubs in New York?" The next morning, the headlines read: "First Question Bishop Asks Upon Landing: 'Are There Any Nightclubs In N.Y.?' "

When we speak it should be true. The Holy Spirit says, "Lie not one to another" (Colossians 3:9). Those who lie will have their place in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). Lying to men is the same as lying to God (Acts 5:4)—and it never escapes His attention. We lie about people when we gossip because we spread things which we do not know to be true.

When we speak it should do some good. The tongue can help others. Think of the words of encouragement we can offer to others—words of kindness, appreciation, sympathy. These can change a person's day and even his life.

Our Lord offered such words. When the women came to the tomb early on Sunday morning they found that Jesus was not there—but He had left a special message for these women to deliver: "Go tell my disciples *and Peter* to meet me in Galilee." Do you see that special word for the broken-hearted fisherman? Peter is the only one specifically named. I believe Jesus knew he was terribly in

need of encouragement at that time.

Our words are never neutral. They have an influence for good or bad. All of us must think before we speak. Too many of us do not concentrate on doing good with our words, but just throw our minds into neutral and let our big mouths roll on. There is said to be an epitaph in a cemetery in Middlefield, MA, which says:

Old Thomas Mulvaney lies here,
His big mouth ran from ear to ear.
Reader, tread lightly on this
wonder—
For if he yawns, you're gone to
thunder!

I do believe I knew that fellow.

And then, of course, the greatest potential of the tongue is to be found in words spoken for Jesus. Some people think it is only the business of preachers to speak for Jesus, but it is not. All of us who belong to Him can speak for Him and lead others to Christ. These are not just life-changing words—they are *eternal-life-changing* words. Let us not be too timid or ashamed to speak them.

The unkind word we might have
kept,
Who knows how hard it pierced
and stung;
And the word we had not sense
to say,
Who knows how grandly it could
have rung! — Author Unknown

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL

Harold V. Comer

The Right Word

WHAT ARE THE RIGHT WORDS TO criticize a willful king who could kill you for what you say? The prophet Nathan found the right words to help David clearly see himself. His words reversed David's spiritual decline. Nathan's picture of a rich man taking a poor shepherd's pet lamb was powerful and touching indeed. They were the right words!

How do you immediately get a Bible study with a powerful foreign official? Philip chose words with punch and yet enough courtesy to propel him from the desert roadside into the treasurer's chariot and a powerful, life-changing study of Isaiah 53. The right words open doors. The wrong words close them.

When an angry, powerful man is coming to kill your husband, do you hide, stay and cry, or ponder your words for just the right statement to sway him to reason and insight? Abigail chose the right words and her speech cooled David's anger while it warmed his admiration for her. It is valuable indeed to choose the right words.

When Jonathan's best friend David was threatened with death or at least exile, the young prince's speeches were an example to all friends in lending support and encouragement with choice words!

God Said To "Consider"

The right words are often needed in Christianity today. We are commanded to give consideration to our efforts of provoking or stimulating our brethren (Hebrews 10:24). That means we are to ponder the needs and personalities of our weak brethren and are to work at choosing the right words. We are to exhort—but the real command of that passage is the simple verb "consider" to provoke one another to love and good works. God commands the thinking, searching, and agonizing necessary to find the right word.

Finding The Right Words

We can find what will help if we really try. Nathan, Abigail, Jonathan, and Philip did. We must keep building our ability to say the things that minister

grace to those who need us (Ephesians 4:29). Here are some things we can do to find the right word that will help others.

1. We can decide we are obligated to improve our ability to say what's best. Too many say, "I don't know what to say" and try to shed the responsibility to find the right thing to say. Others speak but their tongue is a butcher knife into the heart of those they "help." In addition to Hebrews 10:24, Colossians 4:5-6 and Ephesians 5:15 command us to develop wisdom in helping others.

The right words are needed in Christianity today. We are commanded to give consideration to our efforts of provoking or stimulating our brethren. That means we are to ponder the needs and personalities of our weak brethren and are to work at choosing the right words.

2 Timothy 2:24 commands us to improve our teaching skills.

2. We can study the Bible to find things that work. When Jesus picked just the right words to stimulate the Samaritan woman to spiritual curiosity and self-honesty, He taught us a lot about one group of choice words which arouse another's interest. It is possible to find things that work by perceptibly looking at Biblical role models.

3. We find the right words with empathy. Too often, well meaning

spiritual people bull into another's life. They tell them exactly what they should do without any awareness of the other's emotional condition or mood. They not only fail in their effort to help, they come through as insensitive, pushy bores and they close doors for later help. God commanded a spirit of empathy in Romans 12:15 and 1 Corinthians 12:26. Wise men don't sing songs to the heavy-hearted (Proverbs 25:20). Identify their mood. Be sympathetic. Then speak gentle words to help find receptive ears.

4. Tone is important to the right words. Often the right words can end up sounding different from what is literally expressed. The words are good but the tone is altered by anger at something else, excessive tension, or just plain exhaustion. Proverbs 15:1 teaches that tone is important for really changing the angry man. A portion of people who need help respond more to tone than they do to the specific words that are used. Watch your words and watch your tone!

5. Visual words work faster! Nathan used a concrete, visual situation with David. There was a quick response. Christ often taught by painting a visual picture. When Abigail cooled the angry David, she painted a vivid picture of him as king. Paint a picture with words. Hunt for a visual or a concrete word. The meaning will be clearer than a long speech loaded with abstractions.

Words of support are valuable! When David was threatened by the jealousy and javelins of Saul, Jonathan was there to offer words of endorsement and support. Words of support are needed by Bible class teachers, elders, deacons, parents and weak, troubled Christians today. They are not a waste of time. Rather, they are great and valuable motivators.

God expects you to care about the end result. Words, forced into sounds are just particles of bouncing air until they move the brain of another in a valuable and powerful way. Hunt for better words!

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL



The Tongue: Hell's Fire or Heaven's Fervor

Kenneth L. Chumbley

IF IT'S SOMETIMES TRUE THAT FAMILIARITY breeds contempt, it's oftentimes true that it encourages carelessness. While we might hope with Chesterton "that common things never become commonplace," our experience tends to indicate otherwise. People will occasionally run a red light, and seven-foot basketball centers will every now and then miss a slam-dunk, just because they've grown inattentive while performing the routine.

I really think that it's this sort of non-chalance which James challenges in the very heart of his discourse to the Dispersed. There are few things we do in life more important than talking. Yet few things are done more thoughtlessly. The exercise of the tongue is never a trivial matter. Jesus taught that *every* word we speak is imprinted with eternal consequences (Matthew 12:36-37). And James underlines this truth when he cautions "so speak ye . . . as men that shall be judged" (2:12).

But it's in the third chapter of James' epistle that we find the definitive New Testament statement on the tremendous power of the tongue. In this text the Spirit of God underscores three distinct capabilities: the tongue's potential for Direction, 3:3-5a; Destruction, 3:5b-8; and Dissimulation, 3:9-12. It's the second of these—the potential for destruction—that we want to focus our attention on.

You would be hard-pressed to find inspired language more scathing or shocking in its severity than what is here used to describe the inflammatory power of the tongue. In fact, apart from Jesus, James is the only New Testament writer to use the word "hell" (*gehenna*). The picture he describes is that of the whole course of nature being ignited with a spark (the tongue) fueled by hell itself (3:6).

The illustration is vivid; the application is vital. Satan is ever trying to use our tongue as his flame-thrower. One unguarded word, be it ever so small, can quickly turn into a holocaust. Sociologists have discovered that for all the

talking which goes on, the average person only speaks for about 10-11 minutes each day. Yet in that short time, yea, in a fraction of that time, enough can be said to sear lives, ruin reputations, destroy friendships, and ignite a conflagration which may cremate the body of Christ. "James' Law" regarding the tongue is inversely proportional to its size; which is to say, the size of the fire is in no way restricted by the size of the match (3:5b).

Recognizing this awesome potential, doesn't it just make sense that we be

bombs have a way of going off. But every time I open my mouth to speak I've undertaken a responsibility far more critical than bomb defusing. Listen to what he says: "The tongue is a fire." Though it may not be blazing, it never stops smoldering, and it takes but a moment's carelessness to kindle the flame into a killer. Is it little wonder, then, that James defines "perfection" as the ability to never say the wrong thing (3:2)?

There is an alternative. "Did not our hearts burn within us . . . while he

Satan is ever-trying to use our tongue as his flame-thrower. One unguarded word, be it ever so small, can quickly turn into a holocaust. Sociologists have discovered that for all the talking which goes on, the average person only speaks for about 10-11 minutes each day. Yet in that short time, enough can be said to cremate the body of Christ.

"slow to speak" (1:19)? When James opens this text with the startling admonition, "Be not many of you teachers," he isn't minimizing the importance of teaching—he's magnifying the accountability of teachers. And it's not just those standing in front of an audience who have cause for concern. James defines his proposition so as to make it universal in application—"For in many things *we all* stumble" (3:2). Strict accountability not only pertains to all teachers, but to all talkers (see 5:9). I've never had much of a desire to be on the bomb squad for the simple reason that

opened to us the *scriptures*?" (Luke 24:32). I'm totally convinced that a heart set on fire by God's word is the key to tongue-control. Hell's flames can only be extinguished by a fervor that burns with the fuel of godly faith (Hebrews 11:34). "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt;" and "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." In so speaking, our tongues will become a mighty force in heaven's cause. It's what you call "fighting fire with fire."

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL

Ways That Wives Can Encourage Their Husbands

Norma Bowman

GOD HAS ALWAYS PROVIDED FOR OUR every need. After preparing a beautiful and fitting place for His creation, He breathed life into a being created out of the dust—and made man. Seeing that man was alone and without a fit companion, He made a perfect helpmeet for him—woman. God made man and woman compatible in every way, physically and emotionally. To complete this beautiful union, He gave them the gift of communication. Communication can be expressed in many ways—

remember all the things he hasn't done and thus begins an endless tirade of unpleasant and unkind words. After all this, both husband and wife are angry, discouraged, and unhappy.

But what a different mood we, as wives, can create when we take a few minutes to express our love and concern. It doesn't take much time to smile, or hug, or to say, "How was your day?" We make conscious efforts to be pleasant to those we come in contact with during the day, but many times we fail to carry

dress? So what if you are also working? After all, if he didn't make the house payment, you possibly would not be able to buy the new dress. We too often fail to show just common courtesy to our husbands. We teach our children from the youngest age possible to always be polite and say "Thank you." We need to practice what we preach.

Second, we need to encourage our husbands in their work as well as their other endeavors by complimenting them for having done a good job. How often do you comment on his efforts? Does the yard look good? Tell him so. Did he lead a good prayer in the worship service? Tell him he did. Does he look handsome in his new suit? Tell him he does. A sincere compliment can absolutely make one's day and we need to be more aware of the benefits of a verbal pat on the back. It doesn't cost anything and it doesn't take much time. What it does require is a wife who is willing to help her husband by saying, "You did a good job and I'm proud of you."

Third, we need to remember to say—and say often—"I love you." What we all need the most in life is knowing that someone cares for us and looks after our interests. Why would we ever want to start a day without expressing love for one another? Carrying that assurance of love with us all during the day can turn many a temptation aside. As we go about our daily duties, whether on the job, a day with friends, or just staying at home—we can know that we have that enduring love to sustain us. Don't be ashamed to express your love, by words or by actions. Pride will never warm your life. True love—giving of yourself—always does. Let it show!

Let's all use the wonderful gift of communication that God has given us. Express your gratitude to your husband by saying "Thank you," express your encouragement by saying "You did a good job," and express your devotion by those three most important little words, "I love you."

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What a different mood we, as wives, can create when we take a few minutes to express our love and concern. It doesn't take much time to smile, or hug, or to say, "How was your day?" We make conscious efforts to be pleasant to those we come in contact with during the day, but many times we fail to carry that same attitude home with us.

facial expressions, touch, actions. But the most expressive way is by use of words. What a wonderful feeling to have someone to whom you can pour out all your joys, anxieties, frustrations, problems, ideas and dreams.

Those of us who are wives have the power to encourage or discourage our mates by our words. So many times we unfortunately take out our frustrations on our husbands. Things haven't gone well where we work or the kids have behaved badly, and the minute he comes home we begin to complain. Then we

that same attitude home with us. I would like to suggest three ways to encourage our husbands and, in the process, make our own lives much happier.

First, we need to show our appreciation for all they do for us. Do you ever just say "Thank you" to your husband? We have so many things to be thankful for—our wonderful children, our homes, clothes, food, cars, companionship, protection. Do you say "Thank you" when he takes you out to dinner? Do you say "Thank you" for that new

THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL



The Sin of Gossip

James E. Cooper

"DEATH AND LIFE ARE IN THE POWER OF the tongue" (Proverbs 18:1). The tongue is a powerful little member that can be used for either good or evil. There is no more despicable use of the tongue than to use it for gossip. One must have a perverse character to delight in spreading vicious rumors about others. Character assassination may be bloodless, but it is vicious, nonetheless. Reputations have been destroyed and careers ruined by malicious gossip.

The word "gossip" comes from the Old English *godsibb*, a godparent. Then it came to mean a pal, or crony. From the practice of sharing news and views with one's friend, it later came to refer to groundless rumor or hearsay, whispering behind one's back, backbiting, sacndal-mongering, idle talk.

Someone has written a "recipe for gossip" as follows: "Take a harmless event, add an ugly motive, stir in your own opinion, add a suspicious tone, put in a measure of 'they say,' add imaginary details to improve the flavor, sprinkle with a spice of rumor, heat slowly over the flame of envy, and serve secretly and as frequently as you can find anyone to listen."

According to the humorists, gossip has traditionally been a fault of women. "Tell-a-woman" is said to be the fastest way to spread an evil report throughout a community. However, the female of the species is no more inclined to gossip than the male. It can be found in both sexes, in all walks of life—including elders, deacons and preachers. Paul specifically noted that wives of church leaders should not be "slanderers," prone to gossip (1 Timothy 3:11).

In Leviticus 19:2, God commanded the children of Israel, "Ye shall be holy." Among the things that make for holiness is found this statement: "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (verse 16). The same principle is stated by James: "Speak not one against another, brethren" (James 4:11). In the third chapter, James warns about the tongue as a "restless evil," and one that defiles the whole body" (verses 8,6).

Some gossip is caused by idleness: people having nothing better to do than to talk about others. Paul instructed Timothy not to "enroll" the younger widows lest they might "learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and

There seems to be a perverseness in many of us that delights in finding fault with others. Then those faults, real or imagined, are broadcast. Jesus taught that such idle words proceed out of an evil heart. . . . When we hear that a brother or sister has been "overtaken in a fault," we are not permitted to tell everybody else what a despicable character he or she has turned out to be.

busybodies, speaking things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13). His antidote for such temptation was that the younger widows "marry, bear children, guide the house" (verse 14). Those who are busy, men or women, in constructive work don't have time to tear others down by idle talk.

Vicious gossip, talebearing, and all manner of evil speaking shows the attitude of heart of the persons involved. There seems to be a perverseness in many of us that delights in finding fault with others. Then those faults, real or imagined, are broadcast. Jesus taught that such idle words proceed out of an evil heart (Matthew 12:34-37; 15:18-20). In the Sermon on the Mount we are cautioned to "first cast the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:3-5). When we hear that a brother or sister has been "overtaken in a fault," we are not permitted to tell everybody else what a despicable character he or she has turned out to be. Paul says: "Ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

The wise man said, "A talebearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Proverbs 11:13; see also 20:19). Sometimes people with problems confide in preachers, elders, or other advisors, only to have their problems treated like juicy morsels of gossip to be passed around for every ear to hear. What has been told in confidence should remain confidential.

Some "confidences" should not be uttered at all. Solomon said, "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceases" (Proverbs 26:23). Grievances are often compounded by malicious tales. David pronounced a blessing upon the man that "backbiteth not with his tongue, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor" (Psalm 15:3).

Someone has said that the gossipier should be hanged by his tongue, and the person who listens to gossipers should be hanged by his ears! We are clearly taught to frown on gossipers. "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue" (Proverbs 25:23). Let us give heed.

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THEME

THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL

How Husbands Can Show Appreciation For Their Wives

Gary Henry

"I CAN FLY HIGHER THAN AN EAGLE . . . but you are the wind underneath my wings." So went the refrain of a recently-popular Lou Rawls song. How many wives heard that and thought for a wistful moment how nice it would be if their own husbands would say something like that to *them*?

The unappreciated wife is the victim of one of life's saddest injustices. And the horsewhip is about all a man deserves who is either so unfeeling or so stingy with his praise that he will not regularly *tell* his wife how grateful he is for her. Yet, Christian husbands by the thousands, this writer included, will have to admit that they have not tapped the tongue's potential to brighten the life of their good wives. What can be done to deal with this habit of neglect?

DO appreciate her. Wives need real gratitude, not play-acting. In fact, wives hate nothing more than to be patronized. The suspicion that a man may be expressing appreciation merely because that is what he is "supposed" to do will breed resentment. What is needed is something more than a husband who will talk and act *as if* he valued his wife. The man who substitutes the carrot for the stick just to get more work out of his "maid" deserves the contempt he will eventually get.

The only worthwhile way to solve the problem of non-expression of appreciation is to solve the problem of non-appreciation itself. Words of gratitude are hollow insults if a man's heart is not involved. Candy on Valentine's Day is nice, and so are flowers on Mother's Day. But *tokens* of appreciation are cheap if they are not given in genuine love. If our wives do not *hear* enough about how much they mean to us, it may be because we have forgotten how much they actually *do* mean to us. And we can begin remedying that by rediscovering just how special our wives are.

Count her virtues. Husbands would do well to spend some time fairly frequently reminding themselves how many praiseworthy attributes their

wives possess. The chances are good that the qualities are still there which originally prompted a marriage proposal. These have probably deepened with the passing of time and been enriched by the addition of still other wonderful characteristics. These need only to be remembered consciously to be appreciated. And when he is counting his wife's virtues, the average husband

The horsewhip is about all a man deserves who is either so unfeeling or so stingy with his praise that he will not regularly TELL his wife how grateful he is for her. Yet, Christian husbands by the thousands will have to admit that they have not tapped the tongue's potential to brighten the life of their good wives.

can head the list with the benevolent generosity she demonstrated in marrying *him*!?!

The husband who meditates on his wife, prays about her, and enumerates to God the things about her for which he is thankful will sooner or later find himself being more expressive of these thoughts to his wife herself. If he counts *her* blessings—the ways in which she has been uniquely gifted by God—he will be

well on his way toward showing his appreciation more openly.

Walk in her shoes often. Helping his wife with her work is a surefire way for a husband's appreciation to increase. It is not exxagerating to say that the average man could not hold up for long, physically or emotionally, under the load that the average mother and homemaker carries seven days a week. But if he will offer to help her now and then as opportunity permits, he will get a dose of reality that will do any marriage good.

Even the routine things that wives do are not only demanding physically, they require a range of skills that a husband may well underestimate until he has tried his own hand at a few of them. A man who is serious about learning to be more expressive of his appreciation needs to take advantage of every chance he gets to experience life as *she* lives it. Just let him make a fool of himself bungling his way through tasks that his wife performs with ease and expertise and he will be a rare man if he can continue to take her for granted.

Express appreciation NOW. There is no grief more heart-rending than that of the husband who loved and appreciated his wife dearly but allowed her to go to her grave without letting her know how he really felt. As he weeps before her lifeless form in some funeral chapel he may well be tormented by the memory of the years he robbed her of the affection and gratitude that could have brightened her way. But his chances to *show* her his love are gone forever.

"If you can find a truly good wife, she is worth more than precious gems! . . . Her children stand and bless her; so does her husband. He praises her with these words: There are many fine women in the world, but you are the best of them all!" (Proverbs 31:10,28f, Taylor). Christian husband, you have it within you to express your thankfulness for your wife. Do you love her? Do you appreciate her? Then tell her about it—before it's too late.

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL



"Lying Lips"

Mike Pittman

LYING LIPS OPERATE IN A HIDDEN AND usually injurious fashion. They are often subtle, telling harmful untruths that are so slight as to be difficult to detect. According to Webster, to lie is "1. To make an untrue statement with intent to deceive, 2. To create a false or misleading impression." A life lived under false pretense is, in itself, a lie (1 John 1:6). However, since this issue deals with the tongue, the hypocritical life will not be considered.

Various Forms of Lies

There are as many cunning ways to tell a lie as there are lies to tell. Here are three—see if they sound familiar.

One subtle way people lie is by stating half-truths. An absentee from Sunday morning worship was asked why he was not present. "I had a headache," was his reply. The truth was that he had a slight headache, but the same headache would not have prevented him from going to work on Monday morning. Indifference, not the headache, was the real reason for his absence. He told a *half*, not a *whole* truth. A good Biblical example of this is seen in a case involving Abraham and Sarah. When Abraham lied about his relationship with Sarah, saying she was his sister while omitting the fact that she was also his wife (a half-truth), he caused Abimelech to sin against God (Genesis 20:1-12).

Another type of deception is in the form of a silent lie. Silence many times gives the impression we don't know when we do know. A car owner shrugged his shoulders when the potential buyer inquired concerning the accuracy of the mileage reading on the car's odometer. His silence lied when he deliberately "forgot" that the mileage indicator was incorrect. A shrug of the shoulders substituted for an honest, straightforward telling of the truth isn't any less serious than a barefaced lie.

Asking a lie is the third method employed to disguise the truth. The father of all lies (John 8:44) is the first author of this type of deception. Satan asked Eve, "Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'"

(Genesis 3:1). The answer to this question was known by Satan, but was posed in an attempt to cause Eve to question God's goodness. A question asked for the purpose of creating a false or misleading impression is a lie.

Some Warnings About Lies

Every Christian should be warned of the consequences resulting from succumbing to lies in any form or for any reason. These consequences are not light in view of past, present, and future considerations.

engaged in by Christians today, the effects of lying suffered by mankind in this present world are certain. Some sure consequences of verbal deceit are guilt, destruction of others' trust, and the unending task of supporting one lie with another. Honesty really is the best policy for here and now.

But the most compelling reason to abstain from lying comes from a candid consideration of the future. Revelation 21:8 tells what is in store for all liars: "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the

Although sudden death is not the result of lying engaged in by Christians today, the effects of lying suffered by mankind in this present world are certain. Some sure consequences of verbal deceit are guilt, destruction of others' trust, and the unending task of supporting one lie with another. Honesty really is the best policy for here and now.

Consider the past. The outcome of the lie spoken by two first-century Christians, Ananias and Sapphira, was death (Acts 5:1-10). The awful fate meted out to them had a profound effect on Christians then (Acts 5:11), and should be enough to discourage any prevaricator. This brief look at history clearly demonstrates God's abhorrence toward lying.

The second reason Christians should be warned against lying is in view of present considerations. Although sudden death is not the result of lying

abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and *all liars*, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Notice the company lying keeps in this passage. Notice the company *all liars* will keep in hell.

Since "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord," (Proverbs 12:22), let every Christian strive mightily to maintain the same abhorrence for lying in his own life.

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL

The Potential of Preaching

Irvin Himmel

THE DYNAMIC OF PREACHING IS IN THE potency of God's word. When the tongue is used to speak the living word of the living God, whether there are immediate responses or not, there is vast potential.

Good words and fair speeches can be deceptive (Romans 16:18). One misses the mark if he speaks "with enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:4), or uses "flattering words" (1 Thessalonians 2:5), or makes his personality the drawing power. One must not preach himself (2 Corinthians 4:5). The power of God unto salvation flows through the gospel (Romans 1:16).

Preach the word. Speak the truth in love. Preach Christ. Declare the whole counsel of God. Preach with all boldness. Speak as the oracles of God. Be urgent in season and out of season. Speak what befits sound doctrine. Sow the seed. Water that which has been planted. God will give the increase.

The church was established through preaching. God draws people to Christ through preaching. Saints are edified through preaching. The preacher benefits through his preaching.

The preacher swings the hammer that can break the rock in pieces. He carries the lamp that lights the way. He uses the sharp two-edged sword that cuts the heart and reaches the innermost part of the mind. He holds the mirror that reflects the true image. He sows the seed that can produce good fruit.

Preaching carries the potential of changing lives. Preaching challenges minds; it informs, motivates, cultivates, and gives hope. Preaching provides answers to vital questions and solutions to difficult problems.

The devil tempts preachers to lose interest in preaching. He knows the potential in preaching and would like to still the tongues of all who preach the gospel. He tantalizes with the prospect of much better wages in some other line of endeavor. He plants the thought that preachers are no longer a respected class as they once were. He pushes the idea that preaching is a thing of the past.

He uses divisions among brethren, declining interest, pressing demands, and lack of temporal security to discourage preachers.

Faith in God keeps preachers on the firing line. It defeats Satan. It produces perseverance. It gives optimism in the face of trials and hindrances. It makes preaching a joy rather than a slavish task.

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My first attempt at preaching was made when I was sixteen years of age. Since that time I have never had any serious thought of doing anything else. Have I ever been discouraged? Yes, indeed! But the Lord's statement to Isaiah has helped me to develop patience: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that

goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Just as the farmer sows seed and waits patiently for sunshine, showers, and other conditions favorable to growth, the preacher must be faithful to speak God's truth—then show endurance while the word accomplishes that which God desires.

Many who preach grow weary and lose heart because they expect specific results in a very short time. They add the number baptized and the number restored, they look at the attendance figures and contribution totals, and they take into account the total membership of the local church—success in preaching is evaluated by numbers and statistics. They overlook the fact that swelling numbers do not necessarily reflect accomplishment that pleases God.

God has not promised that His word will accomplish that which pleases us. It accomplishes that which pleases Him. A weak Christian who grows spiritually because of the preaching he hears is not listed in the "response" column in the church bulletin. Preaching which causes brethren to "be of the same mind" after years of bickering cannot be gauged by numbers on the attendance register. Preaching which prunes away dead branches may result in numerical decrease, but it accomplishes what pleases God.

The preaching of the cross is "to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

To leave off preaching, or to downgrade preaching, is to deny the greatest potential of the human tongue—for it is to destroy the divinely appointed plan for saving the lost.

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL



Murmuring — A Spiritual Tantrum

L. A. Stauffer

CHRISTIANS OFTEN WONDER ALOUD about the murmuring of the Israelites in the wilderness so soon after their deliverance from Egyptian bondage.

"How could they complain after all God had done for them? What lack of faith! God showed them miraculously that He was with them. He plagued the Egyptians, parted the Red Sea and destroyed Pharaoh's pursuing army. He then gave them water and manna and quail in the wilderness. How could they be so faithless and ungrateful?"

Now, honestly, brethren, who does that remind you of? God must hold many Christians in derision when they voice amazement at Israel's complaints. What country has ever been better blessed by God than America? Likely, this nation is at once the most prosperous and most complaining people in history. And not a few of the chief complainers are children of God!

Brethren fuss about inflation, fume about the weather, gripe about working conditions, murmur about the price of automobiles and homes, march in protest for higher wages and more benefits, complain at the slightest ailment or discomfort. And what's more they do all this while they ride along interstate highways in air-conditioned \$12,000 automobiles, or while they sit in \$300 lazyboy chairs in \$75,000 houses looking at \$800 TVs and digesting \$5 steaks.

Brethren could significantly diminish this problem if they spent more time "looking at" the word of God and "digesting" its message. A good place to start is with Paul's epistle to the Philippians. Most students of this letter fall in love with it. It is the favorite of many. And rightly so. It is upbeat. It is positive. Fifteen or so times the apostle uses some form of the word "joy" in this letter. "Rejoice in the Lord always," he writes. He also speaks of "peace . . . which passeth all understanding," and says he has "learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (4:4,7,11).

Paul's contentment displays the real beauty of his character, especially in

view of his circumstances. At the time he wrote, Paul was in prison at Rome, his life was on the line in defense of the gospel, brethren were bitter against him and many coworkers were forsaking him for the world (1:13, 15-18, 21-24; 2 Timothy 4:9-10).

Paul, nonetheless, was totally satisfied in the Lord. Not one time in the epistle did he offer the slightest complaint. He refused to criticize life, to murmur against evil brethren and to challenge God's fairness. Quite the contrary, Paul wrote: "Do all things without murmurings and questions" (2:14). He had written a similar warning to the Corin-

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thians a few years before. "Neither murmur ye," he wrote, "as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer" (1 Corinthians 10:10).

Murmuring by simplest definition is a spiritual (carnal) tantrum—a form of dissatisfaction, not unlike the pampered child who doesn't get his way and flings himself to the floor to kick up his heels in protest. Spiritual tantrums in the eyes of God are just as disgusting as the ugly display of spoiled brats. God saw it in Israel and left them to perish in the wilderness. He views with the same disfavor immature Christians who faithlessly, ungratefully and blindly kick up

their heels.

Faith. To eliminate complaining, Christians must increase their faith. They must trust the providential care of God. Complainers unwittingly indict the wisdom, the power, or the love of God. Their complaints charge that He doesn't know how to run the world or that He knows but is powerless to do it or that He has indifferently removed himself from it. These alternatives are as unflattering as the faithlessness that spawns them. When brethren experience Paul's confidence in God's providential working, they will learn his contentment that knows no complaints.

Gratitude. "Count your many blessings," the song says. Gratitude is a frame of mind that focuses on blessings. Grateful Christians think about the love of God, His grace and the hope He has provided. They rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, the privilege of prayer and the love of the brethren. They are grateful for life itself and thank God daily for material blessings that sustain them. When Christians zero in on blessings from above, life's complaints remain blurred in the background.

Insight. Christians are not oblivious to troubles and burdens. They know problems are there, but they have gained the spiritual insight to look beyond them. When they face manifold trials, they "count it all joy . . . knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:2-3). Spiritual wisdom sees the steadfastness, the spiritual wholeness and approvedness that suffering produces (Romans 5:3-4; James 1:4). It is a matter of perspective—seeing beauty rather than ugliness in life. Christians cannot complain about what they have learned to overlook. Paul saw his trial at Rome as a "defense of the gospel" rather than a "tribunal of death."

The sentiment of the elderly gentleman in West Virginia aptly summarizes these remarks, and is one brethren desperately need. When asked about the weather, he always replied, "If the Lord sends 'er, I like 'er."

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL

You Can Offer Words Of Salvation

Harold Dowdy

IT WAS SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND AS HOT as South Georgia can get without air conditioning. The fellow I was teaching was nodding in his recliner as the powerful Word was read. He was not interested in the Lord and His way and told me so. Yet he was the only contact I had. "But there is a preacher who lives 'bout a mile down the road," he offered.

The preacher's house was an old, imposing two-story place with porches that went entirely around both upstairs and down. The yard was full of cars, for the entire clan had been there for dinner. I drove on past, even though I had earlier determined to stop and talk with this old Calvinist—but I had backed down.

After talking to myself for a few miles, I decided to go back, even if to be embarrassed in front of everybody. I got out and asked for Johnny Dukes, and was taken to a kindly old gentleman who was seated on the porch with his wife. I told him who I was and that I wanted to tell him the reason I had come to this county of so many churches to preach the Word. "Go right ahead, young fellow," he invited. I briskly walked to the car for my satchel.

Everybody gathered around as I stood at the foot of the porch steps. I told about the difficulty people were having in finding Jesus amid all the divided churches and doctrines. I told of Jesus' prayer for unity and the historical background that produced the modern denominations. I read from the major creeds of the churches—including the one which had given him his license to preach for so many years.

But I didn't look at Mr. Dukes as I talked, for I was afraid he would stop me if he caught my eye. So I picked the faces of one or two of his children and grand-children to look at as they crowded about the steps to hear my favorite lesson. The lesson was really designed for a one-on-one presentation, but they never even blinked their eyes.

The plea was made for a return to the complete authority of Jesus leaving behind all the man-made ways and insti-

tutions—honoring Christ by honoring His Word, while returning to the old paths. The conclusion was Peter's sermon and plea for those on Pentecost. Near the close I decided it was time to look and see just how Johnny was taking the lesson.

Tears were running down both his cheeks, and when I concluded he immediately and solemnly asked: "Where have you been all my life?"

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We had many studies in the next several weeks, and then Bob Bunting came for a meeting. I asked if he and Gene Dortch would go out and see if Mr. Dukes was ready to obey the gospel. I didn't go along because I had presented about everything I knew, but while I waited for their return I could imagine the deep theology Bob was showering on

him. Soon they were back with Johnny and they baptized him amid great rejoicing. I asked how they had accomplished this signal event. Bob said, "Well, Gene asked him if he believed Jesus to be the Son of God and that baptism was for the remission of sins, and he answered, 'Yes.' Then he asked if he wasn't ready to be baptized, and he said he was—and he did."

From that time Johnny preached the gospel only after the traditions of the apostles—and loved it with all his heart. He would wait on the Lord's table and make you cry with the description of the Savior's death and suffering. Several of his family were baptized into Christ, and Johnny was faithful until his death. Gene and I preached his funeral, and later preached the funeral of his faithful wife.

As I look back on that experience I realize that I should not have been so hesitant about stopping and going up to that old house with nothing but the Word to present. That is the way the apostles faced the entire world. No money or position, no great education or social standing, no grandiose institutional backing—but they had the Word. The city where they began preaching was hostile to their Lord. Their preaching would demand the uprooting of family ties and changing of moral values—but they had the Word.

The apostles believed the Word had the power to save the lost and conquer every foe, and that it was the only means that God had given to lead man to forgiveness and eternal life. To them it was a savor both of life and death. It was their only weapon but it was more than adequate; it was spirit and it was life.

I am so glad that old Chevrolet got turned around that hot Sunday afternoon, and I am glad I found the courage to repeat the powerful words of our Lord that were eventually able to turn that old gentleman around, too. What I did, you can do. You can offer words of salvation. Do it.

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THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL



Words of Strife

Rodney M. Miller

"A FOOL'S LIPS BRING STRIFE, AND HIS mouth invites a beating" (Proverbs 18:6, NIV). In wisdom literature the term "fool" means one who "says in his heart there is no God." Yet, while we apply this to atheists, it was not written to them. It was written to Jews who believed in the existence of God, but just lived like He did not exist. Such people will use their lips to engender strife and cause division among people. How can such a "religious person" cause strife today among brethren?

1. First, by use of the devastating tools of gossip and slander. Slander is the use of false or exaggerated reports about others that are discussed and circulated. Gossip is that which may very well be true but should not be discussed. This misuse of words causes strife because it polarizes people into cliques, discussing everyone who is not a part of their own little group. Many churches have become divided because of the "table-talk" that takes place among a small or select group of friends. For unity to flourish there must be two resolves: (1) Do not speak words which can cause strife, and (2) do not listen to words that can cause strife. There's no difference between a tale bearer and a tale sharer, so do not even associate with them.

Here is a four-fold test to determine whether you should pass along any information: (1) *Is it true?* Check the source. Too many good people have had their reputations dragged through the mire because somebody spoke of something without knowing the truth or falsity of the report. All too often those of us who should stand out as examples of how to use our tongues are those who are the most guilty. (2) *Is it confidential?* If it is, do not betray it! (3) *Is it kind?* We are expected to build each other up. Too often we spend much of our time tearing each other down. (4), *Finally, is it necessary?* There are very few times that I feel sorry for what I did *not* say. Rather, too often I feel sorry for what I did say. It has been well said that the highest level of conversation has to do with ideas, thoughts, truths, plans and events. As we analyze our conversations we might ask ourselves just how much of our time and energy is spent on talk-

ing about concepts or ideas rather than about people.

2. Secondly, a powerful tool to cause strife with words is manipulation by flattery. The kiss of Judas was flattery because it was a compliment given for the wrong motive. "A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin" (Proverbs 26:28). None of us likes to be "used," and this is what manipulation does. It seeks to use people against their wishes to do what they otherwise would not do. Because we are all in need of encouragement and we need to receive positive "strokes" we become vulnerable to flattery. If someone says something to us that is nice or kind we tend to want to respond to it in a positive way. Should we find out later that it was not sincerely offered or had a hook on the end of it, we bitterly resent it. Those who fancy themselves as orchestrators of people often find themselves giving compliments they really don't mean in order to gain favor in the eyes of others. They are like political party builders who use other people to gain for themselves the advantage. This type of behavior is not uncommon among those who are outwardly religious.

3. Another powerful tool to engender strife is boasting. "Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue" (Proverbs 17:28, NIV). Then in Proverbs 10:19, "When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable." The more we talk the greater the occurrence of sin will be.

A mark of a good counselor is not what he says but rather his ability to sit and listen intently to what is *being said*. And the mark of a great salesman is his capacity to listen to all that the customer has to say. One of the most expensive "sales" schools spends three days of its weekly seminar training its would-be salesmen to *listen*. Fools feel that they must comment on everything.

Pride is at the root of boasting and pride is the basic anti-God attitude. "Young men . . . clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5). People recoil from those who spend their time in

boasting about their gifts and abilities. The confusion of the church in Corinth was over who had the best gift. They perceived the gift of tongues to be the most important, and all were clamoring to use it and show it off. We religious people are not above clamoring to show off as to who can preach the best, sing the best, or do the most personal work. Each of us has the seed of this evil in us and needs to beat it into subjection. As one older brother put it, "I have seen many churches split over who was going to preach, or even who was going to teach the class—but I have never seen one split over who was going to mow the widow's yard, do clothes-washing for the infirmed, or cook for the handicapped."

In conclusion, we might consider some of the positive uses of the tongue which could enable us to keep from making the kind of mistakes we have mentioned: (1) We need to use words for encouragement. "As iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). We need to make it our mission in life to encourage members of our own families with well-chosen words—as well as the church and those with whom we work. (2) We can use our words to give sound advice and spiritual exhortation. "The lips of the wise spread knowledge" (Proverbs 15:7). Here is a golden opportunity to strengthen and build up our brethren. Paul sent Tychicus to the Colossians to encourage their hearts (Colossians 4:7). (3) We can teach about and glorify Christ. "The lips of the righteous feed many" (Proverbs 10:21). If we are busy telling others what Jesus Christ has done for us, then we will not fall prey to the evil uses of our words. Nothing exists in a vacuum, so if we have not filled our words with efforts to reach the lost and glorify Christ to our unbelieving friends, then we will slip into the wrong use of our speech. No lost soul will ever accept the gospel from an individual they personally reject! So let us be reaching out in a positive way to build people up and encourage them as much as we can about their lives. We may then gain the wonderful opportunity to present to them the truth.

15 W. Par St., Orlando, FL 32804



THE TONGUE: ITS POTENTIAL

Words Fitly Spoken

Charles W. Brackett

MANY THINGS IN THIS LIFE CAN BE elevated to greater than usual heights of nobility, beauty or service by setting them in fitting, or appropriate circumstances. One striking example is the sun, always useful, beautiful and noble. But, when set in the new light of a morning sky—WOW! Thankfully for late sleepers, the Lord wisely provided them with the equal, but different, beauty of a sun set in an evening sky.

Solomon illustrated the point with eternal words. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). The phrase "fitly

context which contrasts and heightens the value of what he said. He sounded *four warnings* which should help us appreciate the immense practicality of words fitly spoken.

1. **Speak only what you have a right to speak** (verse 9). There are some words, even though true, which are not ours to divulge. That which is entrusted to us in confidence. Knowledge we occasionally acquire about the weaknesses, sins and plights of others. These words are not ours to use. They generally do not edify and thus do not qualify as words fitly spoken.

The Holy Spirit holds before us the potential greatness of our words . . . a word of encouragement in the midst of discouragement; a word of hope when all is despair; a word of comfort when sorrow overwhelms; even a word of admonition when a soul is in jeopardy of sin.

spoken" has been variously translated "in due season," "upon its wheels" and "in right circumstances." Such a word is compared with golden fruit. Whether this is the apple we know or some other fruit more common to that time and place; and whether ornamental fruit made of the precious metal or actual fruit colored like it—the lesson is the same. Whatever fruit is pictured, it most certainly could be found in many forms, some good, some bad and some even rotten; usually useful and usually beautiful. But, when its color is just the right golden hue and it is carefully placed in a complementary setting of silver—WOW! As if to further illustrate, Solomon set his eternal message in a

2. **Speak honestly about yourself** (verse 14). This is elementary, yet it seems so much easier to find those who are boastful of their own abilities and accomplishments than to find one who is truly humble. It is basic to Christianity that we speak honestly about ourselves. An even more noble challenge was sounded when the apostle Paul called upon us in humility to regard others as more important than self (Philippians 2:3). Our words reflect where we are in this spiritual growth.

3. **Speak honestly about others** (verse 18). False testimony, given intentionally, carelessly or even unwittingly, can wound and rob our fellows of possessions and freedoms in ways in which this

life cannot completely remedy. Truth in love—that is fitting.

4. **Speak convictions with due wisdom and forethought** (verse 8). This is wise instruction for many of life's endeavors, but the most important application is in our personal teaching of the lost. Our words must be thoughtfully selected and lovingly spoken. Carefully selected from the pages of God's book to stir need in a lost heart and spoken at the right time and place, in a certain way, all wisely chosen to give the message its greatest chance for success. There is so much at stake and there is so little time! For what greater purpose did He give us words? What among God's creation can be more useful than the word—especially the spoken word? Properly selected written words are certainly effective in their purpose, but a spoken word, especially from one person to another, has the added impact of being precisely selected to fit the need of the moment and can be conveyed with the tone, inflection and bodily expression that heightens its usefulness and contributes to its beauty. Apt words are those which flow easily, rolling along as if on chariot wheels, perfectly suited to the circumstances at hand.

The Holy Spirit has reminded us in many other places of the potential "rotteness" of our words, but here—in the idea of "words fitly spoken"—He holds before us the potential greatness of our words when thoughtfully and lovingly used in the right circumstances. A word of encouragement in the midst of discouragement; a word of hope when all is despair; a word of comfort when sorrow overwhelms; a word of instruction when doubt, confusion or uncertainty reigns; even a word of admonition when a soul is in jeopardy of sin. And, always, a word of truth in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Yes, words fitly spoken truly are like apples in a silver setting—a thing of unusual beauty!

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That's Life!



Dee Bowman

I SAW BARNEY STANTON RECENTLY. "Brother Barney" as the folks around Saratoga, Arkansas, call him, has been a great influence for the cause of Christ in that area for many years. Now in his 80's, he is still actively engaged in the work of the Lord. He talks to folks about the Bible everywhere he goes, and what's more, he lives like he believes the Bible. His reputation as a Christian is never questioned by those who know him, whether or not they are Christians themselves. He is one of a host of godly men who are not so well known outside their own area, but who are great contributors to the furtherance of the work of God. What a help they have been! We salute you, "Brother Barney" (or whatever your name is), wherever you are!

* * *

I DATED NORMA FOR SOME TIME BEFORE WE MARRIED. Being busy with lots of things, I was in no particular hurry to get married. One day she said to me, "When do you think we'll get married?" "Oh, I dunno," I said, "one of these days." "I don't think you really love me," she retorted. "Surely you know that I do," I said confidently, "you just have to have faith." "Aren't you the same fellow who preaches that faith without works is dead?" she asked. We got married the next August.

* * *

ROBERT A. BOLTON, who preaches at the new College Park congregation in Richardson, Texas, is a friend of mine. I asked him not too long ago about what he believes to be the work of the gospel preacher. "I seek to refer people to the word and to relate the word to the people." I think his statement to be incisive and wise. It gets to the heart of all preaching, I believe. Preaching finally resolves itself in the people and their actions. I think I may be a better preacher for having heard Bob say that. And, what's really amazing is that he didn't even mention golf as relating to preaching.

* * *

WE HEAR A LOT TODAY ABOUT WHAT'S WRONG WITH BRETHREN—and that's good. There are some things wrong and they need to be stated so they can be corrected. But there are lots of things that are right with brethren today, and they need to be talked about, too. There are folks who are converting their neighbors, teaching their spouses, talking to their schoolmates. There are folks enduring great hardships in order to further the cause of Christ. There are people who are living their lives before others so as to bring glory and honor to God. There are young people who are standing for the right, rebelling against peer influences, pervading

an evil society with their recommendations of good. There are workers who retire early so that they can have more time to serve the Lord. There are folks who take vacations to go hear the gospel for a week. There are housewives who talk about the gospel over hot cups of coffee with those in their neighborhood. Everywhere there are some good folks doing what Christians are supposed to do—living right. Let us beware lest in the contemplation of our problems, we forget to thank God for the good being done, as well as the good folks doing that good.

* * *

SINGING IS SUCH A VITAL PART OF GOOD PUBLIC WORSHIP. I am glad to see brethren again giving it a place of emphasis. It stimulates and strengthens the soul to sing praises to the Maker. It invigorates the inner man, gives him solace, keeps him close to God. Singing is satisfying, giving peace to the soul. It adds to prayer, enhances preaching, encourages visitors, teaches great lessons and exhorts every participant to greater service. It will draw people to God and make those who are already in fellowship with Him glad they are. We need good singing. R. J. Stevens is a man of gospel music. I love to be in the crowd when he leads singing. He is a fine gospel preacher, but his love for singing praises makes him a song teacher/director almost without peer in this generation. He is happy to help develop song leaders or teach the church new songs or help with the singing where you are. Thanks, R.J.

* * *

LEONARD BERNSTEIN, THE NOTED AMERICAN COMPOSER/DIRECTOR was asked on one occasion what he considered the hardest thing about his job as a conductor. Without hesitation, he replied, "Finding someone to play second fiddle." Isn't it strange how so few of us are content to be behind someone? Competition is fine, but only if it's controlled competition. Why is it such a terrible thing to be second fiddle? It seems to me that no matter who you are, or what or how great your talent, you can always look up and see someone ahead of you and look down and see someone below you. That's life, and we may as well face it. Besides, who ever heard of a good orchestra without a good second fiddle?

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL, OCTOBER 6, 1982: "There is today the prospect of rain. Rain washes and revitalizes. I look forward to it always. Just as forgiveness, so is the rain—washing, cleansing, giving the soul a new beginning."

The Guiding Cloud

L. A. Mott, Jr.

Reading through the Pentateuch recently I came upon a passage that stopped me cold in my tracks, arrested my attention and simply stood there begging to be preached. That passage is Numbers 9:15-23. The law contains several earlier references to the cloud that guided Israel through the wilderness (see Exodus 13:21f, 14:19f, 24, 40:34-38), but this one provides the fullest explanation of the phenomenon.

What is so arresting about this passage is the amount of repetition. Verse 17, perhaps with verse 18, seems to tell us all

journeyed not. And sometimes the cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; then according to the commandment of Jehovah they remained encamped, and according to the commandment of Jehovah they journeyed" (verses 19f).

Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only overnight; sometimes it remained there "by day and by night." It made no difference. As long as the cloud remained, they remained encamped; when the cloud arose they broke camp and journeyed (verse 21). "Whether it were two days, or a month or a year,

phenomenon of the guiding cloud.

The conditions of modern discipleship have some striking similarities to the situation of Israel in the wilderness. As Israel was the elect people of God (Exodus 12:5f; Deuteronomy 7:6; 14:1-2), so those who have come to the living stone to be built up as living stones on that foundation are an elect people (1 Peter 2:4-10). But it is Israel in the wilderness and not Israel in the land to which New Testament disciples can best be compared; for though they are God's elect people, they are "sojourners and pilgrims" in the world (1 Peter 2:11f), not a people settled in the homeland. Finally, as Israel was led in the wilderness, so modern disciples are similarly led by God who goes before them as a guiding cloud.

Our Father leads us by means of the scriptures: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path" (Psalm 119:105). But He also teaches us and directs the course of our lives through providential means. Take note of the purpose clauses in two passages: "And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only" . . . "we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead" (Deuteronomy 8:3; 2 Corinthians 1:9).

Many people add a third way. The indwelling Spirit is conceived as providing a kind of intuitive insight into the will of God. But it has never been God's way to provide each man with his own special little bit of revelation. God's way has been to send apostles, prophets, preachers and teachers to provide the teaching and counsel needed by the people. So the leading of the indwelling Spirit is not to be distinguished from God's guidance through the Scriptures.

(To be continued.)

The conditions of modern discipleship have some striking similarities to the situation of Israel in the wilderness . . . It is not Israel in the land to which New Testament disciples can best be compared, for they are not a people settled in the homeland . . . Modern disciples are similarly led by God who goes before them as a guiding cloud.

we need to know. When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle the Israelites journeyed; wherever the cloud abode they camped. "At the commandment of Jehovah" they journeyed; "at the commandment of Jehovah they encamped; As long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle they remained encamped."

But Moses does not stop with those lines, which, without addition, contain a full explanation. He goes on. "And when the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of Jehovah and

that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, abiding thereon, the children of Israel remained encamped, and journeyed not; but when it was taken up, they journeyed. At the commandment of Jehovah they encamped, and at the commandment of Jehovah they journeyed: they kept the charge of Jehovah, at the commandment of Jehovah by Moses" (verses 22-23, end of passage).

The author was determined that his readers were not going to get this passage without having their attention arrested and their minds dwell upon this

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou forget me for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (13:1-2).

When God Is Not Listening

Does it ever seem to you that God is not listening, that He is far away? That God does not care about your sorrow, your problems, your perplexities? Well, David had been there. It seemed as though God was not listening—though nothing could be further from the truth. God cares when we lose a loved one; when our enemies slander and falsely accuse us; when we try to do right and receive only evil in return. And He cares in every other trying situation that we face in this life.

I strongly suspect that we all can identify with the psalmist's perplexity in this verse because he reveals a true-to-life dilemma which all of us must face. *Sometimes it will seem that God is very far away.* If that has not yet been your experience, then you are probably not very old in the faith. David utters a four-fold "How long?" in only two verses here, indicating the extremity of his misery. His strength is almost spent; his patience can hold out no longer. Why has not God intervened for this interminably long period of time? It seems to him as though God has completely forgotten!

Notice that David looks at his own condition from every plausible standpoint, and he puts the question "how long" in four different shapes. He views his grief: (1) as it seems to be, verse 1a; (2) as it is, verse 1b; (3) as it affects himself within, verse 2a,b; and (4) as it affects his foes without, verse 2c.

Why are we presented with such predicaments in life? I believe that sometimes they serve as a chastening process (Hebrews 12:4-13; Psalms 119:67,71), building

our character (James 1:2-4). In the same way that an earthly father may challenge his son to test his disposition and to see how he will react—whether he will murmur and complain and grow wayward—in the same way it seems that God sometimes tries His children to see what they are made of and whether they will neglect God because He seems to neglect them. It is surely during times such as this that our faith and trust in God is severely, but necessarily, tested.

One of the greatest tests we must face in life is whether we will constantly cleave to God, even when He does not seem to take any notice of us or have any care for us. Job had to face this problem, but he did not turn away from God, even when he could find no answers. Any time that we're feeling sorry for ourselves, we would do well to read the book of Job. Isaiah says that we must *wait on God* in such times: "And I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him" (Isaiah 8:17). Realize that God may be testing your faith and that the greatest blessing of your life may come when the dark clouds pass, if you will only hold on to Him. "And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for Jehovah is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him" (Isaiah 30:18).

Samuel often dealt the same way with Saul. He would keep away until the last hour, to see what Saul would do when Samuel seemed not to keep in touch with him. We must understand that God may appear to withdraw himself at times and stand aloof from his saints. This is not *actually* the case, but it seems as surely so to us as it did to David. The question is—what do we *do* at such times? Do we "foolishly charge God" or do we dwell upon His great blessings of the past and the sure promises of His word, and "wait on Jehovah," knowing that He will once again show His mercy and graciousness if we will but maintain our faith and trust?

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

The Worth of Principles

James W. Rury

Margaret Thatcher, the strong-willed lady leader of England, was criticized for a recent expensive war fought with Argentina concerning ownership of the Falkland Islands. Critics questioned the worth of fighting a war over a small island that was home for eight thousand sheep and only one thousand people. Her reply was, "The worth of principles

The student of the New Testament observes that Jesus acted upon and taught in principles. When a group of Jews brought an immoral woman to Jesus to see how He would judge her, Jesus told them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7). One by one, the crowd left—without a stone being thrown.

Pressure, logic and badgering become unmotivating, if not unbearable. Legalistic requirements become empty forms. But, for principles of truth, or right, or freedom, or fairness, or love—men will gladly serve or gallantly die.

is not determined by head count!"

Prime Minister Thatcher's typical British statement confirms our admiration for English emphasis on principles—often above all else. And her comment challenges our thinking as Christians in regard to the priority we should likewise place on principles.

Jesus and Principles

Jesus did not approve of her sin, but He showed that they were likewise guilty. The scribes and Pharisees acted on self-righteousness and legalism. Jesus acted out of fairness and compassion. The contrast between their motivation and His is obvious. One is based on pride, the other on principle.

In the sermon on the mount, one finds

many principles of action but few specific laws. For instance, meekness, mercy and love for one's enemy are attitudes used in determining any course of action with others.

The Power of Principles

Men become disenchanted with pleasure. Pressure, logic and badgering become unmotivating, if not unbearable. Legalistic requirements become empty forms. But, for principles of truth, or right, or freedom, or fairness, or love—men will gladly serve or gallantly die. A parent might not be able to get an eighteen-year-old boy to clean up his own room; however, out of patriotism the same son will die for his country on some foreign soil.

It is not unusual for someone to put forth great effort requiring sacrifice for some cause and be questioned, "Why did you go to all of that trouble?" The reply is often, "Because of the principle of the matter."

Modern Principles

Though basic principles never change, men find different ways of expressing them. For example, many traditional adages find their roots in tried and true principles. The wisdom of all ages teaches us that: Haste makes waste. Practice makes perfect. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. And one should look before he leaps. Each of these old sayings expresses a principle—a principle of patience, or contentment, or the fallacy of assumptions.

One often sees principles expressed in more modern terms on bumper stickers or signs on some bulletin boards. We are counseled, "If it works, don't fix it!" Or, "Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died." And, "If anything can go wrong, it will!" One more: "Life is hard by the yard—but by the inch, it's a cinch."

The worth of principles never changes. We should seek to be not just believers of great truths, but doers of great deeds—based on principles.

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The Sermon on the Mount

Similitudes: The Calling of the Christian

With every beatitude the gulf between kingdom citizens and the world of ordinary men has widened. Jesus has clearly issued a call for His disciples to make a moral and spiritual exit from a society ruled by pride and passion. This separation to a new life was to be conclusively sealed by the world's own bitter reaction. They are to be slandered, assaulted and rejected. Their gentle and humble ways would never suffice to allay the sense of embarrassment, intimidation and fear which their righteous ways were destined to evoke. The break was to be complete.

And yet, ironically enough, the very people who have become, in effect, the off-scouring of the earth are, in reality, the world's only hope. As the beatitudes have delineated the character of citizens of the heavenly commonwealth, so now the similitudes (Matthew 5:13-16) make clear their calling. Though set apart to God and separated distinctly from the society of other men, they are nevertheless related to the world in a very special way.

Time has somewhat dispelled the apparent absurdity of this scene on a Galilean hillside. Jesus is telling this nondescript knot of men and women that they were marked out to preserve and illuminate the world. They had little money, no worldly standing, and no prospects. Some "wise" heads must have been no little amused by all this pompous talk. Visionaries had arisen before in the nation, created a momentary excitement, and then evaporated (Acts 5:35-37). The poor prospects of this movement made even the hopeless visions of a Theudas or a Judas of Galilee seem positively promising.

Nevertheless time was to reveal an amazing eventuality. The things that looked so durable in those days vanished. The Roman Empire collapsed. Plato's academy closed. The schools of the Stoics and Epicureans faded to a curiosity. The great library at Alexandria burned. But the company of the Christians endured. They would still possess no great wealth or worldly standing, but their message would be very much alive and their spirit vital. Lives would be changed everywhere.

It should not surprise us that the One who came to save a lost humanity (Luke 19:10) should draw all His disciples into that great enterprise. His task was to become their task; His passion their passion.

"Ye are the salt of the earth" (5:13). "Ye are the light of the world" (5:14). The metaphors Jesus chose to illustrate the critical nature of the kingdom's calling were fashioned out of common household materials. Not a house in Palestine was without some salt, or a lamp to

chase away the evening gloom. The world of men, because of sin, was putrefying in the darkness. Citizens of heaven's kingdom were destined to be the salt to stay sin's rot and the light to penetrate its dark despair. Still Jesus warned His disciples that the world they intended to preserve, they might also lose.

The kingdom of heaven was not intended to turn inward upon itself, like some giant monastery. Its citizens were not intended to live in grand isolation. Though not of the world they were to be very much *in* the world (John 17:14-15). Their Master was always a man of the people. His life was lived amidst the thronging multitudes of Palestine. He was always accessible, always vulnerable, always concerned. He spent His time among the troubled and distressed (Luke 15:1-2). This is something Christians must never forget. We may be persecuted, as He was (John 15:19-20), but we must never allow our pain to dry up our compassion. We may be weary at times, as He was (John 4:6), but we can never permit our weariness to turn us away from the needs of others. The kingdom from above may indeed be a citadel against sin but it is always to be the refuge for the sinner.

"If the salt have lost its savor" (5:13). Kingdom citizens, though very much in the world, must never become worldly. The salt must not lose its saltiness (Luke 14:34-35; Mark 9:50). Their savor rests in the holy distinctiveness of their lives and character. The passion for righteousness must never be compromised or the disciple's usefulness is at an end. Though salt in fact cannot cease to be salty it can, like the salty powder that forms on the shores of the Dead Sea, become so polluted that it is as useless as road dust. If by concessions made to the world the salt has been leached out of us, leaving only a residue of worldly respectability, fine buildings, congenial social circles and empty rituals, we, too, have become utterly worthless!

One final thought. As important as it is for Christians to worship God according to His will, we must remember that most lost men will not be made to glorify God because we eat the Lord's supper every Sunday. They may indeed be moved to exalt God by the quiet love with which we bear one another (John 13:34-35), by our self-control in the face of great provocation, by our calm assurance in the presence of tragedy, and our firm refusal to be drawn into a world of mindless lusts. If we have gained the victory over a worldly system of pride and carnality (1 John 2:15-17; 5:4) it will surely show, and God, not ourselves, will be glorified. (To be continued.)

And Then Some...



Brent Lewis

Ahem, er . . . sorry I mentioned that!

My good friend, Glynn Gregg, is a school textbook salesman for a major company and a member where I preach at 62nd & Indiana in Lubbock. Glynn tells about the time that his company was presenting a new science textbook for review. Many of the reactionary groups of our society have representatives at an affair such as this to "lobby" for their partisan point of view and make sure that their cause has not been damaged or misrepresented.

In this particular case there was an agent for NOW (the National Organization for Women) present. They had a strenuous objection to make because they had counted all the times the word "she" appeared in the book and compared it with the number of times the word "he" appeared. "He" was in there (he doesn't remember the exact numbers) 180 times and "she" was only in there 106 times. The representative ranted and raved for a long time about how "sexist" such an action was and how they weren't going to stand for it.

The textbook company has a person who responds to all these challenges with the company's justification for what they do. He sat patiently until she finally finished. Glynn says that the company has an option of formally replying to all objections in writing or by responding on the spot. In this case, the company's representative could not resist an immediate 30-second reply to the hour-long tirade. "If the representative from NOW will bother to reconsider, it is true that 'she' is in the book 106 times and 'he' is in it 180 times—but 64 times it is He, the scientific symbol for Helium!" Glynn says they had no further objections.

What happens when we seek answers from man

There was a poor fellow who had spent years hopelessly searching for the meaning of life. He traveled from country to country seeking out the most ingenious philosophers, the most learned theologians, the most gifted novelists, poets and playwrights. None of them could satisfy his satiable hunger for eternal truth.

Finally he heard of a very old and very wise guru living thousands of miles away on one of the world's highest mountains. After a long, hazardous journey, he arrived at the base of the mountain. Slowly, painfully, he clawed and scratched his way up the sheer rock mountainside. At last, as he hung from the top by his bloodied hands, he cried out, "Oh wise one, please, what is the secret of life?" "My son," the old sage answered profoundly, "life is a fountain."

The poor fellow was incredulous. "A fountain? Life is a fountain?" he asked disbelievingly.

"You mean," the old man replied, "life *isn't* a fountain?"

The difficulty of living up to your bumper sticker

A certain woman, driving alone from Washington to Richmond, ran over a spike which punctured her tire and left her stranded. In distress, she raised the hood of her car and tied a scarf to the door handle; then she locked the doors and sat in the car praying for the Lord to send help.

By chance there came a limousine with a bumper sticker that read, "Smile—God Loves You." When the occupants saw the stranded woman, they passed by

in the far lane without even smiling.

There also came a sports car with a CB radio and a bumper sticker saying, "Honk If You Love Jesus." The driver passed by in the far lane without even honking or using his CB to tell the highway patrol about the woman's dilemma.

A certain workman, when he saw the raised hood and scarf, came to the spot where the woman was, with compassion. He stopped his old pickup, which had no bumper stickers, crossed the four-lane highway, and offered to change the tire.

The woman tried to pay the workman, but he refused the money saying, "If my wife were stranded on the highway, I'd want some Good Samaritan to stop and help her out." And again he crossed the four-lane highway, got into his bumper-stickerless truck, *smiled* and *honked* at her, and went on his way to work. *Which now of these three was neighbor unto her that had a flat?*

—via Pulpit Helps

Essay on anatomy

Harold Turner carries this story from Austin Mobley in his bulletin, *Sincerely Yours From Saratoga*:

A young boy in school was asked to write on anatomy. His effort produced the following:

"Your head is round and hard, your hair is on it and your brains are in it. Your face is what you got to eat and make faces with. Your shoulders are shelves where your arms hang, and your stomach is what hurts if you don't get enough to eat and spinach don't help it none. Your arms

are what you got to pitch with and so you can reach the butter. Your spine is what keeps you from folding up; no matter how quick you turn around, it's always behind you. Your legs are what, if you ain't got two of, you can't get to first base and neither can your sister. Your toes are what's always getting stubbed and that's all there is to you except what's on the inside and I ain't never seen that."

Harold says, "Brother Mobley goes ahead and makes a timely observation about the inside of a man, but I ain't got no room for that. Use the occasion to give it some thought."

How do you do it?

The preacher noticed a man who came way down front for the service.

Afterwards the preacher spoke to the man and asked, "How was it that you came and sat right in front, being a stranger here?"

"Oh," said the man, "I'm a bus driver and I just came to see how you get everyone to the rear of the building."

My column's happy ending

A little boy and his daddy were looking at a litter of puppies, planning to buy one, and the daddy asked the little boy which one he wanted. The lad pointed to a pup, whose tail was wagging furiously, and said, "There—that one with the happy ending!"

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Parents' Page

Some Suggestions For Rearing Godly Children

Roland H. Lewis

● When children play house with dolls, let the "parent-child" relations and the "daddy-mama" relations be a basis for you to correct their actions. "Mama" should not order "Daddy" and he (they) should not "tear up the house." If one mistreats "Baby," find out why.

● Little girls who play with baby dolls learn the important feelings of motherhood, but if the same girls play with "Barbie-type" dolls, they are hurrying the desire to wear high heels, bras, and other "grown-up" fashions that tend to rush them out of the innocence of childhood. Parents and grandparents, be smart!

● Show your children they are loved. Don't just hand them things. Touch them, handle them, love them in your arms, in your laps, with kisses and with words—even teenagers, but in your own homes where you do not embarrass the teenager in the presence of outsiders.

● Parents must learn how to express love for their children even during times of strong disapproval of the child's actions. Never say, "You are a bad boy," but rather, say, "I love you, but not what you have done, because what you have done is bad."

● Success in rearing children depends strongly on how the child feels about the parent. Does he feel you are "for" him or "against" him? Care must be taken in correction to prevent a wall from developing; love must always show through all interaction with a child.

● The amount of time you spend with your children is not as important as the way you spend that time. You can give them nothing more valuable than your *undivided you*—for each child, one at the time, even if only a few minutes a day. Group time, in addition, is necessary, too.

● See and remember what they want you to look at; hear and remember what they tell you. Do not give them an absent-minded "Uh-huh." Give them a feeling that they are important to you.

● Sincerely compliment and commend them more than you scold or reprimand. Tell others about their good

when they are with you.

● Don't say "no" if you can say "yes."

● Don't say "no" when you mean "wait a minute."

● It is advisable to listen to their arguments for wanting a "yes" answer

The amount of time you spend with your children is not as important as the way you spend that time. You can give them nothing more valuable than your undivided you—for each child, one at the time, even if only a few minutes a day. Group time is necessary, too.

points, *in their presence*, but not about their faults. Compliments are to strengthen rapport, the parent-child bond, not to bore friends with our ego concerning our children.

● Let your children see their parents love each other and hear you compliment each other. Show them how to show affection by being affectionate

after you have said "no," then if their reasoning is good and just, change your mind and say "yes" and tell why you changed your mind. It is good for their personal feeling of success and worthwhileness as well as preventing the attitude developing in the child that "Dad thinks he is always right!" Children *can* be right; they can also have good ideas.

201 N. Bannockburn, Temple Terrace, FL 33617

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

A Modern Phoebe

Phoebe was "a servant of the church in Cenchrea" (Romans 16:1-2). The word for servant can be translated deaconness, but there is little reason for assuming that she was a deaconness in an official sense. More significant, perhaps, is the original word for "succorer" or "helper" which Paul also uses to describe her. That word denotes "a female guardian, protectress, patroness, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them from her resources" (Thayer).

Most of us have been privileged to know a modern Phoebe—a sister who possesses the wisdom, resources and compassion to be helpful, whatever the need may be. I met a notable Phoebe recently in a small town near the outer banks of North Carolina.

Mattie Hunter is retiring this year from thirty-three years in the public schools, twenty-five of them spent as a guidance counselor. This position has brought her into contact with many troubled children. Unable just to go home and forget about them, she has taken fourteen into her home as foster children. One of them under her influence became the only black student thus far to graduate as valedictorian of her high school.

Though Mattie herself is black, her great heart is color-blind; her benevolence reaches out to all alike. As a recent Christmas approached, she was deeply troubled by the extreme depression being suffered by a white sister living hundreds of miles away. She determined to use her vacation time and the money she normally would spend for gifts, to do what she could to rehabilitate her sister in distress.

Inevitably, a true Christian's concern for the social, emotional and material needs of others will be exceeded by concern for their spiritual needs. In such a person as Mattie, these concerns cannot always be separated. A fellow teacher in her school had to take a leave of absence because of a disease which caused a seizure in the classroom. Many did not understand the nature of the problem and some were superstitiously avoiding her. Mattie thought carefully of what she might do. Soon she had her answer. Mattie walks two miles each afternoon; she would ask her friend to walk with her. Walk they did; and talk they did—about Jesus Christ, His way of salvation and His church. Bible studies followed and the teacher was brought to know what Jesus required. Sadly, she decided not to obey Him, but like a godly woman

living in Jesus' day, Mattie had "done what she could." She has succeeded in bringing many others to Christ, including half of the fourteen children she has fostered.

It would have been easy for her to be very assertive in her teaching. She reports that when she finally saw the truth and obeyed it, she was so elated that she wanted to climb to the top of the water tank and shout to the whole town: "I have found the truth! Come with me out of your error and follow the Lord." She would be very capable of teaching anyone publicly or privately. Yet, modesty has led her to have a Christian brother assist her with most of her contacts. Jimmy Jenkins, who preaches for the church which she attends, reports that in the six years he has known her she has arranged for him to teach at least one hundred of her friends. Once when she and Jimmy went together to a home, the racially prejudiced man insisted that he would listen to her, but not to the white man. She refused that arrangement, considering nothing else but that Jimmy would do the teaching.

Obviously, such a person is a great help to gospel preachers. Some serving in other countries have reported monthly contributions from her. Local preachers appreciate the prospects she brings to them and the words of encouragement she offers. I first noticed her as she listened intently and took notes on a lesson which I felt was poorly chosen and ineffectively presented. After the service, she came to me stating that when she came to the service she did not feel well, but that the worship had lifted her spirits. She thanked me for the message which, she insisted, was just what she needed and very helpful.

Being a Christian has cost Mattie more than it has most of us. Her faith forced her for several years to live without a marriage companion. Many of her friends and professional associates have criticized her membership in a "white church." The church, however, has been greatly blessed by her association with them. Her good character so highly respected, and her good works so widely known in the community, have truly adorned the doctrine of God in all things. Though she does her good deeds quietly, "a city set on a hill cannot be hid."

"I commend you to our sister," Mattie, "who is a servant of the church which is at" Plymouth; . . . "for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well" (adapted from Romans 16:1-2).

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

Old Athletes and Other Liars

Time was running out in the finals of the state tournament and we trailed by just one point. Staggering and weak from exhaustion (having carried my mediocre teammates through one tight game after another), I wheeled at mid-court and hurled a desperation shot. It never touched a thing. The crowd went wild; mobbing the court, they hoisted me into the air, the men patting me furiously and the women trying to embrace me. Though it was many years ago, I remember it well.

Well, maybe it was not exactly like that. It was not the state tournament and I missed the shot, but I did play basketball. And there was that hefty, snaggletoothed girl who kept trying to embrace me.

I have noted that sometimes even Christians get lost in a

crippling nostalgic haze. It is invigorating to listen to the tales of the battles fought and the valiant deeds of old warriors. But sometimes I hear creeping into those conversations a fantasy world and an unhealthy yearning for a non-existent past.

Do you wonder why we do that? Why do we live in a romanticized past when we were prettier, stronger and braver than truth would confirm?

I can think of at least two serious problems in such thinking. First, it reflects an unwillingness to face reality which is nothing less than lying to one's self and to others. We can never live life unless we face what it is—the good and bad, the victories and the defeats, and all the humdrum mediocrity in

between. Nor can we teach our children what life is about by feeding them on fables. Nobody wins them all. Fifty-fifty is not bad. Paul made mistakes and he reconstructed his past with humbling realism. It is our real past which keeps our humanity before us, which acknowledges it to those who know us as we are, and which points us toward a better future.

Second, a maudlin preoccupation with the past signals an unhealthy withdrawal from the present. Thus the apostle Paul instructed us: "Forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal . . . Let us therefore . . . be thus minded" (Philippians 4:13-15). Whatever the victories or failures of the past, I live in the present

and I look forward to the future. Too often, one preoccupied with the past is contributing little to the present.

Hopefully, we should continue to grow so that the present is more important to us than the past. I do, indeed, remember fondly my obscure athletic past. It helped me, served me well, and was important then, as it should have been. I now am involved in more important things and I trust the best is yet to come.

So, also, we grow in Christ. I remember fondly the struggles and victories of the past—the lessons learned, the ties of affection woven, the buildings built and congregations started. But forgetting those things, the present is more exciting than ever—and I trust the best is yet to come.

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The Bible and the Information Age

We live in a world of information. Information is available at an amazing rate of speed. We are told by those who study such matters that we are on the verge of what has been styled "The Information Age" and that it will be a far more explosive and significant time than either the Renaissance or the Industrial age.

It is obvious that our foreign neighbors have achieved a great degree of efficiency in the production of equipment and machinery, an area in which we have had a corner on the world market for years. It is sad, but true, that many of their products are superior in quality to ours. The future of the United States is no longer in the industrial production which has characterized it for so many years, but in the innovating of new products and services and the conception of the plans by which they can be produced by the newly industrialized nations such as Japan and West Germany. In other words, the U.S. will become a storage center for information.

This new role points again to the importance of information. No matter the endeavor, there must be information to bring it about. That's why it is so foolish to seek to live life separate from the information which God has given to guide and direct it. For a man to seek to live life without the guidance which God gives is like trying to make some piece of equipment without a plan or guide. "All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," is a declaration of the principle. God made man according to His wisdom. It logically follows that He knows what is best for him.

I believe more people would study the Bible if they came to see the need of it. Actually, there is just enough religious information around to cause man to be satisfied with the status quo. There is enough talk of good, enough discussion of wholesome things, even enough "doing right" around, to cause most of us to feel safe. Doing what is right ought to make us feel good and it is good that we have some religious information around, but we should not be deluded into thinking that because we once in a while think about right things or periodically stand

on the side of good, we have fulfilled our mission in life. Such shallow reasoning excludes the need for growth, progress, development.

There is a lot of counterfeit religious information. The media evangelists have their brand, the revivalists have theirs, and so do the mainline religious denominations. It's almost like a trip to Baskin-Robbins—you just take your pick. But how many people are interested enough in what they are offered to investigate it? "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world," advises John (1 John 4:1). There is such a thing as bad information, incomplete information, diluted information. By it the religious charlatan is able to "get it for you wholesale," or offer you some sort of short-cut so that religion is not so hard to bear. There's the kind that make you feel good, another that excuses your sins because of your circumstances, still another that gives you a second chance if you don't make it the first time. All of them are efforts to make the product easier to sell, less of a problem to promote. After all, who wants a religion that offers pain for participation; which says, up front, that you'll have to suffer if you embrace it?

Good information produces great results. But this information must be used carefully, applied willingly. Its potency is diminished by lack of use and, just as a prescription won't help sitting on the shelf, it has no effectivity apart from a careful application. One of the saddest sights of all is a new Bible which is several years old, or one used to press funeral flowers or store other memorabilia rather than for a diligent search for information about how to live life.

When used carefully, the Bible will produce the grandest result of all—that home in heaven. How wonderful to view its scenes as we read of it in the pages of God's book.

But, alas, who will listen? Who will hear? Will you?
"Where is the life we have lost in living?

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?"

—T. S. Eliot

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Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 5235 94th St., Lubbock, TX 79424

Was Simon the Leper the father of Judas?

This letter is in regard to an article appearing in the April issue by brother Jeffery Kingry entitled "All Spoiled" [April, 1984, page 7]. I have very much enjoyed the articles and topics that have been covered in the magazine. I have used many of them as foundations/ideas for sermons. I also enjoyed the above-mentioned article by brother Kingry.

One section of his article especially piqued my interest and also prompted further study. The statement is found under the heading **Peter and Judas**. I quote: "The Scriptures are quite plain. Judas was a selfish, self-centered man. John 6:71 says that the Lord and the twelve were in the house of Simon the Leper, and that Simon was Judas' father." I had never heard this before—that Simon the Leper and Simon Iscariot were the same individual. I immediately consulted the text given and found that it says nothing of Simon the Leper or that Jesus and the twelve were in anyone's house. The next passage given in the article did refer to Jesus and the disciples in the house of Simon the Leper, but does not state or infer that he was Judas' father.

Next, I consulted numerous commentaries, dictionaries and the I.S.B.E. I never found even a hint concerning the identification of these two men as being one. Perhaps brother Kingry has a source that I know nothing of. If so, I would like to be referred to it.

I don't mean to be nit-picky, but I am perplexed as to what to do. If we claim to speak as the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent, then let us teach and preach only the facts. The integrity of the magazine is too highly valued by myself to let this go unchecked. Your time and consideration are appreciated.

Daniel P. May
Bellevue, WA

A response to the above

"The art of creativity is forgetting the source." In response to D. P. May's request I went back to my reference books in an effort to determine where I had come to the conclusion established in the article under question. I recalled the entire concept com-

ing from William Barclay's *Daily Study Bible*, but could not find the paragraph that originally gave me the idea. If someone comes across it in their reading who has more time than I to pursue such things you might pass it on to brother May.

The Matthew 26 account of the anointing at Bethany (a chief city of Judah) is also paralleled by Mark 14 and John 12. Mark's account is almost identical to Matthew's; but John adds that it was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who anointed the feet of the Lord. Luke's account does not tell the same story, but he tells of an anointing taking place in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50). Luke's account relates that the woman who anointed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair was a notorious sinner in the region. Scholars have debated for years whether the events related were actually the same and whether or not Mary was the "great sinner." At least one commentator suggested that Luke's account represents the repentance and reconciliation of Mary, and the later event five days before the crucifixion was a second act by Mary intended to honor the Lord again.

However, in both events the name of the host is *Simon*. The surname, "Pharisee," "Iscariot" (meaning from Kerieth), and "the Leper" were not intended as formal names, but identifiers since "Simon" was a fairly common name of the time. There were at least ten Simons in the New Testament, and among famous Jews in such historical works as Josephus, there are over twenty. "The Leper" does not mean that he was a leper at the time, but had been a leper. According to Mosaic law no leper would have been allowed to enjoy a feast with cleansed Jews. In Luke he is Simon the Pharisee, and in Matthew and Mark he is Simon the Leper. But, in John's narrative he is not named at all. The passage reads like this: "Then six days before the Passover he came to Bethany, where Lazarus was whom Jesus raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served; and Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him . . . Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son . . ."

Granted, this is not a "necessary" inference, but I believe the inference to be just that the Simon mentioned in the other accounts who gave the feast, and the sug-

gestion in context that Judas, "Simon's son" in John are the same man. It does nothing to the conclusions of the original article if this is not granted by the reader. And if one does not wish to accept that Simon the Leper and Simon the father of Judas are the same man I hardly believe it to be a matter of "perplexity," dishonesty to the truth, or a failure to "preach and teach the facts." Further, I fail to see the "integrity" of the editors or their efforts encroached in any way regardless of whether or not one agrees where Simon Iscariot was five days before the crucifixion.

Jeffery Kingry
Milton, VT

Want to join the army?

Having completed 2½ years in the army, I am writing this for anyone considering joining. As a Christian, there are many things you should be warned about that are not mentioned by a recruiter. First, there are many duties that last 24 hours, 7 days a week. Some of these duties will interfere with church attendance. Second, most units are field-oriented and some will spend up to 9 months a year in the field. Third, they might offer you a particular unit to join: it will not last the length of your time in the service; then you will be sent somewhere else and a church may not be nearby. Finally, the army allows bad language, drinking and other "lusts of the flesh" that tempt any young Christian. Because of these reasons, I do not intend to re-enlist. But if you plan to join, let me recommend that you take a non-combat job such as medicine (except "Field Medic"), computers or administrative work.

If anyone has any questions about anything in the army, I will be glad to answer them to the best of my ability.

Tom Thornhill, Jr.
Co. C, 299th CSS Bn.
APO, N.Y. 09137

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

History 4673 — Religion in the South

"A study of the development of religion in the South and its impact on the region's culture" reads the *Graduate Catalog* of the University of Arkansas. Register at the university this fall and you can take my class.

Why, one may ask, religion "in the South"? Basically, because the South is different. Each nation, and region, and sub-region has its own distinctive religious history. Because of immigration patterns, race tensions, the loss of the Civil War, and its historic economic backwardness, the South developed differently from the rest of the nation. Of course, so did New England with its Puritan religious heritage, and the Midwest with its strong Catholic and Lutheran ethnic groups, and the West with its peculiar links to Mormon history and the new religions of the 1960s. The South has remained a bastion of conservative and fundamentalist religious expressions.

I wonder why? Of course, I know why historically and can readily trace the intellectual, economic and social forces which influenced southerners' beliefs. But I wonder *really* why? Why in the sight of God?

That is more difficult to answer, but the Bible does give some hints on the subject. First, the Scriptures reveal that such patterns are as old as history. Nations and regions have always had distinctive religious identities—for better or worse—there were Godless nations and times in the Old Testament; the Bereans were "more noble than those of Thessalonica" (Acts 17:11). Societies could become so corrupted that God would give "them over to a reprobate mind" (Romans 1:28). One must keep a keen eye on the society around him; it would be a mistake to think that I am not influenced by it.

A second thing the Scriptures teach is that there is nothing inevitable about my own personal decisions. Free will cries out from every Biblical call to repentance, from each injunction to decide to do right, or to be converted. Whatever their social circumstances, men are urged to exercise their God-given wills and to "save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). No person has to remain what he is—whether born in the home of Mormons in Salt Lake City, or Pennsylvania Amish, or members of the church of Christ in Athens, Alabama. But you do have to be what you are unless you think about it and decide to do otherwise. What makes cultures walk in lock step is the fact that so few are willing to think: change is difficult and sometimes painful.

History proves, however, that men can change. In every society there are those individuals who stand out, having made their own choices to march to their own drummer. The South or the West may have its religious character, but southerners and westerners make their own choices.

The demand, of course, is for repeated rededications to individual responsibility. I am convinced that one cannot be excused for being wrong because he lived in the wrong place or was born to the wrong parents. The responsibility that goes with being human is to think. I am just as convinced that one cannot be right because he lived in the right place or was born to right parents. I cannot drift along fat and satisfied by my good fortune. I must think.

Restoring the Erring

Robert W. Goodman

The title of this article suggests a great need, unlimited possibilities, a keen and recurring responsibility. If we realize no responsibility in this field, we need to be restored. In the past, it was estimated that about fifty percent of those baptized went astray. In these days, we are having proportionately fewer baptisms, but it seems to me we have a higher percentage continuing steadfastly with the Lord. Even if there is only one lost sheep in each community, the work of restoring the erring is imperative. If a rancher had one calf missing out of a herd of ninety-nine he would surely look for the one.

The tone of the Galatian letter begins in an abrupt and pointed manner. The sharpness gives way to a tender admonition in chapter 6:1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

This tells us that most of the erring are not in that condition because they are willful and presumptuous sinners. They have slipped. They have wandered away. They have drifted off course. They do not appear bad, but they are out of service. They have ceased bearing fruit. Their departure probably began so slowly they are not aware when it began. They may find it hard to confess that it has taken place. They will admit they are not attending as they should. "Time is of the essence" here. If we can lovingly appeal to them as they first start going astray and before they become "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" our chances for successful restoration are much higher.

The word "restore" tells us much. It was used for the mending of the fisherman's nets (Mark 1:9). It described the work of a physician in setting a broken bone or putting a dislocated joint in place. In both cases prompt action was needed. The work required skill. The action was not taken with the intention of destroying but restoring. We must not go to the erring with the attitude that

this is the first step toward withdrawal. Our desire is to mend, heal, correct or restore to a right relationship with the Lord and His people. One not functioning properly needs to be restored to faithful service.

The admonition is addressed to the "spiritual." After reading the fifth

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chapter, it should be apparent who the spiritual are. Those who are spiritual will be concerned about restoring the erring. Those who are not spiritual will either not be interested, or if they try, they will make matters worse. There will be so much amiss in their lives the erring will not listen to what they say because *what they are* cries out so loudly. The

one who is spiritual will consider self. He will realize, "I, too, have been overtaken," or "But for the grace of God, I too, could be in the same condition." He does not approach the erring with the spirit that he is glad to "tell him off." He is regulated by the "golden rule."

Notice, too, this language addressed to "brethren." The work of restoring the erring is not the professional duty of the preacher or the official responsibility of the elders. We may feel, "I just don't have a way with words." Where there is love tenderly expressed, there is power even if the words may not be precise and polished. The sincere proposal, even poorly expressed, by a young man showing true love is more moving than the articulate and histrionic expression of feigned love.

It is hard for us to have a constant sense of evangelism for lost souls. It seems even harder to maintain the sense of urgency or to realize the potential of restoring the erring. Whether we convert the alien or restore the erring, let us remember a soul is saved from death (James 5:19-10)! There is a harvest field all about us. We need to think of lost and benighted souls in distant lands and do what we can to save them. At the same time, let us not overlook the lost and erring nearby whose "latter end is worse with them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20).

It is easy to have a defeatist spirit that hinders us from approaching the erring. It will be easy for us to convince ourselves there is no use in wasting our time because one is not likely to be restored. Suppose you were given the assignment to try to restore one astray. The background of the prospect revealed he had become involved with another man's wife, plotted the murder of the lawful husband, and successfully covered up the murder. Would you hasten to visit the erring one? I am glad Nathan did not give up on David (2 Samuel 12). Let us take care not to quit before we start.

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My Brother/My Self

Overcoming Guilt

God has designed human beings so that guilt cannot go unpunished. We all have an inner mechanism which tends to cause us to confess or be punished. Man can either secure a sense of forgiveness for his guilt, by following God's way, or else he will do one of two things—project it onto someone else (as Adam did to Eve) or punish himself.

When a person feels guilt, there are processes set in order in the personality to correct the problem. This results in feelings that register on the inner self: shame, inferiority, feelings of rejection, self-despite and worthlessness. The inner mechanism which causes these feelings is both necessary and good. However, we can punish ourselves just as inexorably for false guilt as for real guilt.

Pseudo-guilt is a real problem with many people—some of whom are Christians. Strangely enough, psychological guilt (pseudo-guilt) is largely selfish and self-centered. Its real concern is not so much, "What have I done to others and how can I correct the harm that is done to them?" but "What a failure I am; what will everyone think of me?" Pseudo-guilt focuses strongly on past failures, a sense of wrongdoing, and a feeling of deserving punishment. Sometimes it masquerades as a concern for others, but it is actually self-centeredness, egocentricity.

Let's give an example. Two women are sitting together in the kitchen, visiting over a cup of coffee. One of them who has an over-sensitive conscience reaches for the sugar and knocks the other person's coffee into her lap. She will typically react, "How stupid of me. I should have known better. Look at the mess I've made. I'm so sorry. How will you ever forgive me?" Hours later she will still be feeling guilty and continue to condemn herself. She focuses on *self* and past failure.

A person with a properly balanced conscience and good emotional adjustment would react entirely differently. She might say, "Oh, I'm so sorry. Please forgive me. Let me clean this table up—and I want you to let me have your skirt cleaned." Before long, she would have forgotten the entire matter. Here the emphasis is more on the other person than on oneself and is more healthy and realistic.

How do we begin to distinguish between real guilt and pseudo-guilt? What steps can we take to be sure that we are not feeling guilty over things that God does not regard as sin? The first question we should ask when we feel a twinge of guilt is this: "Am I feeling guilty because I

have violated God's standards, or because I have transgressed the childish standards of my ideal self?" [See *July, 1984*, p. 8.] If I have violated God's word, then I should correct it immediately. But what do you do if you discover that the guilt you feel is pseudo-guilt, arising from your own internalized standards? Here are some suggestions:

1. Face the fact that you need to change your thinking. Past experiences leave deep imprints upon our personalities. Our ideal self, our punitive self, and our loving-corrective self, if not functioning correctly, must be brought in line with the Bible. People who have the problem of pseudo-guilt always have a wrong concept of God: they see Him as harsh, punitive, judgmental and demanding. But God loves every Christian as a father loves his child; realign your concept to a true understanding of your heavenly Father.

2. Look closely at your feelings and try to identify thoughts and feelings which come from past experiences. Many guilt feelings come from past failures in human relationships, resulting in our thinking negatively about ourselves.

3. Meditate on the Scriptures until the Bible's ideals become your ideals. The psalmist said, "Thy word have I hid up in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. . . . I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word" (Psalm 119:11, 15-16). David repeatedly meditated on God's instructions until they became an integral part of his personality. They gradually became a part of his ideal self.

4. Accept the gap between what you are and what you should be as part of your future growth. Christians who suffer from pseudo-guilt are notorious for being dissatisfied with themselves and for wanting instant solutions to their problems. Growth as a Christian is usually steady and progressive. Realize that you are "a Christian in the making."

It is important to see that if you have taken proper steps to remove true guilt, God accepts you as you are. Examine yourself closely and remove all false guilt from your life. But understand that although God loves you as you are, He loves you too much to let you stay as you are, and constantly seeks to bring your life into a closer likeness to His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christianity Magazine Speaks With a Juvenile Officer

Editor's Note: Harvey Walter has been a police officer for over twenty years. He is a Christian, the father of three children himself and spent twelve years of his service with the juvenile division. *Christianity Magazine* asked Sgt. Walter to give us the benefit of his long years of experience in dealing with problems among young people.

CM: What kind of crimes have you seen among young people?

Sgt. Walter: I have handled juveniles for every conceivable crime—attempted murder, assault, burglary, auto theft, drinking, shoplifting, criminal mischief, shootings, rape, forgery, runaways, and probably others I don't think of at this time.

CM: What, in your opinion, is the biggest cause of problems among young people today?

Sgt. Walter: I believe it is the lack of direction. Many young people are left to wander or choose a path to follow without any leadership. Many parents are too busy to take time to do anything with their children and quite often they turn to drugs or alcohol.

CM: What kind of youngsters turn to a life of crime?

Sgt. Walter: I don't believe that children can be put into categories as to who will and who will not turn to crime. But most often children of careless parents, or of divorced parents are left to judge for themselves—about picking their friends, deciding how and where they will spend their time. Let me say this: I did not say *all* children from broken homes turn to crime; many of these children work hard and achieve a normal life."

CM: Do you think parents bear a responsibility for the actions of their children? And if so, how long?

Sgt. Walter: Some parents couldn't care less about their children. Some parents will tell you anything in an attempt to keep their children out of trouble, mainly because it puts a burden on them if their kids get into trouble. I do believe that parents should be responsible for

their children. Under current Texas law a person is an adult at 17 years and is answerable for his own actions. I think morally we are always responsible for them in respect to the way we have guided and assisted them.

CM: What role has alcohol and drugs played in juvenile crime in recent years?

Sgt. Walter: I have seen young people who were living a good moral life become involved with marijuana, drugs, and alcohol. It turns their life around. I have worked with hundreds of such kids. As I look back, I believe that at least 90% of those involved with heavy drugs started with pot. How many times have I heard, "Man, I can handle it," or "It won't get me?" I still see some of them as adults now, in and out of the city jail, some so wasted, their life is past the point of return. About the only difference with alcohol is that it takes a little longer. Drugs and alcohol certainly play a big part in juvenile crime.

CM: Is sex among teenagers noticeably more prominent among those who use alcohol and drugs?

Sgt. Walter: I believe the morals of teens who are into drugs and alcohol are at rock bottom. Loose morals, drugs and sex go hand-in-hand.

CM: What role has the broken home played in juvenile crime in recent years?

Sgt. Walter: Children from broken homes have one strike against them. In a single-parent situation the one parent usually spends most of the time making a living, caring for the home, and on their own social life. This leaves very little time for the children. With little or no guidance they are easily influenced in the wrong directions. If a single parent gives enough love and time to their children they can make a good life for them. But it doesn't happen too often, especially among non-believers.

CM: What effect do you think television has had on teenage crime?

Sgt. Walter: I do believe that TV has had a profound effect on young people. A

great many of the prime time shows or movies show sex, drinking, and pot, and most immoral things as an acceptable way of life. TV makes it appear that people involved in these things are happy, living a good life, and having lots of fun. Too many of these shows make the bad guy the hero and the supposed straight people look like fools.

CM: Do you see many young people who are interested in religion?

Sgt. Walter: Teenagers who get involved in criminal activity have little or no interest in religion. On the other hand, very few teens in the church get into trouble. And young people involved in good activities at school seem to have higher morals, too.

CM: Is it true that pot smoking and the use of other drugs is now being seen in youngsters in sixth and seventh grades?

Sgt. Walter: Yes. In this city the sixth grade has been moved to junior high level. This puts younger children in social groups with much older kids and they do come into contact with pot or drugs at an earlier age, which means that they are more likely to use it.

CM: How can early detection of the use of drugs or alcohol be made? Are there some signs to look for?

Sgt. Walter: Yes. Changes in attitudes, grades dropping, unsociable behavior with the family, strange smells on the person or in their room, staying out late, radical changes in friends, rebelliousness, drowsiness. These are a few of the signs that are most noticeable.

CM: How can we help?

Sgt. Walter: By starting with your own family, helping them to develop into what they ought to be and by being prepared to help other youngsters with their problems as they ask your help. And the best thing of all is to teach them about God and take them to church.

Sgt. Harvey Walter, 1009 Mobile, Pasadena, TX 77506



Turning the Hearts of the Fathers to the Children

Malachi prophesied and the angel announced that John the Baptist would "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children" (Malachi 4:6; Luke 1:17). In this age of family disintegration and radical parental failure it is obvious that John's message of repentance and reconciliation has not lost its relevance.

Four hundred years before the birth of Jesus, the Athenian philosopher, Socrates, agonized for the children of Athens: "Could I climb to the highest place in Athens, I would lift my voice and proclaim: 'Fellow citizens, why do ye turn and scrape every stone to gather wealth and take so little care of your children to whom one day you must relinquish it all.'" Yet for all his concern this brilliant Greek had little understanding of his own responsibility. In his search for "wisdom" he largely abandoned his children and his wife, Xanthippe, to their own devices. He certainly had no grasp of the ultimate spiritual tragedy which befalls children whose parents have no time to train them not merely in prudence but in righteousness.

As a gospel preacher my heart frequently aches for children of this generation. Their sense of lostness and emptiness is the legacy of parents who have given them things instead of values. It is the ferment that racks the times with drug addiction, immorality and crime.

But how far greater is the sadness we feel in seeing the same aimless lack of principle in the children of Christians. Many of our young people are growing up not to love goodness, mercy and faith, but pomposity and self-indulgence. They are often intolerant, indifferent, and irreverent, and every step of their advancing maturity leads them not nearer to but farther from the God of their salvation. Where, brethren, is the blame to be fixed? Have all these young people gotten where they are entirely on their own? Can we as parents wash our hands of all responsibility?

Some of these young boys and girls are being spiritually starved to death while their parents go in pursuit of "the good life" or "success." If asked, they would probably say they were doing it all for their children, but the truth is that all those status symbols that keep both Mom and Dad working day and night are not the things that little children cry themselves to sleep for. These parents give their children trash while withholding the most critical and precious gift — themselves.

Other young people are being sold out by parents who are thorough-going hypocrites. All their church-going is just a sham. Their private lives are a horror of vicious infighting or worldliness or both. Children are almost uncanny in their ability to separate substance from style and will, of course, imitate the reality, not the facade. Experience teaches us that many parents who attempt this spiritual masquerade will be terribly hurt and disappointed when their offspring choose to dispense with the hypocrisy and get right down to unabashed worldliness. Some will even turn bitter. But such a course only serves to deceive us. Certainly not God. Not even our children.

Yet perhaps more children will grow up to spiritual tragedy from parents who are simply weak than from any other cause. These parents have some genuine concern at times but they lack stamina and deep commitment. They may make some sporadic efforts to guide their sons and daughters in the way of righteousness but the slightest resistance or distraction makes them fade like a two dollar shirt. The children, fully aware of this fact, run the house. They go where they please when they please and come back when they are ready. They are thoughtless, disrespectful and disobedient. But how did they get this way? By the compromises with love and right which their parents have made to buy some selfish "peace."

Christian fathers and mothers, your children are largely (though certainly not entirely) a reflection of your own character and values. After all, they have lived with you in the most intimate way during the most formative period in their lives. How helpful it would be if young parents would make a careful and prayerful evaluation of their child's spiritual growth and set about to do the things that will prepare their young charge to live happily in eternity. Those informal heart-to-heart talks about God and His word sure do help, and praying together and reading the Bible together are grand. Being there when he needs you is indispensable. But, above all, we must set an example of unalloyed love for God and His Son and consistently and patiently, with much love, demand from our child a reverence and respect, manifest in conduct, for the Highest One of all. May God bless you, parents, in this high and holy enterprise.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Dee Bowman

To Put You In Remembrance

Someone once said, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Now I would never be one to suggest that such reasoning is so regarding our appreciation of and attention to the Scriptures. But it does seem to me that when we have heard certain passages over and over, we tend to develop a kind of immunity to them. We don't listen to them as carefully as we once did. And I think those of us who preach probably fertilize such thinking with our rhythmic dronings of the more familiar passages when we use them in sermons. After all, we must let the audience know that we have this passage memorized, and how better to do it than to give the passage a musical poetic flow?

But a statement I like better is by the British playwright, Shackerley Marmion, who said, "Familiarity begets boldness." Our use of the Scriptures should be enhanced by our familiarity with them, not diminished. We should have new confidence when we have come to be familiar with a certain principle and the passage which assures it. It should not be just a part of our

memory, but a part of our resolution as well. And the more passages we know, the better our lives should be.

We live in an age when there is no excuse whatsoever for not having the information we need to be useful, productive citizens. Furthermore, we have available great stores of information about the Bible and how it relates to our lives. Not only do we have at our disposal all the information we need, but the time to digest it as well. In a world where such is the case, you'd think there would be more good Bible students than ever before in the history of mankind. But, in fact, it seems to be that the opposite is true. The more available the biblical information has become, the less it is used. And the more ignorant the people. It almost seems that there was more love for the Bible when it was chained to the post than now when it is so accessible. Sadly, this self-imposed ignorance is not restricted to the people of the world, either. Time was when those in churches of Christ were known by their friends and neighbors as excellent Bible students. Do you think it

is still so?

In this month's theme section, we have chosen several familiar passages for treatment by a group of men well qualified to direct our thinking back to them so that we have renewed vigor for their use in our lives. The expositions of these old and loved passages make them come to life again. You will thrill to the force of them as you renew your appreciation for the wisdom, strength, and peace you will derive from these familiar, but forgotten passages.

In 2 Peter 1:12, Peter said, "Wherefore, I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth." It is in the spirit of this passage that this edition of *Christianity Magazine* is presented with the hope that it will cause you to have a new appreciation for the word of God, that most glorious gospel which is "able to build you up and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified."

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TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE

John 3:16: "God So Loved"

Robert Jackson

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

This can truly be classified as one of the great texts of the Book. It is one that I feel sure has been quoted in the pulpit, in the Bible classes, and in the home as much as any verse in the Bible. It gives us a deeper insight into the love of God.

that *there is not one sinner that God does not love*. I have often heard some preaching that left me with the feeling that God's love was not offered to all. In this study of the verse, I fail to see one sinner that God does not love and is not willing to save.

1. Sinners of the lowest degree. Some think they have committed such sins that God does not love them. Friend,

us not lose sight of the people that are in error. They still come under the love of God. God does not condone their error. However, He loves them. He is ready to forgive them. Have we lost sight of this in our preaching?

3. The prodigal. People who have left the faith (Luke 15). If there is anything that the Lord taught in Luke 15, it is the fact that He loves the sinner. He did not approve one sin that the young man committed. Yet, He still loved the sinner. Is this our attitude? Have we forgotten that God so loved the world?

4. I like to think of God loving me. I am just a little ole fellow from Dickson County, Tennessee. I am really not deserving of the love of God, yet I know that God loves me.

The Gift of His Love—He Gave

Let these words turn over in your heart. We often speak about how much love people have by what they give. They love the poor because they give to them in need. It is really difficult to fully understand the love of God. There is no way to measure His love. *He gave His Son*. He gave Him to die for the world (Romans 5:7-9). How great is the love of God.

How To Receive This Love

One must believe that God so loved the world that He gave His Son. This faith is the kind that will obey. It is not a dead faith, but a living faith. It is faith that reveals our love to God (1 John 3:15). I have often had people ask me if I think they are lost because they have not been baptized. I inform them that they are lost due to their lack of love for God. If you love the Lord, you will not argue or quibble over being baptized. Show me a person who really appreciates the love of God and I will show you one who will not refuse to obey the Lord.

In every age, God has revealed His love to man. This is the motivating power of the gospel of Christ. God so loved. Let us never be ashamed to put the brethren in remembrance of the love of God.

"Some think that they have committed such sins that God does not love them. Friend, God loved the people at Corinth. They obeyed the Lord and made up the church of God in that city (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Could it be that we have forgotten that God loves the sinner?"

I fully realize that I lack the ability to bring to your mind all the great lessons about the love of God, but there are some things I would like for you to consider with me at this time.

God So Loved the World

When we talk about the love of God, we must stop and consider His love to the world. The world in this verse is the society of people who are identified as lost. In this one simple statement we see

God loved the people at Corinth. They obeyed the Lord and made up the church of God in that city (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Could it be that we have forgotten that God loves the sinner?

2. Religious sinners. People that were sincere about their religious conviction, but they were sincerely wrong. Paul is a good example of this (Acts 26:5). He was a Pharisee. God's love was not short here. He was willing to forgive him. Let

TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE



Matthew 16:18: "Upon This Rock"

Harry Osborne

ON THE SOUTHERN SLOPES OF MOUNT Hermon, Peter made a confession which declared greater strength and glory than the mountain itself could ever boast. From the rocky soil which surrounded Caesarea Philippi, one can imagine Jesus looking to the north up the slope of the mountain and seeing the massive rock formation which formed creation's visual aid for the spiritual truth to be declared. The reality of the confession by Peter—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—formed a foundation so solid and secure that the vast strata above seemed feeble in comparison. The church of our Lord and Savior stands not upon the vacillating base of man or human invention, but upon the sure, solid, and majestic foundation of the Divine Messiah. No flood of trial or turmoil nor even the hand of death can sweep away that blood-bought body of the glorious Savior.

The confession of Peter declared two essential realities. First, Jesus is the Christ. The student of the old covenant understood the Christ to be the Messiah of promise who would establish His kingdom of righteousness. Second, Jesus is the Son of the living God. In other words, He partakes of the nature of God and is, therefore, divine. Peter may have had problems with impetuosity and weakness, but he had no trouble seeing the conclusion to the clear evidence. The disciples affirmed a fact attested by the glory of heaven, not a fantasy. That reality is the rock of this passage.

Some have mistakenly identified Peter as the rock upon which the church would be built. The words "Peter" and "rock" in the original language of the Bible differ in meaning and gender. The word "rock" had reference to a mass of rock or a foundation, not a stone suggested by the word "Peter." A papacy with Peter as the original pope is not taught in this passage or any other. Jesus, the Divine Christ, is the only one qualified to be the source of strength upon which the church is founded. To suggest that any man or group of men could provide such strength is

blasphemous! The rock is the reality that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

But what does it mean that the Divine Messiah is the foundation of the church? Certainly when Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ," he does not mean Jesus' physical body formed a physical foundation for a physical structure. The context makes clear that the writer is speaking of a spiritual foundation for the temple of God which is God's

***At the
death of his
wife and two
children, one
preacher doubted
his ability to
continue his work.
Upon his return,
one brother asked
him why he came
back. His reply
was, "I hit the
bottom and I
found out it
was solid."***

people. Very simply, that's what the church is—people whose lives are based upon the sanctification and sustenance of the Divine Christ. The apostle says such in addressing one letter "unto the church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place" (1 Corinthians 1:2). The "church" according to the Bible is not a super hierarchy comprised of conferences, boards, and committees, but the people who have been sanctified by the

Savior's blood and are directed by calling on Him for authority in all they do. The Divine Messiah is, therefore, the foundation of the church in that He has saved His people by His own blood and directs them through His word revealed through the apostles and prophets.

Having said all that, do we really appreciate what it means to us personally? We are committed to a Lord of whom we can be sure. Paul affirmed, "I know him in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). He goes on to tell Timothy he can be sure also. Peter recalls the voice of the Majestic Glory proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God on the mount of transfiguration when he fervently declares, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Brethren, though the world may belittle us, we know the power behind our faith. We are the disciples of the Divine One of promise! When one confesses his faith in Jesus, he makes the same confession which the Almighty God of heaven declared to be so—Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Young people, never be ashamed of your Lord, but declare Him with surety. Brother in Christ consumed in your job, remember your priority must be on the Divine Savior who gave His life for you and serve Him with all your might. Sister in Christ wondering if there is light at the end of the tunnel, there is and, oh, what a glorious light! At the death of his wife and two children, one preacher doubted his ability to continue his work. Upon his return, one brother asked him why he came back. His reply was, "I hit the bottom and I found out it was solid." Death or trial did not stop Jesus from establishing the church because neither could diminish the transcendent strength and surety of the Divine Christ.

2309 Kipling Drive, Baytown, TX 77520



TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE

Philippians 2:5: "Let This Mind Be In You"

Daniel H. King

WHEN PAUL HAD AS HIS PURPOSE TO offer some great example of a particular quality of character, the first person who came to mind was Jesus. As when one thinks of strength of body he considers first Samson and when he conjures up some mighty intellect it is Solomon, so the apostle thought of Jesus when he brought up any virtuous characteristic of the human spirit. For him Christ was the epitome of virtue and the very face of God in human form.

This readily explains why, when concerned at the rumor of ill-feeling and quarreling among his beloved brethren at Philippi, Paul pled for unity and then proffered the model of Christ for their imitation. "Let this mind be in you," he wrote, "which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Though He was God, yet He condescended to become man. He forsook the grandeur of heaven for earthly servitude. He sacrificed the glory of heavenly existence for an ill-fated career as the slave of God. And He did that for others. Eventually He was exalted to heaven once more, enhanced as Lord of all because He first was willing to become the servant of all. The apostle sets him forth as the purest example of kind and self-sacrificing consideration for others. As he said in yet another place: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

This is the mind he would have us take upon ourselves. It is a mind of humility and self-denial. We cannot change our nature so as to become God; but we can change our ways so as to become like Him. We can assimilate this divine quality of human character by first appreciating our need for it and then altering those ways of thinking about ourselves and others that make its cultivation in our souls an impossibility. In other words, for us to plant flowers, we must first uproot the weeds.

Now this teaching is for us—for you and me. Ego and pride are the enemies of genuine Christianity in every age. If we

take it upon ourselves to fashion our thought processes after the model of Jesus, the sure result will be today, as then, that we will be of the same mind, have the same love, be in full accord with each other, and we will not act from motives of selfishness or conceit. We will tend to count others better than

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ourselves, and, before we act or speak, we will consider the interests of others (Philippians 2:2-4).

The overall effect of such abandonment of self for the good of others is summed up in one word, a word which does not appear in this text but which is the ever-present theme of this part of

Philippians. It is the term *unity*.

One of the greatest temptations for man is to make the attempt at justifying himself in whatever sin he is engaging in at the time. The Philippians were not reckless sinners. They were godly Christians. More good things are said about them by Paul per square inch of print than about any other church in the New Testament. But personal ambition seems to have gotten the best of a few. Two in particular—Euodia and Syntyche—are named as guilty (4:2-3). What they were fussing about we will never know. That much has been long forgotten. And isn't that ironic! To them it was undoubtedly of great importance. But Paul ignored that aspect of it (it's always *something!*). Only two things seemed of any relevance for him. First, there was the fact that two of his friends and coworkers were quarreling; and any time there is a quarrel there will be bad feelings; and when there are bad feelings in the place of love, then sin is crouching at the door. Secondly, when two people who are members of the church are at odds with one another, there is a tendency for others to get involved. People like to take sides with the one whom they like the most. When others follow suit, you have a tragic situation indeed. (Most of us ought to know; we have seen it happen enough times!)

So this little dispute between two ladies was, in embryo, the division of the church. For Paul it did not represent an opportunity to start another congregation across town. God may be able eventually to make something of such a situation. But for him it was a chance for the Devil to get his foot in the door at Philippi, in a church where he had had no luck before.

"Let this mind be in you," said Paul, "which was also in Christ Jesus." All of our interpersonal relationships will be happier if we will. The climate at work, the environment at home, and the atmosphere in the worship and work of the church—all will be more peaceful if we but will.

131 Connie Lee Ct., Lakeland, FL 33805

TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE



1 Peter 4:11: "If Any Man Speak"

Randy Harshbarger

IN 1 PETER 4:11 THE APOSTLE SAYS: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." God's people have long recognized the seriousness of Peter's injunction. Anytime we speak at all on religious matters we should speak as "holy men of God spake" (2 Peter 1:20-21). We say the things they said; then and only then are we speaking as the oracles of God. We must emphasize what they emphasized. As Paul told Titus: "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). Perhaps the need to speak as the "oracles of God" has particular application to preachers of the gospel. As William Barclay suggests: "If a man has the duty of preaching, let him preach not as one offering his own opinions or propagating his own prejudices, but as one with a message from God" (*The Letters of James and Peter*, pp. 256, 257). Before we speak to men, we must listen to God. Preaching must be done, not to display the preacher but to bring men to God. Paul's boasting was of the Lord and in the preaching of the word, and only that (2 Corinthians 10). Only good can result when we do all things for the glory of God and not for ourselves. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

In the immediate context of 1 Peter 4:7-11, Peter writes to Christians who were suffering severe persecution. The "fiery trial" was upon them and they became "partakers of Christ's sufferings." In the midst of these trying circumstances, Peter admonishes God's people to unite upon common ground. Their attitudes toward the return of Jesus Christ, love for each other, hospitality, and being good stewards, would fortify them in the midst of a world that was openly hostile to the demands of dedication set forth in the oracles of God!

Christians must live with eternity's

values in view. In fact, our time here on earth makes sense only in view of eternity. Each day must be lived in eager anticipation of Christ's return. Yes, we "watch unto prayer" and say, "Lord, hasten the day of thy return." It has been said that we live in the land of the living. Not so! We live in the land of the dying, but we are on our way to the land of the living!

Too, love must exist among God's people. Jesus tells us that love is our badge of discipleship. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one

God's people. Our children need to be around other Christians. We must cultivate friendships within the family of God. We need the encouragement of those of like precious faith.

We must also be good stewards before God. Whether Peter refers to some miraculous gift, or a man's natural endowments, the principle is the same. We must be good stewards, taking care of, and using wisely all that comes from God.

The underlying emphasis in all that Peter says, is that every facet of our lives

"The underlying emphasis in all that Peter says, is that every facet of our lives must conform to the 'oracles of God.' Whether we speak of love, hospitality, etc., we must constantly be reminded of WHAT GOD SAYS! We must speak only as He has spoken to us.

another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). This badge must be worn at all times. Our love for one another must be genuine. Love is the tie that binds God's family together.

Hospitality extended to all, but especially to fellow Christians, would naturally draw people together in times of trouble. Are the times in which we live any less dangerous to our faith and purity? We need to spend time with

must conform to the "oracles of God." Whether we speak of love, hospitality, etc., we must constantly be reminded of *what God says!* We must speak only as He has spoken to us. As we combine preaching with practical service in the kingdom of God, may we unite together in doing the will of God as He has commanded. May we be "stirred up" by "remembering" the sacred oracles as we endeavor to do just those things that will glorify and honor the God of heaven!

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TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE

John 1:14: "The Word Was Made Flesh"

Melvin Curry

THE NAME "ICHABOD" PROBABLY REMINDS us of a headless horseman or of nothing at all. Yet this significant term should bring to mind one of the saddest events in Israel's history. While the nation fought a war with the Philistines, the ark of the covenant was taken by the enemy. Israel had brought it into battle with them in order to guarantee their victory because they considered themselves to be invincible as long as they had the ark; no one could defeat them. But they were wrong, and they lost the

nezzar's army surrounded the city of Jerusalem, and the situation looked hopeless. But the people had been convinced by the false prophets that they had nothing to fear because the temple of the Lord was in Jerusalem and the ark was in their midst. Not even the Babylonians could defeat an army protected by God's glory. They were wrong again, however. Their sins were too many, "and the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood on the mountain, which is on the east side of

than the former" (Haggai 2:7-9). Moreover, Ezekiel's last vision portrays the building of an ideal temple of such dazzling splendor that the prophet is led to exclaim, "Behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple" (Ezekiel 43:5). Clearly, then, the time would come when God Himself would dwell among men in glory. And in that day Zion would truly be named, "The Lord is there" (Ezekiel 48:35).

Perhaps now we are beginning to grasp the significance of John 1:14. The entire verse reads, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Deity dwelt in flesh; God's glory had returned. And He was manifested to "take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Moreover, the spiritual temple He came to build (Ephesians 2:21-22; 1 Peter 2:5) radiates His glory both now and forever (Revelation 21:22-23).

The spiritual stones of Christ's temple are saints who have been called "to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). In fact, the very words of Haggai's prophecy quoted above are applied in the New Testament to this spiritual kingdom, "the heavenly Jerusalem, . . . the general assembly and church of the firstborn ones" (Hebrews 12:22-29).

Christians are, therefore, "the temple of the living God. As God has said,

I will dwell in them

And walk in them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be my people"

(2 Corinthians 6:16).

But remember that God's glory cannot long dwell in the midst of people who continue to defile themselves in sin. Therefore, "having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1), and, as we continue to gaze at the glory of the Lord embodied in Jesus, we will be "transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

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"The Old Testament sounds the hopeful note that God's glory would return someday. When Israel came back from Babylon and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, which was far inferior to Solomon's magnificent structure, God made the promise, 'I will shake the nations' and 'fill this temple with glory,' and 'the glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former' . . . Clearly, then, the time would come when God Himself would dwell among men in glory."

war. After the smoke of the battle cleared, the wife of a priest who was killed by the Philistines gave birth to a son on that tragic day and named him Ichabod. The baby's name was symbolic, meaning "the glory is departed." It was a reminder that God's glory would not remain among sinful people who would not repent and turn from evil.

One of Ezekiel's visions taught a similar lesson about God's glory departing from Israel. This time Judah was at war with the Babylonians. Nebuchad-

the city" (Ezekiel 11:23). Thus, having been abandoned by God, Jerusalem's destruction followed swiftly.

From this point on, however, the Old Testament sounds the hopeful note that God's glory would return someday. When Israel came back from Babylon and rebuilt the temple in Jerusalem, which was far inferior to Solomon's magnificent structure, God made the promise, "I will shake the nations" and "fill this temple with glory," and "the glory of this latter temple shall be greater

TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE



Romans 12:2: "Present Your Bodies"

Bob Dickey

YEARS AGO, DURING A REVIVAL MEETING, an old rascal of a man wanted to "give his testimony." With great seriousness he stood before the congregation and declared: "I've not been what I ought to be; I've robbed hen roosts, I've stole hogs, I've got drunk, I've told lies, I've slashed with my razor—but thank the Lord there's one thing I've never done—I've never lost my religion!"

We may have a good chuckle about that story before we soberly realize that our own battles with sin often belie our claim of full consecration to the Savior. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon," our Master said. Yet, how persistently we may attempt the impossible. In what strange and curious ways we often seek to combine the spiritual with the carnal, the holy with the profane, the divine with the worldly.

The Apostle urges, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2). Ours is a consecrated life.

Full consecration involves the salvation of our God ("by the mercies of God"). This is the great motive. Our sacrifice to Him is in recognition of all that He has done to save us. The tender mercies of God should constrain us to yield ourselves entirely up to Him, even as the goodness of God leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4).

Full consecration calls for the presentation of our bodies ("present your bodies"). We are so prone to be content with committing our *souls* unto Him, while thinking that our *bodies* are all our own. Why withhold from Him what is His due? Why take from Him what is His by right of purchase: "for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20)? We are robbing God when we keep back this part of His purchased possession.

Full consecration demands the dedication of our lives ("a living sacrifice"). To be a living sacrifice is to continually and completely be at God's disposal. In contrast to the *dead* sacrifices consumed on Old Testament altars, we are to *live* on the altar today! The yielding of ourselves to the Lord is the meaning of self-denial, without which there can be no true discipleship (Matthew 16:14).

Full consecration requires the renovation of our minds ("by the renewing of your mind"). This renovation comes from a changed purpose and disposition. We must daily put off the old man with his doings, be renewed in the spirit of

like a chameleon which takes its colour from its surroundings; don't go with the world; don't let the world decide what you are going to be like" (*Letter to the Romans*, p. 170).

A father, to compensate for a trip away from his family, bought his young son a chameleon. When the father returned from his trip, the little boy met him in tears. The father asked, "Son, what happened to your chameleon?" The boy answered, "I put him on a dark cloth and he turned dark; then I put him on a piece of light cloth and he turned light." At this point, the story was interrupted with more tears. Finally

"We are so prone to be content with committing our SOULS unto Him, while thinking that our BODIES are all our own. Why withhold from Him what is His due? Why take from Him what is His by right of purchase: 'for ye were bought with a price; glorify God therefore in your body'?"

our mind, and put on the new man created by the will of God (Ephesians 4:20-24). In short, we must have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5).

Full consecration results in the transformation of our whole being ("be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed"). Because we are not conformed to outward circumstances or surroundings, we are able to fashion ourselves according to Christ and that which adorns His gospel. Barclay explains, "Don't try to match your life to all the fashions of this world; don't be

consoled, the child sobbed, "Then I put my chameleon on a plaid cloth to see what he would do, and he burst himself trying to make good!"

How much easier and happier is the Christian's life when once we have ceased our futile efforts to conform to this world. To consecrate oneself is the only way to secure a higher and nobler life. By presenting our bodies to Him we can find peace and strength. As a living sacrifice, we are privileged to experience that His way is truly best.

5811 Lee Ave., Downers Grove, IL 60516



TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE

Ephesians 4:26: "Be Angry and Sin Not"

Charles Durham, Jr.

EDDY CHILES, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER of the Western Company of North America, in a series of radio spots, instantly became a hero to conservatives. He hit a nerve with every businessman when he decried the fiscal irresponsibility of the federal government. He had sung their song. Like Clara Peller's "Where's the beef?", his name became synonymous with his opening line: "Hi, I'm Eddy Chiles and I'm mad." Almost as fast as he said it bumper stickers began to appear bearing the slogan: "I'm mad too, Eddy." People were fed up with gross misbehavior. The formation of M.A.D.D. (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) and M.A.D. (Mothers Against Drugs) says it well.

And all of this says something. It says that it would be aberrant behavior for a person never to become angry. Normal people get angry. Just as it would be abnormal for a person never to laugh, or cry, or love—just so, it is abnormal never to be angry.

And what's more, it says it is right to be mad at the right things, for the right reasons. How could any right-thinking individual consider the atrocities of Hitler and not be moved with anger? Would it not be contradictory to say he is a person who loves justice and freedom, and yet, he not be enraged by the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan? Who could not be moved with fury at pictures of abused children? There are times when no other response is right but anger.

The Bible says so. In Ephesians 4:26-27, Paul wrote, "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." These verses say two things: (1) there may be anger without sin, and (2) where there is anger there is always the danger of sin.

There is anger that is right. David wrote, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11). On one occasion Jesus healed a man of a withered hand. His enemies believed it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath. The record says, "He . . . looked around at them with

anger being grieved by the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5). Clearly, if all anger were sin, then God would never be angry. But all anger is not wrong.

When is anger right? There is only one occasion where anger is not sin. It is right to be angry when God is disobeyed. Because of the golden calf both God and Moses were angry—not for petty reasons, but because the Creator was disobeyed and despised. God said, "They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them . . .

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but anger.*

let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them" (Exodus 32:8,10). When Moses saw Israel's debauchery his "anger became hot" and he broke the tablets God had given him. Three thousand men were killed that day. Was it for personal revenge? For pride? No, it was because: "You have sinned a great sin" (Exodus 32:30). God's standard must be kept. "Be holy, for I am holy" was not said for nought. A concept of grace which admits of no keeping God's standard is straight out of hell itself.

Righteous indignation can never be

properly expressed silently. To be moved to righteous anger argues for action. We live in an increasingly decadent society. On every hand the forces of evil assail the Word of God. Humanism in all its forms is on the offensive. What are we doing? Do we let others get mad and fight the battles the children of God ought to be waging? Stand up—at work, at school, at worship—for the truth of God. "I'm mad too, Lord."

There is anger which is wrong. The safety valve of a pressure cooker is all-important. If the steam did not have a way to escape, the resultant explosion would be devastating. God's safety valve for anger is two-fold: (1) do not let the sun go down on your wrath, and (2) do not give the devil a foothold.

By command of God, if we are angry with a brother, we need to make it right before the sun sets. It not only will save our souls, but it will help us sleep better, too. If we hold anger in our hearts it will turn into hatred and malice. We must never cherish ill-will toward anyone. Even the most devout atheist can be turned to the Lord. It may all depend on how we treat him. Be angry with the sin, but do not let it degenerate into hate for the person. If we allow Satan a foothold because of our anger, we can be sure he will mold us to be like him. Every sordid deed, every heinous crime, every ounce of hate begins with him. He is a formidable foe not to be lightly dealt with. Do not give place to him for one moment (James 4:7).

Finally, be slow to anger because God is. Though He is angry with the sinner every day, He is longsuffering. It takes a great deal to move Him to wrath (Psalm 103:8; Proverbs 16:32). Remember the Lord's mercy in our own lives. Overlook transgressions committed against us (Proverbs 19:11). Remember how often He has overlooked our own, and in mercy corrected us, and led us back to Him. Be patient (Ecclesiastes 7:8-9). Remember the Cross.

202 Sharon Kay, Longview, TX 75604

TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE



Matthew 16:24: "If Any Man Come After Me"

Bill Fairchild, Jr.

WE MAY BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS the Son of God and that salvation is obtained exclusively in Him and that we, as sinners, are in desperate need of the salvation which He offers. But knowing all of these things does not make us a Christian. Awareness of these facts alone will not make us disciples of the Lord. A personal response on our part is absolutely essential. That response is in the form of a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. It is the giving over of ourselves to Christ as Lord!

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, He enunciated many principles, the likes of which had never been heard or considered before. He never concealed the fact that service in His kingdom involved not only an invitation but demands as well. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28ff, "Come unto me all ye that labor and I will give you rest. . . . Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." Yes, Jesus offers the greatest invitation of life—a relationship with Him—but we must be willing to "come, take, and learn." It was this demand on the part of our Lord which turned the rich young ruler away. There was a lack of willingness on his part to give up self to serve the Lord!

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." This passage of Scripture states the very core of what Christ requires of His people! There can be no following without first forsaking! Jesus had too much to say about men and their priorities for there not to be a real problem with loyalties. Whether it's family (Matthew 10:34-39) or possessions (Luke 12:15ff), the real problem has to do with self. Selfishness is the root of all sin. Behind every sin, great or small, is the prompting initiated by self. That's why Jesus' statement in Matthew 16:24 is so monumental. Until I can surrender myself, my will, to the Lord, forsake all previous loyalties as being of lesser importance, and willingly choose to now let Jesus rule on the throne of my heart and in my life, I am not really nor

will I ever be a true disciple.

When we consider the greatness that is involved in becoming and remaining a servant in the kingdom of God, we ought to be so excited about all of the possibilities and opportunities found in Christ that we are simply filled up with passion for Him and His cause! Jesus said in John 14:15, "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments." Learning of Jesus and His will for us and of all that He has done for us, and of our own inabilities and weaknesses, we surrender

plain one. He does not call us to a sloppy, half-hearted service, but to a total commitment to Him. When we have been asked to do something for someone else that is difficult or time-consuming, our willingness to do it really depends very much on who asks us. Is there any greater than Christ? If we worship self, the answer is a clear one: no one is more important than me. But if we recognize the Lordship of Christ, how sweet it is to be in His service!

"This passage of Scripture states the very core of what Christ requires of His people! There can be no following without first forsaking! Jesus had too much to say about men and their priorities for there not to be a real problem with loyalties. Whether it's family or possessions, the real problem has to do with self. Selfishness is the root of all sin."

ourselves to Jesus and comply with His will.

But do we ever reach the state in life where we can quit "taking up our cross and following Jesus?" Not if we want to go to heaven! If Jesus is Lord, he must always be Lord! Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

The full demand of Christ is a very

The demands that Jesus make are heavy, but the benefits are overwhelming. There is a reason for these demands and the reason is very compelling. It is what is best for us! We must never be lulled or deceived into thinking that total commitment to Christ makes us a loser. It makes us winners. We become winners over sin, trials, death and life! Let us remember that Christ asks no more of us than He was willing to give Himself! Jesus asks a cross for a cross!

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TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE

Ephesians 5:8-9: "Walk As Children Of Light"

Fred Gore

LIGHT IS A MARVELOUS CREATION OF God. Its nature, even today, is not fully understood, and yet there are very few of us who do not recognize its importance to our daily lives. The sun provides us with light and warmth, without which the earth would be a wasteland. Obviously, without light sight would be impossible. We use light to warn, to guide, and to protect. Our world would be difficult, to say the least, if we were not blessed with light.

Throughout the New Testament light is used to symbolize the nature of God and the character of His children. Ephesians

5:8-9 says, "For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)." In 1 Peter 2:9 we are informed that we have been called "out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." The need for spiritual thinking and moral purity is seen in 1 John 1:7 where we are told that "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the

blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Let's notice a few significant principles concerning our being "children of light."

In the physical realm, light is essential to life. Through the process of photosynthesis plants convert the energy of light and chlorophyll into the carbohydrates necessary for life. Without the aid of the sun, our crops would die. In the spiritual realm, light is also essential to life. John 1:1 and 4 informs us, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In him was life; and the life was the

us of the need to "slow down" or to "stay clear." Jesus is our spiritual light and He has delivered unto us all of the warnings that we need to safely reach heaven. John 12:46 and 48 say, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness. . . . He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." We can't ignore the warnings given to us in our day-to-day lives and expect to be safe from harm, in either the physical or the spiritual realm!

Light is also used to guide. Our highways are well lit to make it easier to stay on the right route. Runways are lined with light and thereby guide the pilot to the proper place of landing. Giant spotlights are often employed to draw the curious to the "grand opening" or the "close-out sale." God has given us guidance through the light of the world, Jesus. Ephesians 5:7-13 tells us that we are children of light through Jesus and that the unfruitful works of darkness are made manifest "by the light." We can know right from wrong through the guidance of God and thereby know that we are in Him, for "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked" (1 John 2:5-6).

Light provides us with safety and assurance. When the streets of a city are bathed in light during the day, the crime rate is lower. Sections of a city that are well lit by street lights generally have lower crime rates than the sections enveloped by darkness. It is a praiseworthy act for the leaders of a town to seek to have their city well lit. In the spiritual realm, we also find safety and assurance in the light. It gives us safety because the light has given us knowledge of the truth and of the proper path of righteousness. It gives us assurance and hope because we can look ahead and see the goal of heaven lying before us and know that God has promised it to the faithful. Let us all seek to "be children of light" in the truest sense of the word!

"Light is used to warn.

Lights at railroad crossings warn of the approach of a train. Light signals at intersections warn us concerning who has the 'right of way.' Flashing lights tell us of the need to 'slow down' or to 'stay clear.' Jesus is our spiritual light and He has delivered unto us all of the warnings we need to safely reach heaven."

sians 5:8-9 says, "For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth)." In 1 Peter 2:9 we are informed that we have been called "out of darkness into his marvelous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." The need for spiritual thinking and moral purity is seen in 1 John 1:7 where we are told that "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the

light of men." Jesus affirmed that He is the light of men when He said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). All too often, we refuse to "see the light" and seek to blindly follow our own dictates. To believe we are "in the light" and that we are pleasing to God under these conditions is foolish and empty reasoning.

In the physical realm, light is used to warn. Lights at railroad crossings warn of the approach of a train. Light signals at intersections warn us concerning who has the "right of way." Flashing lights tell

TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE



John 6:68: "To Whom Shall We Go?"

Jerry Accettura

I HAVE CONSCIOUSLY AND UNCONSCIOUSLY asked the same question Peter asked Jesus in the sixth chapter of John's gospel and verse sixty-eight, "To whom shall we go?" In various stages and under unpredictable circumstances in my life I asked the question, "If not to Jesus, to whom shall I turn?" I asked that question when school buddies wanted me to sniff glue and to experiment with LSD. I asked that question when I searched the evidences regarding absolutes. I asked that question when I was in the process of choosing a college, a mate, and an occupation. I asked that question when I had to face the fact of my mother's death over a year ago. I must continue to ask that question, knowing that I also have to face death. There is no answer that makes better sense and that has more relevance than the teachings of Christ Jesus.

Our Confidence In Him

"To whom shall we go?" is a question in response to Jesus' question to the apostles, "Will ye also go away?" After feeding the multitude Jesus taught them that He was indeed the "bread of life"—but in a spiritual sense—and He made it clear that He was not a candidate for a political kingship. The confusion over the multitude's inability to properly digest this teaching led many to turn back and to walk no more with Him. Jesus did not run after those who departed but asked His disciples if they, too, would go away. The reason Peter stated for not leaving was that the Lord has the "words of eternal life." Peter and the apostles did not understand everything Jesus had told them about His being the "bread of life." However, unlike the crowd, Peter was focusing on the general direction to which Jesus, whom he learned to trust, led him; and he did not get lost in the details that would later be brought into clearer focus. Shouldn't we all learn that lesson? Let us not get so bogged down in the areas of question that we lose sight of the goal at the end of the tape in the Christian race. The significance of "eternal life" in the New Testament is the

mingling of the future and present, not only in duration, but also in quality of life in which the possessor shares by faith in God's eternal being. We have the same legitimate right the apostle Paul had to say, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

and for the others, especially in the case of Judas. There was a need then and there is a need now for holy fear rather than self-confidence. We can turn away from the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:12). Paul expressed his constant need for the Lord when he said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after that for which

"In various stages and under unpredictable circumstances in my life I have asked the question, 'If not to Jesus, to whom shall I turn?' I asked that question when school buddies wanted me to sniff glue and to experiment with LSD. I asked that question when I searched for the evidences regarding absolutes. I asked that question when I was in the process of choosing a college, a mate, and an occupation."

Our Vulnerability

The answer of Peter was a splendid affirmation of faith. But it contained a note of self-confidence. The use of the pronoun *we* (*heimeis*, verse 69) is emphatic, indicating the strength of contrast which Peter presumed to exist between the Twelve and the disciples who withdrew from Jesus. The Lord indicates Peter's self-assurance when he said, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" Peter was told not to be too sure as he spoke for himself

also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12). Paul didn't know everything or think "he had arrived." Let us never forget that we do not have all the answers. We cannot afford to look smugly at others who have fallen as if it would not or could not happen to us. We should be confident, and be full of the joy of the Lord, but we must never forget who it was that made it possible for us to have such confidence. "Where could I go, but to the Lord?"

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TO PUT YOU IN REMEMBRANCE

Matthew 25:44: "Therefore Be Ready"

Rick Lanning

IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE, DOESN'T IT? THE greatest coming event in the history of the world, and the last great promise by Almighty God, and we have to be reminded to remember it and prepare for it! But the sad fact is that we often forget *Jesus is coming again*. Every sin I commit and every good deed about which I procrastinate is only a reminder that I have temporarily slumbered from my watchfulness. So let us spend the few moments we have together stirring up our hearts to work, pray and watch with each other so we can all say to the Lord upon His triumphant return: "We are ready and waiting."

When the disciples were troubled as to the future of Jerusalem the Lord gave them certain signs to watch for to know when the destruction was coming. Using this catastrophic judgment as His introduction Jesus then spoke of a far greater judgment concerning all of mankind. This final judgment would have no tell-tale signs as to its happening for it would be swift and sudden. Listen with rapt attention as He here speaks of this coming: "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matthew 25:42-44). This illustration must have left a deep impression upon Peter, John and Paul because they emphasized it with force in their writings to brethren (2 Peter 3:10; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Revelation 3:3; 16:15). It is also a perfect example which strikes home to me. Would you care to listen?

While away in a meeting I received a phone call saying my house had been burglarized. Upon returning home I discovered the thief had cleaned us out of many of our possessions. I thought things like this only happened to "the other guy." After collecting insurance money and replacing the goods I left on another meeting. You guessed it.

Another phone call, another house-cleaning. Needless to say, I was upset and determined the thief would not hit me again. Well, to make a long story short, after nearly \$2,000 spent on a new fence, security lights, alarm system, dead bolts, window locks, etc., I felt prepared. While away at meetings (you'd think I would get the hint) they hit three more times! Only this time the

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alarm system went off and scared them away. My point? Jesus' words, "*be ready*," take on special interest. I aim to be ready when the heavens are rolled back and the shout pierces the air and the trumpet calls all to the judgment bar of God. Insurance money will not cover my lack of preparation on that event!

I would feel a miserable failure to have written this article and have left you only with the formula to stop a

thief. I want to share with you what I have committed to practice so as not to be caught unprepared for the Savior's return. For lack of a better title I call it the *8-P System: Plan Purposefully; Prepare Prayerfully; Proceed Positively; Pursue Persistently*. Meditation and application on each point will instill vigilance to safeguard your soul.

Plan Purposefully: I hereby purpose to myself and to God to plan my life around one goal: heaven! This plan is clearly focused in the following Scriptures, which I will read daily: Philip-pians 3:7-11, 20-21; Colossians 3:1-4; Titus 3:11-13; 2 Peter 3:1-14.

Prepare Prayerfully: The best laid plans will soon become lifeless without Jesus' warning to "watch and pray." Therefore, while watching and working I will fervently pray. These Scriptures, read daily, will offer me the needed reminder to "watch and pray": Mark 13:32-37; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Thessa-lonians 1:7-12; 1 Peter 4:7.

Proceed Positively: No plan can suc-ceed without confidence in its success. I will therefore develop a positive attitude as I proceed in my quest for heaven. These Scriptures will train my conscience to think in this way: 2 Corin-thians 5:1-9; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:7-8; 1 Peter 1:3-5; 1 John 2:28.

Pursue Persistently: "On the plains of hesitation lie the blackened bones of countless millions, who, at the dawn of victory, sat down to rest, and resting—died!" Therefore, I determine to pursue my goal with steadfast persistency until the victory is won when my Lord comes to take me home. These Scriptures will give faith and courage to press on: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Philippians 3:12-14; 1 Timothy 6:12,14; James 4:7-8; 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13.

My burning desire for us all is to rise triumphantly together into the air forever to be with our Father, our Savior, the Spirit, the angelic host and all the redeemed. Won't it be wonderful there! *Jesus is coming again! Watch and Pray!*

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That's Life!



Dee Bowman

CRITICISM IS HARD TO ADMISTER PROPERLY.

First, because it is very difficult to be totally objective. We tend to criticize from our own point of view. Secondly, it's hard when we criticize to refrain from being bossy about it. We tend to set ourselves up as superior sometimes. But most of all, I think it's hard to criticize because we aren't perfect either. We decide not to correct or discipline based on our own inadequacies. In all these cases, it's a matter of our failure to recognize that the standard of authority by which we discipline one another is higher than we are. Respect for that fact will cause us to lovingly correct one another.

* * *

CAN YOU IMAGINE A GREATER JOY than to hear the gospel preached by Connie W. Adams, Paul Earnhart, Homer Hailey, and Harry Pickup, Jr., all in the same day?

* * *

WE SOMETIMES FAIL TO CAPTURE THE

MOMENT. Life is full of little incidents that are immensely fulfilling—things like a stranger's warm smile, an encouraging word from someone you thought didn't particularly care, hearing some good report, or maybe just the smell of the hamburger on the grill. We need to learn to stop and savor the moment. Not just the big events, but the simplicity of the little moment. It'll make life much more enjoyable, its difficulties more bearable.

* * *

I LIKE TO HEAR ROBERT JACKSON PREACH. And if you've never heard Robert Jackson say "Nashville, Tennessee" you've never heard it said right.

* * *

A. HUGH CLARK ONCE SAID TO ME, "If it's any

good it isn't new; and if it's new it isn't any good." He said that in regard to the principles of truth and it seems to me that the point is well taken. Most truth was mined from its lode far before my time. And besides, we have far less trouble understanding what God wants done than we have doing it, don't you think?

* * *

SOMEONE HAS SAID THAT HAPPINESS CONSISTS

of three basic ingredients: someone to love; something to do; something to hope for. How much greater becomes the recommendation when it is elevated to the spiritual plane. Surely we have someone to love, for God is our great Benefactor. Our work is of the highest sort, for we seek souls for Christ, as well as opportunities to build character in the righteous. Furthermore, our hope is "incorruptible, and undefiled" and "fadeth not away." And what's more, such happiness is ours regardless of externalities. "And again I say, rejoice!"

* * *

I CAN'T FIND ANY PLACE IN THE BIBLE

where God ever ridiculed honest doubt. In fact, it seems to me that what curiosity is, is really just honest doubt. Many a person who honestly doubted the true way and set out to prove it wrong by the Bible has since obeyed the gospel and is now a resolute and convicted Christian.

* * *

I HEARD A STORY RECENTLY ABOUT A FELLOW

who was voted the most humble man among his fellow workers. At the annual employees banquet he was honored with the award for his humility—but they immediately took it back when he accepted it.

Not A Move Without the Guiding Cloud

L. A. Mott, Jr.

As was Israel in the wilderness, modern disciples are God's elect people, sojourners and pilgrims on the earth, but divinely guided through their earthly sojourn. The God of heaven directs the course of our lives both through His word and through providential means. Israel would not break camp and journey until the cloud arose from the tabernacle (Numbers 9:15-23). Nor should we make a move without the Guiding Cloud.

connection, but usually without much regard for context (verses 17-25). Jeremiah gives voice to the lesson he could never get Judah to accept, but which would finally be unmistakable with Jerusalem in ashes, the king removed from the throne and the people scattered to the wind, all as a consequence of following rulers who did not inquire of Jehovah (verse 21). Under such conditions the message would be difficult to miss: "O Jehovah, I know

know them, and they follow me" (verse 27).

Many a "stranger" will try to lead us astray, some with signs that may even come to pass (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; see also Matthew 7:15-23). But if the direction they would lead us takes us away from God's revealed will, then we must turn a deaf ear to them and determine to take no step without the Guiding Cloud.

I have cited two passages (Deuteronomy 8:3; 2 Corinthians 1:8f) in an earlier article to indicate that God influences the course of our lives by providential means. But a word of caution must be sounded. Providence alone is not a certain indicator of the direction God would have us take. Circumstances can be misunderstood. David's men concluded from circumstances that Jehovah would have David kill Saul (1 Samuel 24:4), but it becomes clear from what follows that David had no such revelation from Jehovah and shrank from laying hands on Jehovah's anointed king. Even a prophet could be misled by circumstances. Nathan first approved David's plan to build a temple, but the same night God revealed to him that that was not His will at all (2 Samuel 7). Providential circumstances can be misleading and must be interpreted in the light of revelation or else we may forsake the lead of our Guiding Cloud.

But even revelation can be misunderstood, as we see from John 21:22f (also from the similar case in Acts 21:4 compared with 20:25f and 21:10-14). Jesus' words about John, "If I will that he tarry till I come" gave rise to a rumor that John was not to die. "Yet Jesus said not unto him, that he should not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" The solution to all such misinterpretations remains today what it was then—go back to the Lord's words and see what He actually said. We must avoid unwarranted conclusions if we want to be sure we make not a step without the Guiding Cloud.

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That means we should trust God rather than our own judgment—lean upon His word, obey, trusting that that will always be best.

Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart,
And lean not upon thine own understanding:

In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he will direct thy paths.

(Proverbs 3:5-6)

Jeremiah 10:23 is often quoted in this

that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

We must not be led by "strangers." I am thinking of Jesus' words about the shepherd: "the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:4f). He makes his application thus: "My sheep hear my voice, and I

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel; Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons. I have set Jehovah always before me: Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (16:7-8).

"I Shall Not Be Moved!"

Each of us admires the quality or characteristic of another that causes him to be steadfast and dependable. God wants this trait to be a mark of His followers. David was determined not to be moved from his faithfulness to God. Are there discernible reasons for this in the psalm? If David was not going to be moved, what would keep him from it?

1. **He listened to the Lord's counsel.** "I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel" (verse 7). David's attitude was right. He had properly evaluated himself in comparison with God. He had decided to make the Lord his refuge (verse 1), his highest good (verse 2), and his choice portion (verse 5). This is not a resolution that comes about from human tendencies—it can only come by "the wisdom that is from above" (James 3:17). No man can be blessed who walks "in the counsel of the ungodly" (Psalm 1:1). If you do not want to be moved from serving the Lord, you are going to have to listen to God. "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom" (Proverbs 15:32-33). And David would not be moved because he listened to God. When we quit listening to God it is inevitable that we will fall away from Him.

2. **His conscience was clear.** "My heart [reins, KJV] instructeth me in the night seasons" (verse 7). Whenever he thought the situation over in the quiet of the night—when all distracting influences were removed—his inmost thoughts, his conscience, told him that he had done the

right thing. The conscience passes sentence on one's conduct. Every man has within his own breast a court of law, composed of culprit, judge, witnesses and jury, "accusing or excusing" him (Romans 2:15). If we violate our conscience repeatedly, we can cause it to cease functioning (1 Timothy 4:2). But if we do God's will, "our heart [will] condemn us not" (1 John 3:21). The "reins" of David's heart, his conscience, made him comfortable with the decision he had made. He knew with complete certainty that it was the right thing for him to do—the correct course for him to follow. If we are not to be moved from our dedication to God and His Son, Jesus Christ, we simply must maintain a good conscience before God. Of course, conscience alone is not a safe guide (Acts 24:16; 26:9). The heart of man is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9-10); man cannot guide himself (Jeremiah 10:23). Still, man must not violate his conscience.

3. **He constantly kept God in his mind's eye.** "I have set Jehovah always before me" (verse 8). David often thought of God. It is a sad mistake to be so caught up in the activities of life that we never think of God except at the public services of the church. We must know that God is our Father and He cares about every detail of our lives. We must not treat God casually or contemptibly or carelessly. Isaiah said: "Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for thee; to thy name, even to thy memorial name, is the desire of our soul. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee earnestly: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isaiah 26:8-9). The one today who, by faith, keeps God continually in view, in his mind's eye, ever mindful that He is his protector—is the one, like David, that "shall not be moved." We need to recognize that God is always "at our right hand."

If we will follow David's three-part plan—listening to the Lord's advice, keeping our conscience clear, and keeping God ever before us—I suspect that we will remain steadfast and unmovable, too.

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Personal Evangelism: "One on One"

Delmer Hightower

The most effective and productive teaching has always been done by the individual. Public teaching has its place, but it cannot compare to the results of sincere and dedicated efforts of one-on-one evangelism. We lament the lack of growth in the church today; usually the blame is laid at the feet of the preacher or the elders. We must have strong preaching by strong preachers and strong and firm guidance by strong elders—but that will never take the place of strong personal workers.

The persecution of the church in Jerusalem resulted in men grounded in the truth going everywhere teaching the gospel. We usually equate "problems" and members scattering with losing ground, and most of the time this is what happens. Why? A lack of conviction and dedication by individual members! The preacher is *not* the most important member of any congregation. Every member has his own responsibility to discharge, and personal evangelism is the answer.

Lack of personal evangelism is often excused with "I would do more if I just knew how." What is the proper way? "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Did you notice the word "work" raising its ugly head? There is no substitute. It is a matter of me doing my work and you doing yours. We often have training classes and make preparations to go—and then never go. It is not easy to get started, but start we must. Do you have trouble talking to those you really love about their physical well-being? Christianity is like a smile—you can't keep it without sharing it.

Moses used the same excuses as we do today to try to get out of his duty. "Who am I that I should go? What shall I say to them? They will not believe me or listen to my voice. I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. Send someone else." (See Exodus 3,4.) Just as God's anger was kindled against Moses, it will be against us if we do not try to teach someone the

gospel.

"Who am I?" I am one who was lost in sin, but now am free. I am one who had lost the peace of mind that is sought by all. I am one so thankful for God's love and mercy and sacrifice of His own Son. I am one who has a hope of eternity in heaven and a burning desire to share that hope with everyone that will listen, if I am a Christian.

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"What shall I say?" I will tell others about the Lord and Savior of a lost and dying world. I will tell others of His love for man and His death, burial and resurrection. I will tell about the Word that guides us in all truth. I will share God's concern for man and His desire that all will come to repentance. I will tell how faith, repentance, confession and baptism saved three thousand souls on the day of Pentecost and how they do the

same for us today. I will study the Word more and the more I study, the more I will know and have the desire and confidence to tell others. What to say is limited only by my lack of study and conviction and zeal for the Lord.

"They won't listen." We often are guilty of pre-judging others. Would you have thought that Saul of Tarsus was a good prospect for the gospel? We confuse our responsibilities. It is not my job to convert the world, it is only mine to tell the story of conversion. We will not be judged by what others do or fail to do. We will be judged by how we tell the story—or fail to.

"Slow of speech." This is one that gave me trouble. I have problems expressing myself at times. The funny thing is, the more I apply myself to study and meditation the easier it is to control the mind and the tongue. Do we really have trouble talking about things that are *really* interesting to us—like grandchildren, sports, our job, etc.? Do you suppose it could be that we're just not properly motivated?

"Send someone else." In our hectic life styles and busy schedules, it is easy to succumb to this temptation. We reason that if we give "liberally" (say, way up around \$50 or \$60 a week on a forty thousand plus income?) that we can expect the preacher or someone who "has more time" to do the "personal work." I see a contradiction of terms and someone who himself needs to be converted. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God?" Personal evangelism boils down to *personal* conviction and dedication and zeal and sincerity.

In a survey of 10,000 people by the Institute for American Church Growth, this question was asked. "What was responsible for your coming to Christ and His church?" The answers: "Special need, 2%; I just walked in, 3%; I liked the minister, 6%; Visited there, 1%; I liked the Sunday School, 5%; I liked the programs, 3%; A friend or relative invited me, 79%" *Personal evangelism has no equal. Do it!*

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Mining The Scriptures

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

The Sermon on the Mount

The Righteousness of the Kingdom: Jesus and the Law
We have now come to the heart of Jesus' great address. The beatitudes have outlined the special spiritual character of the kingdom citizen. The similitudes have dealt with the kingdom's high and noble calling. Now Jesus addresses Himself to the quality of kingdom righteousness. His treatment is specific and to the point and essentially continues from Matthew 5:17 until He begins His final appeal in Matthew 7:13.

"I came not to destroy the law . . . but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus prefaces His discussion of kingdom righteousness with a powerful disclaimer. He has not come, He says emphatically, to destroy the law and the prophets. Why was such a disavowal necessary? Did He not claim to be the Christ of prophetic promise? Yes, but sometimes appearances overwhelm words. A brief look at the events which preceded the delivery of this discourse will provide an answer to our question.

The Pharisees, as a party, represented the most dedicated defenders of the law in the nation of Israel. While the Sadducees busied themselves with Temple politics, the Pharisees studied and taught the law as viewed in the traditions of their fathers. In the mind of many in the Jewish community the law of Moses and the traditions of the Pharisees were identical. It would have been the cause of no little anxiety among the people to see Jesus come head to head continuously with these established teachers of the national covenant.

The Pharisees were greatly displeased with the company Jesus kept (Mark 2:16-17; Luke 5:30-32) and by the time Jesus preached His great sermon on the kingdom He had had at least three bitter confrontations with the Pharisees over sabbath observance (Luke 6:1-11; Mark 2:23-3:6; John 5:2-18). The disagreement was now so deep that the Pharisees had already determined to destroy Him (Mark 3:6; Luke 6:11).

This sharp conflict with the known party of the law must have convinced many that Jesus intended to destroy the law and build again on its ruins. The Pharisees would not have been slow to exploit such an impression. The Lord is now, therefore, at considerable pains to explode this misconception. It would soon become apparent in His sermon that His conflict was not with the law but with the Pharasaic perversions of it.

Jesus' attitude toward the Old Testament Scriptures now becomes unmistakably clear. Because they are His Father's words, far from being abolished or subverted, they are to be fulfilled to the last minute detail, and, even more significantly, *He* was to fulfill them! Three great truths surface here. Jesus ties Himself inseparably to the

God of the Old Testament. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is also the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus also confirms His absolute confidence in the integrity of every word of the Old Testament writings. They are the words of God, and anyone who would be His disciple must have the same high view of Scripture (Luke 24:25-27; John 10:35). And then there emerges for the first time in the sermon the awesome greatness of the preacher. He is to be the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose, the consummation of the ages, the end point of all history. This is no mere ethical treatise. The sermon is great, but the preacher is greater still.

What does Jesus mean when He speaks of fulfilling the law and the prophets? He is certainly not speaking of binding upon kingdom citizens every last precept of the Mosaic covenant which by rabbinic count numbered 613! No one to our knowledge holds this view. Paul was later to state clearly that these ordinances about food and feasts and sabbaths had nothing to do with serving Christ but were fulfilled in His death and removed (Colossians 2:14-17).

Does the Lord then refer to His own perfect obedience to the law? Jesus, who was born under the law (Galatians 4:4), did indeed observe the law's commands with flawless perfection (1 Peter 2:22), yet His concern here is *fulfillment* of purpose, not *observation* of precept. Jesus was destined to be the fulfillment of all the Old Testament types and shadows (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1-4) and the realization of all Old Testament prophecies (Luke 24:25-27, 44-48). He was to be the culmination of the law's purpose to lead men to justification through faith in Him (Galatians 3:24-25; Romans 10:4). Having done its work, the law was ended, and led, as it had always promised, to the establishment of a new covenant with better promises (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-8). The citizen of the kingdom is under law to Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21) and in the fulness of Christ he is made full (Colossians 2:9-10). All efforts to turn from Christ back to the law are a case of arrested spiritual development.

But having said all that it must be remembered that the ethical teachings of Jesus do not represent a radical departure from the law but are a natural extension of the two greatest commandments which are first found in the law: "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5) and "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18). The great difference between the law and the gospel is not to be found in their respective ethical demands but in the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

(To be continued.)

Meditation At A Grave

Bill Humble

Last week, as I stood beside a grave on a beautiful rolling hillside near Bethany, West Virginia, it was a moment for serious meditation. The grave was not a new one, for the tall marker at the head of the grave carried the dates: 1788-1866. This grave had already been on that peaceful hillside for sixty years when I was born into the world; yet, I realized that my life had been made richer by the man at whose resting place I stood. Further down the hillside stood the old mansion where he had been married, where he had rocked his fourteen children and where he had died. Outside the mansion was the octagonal study, lighted by small windows at the top to symbolize the owner's desire to be guided only by that light which comes from above; and I realized that within this study had been prepared volumes which I had perused with interest and profit.

For I was standing behind the grave of Alexander Campbell. Nearby was the final resting place of his father, Thomas Campbell, who had coined that familiar plea, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent." To others this would have been just another grave, but to one who has been interested in the cause of restoring New Testament Christianity, it was a memorable experience and a moment of meditation.

Each of us must leave his small mark in the world, but Alexander Campbell was one whose mark was larger, more impressive and more enduring. It is not often that truly great men arise, but Campbell was such a man, gifted to guide others. It was within the little octagonal study that Campbell had studied and prayed in preparing to debate Bishop John B. Purcell of the Roman Catholic Church; but many years later Purcell, who was then America's ranking Catholic prelate, paid this tribute to Campbell: "History will place him on the same pedestal with Luther and Calvin and Wesley, the peer of either of them." Remarkable praise for a remarkable man!

Campbell's greatness was many-sided. He was a profound student of the word of God, and he accepted it as the all-sufficient revelation of God's will. As a preacher he could hold audiences spellbound for hours, and he is one of the few men to preach to both houses of our Congress. Campbell was probably the most gifted debater ever to grace the American religious scene; yet, he engaged in only five formal debates.

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Campbell knew the Bible and he understood that denominationalism and division were sinful. Campbell never founded a denomination; he did not establish the church of Christ. Christ's church had been founded in the first century, a perfect pattern of what the church should be in every century; and Campbell was simply one among many who pleaded for a restoration of that

first century body of Christ. They planted the seed and the kingdom grew.

But as I stood beside that grave, I mused, "His greatness should not blind us to his mistakes." For Campbell was a man, and men make mistakes. Campbell made his. Earlier in his life, he had challenged all organizations which questioned the sufficiency of the church to do its work; but later he pleaded with his brethren to establish an organization through which the congregations might work in carrying the gospel to others. When the organization was created, Campbell became its first president. The mantle of charity will hardly excuse this mistake; for when he thus abandoned his earlier faith in the sufficiency of Christ's church, he opened the door for the digression and apostasy which engulfed much of the church after his death. And unfortunately, the Christian Church, born of that mistake, has never been able to close the door.

Not far from that hillside grave, there stands Bethany College, the school which Campbell founded. Today, it is worldly, liberal and modernistic. Christian churches frankly admit that they do not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, the miracles of the Bible or the essentiality of baptism. They have abandoned their faith in the New Testament as a perfect blueprint for what the church should be in every century; yet, they profess to be following the same principles which guided the Campbells. As I stood beside that grave, I thought, "How many times Campbell must have 'turned over' in this grave at such a turn of events. Behold, how great an apostasy a little deviation kindleth!

The lives of great men always serve to inspire and influence others. Campbell set out in search of the ancient order, unaided as are we by others' efforts; and we can be thankful that his influence for a restoration of the Lord's church does not lie buried in yon' hillside grave. But how important it is that we remember the warning of Paul that we follow men, but only as they are followers of Christ!

From The Preceptor, Vol. 5, No. 6, April, 1956

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Woody Woodpecker

Harold E. Turner

You have probably never considered Woody a fit subject for discussion in a paper of this sort and certainly not in connection with evolution, but maybe we can make a place in both areas for our long-time friend.

It's an easy matter for the evolutionist to observe distinctive traits of present-day animals and theorize concerning the development of those traits. However, it's something else altogether when we get back to "first happening." Interesting things appear.

Again, if the giraffe survived before the lengthening of the neck, why did he need a longer neck? Did trees quit growing low leaves? Did bushes and shrubs become extinct? Were the higher leaves more tasty?

Now to Woody. Woodpeckers have certain distinctive traits. It wouldn't hurt Woody's feelings for you to call him a hardhead, because he is. His cranial structure is outstandingly strong. He also has a chisel-like bill that he uses effectively in many endeavors. His feet

may decide the core of the tree is good to eat at which time he will probably develop a saw on the top of his head—but that's for future ornithologists to work with.

Anyway, let's go back to the "first happening." Remember, at one time these birds didn't peck holes in trees and telephone poles, but now they do. Some smart little rascal had to be the first. Now, mind you that when he (and we'll call him Grandpa Woody) started the process, he didn't have a hard head like his grandson, and he didn't have a sticky tongue, either. No, he was a soft-headed, plain-toed, ordinary-beaked and slick-tongued little bird.

One day Grandpa Woody decided that tasty bugs and insects are just inside the bark of the trees and poles, etc. He flew to a tall oak and landed against the side. Being the ordinary-toed soul he was, he rapidly slid to the ground and bruised his tail-feathers. Eventually, however, he managed to twist a toe around, so there he perched. Now, how to get into the tree was the next problem. "Let's see, I can kick a hole in the thing, but then what's going to hold me up here?" Finally he decided that with his head he would simply blast away until the job was finished.

Can you imagine the look on his face when he reared back and for the first time in woodpecker history that bill came thundering into contact with the oak?" "AHHH NAHH! Why didn't I pick a pine instead of this thing?" But eventually, he solved the hole problem, at which time he discreetly slid his smooth little tongue inside only to be stung by a bee. The crushed beak, the hurt feelings, the second fall and consequent slipped disc, the Excedrin headache, the running sinuses and the swollen tongue all testified to the failure of Grandpa. Discouraged? Not on your life. He persevered and finally through his noble efforts and the trials and tribulations of his descendants, we have our friend Woody just as he is. Isn't evolution grand?

P. O. Box 164, Saratoga, AR 71859

"Remember, at one time these birds didn't peck holes in trees and telephone poles, but now they do. Some smart little rascal had to be the first. Now, mind you that when he (and we'll call him Grandpa Woody) started the process, he didn't have a hard head like his grandson, and he didn't have a sticky tongue, either. No, he was a soft-headed, plain-toed, ordinary-beaked and slick-tongued little bird."

The story goes that these qualities (such as the long neck of the giraffe) have not developed by accident but have come about in order for the animal to survive. As the giraffe, over a prolonged period of time, stretched his neck to eat the high leaves, this resulted in a lengthening of the neck. In order for the giraffe to survive, this happened.

Of course, questions crop up at this point. For example, why didn't the necks of other animals, whose diets are similar to that of the giraffe, lengthen also?

are skilled in aiding him to hang to the side of a tree. His neck is extremely loose. All of these traits, along with his sticky tongue, and others (that can be found in a good encyclopedia) make Woody, Woody.

The evolutionist says that there was a time when poor Woody didn't have all of these wonderful qualities. Then one day, in order to survive, these things began to develop and the process has continued until now, and who knows where it will go beyond this? Woody

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

R. B. Scott—A Light in London

It has been my purpose that the church should live off of me; not that I should live off of the church." From the lips of some men, such words could sound boastful; but from R. B. Scott in England they seem, like the man himself, perfectly proper.

At the age of 89, Brother Scott's earliest memories are of services in Hope Chapel on Prince of Wales Road in the Kentish Town section of London. Since then he has missed services on only a few of the 4,600 Lord's Days that have passed. Most of the absences were during World War I or when he was away speaking for other assemblies.

If stripes were awarded for years of service in the Lord's army, this aged brother would already have received his seventieth; and they have been very active years. Not long after his baptism in 1912, he began teaching children's classes. Soon, he was accepting his place in the rotation of speakers assigned to admonish the church. In recent years, with the membership small at Kentish Town, he has spoken more often and has been the mainstay for the teaching of classes. His voice has also provided the hymn tune for many a visiting American, puzzled by the absence of notes from the British hymnbooks.

In the early 1930's our brother became secretary of the Kentish Town church, a position in which his father had also served for several years before him. Among English churches, this is a very heavy responsibility. It not only involves correspondence for the church, but many other duties as well: making assignments for participation in services, preparing the agenda for and conducting business meetings, making those urgent decisions that must be made between business meetings, and accepting responsibility for the building. In addition, he has served as treasurer for several years. Unrelated to these congregational duties, he has visited the sick, admonished the weak and, until recently, spent considerable time in efforts to reach the lost of the community—all of this while gaining a livelihood in secular employment.

Fulfillment of these tasks has required numerous trips to the building for services and for service. With no automobile, this has meant considerable walking and, for the past 19 years, the use of public transportation. His 89 years, a heart attack, and an encounter with a motorcycle at a pedestrian crossing have slowed his steps a bit, but even a forced change of residence to a location forty miles

away did not prevent his regular teaching of the Wednesday night class and his presence for most Lord's Day services. The greatest hindrance to his activity recently has been the almost constant care required by his beloved "Mary" who only late last year departed this life.

Brother Scott holds a number of views which would be at odds with those of a majority of American brethren. He cannot conscientiously accept the use of individual containers for use in communion and he would feel more obligation to prevent unbaptized persons from partaking of the Lord's Supper than would most Americans. He also objects to any contributions into the treasury by non-Christians. Although he does not object to supporting a man to "do the work of an evangelist" in a community, he feels that attachment of such a man to the church should not be considered permanent and that, even then, the exhortation at the "breaking of bread service" should be rotated among the members. These convictions are common among brethren in England.

Brother Scott, however, has not allowed his convictions to prevent his fellowship with those of other persuasions so long as they do not impose their will upon the church where he worships. Though he spent time in prison during World War I rather than participate in military service, he was of great help to numerous servicemen stationed in England during World War II. Though some have considered him "anti-American" because of his disagreement with some American practices, he has possibly entertained as many Americans as any other private individual in England. Foy Short tells of staying in the Scott home as he traveled to Africa many years ago. Americans enroute to Europe to establish churches in the late 1940's and early 50's were often entertained by the Scott family. John Allen Hudson lived with him while preparing his book, *Churches of Christ in Great Britain*, and several American brethren preaching in London in recent years have been greatly helped by his fellowship.

Truly, the Kentish Town church has "lived off of" Roy Scott; it would have closed its doors or gone into total apostasy long ago except for him. Yet he has never been "paid for his services." He is perfectly willing that "those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," but his sentiment concerning himself is the same as that of Paul: "In all things I have kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so will I keep myself" (2 Corinthians 11:9).

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

The Texan and the Kader Kids

My Texas friend, Dee Bowman, and I recently finished the latest version of the Bowman and Harrell lecture series at the Miller Avenue Church in San Jose, California. It was a refreshing and stimulating week; as usual I learned a lot watching and listening to Dee. Particularly interesting was his encounter with the Kader Kids.

Our first day in town we had lunch with the Kaders—an impressive Christian couple with three young, pre-school boys. It was a fine occasion and both Dee and I came to appreciate the Kaders more as the week wore on, but, even after one brief encounter, it was apparent that the three little Kader hombres were something special. It is true they were small, but they were

wiry, taunt, confident and had a gleam in their eyes that would intimidate a hardened Texas Ranger.

Somewhat uncircumspectly I thought, Dee took a seat the first evening just in front of the Kader family. I watched safely from the other side of the auditorium. On Monday evening, he got smacked on the head with Winnie-the-Pooh. Tuesday night, he was crunched by another stuffed animal. Wednesday night, so I am told, he was passed a note with three words scrawled in a pre-school hand: "BROTHER BOWMAN—STOP." He didn't take the warning, and the next evening when we arrived at the building there was a gun (toy) in his seat.

The Kader Kids reminded me of the most fundamental

lesson I have learned in quite a few years of observing families. There are great variations in child-rearing customs in our culture—not to mention other cultures. Some children are meek and quiet, others are rowdy and boisterous. I have my preferences, but through the years I have seen both kinds turn out bad and good. More important, I believe, are the general requirements that love bind the family together and that parents bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Those principles are cross-cultural; they will work anywhere, any time.

By the way, the Monday following the meeting in San Jose, the Kaders moved to Houston. They said they had been planning the move for

some time, but it sure seemed more than fortuitous to me. Watch out, Bowman—the Kader Kids are coming.

Actually, I became slightly nonplussed myself just before the meeting closed when brother Kader told me that his family had relatives living only about a hundred miles from Fayetteville and they might come to see me after they moved. "Wonderful," I said, "just leave the kids with your relatives and come to visit." "Oh, no," he replied, we wouldn't want to leave the children behind." I swallowed hard. "Well," I said, with an unmistakable quiver in my voice, "Just remember that a hundred miles over those Ozark Mountain roads is an awfully long trip."

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MAGAZINE



**THE
APOSTLES**
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EDITOR: Ed Harrell

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Faith: Faculty for Seeing the Unseen

Christianity is a system of religion based on belief. Belief in God and belief in self. That person who believes in God not only is convinced of His existence, but also of His sayings. He is totally committed to His promises and respectful of His ability to perform exactly what He has said. The Christian believes in himself, too. By his own consciousness he learns of his amenability to God. While nature says nothing of God's wishes, it does declare Him (Psalm 19:1-3), at the same time inferring the necessity of some relation between the Creator and His creatures. But further than the attestations articulated so forcefully by creation, man learns of God by inspiration (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13) and revelation (1 Corinthians 2; Ephesians 3:1ff) by His word. It is by this revelation that man is not only constrained to believe in God, but to believe in his own ability to have a right relationship with Him.

But what is it that causes belief? Does man just automatically believe? And why do some not believe? I shall start with the last question and reason toward the first. Disbelief is as much a mental process as is belief. It comes as a result of a man deliberately (notice the term, please) choosing to ignore substantiated facts. There is a great difference between ignorance and unbelief. Ignorance is based on not knowing; disbelief is deliberately ignoring an obvious truth. And so, some do not believe because they choose not to. It is as simple as that. God once overlooked ignorance (Acts 17:30), but He could never overlook disbelief.

Belief is brought about by the presentation of facts and testimony presented in support of them. The fatal error in denominationalism is the assertion that faith is an emotional feeling which is indescribable and comes as a result of some religious experience. The Bible clearly affirms that faith is a mental process which is observable and is achieved as the mind deliberates certain affirmations and the evidence given in support of them. If the evidence is of sufficient value as to show clearly that the facts affirmed are true, then the man is said to believe. "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago

God made choice among us that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe" (Acts 15:7). If no gospel had been presented, no belief would have occurred. "And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). The belief of the Corinthians came from the thing heard. "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Our trusting confidence in God comes from our belief in the word of God. It can come no other way.

Belief is not restricted to time or place. It is the assurance that people, things, places we have not seen actually and truly exist. It is a mental process by which one is connected even to eternity. My faith in heaven is exactly like my faith in London. I have never seen either, but I verily believe in the existence of both. And for the same reasons. The evidence of the fact of their existence constrains me. I am left with only one other choice—to disbelieve. That is, to ignore the obvious.

The Bible nowhere treats the concept of a disobedient belief. It everywhere assumes that belief in God results in a positive reaction to all that He has said. For that reason it often uses the term "faith" in a comprehensive manner. That is, because it assumes that a man who believes in God will necessarily want to do what He says, it often uses the term to encompass both the mental persuasion of God, and the commands He gives. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16) assumes that a man will do all that is necessary not only to affirm his faith in God, but to respond obediently to all that He says. "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17), states that faith is the basis of the righteous man's manner of life, not just the profession of his faith. In these and other passages "faith" is used to describe the entirety of man's dealings with God, especially as it is viewed from the vantage point of man's reaction to his knowledge of God.

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Why can't we "Leave It To Beaver?"

The current craze seems to be nostalgia. It has occurred to me on more than one occasion that "life in the slow lane" was indeed grand. Recently we have seen some interest in the clothes of the Fifties, the music of the Forties and some of the popular TV programs of the Sixties are continuing to be seen in re-runs.

I have begun, once again, to enjoy the close-knit family ties of the Cleaver family. Ward, June, Wally and the "Beav" are welcome in my home anytime.

Ward Cleaver is the exemplary father. His priority is his home and family. We never even learn what business occupies his time. The series centers on his relationship with his wife and sons. He teaches moral values as easily as he settles into his comfortable leather chair in his den. Notice, that this was a den, with books and desk and chair—all necessary in solving family crises on a moment's notice. This is a *real* family room. There is not a VCR or stereo system in sight, which modern America deems a necessity.

Mrs. Cleaver would no doubt raise the ire of any card-carrying ERA supporter. She is seen preparing meals on every show. This is the type of mother who has the uncanny ability to hear what her children are saying even when they do not say it. She is there when her family comes home in the evening and worries when her children are gone. She even cares enough about her youngest to wear just the "right dress" to a school Open House. Pretty ghastly credentials for a modern-day mom, don't you think?

And then there's Wally. How long has it been since you've seen an older brother in high school go to plead mercy on behalf of his little brother in the fourth grade? Or even speak to his little brother in the fourth grade, for that matter? Or how many young men would take pride in being the "man of the house" while father was away on a business trip?

And then there's the Beaver. His virtues are innumerable. This little boy says "Yes Sir" and "No Ma'am" to adults. He feels compassion for an animal that has been hurt. He respects the property and rights of others. He even has a tender heart for the

elderly.

Mothers and Dads, we can't leave it to Beaver. It is up to each one of us to teach these values, so plainly brought forth in the Scriptures. We need to teach our children to be humble (Philippians 2:3-4), to practice the golden rule and, most of all, to love God and His word, for in these are hope (Romans 15:4). We cannot expect our children to accept these things if we ourselves are not living examples. We are quick to judge the religious differences in the world today, but if we don't teach our children to be pure in heart, they will not see God (Matthew 5:8).

Mrs. Sue Carpenter
Ontario, CA

Preachers need to be more careful

In "A Divergent Opinion About Rock Music" [June, 1984, page 5], the writer mentioned that the author had colored the article with his personal opinion of rock music with the intention of warning young Christians and their parents of the evils that may arise from "listening" to such music.

In observing the letter writer's feelings, I can relate to this "coloring" and the irritation it can bring. Coloring *anything* (sermons, articles for bulletins, etc.) can become dangerous. For example, I took a friend to services once and the guest preacher said everything short of "If you aren't a 'Church of Christ' Christian (whatever that is) you're going to Hell!" Although this statement is true (short of the adjectives placed before the noun "Christian") he certainly did not have the charity and understanding needed to teach *properly*. In addition, he ostracized my friend's religious affiliation. He *should have* pointed out via the Scriptures, the faults of the denomination's beliefs (i.e., letting the Scripture do the talking). As a result of this teacher (?) I have not been able to get my friend to lay eyes on our building, let alone the truth.

I'd like to direct my thoughts toward Christian evangelists by writing a short warning: *Teachers, beware!* Remember our Lord's compassion at all times, and teach by

using the Scriptures *and not your own opinions!!!* If one uses offensive tactics as a substitute for teaching, one will hurt rather than help bring lost souls to Christ.

In conclusion, I'd like to leave an unanswered thought: did Jesus, our Lord, mock Cornelius' ignorance of the gospel by insulting him?

D. Scott Stone
San Antonio, TX

Making a case for Barbie

While I agree with most of what Roland Lewis wrote in "Some Suggestions for Rearing Godly Children" [July, 1984, page 30], I disagree with one point. I fail to see how playing with "Barbie-type" dolls would rush a little girl out of the innocence of childhood. Many women have found memories of playing with "Barbie-type" dolls practicing roles in dating and marriage, not to mention learning appropriate dress for specific occasions. Isn't "being adult" the basis for children's play? Let's not blame a *thing* on our own misguided enthusiasm to grow our children up. Children are rushed out of childhood by being forced to be adults early rather than by pretending to be adults. In the same vein, one could say that baby dolls tend to rush little girls into parenthood before they know the responsibility of a real baby.

India Henson
Fairfield, AL

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Thoughts On Marriage

I was proofreading something I had written the other day and came upon a misspelling of the word "marital." I had spelled it "martial." The words are so similar I almost missed the mistake. Is that ironic? One means "of or pertaining to marriage;" the other "of or pertaining to war." The only difference is a misplaced "i".

* * *

That reminds me of a story a brother told me in Alabama. A smart aleck young husband began lecturing his wife about her minor faults shortly after their honeymoon. She accepted the criticism gracefully and replied, "It is a shame I have these imperfections. Otherwise, I could have gotten a good husband."

* * *

It is true that the success and failure of marriage depends very much on expectation. One thing that has gone awry in our society is that people do not expect marriages to last. Western culture, like some civilizations in the past, has allowed lust to undermine the sanctity of the home. Other societies have preserved it better. In India people marry expecting to live together the rest of their lives, and, by and large, they do. In the West, if troubles arise, the way to fix it is to divorce.

That, of course, is the issue Jesus addressed in Matthew 19:3-12. Asked the question, "Is it lawful for a

man to put away his wife for every cause?" Jesus answered: "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" (verses 3,9). Jesus laid the question of expectation to rest. Marriage, by God's intent and design, was inviolate. But marriage is not a martial arrangement binding two people to battle harshly through life. A pacific and rewarding marriage, like a permanent one, is also related to expectations. A Christian girl must seek a young man who loves the Lord and honors her. A Christian boy must seek a girl who is modest and virtuous and who will obey him. If one expects those things of his or her mate, and seeks them in marriage, they are qualities that will not fade with time.

* * *

There is no greater joy in life than a stable and loving home. The trust that exists between a Christian husband and wife is almost beyond the comprehension of a world without principles. The mutual love and respect between Christian parents and their children is among the warmest experiences of life. Man can build no monument, accomplish no goal, that does not pale when compared with the legacy of a marriage vow honored. It is a measure of man's perversity that he would exchange it for a mess of sin.

An Effective Father

Tommy Poarch

Being an effective father is a great challenge. In the Bible, we do not read about too many successful fathers. Great men, such as David, Samuel and Eli, were not effective fathers. A successful father is a man marked by several important characteristics.

1. He has a very clear and strong priority system. (1) Personal and spiritual integrity is foremost in his life. His character is more important than his occupation. (2) He strives for marital peace and intimacy. The best gift he gives to his children is the great love he shows toward their mother. (3) He is devoted to the training of his children. His call to be a provider does not conflict with his responsibilities as a father. (4) He provides for his own (1 Timothy 5:8). He is a diligent worker and provider for his family.

2. He maintains a healthy attitude in his home. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Tensions and trials of the day can produce heartaches in the night if they are carried home and unleashed.

3. He communicates his love to his family. He should be able to display and communicate his love to each of his children. Tenderly communicating love while displaying at the same time firm conviction, responsibility and leadership is no easy task. An important means of demonstrating love to others is being able to listen to them without feeling threatened. If children doubt their father's desire to objectively listen to them, they are reluctant to follow his guidance.

4. He nurtures the self-esteem of each of his children. An effective father must strive to make his children feel good about themselves in a wholesome way. Correction is needed in every home, but when condemnation and punitive action become the major source of communication, the leader of the home has failed in being an effective father. Children need time and special attention from their fathers.

5. He will find his true strength in his

spiritual life. He won't give up in despair. He won't offer "I can't help what I am" as an alibi. In Christ, he will find strength and sound judgment to do all that Christ would call upon him to do (Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:7).

Children, bear with your father. Love

time—it is not easy. Your father, whose work must ultimately find the approval of God, needs your compassion and cooperation. Sons, remember, one day you will most likely be fathers, too. Watch what you say—unless you enjoy eating words.

"Tenderly communicating love while displaying at the same time firm conviction, responsibility and leadership is no easy task. An important means of demonstrating love to others is being able to listen to them without feeling threatened. If children doubt their father's desire to objectively listen to them, they are reluctant to follow his guidance."

him and honor him for the efforts he is putting forth. If you think they are not good enough, you still must love, honor and obey him in the name of Jesus (Ephesians 6:1-3). Remember that your father must love you and be an authoritative and decisive leader at the same

Fathers, let us get on our knees before God and ask Him to help us to attain the love, compassion and discipline that we need to lead our families successfully. Then, let us rise up and apply ourselves to the task.

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My Brother/My Self

Friendship—One of Life's Foremost Blessings

The Bible has something to say about friendship. "A man that hath friends must show *himself* friendly" (Proverbs 18:24a, KJV). It is a simple principle but one that is often neglected. Have you ever wondered why some people are able to draw others to them like paper clips to a magnet? And these people may or may not be wealthy, have high intelligence, or look like fashion models. Most often they don't. But somewhere within their personalities they have that spark that causes them to be sought out, respected and admired.

There are some prerequisites to friendliness. One of these we have already talked about in this column—a positive, healthy *self-image*. No one likes to be around a person dominated by stifling neuroses and a critical spirit. If you are going to have friends you must be the kind of person people like to be around. And you cannot do that if you do not have a good self-image. This begins by accepting yourself as you are—making whatever changes are needed (and possible), and being satisfied with the rest [see April, 1984, p. 8]. This prerequisite is suggested in Ephesians 5:29 in a context dealing with a man's love for his wife: "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church." A healthy attitude toward ourselves is necessary before there can be a healthy attitude toward others. Friendliness is a matter of *being someone* rather than doing something.

Your *inner* qualities are the things that make you attractive and friendly; they are far more important than your outward size, shape, features and dress. Read 1 Peter 3:1-6. Many people never develop intimacy because they are too concerned about themselves—too dissatisfied and self-critical. And friendship is the basis for intimacy.

Soon after Jack Benny died, George Burns was interviewed on TV. Burns said, "Jack and I had a wonderful friendship for nearly fifty-five years. Jack never walked out on me when I sang a song and I never walked out on him when he played the violin. We laughed together, we

played together, we worked together, we ate together. I suppose that for many of those years we talked every single day." Not many people have that kind of friendship. It is rare. But friendship is the model for all intimate encounters. Sociologist Andrew Greeley says that the basic ingredients for a good marriage are friendship plus sex.

Women have more friends than men do. It is because they are more willing to share themselves openly with other women. Men fail to do this undoubtedly because of conditioning. Men, in our society, never touch each other except to shake hands. Dick and Paula McDonald say: "Most men have had no practice in the art of intimacy nor role models to point the way. Little girls can walk to school hand in hand, hold each other up skating, hug and cry and say, 'You're my best friend. I need you. I love you.' Little boys wouldn't dare. The enormous blackening cloud of homosexuality is always present, and the devastating power of the snicker begins in playground days . . . it forever after affects his behavior toward other men who might become his friends." Some of America's leading psychologists were asked how many men ever have any real friends. Most guessed at 10%. One authority said, "Millions of people in America never had one minute in their whole lifetime where they could 'let down' and share with another person their deeper feelings."

It is my firm conviction that our relationship with one another as brethren in the Lord parallels in many ways the principles of friendship. The deepening of our relationship with each other can be accomplished by learning what it means to be a true friend. "Life is to be fortified," says Sydney Smith, "by many friendships. To love, and be loved, is the greatest happiness of existence."

What are the principles of friendship? How can we deepen our relationships? We will talk about this in the next article.

Blessed Are the Meek

Denny Diehl

Meekness is a quality which is described throughout Scripture as that which the disciple of Christ should strive after. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Paul stated that "the fruit of the Spirit is . . . meekness" (Galatians 5:22-23). It is also stated, "the meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his ways" (Psalm 25:9).

Meekness, being translated from *prautes*, is a difficult word to define. It "is not readily expressed in English, for the term meekness . . . suggests weakness . . . whereas *prautes* does nothing of the kind" (Vine, *Expository Dictionary*). We often think of a meek man as being someone who is spineless, who is without the fortitude to stand up for himself. However, as we shall see, this is not the case.

Moses was described as being "very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3). Jesus said for us to "take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Paul even reasoned with the Corinthians "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1). Both Moses and Jesus are displayed in the word as being meek, yet both are far from weak.

Notice the character of Moses. While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Law, Aaron and the people made a golden calf for themselves to worship. "And the Lord said to Moses, 'I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. Now then let Me alone, that My anger may burn against them, and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation'" (Exodus 32:9-10). Now if Moses were a spineless individual, having been told to "let Me alone" by an angry God, Moses would have done just that. But he didn't. "Then Moses entreated the Lord his God and said, 'O Lord, why doth Thine anger burn against Thy people whom Thou hast brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand'" (Exodus 32:11). Moses soothed the anger

of God, "so the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people" (Exodus 32:14). And then, right after being so gentle with his God, "Moses' anger burned, and he threw the tablets from his hands and shattered them at the foot of the mountain. And he took the calf which they had made and burned it with fire, and ground it to powder, and scattered it over the surface of the water, and made the sons of Israel drink it" (Exodus

downcast like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Conversely, Jesus could be very harsh. Jesus several times repeated, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" (Matthew 23:13-16, 23, 25, 27, 29). He continued, "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?" (Matthew 23:33). Jesus was like Moses in that He responded as He should to the situation at hand.

Barclay says, "The most characteristic

"We often think of a meek man as being someone who is spineless, who is without the fortitude to stand up for himself. However, this is not the case. . . . Both Moses and Jesus are displayed in the word as being meek, yet both are far from weak. . . . To be meek is to be a man—a strong man, a strong gentleman."

32:19-20). Moses changed in accord with the situation at hand. With God, Moses was gentle. With the idolatrous people, Moses was a stern leader.

Also, notice Jesus in dealing with His people. With the proud, arrogant and self-righteous, Jesus was strong and forceful. With the sick, poor and repentant sinner, Jesus was kind and tender.

Yes, Jesus was gentle: "seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and

use of these words is to describe the character in which strength and gentleness go together. In Plato the best illustration of *prautes* is the watchdog who is bravely hostile to strangers and gently friendly with familiars whom he knows and loves" (*Flesh and Spirit*, p. 114). Thus, to be meek is to be a man—a strong man, a strong gentleman.

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The Christian's War Against Depression

Depression is an emotional experience which can grip the heart with a sense of hopelessness. It lays a dead hand on all effort. The struggle against problems is seen by the depressed as futile and this perception leads to even deeper depression.

Matters are made even worse by the commonly held view that truly godly people never experience depression. The biblical evidence is to the contrary. How else can we explain the utter misery of Job whose calamities nearly overwhelmed him (Job 3)? And there is the godly Elijah whose glorious victory on Mt. Carmel was so seemingly nullified by Jezebel that he despaired of any purpose for his life (1 Kings 19:1-14). There is not a more righteous and noble figure in the Old Testament than Jeremiah, and yet the hatred which his message of doom stirred up against him, even within his own family and friends, brought him at times to the very edge of despair (Jeremiah 20:7-18).

But all these, it may be objected, lived before the revelation of the gospel with all its hope and assurance. True, but it is not difficult to extend our examples to the New Testament. Paul, the apostle of joy himself, was no stranger to moments of depression. Of the exceedingly burden-filled years spent at Ephesus he wrote: "For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in Asia, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life" (2 Corinthians 1:8).

Are we then saying by all this that depression is a settled part of the Christian's life and ought to be accepted gracefully? The answer is a most emphatic "No!" Our point is that you are not a spiritual reject because you experience depression. The question is: what are you going to do about it? We are all too often guilty of accepting depression helplessly, and even feeding it until it becomes despondency and despair. We have said that godly people suffer depression. Now let me add that godly people don't yield to it. The onset of a severe case of "the blues" is not a time for acquiescence but for war! Paul assures us that the weapons for the battle are mighty enough to breach every stronghold of the mind which resists the influence of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Depression cannot subdue us unless a weakening faith causes us to lose our grip on God's promises. Paul never denied his own moments of discouragement, but he did fight them. "We are pressed on every side," he wrote, "yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken" (2 Corinthians 4:8).

Paul's years of imprisonment were not easy to bear. The feet that had so long restlessly strode the world in pursuit of lost men were now fixed in place. He had always dreamed of coming to Rome, but never like this.

Still, out of the most unlikely circumstances, Paul wrote to the Philippians the most triumphantly joyful of all his epistles. We can learn some important lessons from him on how to deal with disappointment. What were the weapons of his war against despair?

Among other things, Paul made effective use of God's word and prayer. In the midst of his troubles he was wholly set on knowing Christ more fully (Philippians 3:8-12). He urges the Philippians to "abound" in knowledge and discernment (1:9) and to meditate upon high and holy things (4:8-9). His letter is filled with a prayerful spirit and he calls upon his readers to battle anxiety "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" (4:6). But be warned. Depression will disincline you to both the reading of the Bible and prayer. God will seem far away and all effort hopeless. You will not "feel like" doing it but you must persevere with an unshakeable resolve. In due season your faith in God's promises and love will revive and your prayers will be transformed from mere words to earnest petitions. The depression will dissipate.

Another weapon against depression which Paul used was the comfort of faithful friends whose fidelity to God and love for him through the years now served to buoy his spirits. "I thank God," he said, "upon all my remembrance of you" (1:3). Depression tends to cause you to withdraw from the company of others. This only makes conditions worse. Fight this inclination and seek the strength which being with fellow Christians who love you can bring. We are one body in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:25-27).

The third weapon against depression which Paul used was activity. Despair with its hopelessness causes its victims to simply quit trying. Paul could have done that. He was the victim of onerous circumstances beyond his control. Things had not gone at all as he had hoped. Most people would not have blamed him if he had just turned his head to the wall in utter despondency. But he resolved not to do that. Not able to go to men to preach he preached to those who came to him, and consequently, to every pretorian guard whose duty forced him to stay and listen. Wonderful, unbelievable things happened! The elite troops of the emperor, virtually inaccessible by any other means, were influenced by the gospel. And the brethren in Rome were so stirred by Paul's example that they preached Christ as never before (Philippians 1:12-14).

I learned some time ago that I might indeed get depressed, but by the grace of God I didn't have to stay that way. The choice was mine. Of course, it has taken me some time to learn this lesson, and I am still learning it, but even the apostle said, "I have learned" (4:11).



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Ed Harrell

The Apostles

On the pages that follow are the stories of fourteen men—apostles. They were not simply men “sent” on a mission by Jesus; they were fourteen supreme actors in the divine drama. They were called to the “office of apostleship” and became the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ. Don Wilson, in his article on Matthias, explores and clarifies the meaning of apostleship; that, perhaps, would be the best place to begin reading this theme section.

It is remarkable how much we know about some of the apostles (Peter and Paul) and how little about others (James the Son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Thaddaeus, Matthias). Since I had only eleven pages to assign and fourteen men to cover, I asked L. A. Mott, Jr. to write about four of the lesser-known apostles. It was a difficult assignment, I thought, but you will find a powerful lesson in his article. Russ Bowman and Glenn Reagan may have had an even more difficult

assignment, to try to discuss Peter and Paul in one page, but each has captured the dynamic personality of those highly visible apostles. Each story is powerful and moving—the tale of a man whose name appears in the Book as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Two thoughts fascinated me as I read through these articles. First, these were men. They were not angels or robots—though chosen, their actions were not foreordained. They were frail and frightened, ambitious and arrogant, dull-witted and depressed. They were like us. But they could also be guileless, fearless and profound. And so can we.

Second, these men were Jesus’ friends. Except for Paul, they knew Him both before and after the resurrection. By definition, that was at least partly who they were—witnesses of what they had seen and heard. But to think of their relationship with Jesus adds awe to the reading of these articles. These were men that Jesus loved and chose. They asked

Him questions and heard Him teach. And they shared countless intimate moments with Him. Contemplate, if you can, the human emotions in that upper room when Jesus said “ye are clean, but not all” (John 13:10). What was in Judas’ mind as the Lord looked around the room? Or think of the mind of Thomas when he was told that Jesus had been raised. Or of Nathanael when he first heard the Nazarene speak. Think of each personal encounter.

Tradition tells us, how accurately I cannot say, that all of the fourteen, save John, died violently. The Scriptures tell us the end of Judas and James—very early testimony indicates that others died in such places as Ethiopia, Persia, India, Phrygia and Rome. We know they gave themselves selflessly to preach the gospel to the whole world. To think of who they were and what they did will make us better.

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THE APOSTLES

The Apostle Peter: A Common Man

Russ Bowman

IN THE HISTORY OF GOD'S DEALINGS WITH man, the Bible recounts the lives and deeds of many great men. These men and their works have been recorded in the Scriptures so that we may learn from their successes and failures. Hebrews 12:1 attests to the influence that this "great cloud of witnesses" may have on our lives. And yet, there are many Bible characters to whom I cannot relate. I cannot picture myself in Adam's position—the first man, his problems, his life together and apart from God. Nor can I imagine the thoughts of Moses as he stood facing the Red Sea with the children of Israel behind him, raising his arms, commanding the sea to part. To

death. I can relate to someone who is sometimes rash and impulsive. Also, Peter recognized the Messiah and followed Him (John 1:41; Matthew 4:20), just as we heed the apostles when we become Christians. Peter was a leader—speaking first, representing the apostles, confessing Christ, and preaching the gospel (Acts 2). Most Christians possess at least a certain amount of leadership qualities. Peter was a common man. I can relate to Peter in these areas, yet I can sympathize even more with the fact that this man, an inspired apostle of Christ, committed sin. He did not commit murder, or adultery, or theft—he simply did not

the fool trusts in himself, and all who have ever learned to ride a bicycle must realize that anyone can fall (1 Corinthians 10:12).

The next step down was his rash promise to the Lord (Mark 14:31). In promising to go to death before denying Christ, Peter fails to consider the cost of his words. His impulsiveness and over-confidence win out over clear thought and sound judgment. Christ even told him candidly in John 13:36 that Peter could not follow Him, yet Peter disagreed.

In verses 37-38 of Mark 14, Peter suffers the result of his over-confidence when he falls asleep while standing guard for Christ in the garden. Awakening to a violent mob and confronted with his own failure, Peter reacts violently, draws his sword and cuts off the ear of the servant of the High Priest. I am sure that the ear was not his target. Many common people, even Christians, react violently when confronted with their sins and susceptibilities.

Next, Peter denies Christ. At first he simply did not stand up for the Lord, following at a distance (Luke 22:54). Eventually, however, he was approached as a disciple of Jesus and he cursed and blatantly denied association with Him. The confidence of an inspired apostle became the cowardice of the common man. I can sympathize with the sorrow and guilt he must have felt when the cock crew and Jesus turned to look at him (Luke 22:60-61).

Peter was cut to the heart. However, instead of falling to defeat (as did Judas), he repented, and this common man rose to a place of faithfulness in the eyes of God, becoming a stalwart in the army of the Lord. His change in attitude was the key, as he states later in 1 Peter 5:6, when he admonishes us to humble ourselves so that God may exalt us.

We can learn a great lesson from Simon, son of Jonah, a man hand-picked by Christ, inspired of God, and author of the Holy Scriptures—a common man.

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"There are many Bible characters to whom I cannot relate. I cannot picture myself in Adam's position—the first man, his problems . . . Nor can I imagine the thoughts of Moses as he stood facing the Red Sea . . . I can relate to Peter, for he was a common man."

comprehend and sympathize with David's hardships in leading the world's most powerful nation is beyond my abilities. While I can gain much from their attitudes and faith, I do not personally relate to Daniel or Isaiah or John the Baptist or Paul the Apostle.

However, there is one famous biblical character for whom I feel a unique understanding. Simon Peter. I can relate to Peter, for he was a common man.

By profession he was a fisherman, and I feel sure that he and I could engage in a lengthy conversation about fishing. We can see in his character a certain impulsiveness, for it was Peter who in Luke 22:31-33 assured the Lord that he would follow Him both to prison and to

stand up for the Lord. Who among us cannot relate to that? Peter was a common man.

The fall of Peter is recorded in such detail that we can trace every step in his descent from faithfulness to faithlessness. This detail can help us to see our own demise before it occurs if we will only look honestly at ourselves.

The first step in Peter's fall was his over-confidence. In Mark 14:29, after Christ assures the apostles that He will cause displeasure to afflict them, Simon Peter impulsively answers that "although all shall be offended, yet not I," a very confident promise considering that the Son of God had just predicted the opposite. Proverbs 28:26 states that only

THE APOSTLES



Andrew: The Glory of the Ordinary

David Crawford

ANDREW WAS CHOSEN BY JESUS TO BE ONE of the twelve apostles. The statement contains such a self-evident truth that it may seem needless to begin with such a reminder. But think again. That same statement has a special distinction about it. How many men has that statement ever been said about? Chosen by *Jesus*; to be one of the *twelve apostles*! What a grand responsibility. And for whom? A man named Andrew. And why? We do not read that he applied for and interviewed for the position. He presented no impressive resume or brilliant example of his work. No, he did not even "try out" for the spot! Andrew was chosen not necessarily for who he was but because of the servant of God he would become. As for his qualifications, suffice it to say that Dale Carnegie would have told him, "Don't call us, we'll call you." But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, called him. He called him to one of the highest offices ever held by a human being, prominent political offices included.

Andrew was a plain man, the kind God likes to use and make feel special. It appears that the full scope of his life was characterized by simplicity, from his educational and occupational endeavors to his social and domestic life. He lived with his brother Peter, Peter's wife, and her mother (Mark 1:29). They lived in Bethsaida which is located on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was in this body of water that he made his livelihood as a fisherman (Mark 1:16). Thus, when we total up what we know about the life of Andrew, we find that it equals *ordinary*. But don't feel sorry for Andrew in his ordinariness, because this is the very thing that God does *extraordinary* things with! In the service of the King the ordinary find glory. Such was the case with Andrew; such can be the case with us.

The most striking account of the character and disposition of Andrew can be read in John 1:35-42. From this record we learn that he was a disciple of John. We may note from this observation that Andrew was a man willing to commit himself to God, not merely a casual

listener. When he and another disciple heard John describe Jesus as the Lamb of God, they both began to follow Jesus. Their shift of loyalty was not meant as an insult to John the baptizer, but was rather the result of an accurate perception on their part. What Andrew and this other disciple perceived was that the Lamb of God offered what neither John nor any other man could give. It is somewhat unfortunate to note that this "unlearned and ignorant" man saw what scores of "brilliant" men have never seen. Upon following Jesus, Andrew and his companion were asked by Christ, "What do you seek?" Their response was, "Rabbi, where are You staying?" They were indeed seeking the right thing—an extended visit with this Great One and

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not just a polite and rushed encounter. Andrew *sought* the Lord. He did not wait until someone forced the issue. He had previously been out in the wilderness surrounding the Jordan seeking the message of God through the prophet John. And while many seem to actively avoid the company of the Lord, Andrew was one who actively sought the companionship and teaching of Christ. His visit with the Lord was not wasted. What he learned in his first contact with Christ was enough to change the rest of his life, and his eternal destiny. Such could and should be the case with us.

Immediately following this life-changing visit with Jesus, Andrew landed perhaps his greatest catch as a fisher of men. In what better direction to cast one's net than in the direction of a

soul near and dear to the "fisherman?" The Scripture says, "He first found his own brother Simon." There is considerable debate as to how the word "first" should be understood. It could mean that he found his own brother, then the other disciple's. It may also be taken to mean that he found his brother and then the other disciple found his own brother. Some understand the verse to mean that the first thing in the morning Andrew found Peter. And others feel that the employment of the word "first" means that Andrew, before doing anything else of significance, went and found his brother with the intent of sharing the good news with him. With or without the term "first" in the passage, we ought to see that with a sense of joyous urgency Andrew hurriedly found a dear soul with whom to share the news, "We have found the Messiah." A short but sweet message, obviously spoken with genuine conviction about the substance, and gentle concern for the prospect. Notice what the Scripture says Andrew did: "And he brought him to Jesus." I am convinced that whatever Peter did when he got to Jesus would not have diminished the merit of Andrew's bringing him there. We often measure our personal work successes only in terms of how many we've baptized, yet we may have brought many souls to Jesus who rejected Him once they got there. Our responsibility is to bring people to Jesus or bring Jesus to people—and our success is when that is done. Andrew needed no prompting or prodding for this effort other than the urging of love in his heart. For what it's worth, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* records that Andrew died in Edessa at the hands of Egeas the governor. This account says that he died on a cross put in the ground like an "X" for preaching against idolatry in the city. Whatever the case, Andrew was a man ready to do God's will; believing Christ at first testimony, following Him at first sight, and sharing Him at first opportunity. Truly he exemplifies the glory of the ordinary.

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THE APOSTLES

Mark Davis

James the Disciple

SOME TODAY USE THE TERM DISCIPLE AND the idea of discipling instead of terms like convert and believer. It is true that a Christian should be both a learner and an active follower of Jesus, and not simply a believer and convert—in the sense of a bench-warmer or building occupant. The subject of this article is James, the brother of John, the son of Zebedee, who became a disciple and apostle of the Lord. Our aim is to notice some particulars in his life with a view to understanding how we can be better disciples of Christ. This is not to say that James was a perfect role model, but rather that we can learn both positive and negative lessons from what he actually did, and from that standpoint improve our walk with Jesus.

James, John, and their father Zebedee were fishermen by trade, apparently engaged in a family business. They had their own boat and nets. According to Luke 5:1-11, they had at some time entered into a partnership with Simon and were working the coast of Genessaret (on the Sea of Galilee), when Jesus, being pressed by the multitudes, entered into Simon's boat and told him to set out for the deep part and to let down his nets. Simon hesitantly did so and miraculously the nets were filled with a great draught of fish—in fact there were so many that Simon called to his partners (James and John) to help him get them to shore. In verses 9-11 we find that Simon, James and John were so amazed by the miracle that they left all to follow Jesus. Matthew gives us more details about what James and John did in chapter 4:21-24. That passage says that they *straightway* left their boat and their father and followed Jesus.

This must be the attitude of a disciple. For the most part, our decision to follow Jesus is not a choice between good and bad, but between what is good and what is the *best*! Jesus tells us in Matthew 10:37 that if one loves his family more than Jesus, he is not worthy of Him!

In Luke 6:12-15, we are told that Jesus chose from His disciples twelve men to also be called apostles, and the three

fishermen from Galilee, Simon, James and John, were part of that number. They were the only ones of the twelve that the Lord re-named. In Mark 3:16-17, Simon is called Peter, probably because of his confession in Matthew 16. James and John are called *Boanerges*, or sons of thunder. Perhaps this has reference to their zealous attitude in serving the Lord. At any rate, these three became the inner circle, or confidants of Jesus, and were privy to certain events

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that the rest of the twelve were not, as in Luke 8:51-56, when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter. In this event they had special witness borne to them that Jesus was the resurrection and the life. In Luke 9:28-36 Jesus took them to what Peter would later call the Holy Mount, and they beheld the majesty of Jesus when, in a sense, He pulled back the disguise of mortality and revealed His true identity as the Son of God. These two private events would impress me if I were James; I might have the desire to militaristically

make others know Jesus. If they were stubborn, I might request the chance to call down fire from heaven to destroy them, Luke 9:54-55. But, then as a disciple, or follower of Jesus, I would be using my faith as a cloak of wickedness to fulfill an earthly selfish desire. At that point, I have left the ranks of a disciple and need the rebuke of the Lord because my pride has gotten in the way of my service, and all I can now see is the necessity of eliminating another's view to bolster my own self-worth. On another occasion, recorded in Mark 10:35-41, James and John asked if they could sit in a place of prominence in the kingdom, one on the right side of Jesus and the other on the left. This request caused a stir among the rest of the twelve. I can understand why; unfortunately there are still seekers of prominence today in the kingdom.

Finally, if I were to put James in a test tube and analyze him from the inference of Scripture, I would have to say that he is, to a great extent, like disciples today—ever learning and growing into the type of follower that the Lord desires. He understood who Jesus was and was willing to give up all to follow Him, even though there were moments of weakness, especially at the arrest, when he followed the crowd and deserted the Lord. Yet, after being edified by the resurrection, we see him as a staunch advocate of truth, as in Acts 5:29 when on trial before the council he said with the rest of the apostles, "We must obey God rather than men." He ceased not to teach Jesus as the Christ, even when he was beaten (verses 41-42). When Herod Agrippa I stretched out his hand to afflict certain of the church, Acts 12:1-2, James was the first apostle to die for the Lord. All disciples have their strengths and weaknesses, but true colors always show forth during a crisis. I suppose that the greatest shadow that James casts upon us is one of conviction. If the government began to afflict the church today, would you be the first to die?

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THE APOSTLES



John: The Friend of Jesus

Harold Hancock

WHILE HERE ON EARTH JESUS CHOSE twelve men to be His witnesses unto the world (Acts 1:8). They would, therefore, have to travel with Jesus from His early ministry until His death, and they would have to see the resurrected Savior (Acts 1:21-22). God would empower them with the Holy Spirit that they might confirm the words which were at the first spoken by our Lord (Hebrews 2:3-4). One of the twelve chosen by Jesus was John the son of Zebedee (Matthew 10:1-2; Mark 3:14-19).

It is very likely that Salome was the mother of John. This is deduced by comparing the account of the women near the cross in Matthew 27:56 to that of Mark 15:40. Some have added John 19:25 to the textual comparison and have suggested that Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus; thus making James and John cousins to Jesus.

John was a fisherman by trade. He was the brother of James and a partner to Peter and Andrew (Luke 5:7,10). John, along with these men, was called in the early part of Jesus' ministry to be a fisher of men, and he answered the call immediately by forsaking all and following Jesus (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:15-20).

John accompanied Jesus on occasions when few disciples were invited by the Lord to do so. He was among the limited number of disciples to witness the raising of Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:51), and among those who ascended into the mount to see Jesus transfigured (Matthew 17:1-2). Only John and two other disciples heard Jesus' discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13:3), and only these three went deep into the garden with Jesus on the night of His betrayal (Mark 14:33).

It was John who announced to the Lord that he and other of the apostles had encountered one casting out demons in Jesus' name, who would not follow with them, and thus they had forbade him (Mark 9:38; Luke 9:49-50). James and John together wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village which had not received the Lord

(Luke 9:51-54). And it was these same two who, while in the company of their mother, or perhaps through their mother, requested of Jesus high places in the kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21; Mark 10:35-37). On each of these occasions Jesus saw the need to explain more fully the nature of His mission and kingdom. Perhaps it was the temperament displayed by James and John in instances such as these that caused Jesus to refer to them as "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17).

After the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, John is often found in the company of Peter. Peter and John healed the lame man (Acts 3:4-7) and spoke boldly to the rulers about the

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matter (Acts 4:13-20). Peter and John traveled together to Samaria to impart gifts of the Holy Spirit unto those who received the word of God at the preaching of Philip the evangelist. None of the other works of John are recorded for us in the book of Acts. Yet, John was recognized by Paul as a "pillar" among the apostles and the church (Galatians 2:9). John must have been busy in the work of the Lord!

The fourth Gospel speaks of two disciples of John the Baptist who, upon hearing John's testimony that Jesus was the Lamb of God, immediately followed Jesus and abode with Him that day. One of these disciples was Andrew (John

1:35-40). The other disciple's name is not disclosed. The Gospel of John also speaks of a disciple "whom Jesus loved." This disciple was near Jesus at the pass-over supper (John 13:23), stood near the cross, and was entrusted by Jesus with the care of His mother (John 19:25-27). It was this same disciple who, upon hearing of the empty tomb, ran with Peter to investigate (John 20:2-9), and who first recognized the risen Savior when He appeared to the apostles near the sea (John 21:3-7). It is likely that on each of these occasions the unnamed disciple is the apostle John.

If John the apostle was at one time a disciple of John the Baptist and heard John bear witness of Jesus, one can readily understand why John would eagerly leave all and follow after Jesus. If John the apostle is the "disciple whom Jesus loved," John becomes not only a part of the inner circle of apostles, but perhaps the closest of Jesus' associates on earth. No other apostle is spoken of with such terms of endearment. If John is this beloved disciple of the Lord, then it is John of whom it was rumored that he "would not die," but live until the coming of Christ. John, himself, corrected the misunderstood words of Christ by stating that Jesus did not say he (the beloved disciple) would not die and then by quoting Jesus' exact statement: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is it to thee?" (John 21:23).

Our knowledge of John ends on the Isle of Patmos where we leave him, a brother and companion in tribulation and in the kingdom, having seen and recorded the vision of the heavenly city (Revelation 1:9; 21:1-2).

The apostle John serves as an example for all of us of what Jesus can do with an ordinary person who is willing to forsake all and follow Him. John faithfully discharged the work committed unto him. All took knowledge that he had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). May Jesus have such a profound effect upon our lives! And may we someday enjoy the heavenly city seen by John.

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THE APOSTLES

Philip Who?

Gary Copeland

EUNUCHS. USUALLY NOT MUCH IS SAID about them. But in the book of Acts, God singles out such a man to hear Christ's gospel. The eunuch's teacher was Philip. After establishing that Christian contact with Africa (chapter 8, verses 26-39), Philip preached his way to Caesarea (verse 40), where he is next found, with a family, in chapter 21. Verse 8 identifies him as "Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven" (referring to the Hellenistic Jews of chapter 6, verse 5). So, the Philip in Acts is not Philip the apostle. This fact is also seen in his not imparting the Holy Spirit to any new converts. The people of Samaria had to wait for apostles (Peter and John) in order to receive that gift (8:14-17). So, where to now?

Only four passages reveal the character of Philip the apostle. All of the other references simply list the apostles and clarify the authority Jesus gave them (Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; Acts 1:12-14). The verses vital to this study are found in John's account of the gospel.

First, there is an account of Philip's simple, but effective, testimony to Nathanael in chapter 1. Having been summoned by Jesus to follow, Philip found Nathanael (This implies a search, as opposed to a meeting by chance. There's a sermon there.) and related the good news. Nathanael responded skeptically, as many do today. Rather than arguing with him or trying to convince him on the basis of his testimony alone, Philip simply said, "Come and see" (verse 46). The gospel's power shines forth so brightly when men lay aside arguments and personal experiences. Taking people directly to truth's source and letting them "see" Jesus for themselves has been and continues to be the only truly effective teaching method. Presenting the bare facts of Jesus' awesome works and His sacrifice that shook the foundations of hell is the only way to really change men's lives in a meaningful way. Philip's example teaches modern Christians to hold open their Bibles to skeptics, saying, "Come

and see."

Secondly, Jesus singled out Philip to be tested and taught. At the feeding of the 7,500 (a reasonable estimate; compare Matthew 14:21), Philip's faith was still lacking. Andrew and Philip both sought common sense answers to the problem rather than depending on Jesus.

Thirdly, in John 12:20-22, some Greeks approach Philip asking to see Jesus. Philip tells his friend Andrew. Those two go to Jesus. The names Philip (lover of horses) and Andrew (manly) are both Grecian, and Bethsaida (house

means, though, the only apostle who lacked a perfect understanding of his divine teacher at this time. John records more of Jesus' teachings about His mission, starting in 13:31, just after Judas Iscariot leaves to prepare His betrayal. Simon Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Judas the son of James each proceed to ask Jesus questions which lead to further teaching. Philip's was indeed a common misunderstanding.

Philip the apostle. These few passages reveal a sincere, zealous man with a straightforward "come and see"

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of fish), their home town, was influenced by Herod Philip, the ruler of the neighboring region. These two facts indicate that while Philip was Jewish, he possibly knew Greek.

Lastly, Philip asked Jesus to show him the Father, adding, "and it is enough for us" (14:8). This illustrates his eagerness and willingness to believe. Also, he realized that Jesus was capable of granting even such a weighty request. His problem was (and is) a common one: he didn't fully comprehend Jesus' relationship with the Father. Philip was by no

approach. Although he possessed ordinary human weaknesses, Jesus was able to use him in establishing spiritual Israel, the eternal kingdom. After Pentecost, he worked in Asia Minor, especially in Phrygia. Tradition disagrees as to how he died. He was apparently either hanged or crucified (probably the latter) in Hierapolis, near Laodicea and Colosse, in A.D. 54. In either case, however, we see his faith ultimately matured, for he died almost surely a martyr.

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THE APOSTLES



Bartholomew the Guileless

Steve Cawthon

UNTIL RECENT YEARS, I HAD NEVER really thought much about the apostle Bartholomew. His name was useful when, as a child, I memorized the list of "the twelve." It rhymes with "Thomas, too" in the song, "Jesus called them one by one: Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Next came Philip, Thomas, too; Matthew and Bartholomew." Actually, the name only appears four times in the Bible, all of which are in the lists of the apostles (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). It might seem, therefore, that we know nothing unique about this man apart from his activities with the other eleven. But a little further investigation opens for us an intriguing, if not conclusive, conjecture.

In their lists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke pair Bartholomew with Philip. The gospel of John, on the other hand, says nothing of Bartholomew. However, John mentions, in connection with the calling of Philip, a man named Nathanael. Like the apostles, Nathanael was a Galilean (Acts 2:7; John 21:2). Also like the apostles, Nathanael was a witness of the resurrection of Christ (John 21:1-14). It is quite plausible, therefore, to identify Bartholomew as Nathanael, the latter being his given name and the former expressing his filial relation, "son of Tolmai." Like "Simon Bar-Jonah" (Matthew 16:17) or "Elymas Bar-Jesus" (Acts 13:6-8), he was called Nathanael Bartholomew. If this identity is correct, there is a passage of Scripture which affords great insight into the character of this otherwise obscure apostle of Christ.

Most of us have become followers of Christ through the interest and efforts of previous disciples. This was the case with Nathanael. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1:45). What would have become of Nathanael had Philip not shown that interest in him? He must have considered that question himself and he surely felt deeply his own responsibility to tell

others of the Messiah he had met through Philip. What Jesus later said to him and the other apostles was true not only of the miraculous powers given them, but of the message of salvation as well: "Freely ye received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Bartholomew and the others "went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed" (Mark 16:20). Uninspired tradition tells us that this apostle repaid his debt to Philip by preaching the gospel in either India or Armenia. We,

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too, should feel the need to take the message of Christ delivered to us by others, and pass it on to "faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Although Nathanael became a disciple and, we believe, an apostle of Jesus, his commitment was not based merely on Philip's opinion of the Christ. In fact, when told that the Messiah was "Jesus of Nazareth," Nathanael replied, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). I can appreciate his regional bias against a city which was less than ten

miles from his own hometown, Cana. It was not unlike the geographical prejudices I encountered as a youth in Middle Tennessee. Both Davy Crockett and I were from Lawrenceburg. I don't know how Davy felt about it, but I've always been proud of my hometown. Then there's Waynesboro. My friends and I learned to despise that city twenty-five miles west of us. I'm not sure just why. Maybe it was because of the Waynesboro thugs we always saw at the Lawrence County Fair. Or maybe it was because Davy Crockett never lived there. But for whatever reason, I've always wondered, "Can any good thing come out of Waynesboro?"

What I like about Nathanael is that, in spite of his prejudices, he was willing to "come and see." Too many folks allow their preconceived notions to prevent honest investigation. Jesus perceived this man's integrity and paid him the great compliment, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile" (John 1:47). Unlike many Israelites with whom Jesus conversed, Nathanael was without deceit. He made no effort to subtly mislead and ensnare. He was an honest man. This was verified by his response to the evidence Jesus provided. The Lord told him, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Such supernatural knowledge would have been impossible apart from God. Acknowledging the consequences of this evidence, Nathanael said to the Nazarene, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

Nathanael saw his profound confession reconfirmed by "greater things than these" (John 1:50), and ultimately by Christ's resurrection. Tradition variously reports that, after faithfully preaching the gospel, Bartholomew suffered martyrdom either by drowning, flogging or crucifixion. We are confident, however, that the honest Israelite never found reason to doubt his confession. May we imitate his worthy example of unfeigned love for truth.

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THE APOSTLES

Bill Fling

Thomas the Twin

"BUT THOMAS, ONE OF THE TWELVE, called Didymus" (John 20:24). Thomas is the Hebrew and Didymus is the Greek for twin. Thomas was, seemingly, someone's brother. Who was his twin? Legend has produced novel notions and speculations. The truth is, we do not know.

Thomas, the apostle, is not as famous as the "sons of thunder" or the scintillating Simon Cephas, but he was unique and memorable in the fourth gospel account.

1. **He was highly honored.** Jesus prayed for "the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word" (John 17:6). "Thine they were," including Thomas. "Thou gavest them me;" Thomas belonged to the Savior! Thomas "kept thy word." What an epitaph!

Jesus promised, "ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28).

Thomas was not as prominent as the "pillar" apostles, but he was not "one whit behind" the very chiefest in these Scriptures. He was highly honored.

2. **Thomas was courageous and loyal.** When Jesus determined to go on a dangerous journey, "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:8,16). "That we may die;" what courage! "No greater love than this." "Die with him," not just anyone. What loyalty! Thomas was one to count on. He would go the distance; he would sacrifice the ultimate.

3. **Thomas was of good and honest heart.** On the betrayal evening, Jesus said, "I go . . . and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know" (John 14:1-4). They were disturbed disciples, bewildered and perplexed. They didn't understand this "going." At least Thomas did not. He said, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest and how can we know the way?" Barclay wrote, "There

was one among them who could never say that he understood what he did not understand, and that was Thomas. He was far too honest and far too much in earnest to be satisfied with any vague pious expressions. Thomas had to be sure. So he expressed his doubts and his failure to understand, and the wonderful thing is that it was the question . . . which provoked one of the greatest things Jesus ever said."

It was to honest Thomas that Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:5-6).

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4. **Thomas was an independent thinker.** On resurrection day, Jesus appeared to the disciples in closed room. "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came." They claimed to have seen the body of Jesus, the corpse that came to life. Thomas said, "Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:19-25). For this statement he has been branded a "doubter," a skeptic, spoken of with scorn.

I, for one, have always appreciated

and identified with Thomas. He was not credulous, gullible or easily duped. He demanded evidence. An impostor *could* disguise himself and pretend to be the resurrected Savior. He knew that wishful-thinking, disappointed disciples would *want* to believe. He would not be an eager party to a hoax. Neither would he say he believed just to submit to peer pressure. The consequences of a resurrection from death were monumental. The ramifications of such an event would be world-shaking. He could have said, "I have known that man for over three years, left everything to follow Him, would have died with Him, lovingly listened to His every word—if He is alive, I want to see for myself."

Notice his statement, "I will not believe," was preceded by "except." His unbelief was conditional. Conditional on what? On the same evidence the other apostles received—seeing for himself. It was a valid request. Jesus met the need. A week later, He appeared to Thomas! The voice was Jesus' voice; the wounds were real; the body was the Beloved; it was the living Christ!

5. **He made a great confession.** Thomas, all doubts gone, uttered a convincing confession, "My Lord and my God." Jesus was *kurios*, lord in authority—authority from God. The resurrection convicted Thomas that the Nazarene was *more than authority from God: HE IS GOD*. Deity in the flesh. Peter never made *that* confession; the "sons of thunder" never said it so clearly. Truly, Thomas was a unique apostle (John 20:28).

Now, back to the question, "Who was Thomas' twin?" Spiritually—figuratively—anyone can be his twin. How? 1. Belong to Jesus and keep His word. 2. Be courageous and loyal to Jesus. 3. Be of good and honest heart always. 4. Be an independent thinker, examining the Scriptures daily. 5. Believe and confess that Jesus is *Lord and God*.

I want to live in such a way that I can demonstrate that Jesus is my Lord and my God.

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THE APOSTLES



Matthew, James the Son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot and Thaddaeus

L. A. Mott, Jr.

I DO NOT KNOW MUCH AT ALL ABOUT Thaddaeus. He was one of the twelve apostles (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18). According to the text followed by the KJV, he was also called Lebbeus. He appears as Judas the son of James in two of the lists (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). He once asked the Lord a question and received an answer. That is about all that is certain. I like these easy assignments!

Nor is much known about James the Son of Alphaeus, possibly a brother of Matthew or Levi who is also called "the son of Alphaeus" in Mark 2:14. Others identify him with James the Less (literally, the Little; Mark 15:40), an identification that depends, in turn, upon the identification of Clopas (compare John 19:25 with Mark 15:40) with Alphaeus, but this is really "an open question" (J. B. Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 267).

Matthew was a "publican" (Matthew 10:3). When called, he was "sitting at the place of toll" (Matthew 9:9). He was also called "Levi the son of Alphaeus" (Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). After this call he held a banquet in honor of Jesus, apparently for the purpose of bringing his associates to Jesus (Luke 5:29-32). We owe Matthew thanks for the first gospel.

The *publicani* were wealthy men who bought the taxes from Rome and then had them collected in the provinces at a profit. The "publicans" mentioned in the gospels were really men hired by these *publicani* to do the actual collecting of taxes. "The tax-collectors were, as a class, detested not only by the Jews but by other nations also, both on account of their employment and of the harshness, greed, and deception, with which they prosecuted it" (*Grimm-Thayer* on *telones*).

It was bad enough to be a tax-collector, but these men were collectors of taxes for a foreign government. Think of the uproar over "taxation without representation" as our own country was coming to birth. I imagine these Jewish tax gatherers would have been men who did not much care what their country-

men thought of them.

These men would have been in it for the money and many were extortioners (see Luke 3:12-13; 19:8). Count the times "publicans and sinners" are coupled together in the gospels: Matthew 9:10f; 11:19; Mark 2:15f; Luke 5:30; 7:34; 15:1; see also Matthew 18:17; 21:31f.

Of all things! Why did the Lord choose a publican? Could He hope to succeed when He so disregarded every consideration of worldly wisdom and stuck a man of such background right in the world's eye? I certainly would not have chosen a publican. How could a publican get along with a Zealot?

rigorously adhered to the Mosaic law and endeavored even by a resort to violence . . . to prevent religion from being violated by others; but in the latter days of the Jewish commonwealth they used their holy zeal as a pretext for the basest crimes. Josephus, *Wars*, 4, 3, 9; 4, 5, 1; 4, 6, 3; 7, 8, 1 (*Grimm-Thayer*).

Why on earth would Jesus choose a zealot? And how could He expect to keep him from sticking a knife in the back of a publican?

I think my questions must be answered thus. The Lord of glory would be able to

"Of all things! Why did the Lord choose a publican? Could He hope to succeed when He so disregarded every consideration of worldly wisdom and stuck a man of such background right in the world's eye? I certainly would not have chosen a publican. How could a publican get along with a Zealot?"

The second Simon was distinguished from Simon Peter as the Zealot. He is called "the Cananaean" (not Canaanite, KJV) in Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18. Cananaean is an Aramaic word meaning "enthusiast, zealot" (*Arndt & Gingrich*). It is translated in Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13 by the Greek *zelotes* which refers to "one burning with zeal" (GT), "zealot, enthusiast, fanatic" (AG), and is applied to Simon "probably because he had formerly belonged to the party of the Zealots" (AG).

From the time of the Maccabees there existed among the Jews a class of men called *Zealots*, who

accomplish mighty works by means of any man who forsook all to follow Him and yielded himself as clay in a potter's hands. Jesus might also have used the rich, the powerful, the educated and the respectable—and did in the case of Saul—but the rulers were afraid to confess Him (John 12:42f), the wise stumbled over His message (Matthew 11:25) and the rich would not forsake their wealth for greater treasure (Matthew 19:16-22). And all the power, brains and wealth in the world is just a stinking mess when it is not dedicated to the Lord's purposes.

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THE APOSTLES

Louis J. Sharp Judas Iscariot: Misunderstood or Miscreant?

WHEN INFAMOUS DEEDS ARE ENACTED among men, invariably, opposing views are espoused: guilty or not guilty? The case of Judas Iscariot's betrayal of our Lord is no exception. What about this man, Judas? Who was he? Was he misguided, disillusioned, or did he deliberately, knowingly, and with full understanding betray his Lord? Did he follow Christ for material advantage, as some suggest? Was he a "strong patriot who saw in Jesus the foe of his race?" Many theories have been advanced in an attempt to exonerate Judas. What saith the Scriptures?

Judas was the son of Simon Iscariot (John 13:2,26), both men taking the name "Iscariot" from Kerioth or Karioth, one of the "southernmost towns of the tribe of Judah in the Negev toward the boundary of Edom" (Judges 15:25, NIV). Judas was the only apostle not a Galilean. Concerning his call to apostleship, nothing is revealed. His name is duly recorded along with the other apostles, but always with the epithet, "who also betrayed Him" affixed to it (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16). Luke emphatically calls him a traitor! What an appellation to live with in life, face in death, and bear in eternity.

We learn something of his character in an incident at Bethany (John 12:1-8). He asked a question, "not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." We can detect covetousness, insincerity, hypocrisy, and unfaithfulness. Why was such an one selected to be an apostle? We can conjecture about the answer, but revelation does not tell us. We learn from Judas the possibility of apostasy. Could this be one of the reasons he was chosen? The statement of the psalmist, "mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me," was applied to Judas (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18). Yet, he was responsible; he made the decision!

One of the most touching scenes in all of the sordid betrayal occurred in the upper room when Jesus washed the feet

of His disciples. Yes, He washed the feet of Judas, too! The Lord knew, and Judas knew, what was about to happen, yet, Jesus tenderly and lovingly washed Judas' feet. I can't help but wonder, "How did Judas feel?" What was going on in his mind? The words of Jesus must have fallen heavily upon his ears. Jesus said, "ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:10). Again, "If I then, your Lord and

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Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (verse 14). And, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (verse 17). Then, the thunderbolt, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (verse 18) and, "one of you shall betray me" (verse 21). Judas knew what he had conspired to do. He knew he was the culprit, though the rest were

unaware of his treachery (verse 22). Finally, Jesus said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly" (verse 27). And the record states: "He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night" (verse 30). The die was cast, the wheels were turning, the machinery was in operation for the infamous betrayal of the spotless Son of God. Imagine the emotions of that evening.

Judas departed from the company of fellow apostles and from the Lord, never to return again. Oh, yes, he met the Lord in Gethsemane—but not as a friend, but as a traitor! How could he bear to hear the Lord ask, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). Evidently, he could not erase that question from his mind. Having tried to return the money to those Jewish leaders who hired him (Matthew 27:3-10), he went out and hung himself. The prophet Jeremiah had spoken of a "purchased field" (Jeremiah 32:6-9), and Zechariah gave the price of it, thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13). The price of betrayal was the price of a gored slave (Exodus 21:32). This, in itself, was the final insult to the worth of our Savior.

The story of Judas sadly ends with the words of Luke in Acts 1:17-20: "For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. . . . For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take" (see Psalm 69:25; 108:8). Thus, another was chosen to fill the vacated office of Judas. We are compelled to think of what "might have been!" Judas could have been one of the foundation stones (Ephesians 2:20). His could have been an honored name instead of a dishonorable one; he could have witnessed the resurrection of Christ instead of dying before it; he could have been one of the first citizens of the new kingdom of God, instead of never seeing it. A lost life is a terrible waste! A lost soul an indescribable tragedy! Oh, Judas, why did you betray your Lord?

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THE APOSTLES



Matthias Was Numbered With the Apostles

Don Wilson

MATTHIAS IS MENTIONED IN ONLY ONE paragraph in the Scriptures (Acts 1:15-26). Eusebius (1:12) says Matthias was one of the seventy. One early tradition says his field of labor as an apostle was Ethiopia. But, in fact, we know nothing more about Matthias than what we can read in Acts one. The apostles prayed for the Lord to select (compare Proverbs 16:33) a successor to Judas. "The lot fell to Matthias," and about thirty years later, Luke simply recorded, "He was numbered with the eleven apostles," with no indication that the choice was ever disputed. From Acts one we actually learn more about the apostleship than we do about Matthias.

Who were these with whom Matthias was numbered, and what was their mission? "In the NT *apostolos* . . . always denotes a man who is sent, and sent with full authority" (Kittel, Editor, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, p. 421). Jesus is called the "Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (Hebrews 3:1). Epaphroditus was an apostle of the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25). Barnabas is called an apostle (Acts 14:14; compare 13:2). Other apostles of churches are mentioned in 2 Corinthians 8:23. But our special interest at this time are those "called apostles of Christ by the will of God" (Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1), that is, those who occupied the "office of apostleship" (Acts 1:20,25; Romans 1:5; 1 Corinthians 9:2; Galatians 2:8).

From His disciples, Jesus selected twelve, "whom He also named as apostles" (Luke 6:13-16). After the betrayal by Judas, Matthias was specifically to "become a witness with us [apostles] of His [Christ's] resurrection" (Acts 1:22). Jesus had promised the Holy Spirit to His apostles, and then they would be witnesses. With inspired memory they would testify concerning what they had seen and heard (John 14:26; 15:26-27; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:3-4,8). When Saul was called "to be a witness . . . of what you have seen and heard" (Acts 22:14-15), he had seen and

heard Jesus after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 9:1-2; 15:8-9). They were "not sent from men, nor through the agency of man" (Galatians 1:1). They were the first to hear the words, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15).

The apostles of Christ were sent with authority (2 Corinthians 13:10) as ambassadors of Christ. When they spoke, it was "as if God were entreating you by us" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

power to attest to their unique authority and to confirm what they preached (2 Corinthians 12:12; Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:1-4).

While their teaching is to be received "not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13), Peter reminds us that it was possible for them to sin. He played the hypocrite in Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14). The treasure was truly in earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7).

"Primarily, the significance of the apostles of Christ is not in the character of the men (but weren't they great!) nor in the 'office' they held, but in the mission they accomplished. They laid the foundation of the church. Every living stone ever added to the temple of God is built upon 'the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone.' "

Theirs was "the ministry of reconciliation," as stewards of "the word of reconciliation." They had the "keys of the kingdom," to bind and to loose (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Guided by the Holy Spirit into all truth (John 16:13) they were among Christ's "gifts to men," "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service" (Ephesians 4:8, 11-12). Their inspired preaching and writings were "the Lord's" (1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 14:47), by which other teachers were tested (1 John 4:1,6). They had divine

Primarily, the significance of the apostles of Christ is not in the character of the men (but weren't they great!) nor in the "office" they held, but in the mission they accomplished. They laid the foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). Every living stone ever added to the temple of God is built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14).

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THEME

THE APOSTLES

Paul: "The Least of the Apostles"

Glenn H. Reagan

FOLLOWING HIS RESURRECTION, JESUS appeared personally to His original apostles, then to several hundred brethren at once, and "last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me [Paul] also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:8-10, NASB).

What a remarkable individual, this apostle Paul! He candidly recounts his active persecution of Christians in his early life: "I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons . . . but also when they were put to death I cast my vote against them" (Acts 26:9-11). Yet, by the time of his death (around 64 AD), Paul (whose Hebrew name was Saul, Acts 13:9) had preached the gospel of Jesus to countless numbers of Jews and Gentiles (note his preaching journeys recorded in Acts) as well as authored by inspiration thirteen (not counting Hebrews) of the twenty-seven New Testament books.

Paul, "the least of the Apostles?!" Not hardly, especially in view of the impact that his life and writings have had on mankind, including you and me! Paul so reflected the Lord and His will in his life that he remarked: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20a). He encouraged the Corinthian Christians to "be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Active persecutor to active proclaimer of Jesus Christ; what a remarkable change by the "least of the apostles!"

Background. Paul (or Saul, double names being common for Jews of the dispersion) was born in the busy Greco-Roman city of Tarsus of Cilicia around the beginning of the first century. A noted trading center known for its manufacture of goats' hair cloth, Tarsus was probably where Paul learned his trade of "tentmaking" (Acts 18:3). Having been born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28), although it is not revealed how

his parents gained the coveted status, Paul grew up in a Gentile environment while retaining a strong Jewish heritage. He was born of purest Jewish blood, of the tribe of Benjamin, and the son of a Pharisee (Philippians 3:4-6; Acts 23:6). At the proper age (maybe 13) he was sent to Jerusalem where he completed his studies under the famous teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:1-5; 26:3-4), whose own background was of the liberal school of Hillel. Here Paul became a Pharisee after being taught the "strictness of our fathers' law" (Acts 22:3) and was zealous for God even to the persecution of "the Way to the death." In his fanatical devotion to Judaism, which we see introduced in his support of the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58), Paul was convinced that Christians were heretics who blasphemed against Jehovah, and, thus, deserved death. His persecutions, although themselves blasphemous, were carried out in sincere ignorance in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:13).

His conversion and commission as an Apostle of Christ. It is not strange that one so adamant against Christ would be called into question when he was found later to be advocating Christ. Such was the case of the apostle Paul. In the book of Acts as well as in many of his epistles, Paul defended both his conversion and apostleship (see Acts 9:1-30; 22:1-21; 26:1-23). It was through divine intervention (the appearance by Jesus to Paul on the road to Damascus) that Paul came to realize that Jesus was not a heretic but the fulfillment of God's promises to man (Acts 13:32-41). Jesus of Nazareth *was* raised from the dead and was "so declared with power to be the Son of God" (Romans 1:4)! Paul believed this truth, and his conversion was made complete with his obedience to the Lord's command to be immersed in water for the remission of his sins (Acts 22:10,16). Having, then, a new understanding, Paul, in becoming a Christian, did not depart from the religious hopes of his people as embodied in the Old Testament (Acts 24:14-16; 26:6-7). Rather, his zeal for God was now being properly channeled to *reveal*, not *conceal*, the love of God for all mankind in

His Son Jesus Christ. In fact, Paul's prayer for his Jewish brethren was that they also might redirect their zeal for God toward God's righteousness (Romans 10:1-4).

The record of Paul's apostleship is made clear in Acts 26:15-18 where Jesus explained to Paul that he was being appointed as a minister and witness of the gospel of Christ primarily to the Gentiles, "to whom I am sending you." So even though Paul had not accompanied the other apostles and Jesus while He was here on earth (Acts 1:21-22), he was a witness of Jesus' resurrection and an apostle chosen by Christ "as one born out of due time." What he taught came by revelation of Jesus Christ, not men (Galatians 1:1, 12-17). He did not confer with the other apostles concerning the preaching of the gospel, but moved as the Lord directed him. His credentials were evident, and he so chided the Corinthian church: "For I ought to have been commended by you; for in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds" (2 Corinthians 12:11-12).

His impact and challenge for us. Paul in his service for the Lord was in constant conflict and turmoil (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). There were pressures from within as well as without. Yet, while the external picture of his life displayed such tension and anxiety, his message was one of peace, harmony, joy and happiness. There was a contentment, a release in Jesus Christ that nothing else on earth could offer. Paul *learned* this by allowing Christ to rule in his heart. The contentment did not itself come by inspiration; it came by *experience*, by Paul applying in his life the principles he had received by inspiration and which he has recorded for us. This, then is *our* challenge: "The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, *practice these things*; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9).

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That's Life!



Dee Bowman

EVERY MAN COULD IMPROVE HIS LIFE CONSIDERABLY by more carefully choosing his words. In the heat of controversy it is our words which sting and bite, which ruin and destroy. In times of joy how often we load our words with envy, extending our spirit of competitiveness into someone else's joy. How many times we just throw our minds into neutral and let our tongues idle on, contributing nothing at all to the conversation. And who has not stuttered in diffidence when entering the house of mourning? Words are the expressions of our character. We should choose them wisely and well.

* * *

WHEN I WAS A LITTLE BOY I used to sit in the warm sunshine on an autumn afternoon and marvel at what I could hear. The sound of a distant hammer, building some new thing. The sound of the cotton gin's whistle, shrieking the news that the shift was about to change. The chug-a-lug of the power plant down by the water tower. The backfire of someone's old car as it sputtered down the gravel street in front of our house. The leaves rattling at the insistence of the fall breeze. Occasionally I would hear the dull drone of an airplane as it came across the sky, loudly roared by, and then faded into the distance, repeating on the other side of the sky the same monotonous drone of its coming. Sometimes I could even hear the meadowlarks at the edge of the little town where I lived as they warbled their sweet song of the field. I was at peace with all these things, respecting, admiring them. Ah, the peace of the little boy! How can I capture it again?

* * *

TO REMAIN FAITHFUL IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY is the true test of character. The character of a man is not what you see, nor what he tells you of himself. The character is what he is, and oftentimes a man's genuine self

surfaces only when he is thrust into the midst of some adverse circumstance. There you will see the real man. With the Christian, he turns out to be just what you thought he was—just what you had seen—only better.

* * *

ONE OF THE HARDEST THINGS TO DO IN LIFE is to sacrifice your pride. Pride so intertwines us that it becomes almost impossible to divorce it from any objective reactions to life's situations. But pride is not inherently evil. It's what we allow it to do to us—our misuse of it—that makes it harmful. Water can be both good or bad; it can quench your thirst or cause you to drown. Fire can heat your food or burn you to death. It depends on how they are used as to whether they are good or bad. So it is with pride. It is good when it is managed in the direction of self-esteem; it's bad when it is allowed to manage us toward egotism or self-elevation.

* * *

YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU GET RIGHT DOWN TO IT, most of us don't diet for health reasons. No, if that was it we'd probably just take our chances. Most of us diet for cosmetic reasons. That is, we're more concerned about how we appear to men than just being healthy. Now, I'm certainly not opposed to that; it would be an ugly world if we all were just to let ourselves go. But I remind you that if we'll do that kind of thinking about the physical act of dieting we just might do the same thing regarding the more important spiritual matters. Maybe—just maybe—we ought to think about that.

* * *

THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY is not measured by what you get out of it, but by what it gets out of you.

Following the Guiding Cloud (I)

L. A. Mott, Jr.

The children of Israel remained encamped as long as the cloud was over the tabernacle; but when the cloud arose they broke camp and followed the cloud (Numbers 9:15-23). Disciples of Jesus should in like manner take their lead from the Cloud that goes before. Consider some applications.

If providential circumstances can be misleading and even revelation can be misinterpreted (last article), then attitude becomes of surpassing importance. We must look for God's will as the pearl of great price which we simply must have, no matter what we lose. Jesus defines the necessary attitude: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John 7:17). Observe: not "know His will" but "do His will." So we must come to the Scriptures with a stubborn determination to do the will of God.

On the other hand Paul wrote about people who "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). It was not that they received not the truth. They did not want it. They "received not the love of the truth." God punishes that attitude by sending "a working of error, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged" (verses 11-12). He sends a preacher who will tell them what they want to hear and who can make a lie sound plausible and believable. They believe it and are damned, and that is what they deserve because they do not want the truth.

We will not profit from this passage if we reflect upon "people like that we know" and do not take personal warning with regard to our attitudes. We take a lot of satisfaction and do a lot of boasting about our commitment to Scripture. But our commitment to Scripture is not even tested until Scripture is applied to our own sins. Then we know whether we are committed to following the Guiding Cloud.

Following the Guiding Cloud means making constant use of God's words. These words must be upon our hearts;

we must "teach them diligently" to our children; we must talk of them when we sit in the house and when we walk by the way; when we lie down and when we rise up; they must be constantly before our eyes (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). We must make little signs to remind us of scriptural truth; we must read the Scriptures; we must meditate upon them and memorize them and talk to our children about the things of God. The Scriptures must be the mirror in which we look. And we must not merely turn away unchanged, but we must go on looking and be changed and thus blessed (James 1:22-25).

We cannot teach our children to love and reverence the Scriptures simply by praising and recommending the Scrip-

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tures. They must see that the Scriptures are important to us and vital to our lives.

We must follow the Guiding Cloud in making decisions—the moves we make; job changes; the persons we date and marry. God's will must be considered and His lead followed in all such decisions. Lot considered only the well-watered plain of the Jordan—not the depravity of Sodom—when he decided to move his tent toward Sodom (Genesis 13:10-13). The failure to consider spiritual factors was disastrous. When he warned his sons-in-law of the coming judgment on Sodom they did not take him seriously—thought he was kidding. Such is the influence of a righteous man who compromises. Lot got his wife out,

but her heart was in Sodom and she looked back and became a pillar of salt. Lot's daughters got him drunk and each in turn slept with him so they could preserve his seed. Such depravity! Read the whole sordid tale in Genesis 19! Who could have guessed Lot was choosing such a package when he chose to move to Sodom, looking only at material factors, ignoring the spiritual?

We must do better. We must follow the lead of our Guiding Cloud in all moves and decisions.

Our confidence in the Guiding Cloud must not fail when we have problems. I have learned a lot in recent years about using God's word and prayer to solve problems.

Albertus Pieters called Psalm 37 "The Psalm for the Fretful" (*Psalms in Human Experience*). He recommended this psalm, along with prayer, as a cure for the anxious, fretful spirit. He advised reading it every day for a month and asserted that the fretting would be gone at the end of the month.

I do not remember exactly when I began following this advice, but I have long been able to add my testimony to that of Pieters. And I have found that this use of Scripture and prayer can solve more than one problem.

Your problem may be one of anxiety or it may be a problem with relationships. Some of us preachers may need to get our heads straight with regard to our work. Whatever the problem, find the Scriptures that tell you what you need to hear and live with them every day for a month. Read with prayer. Begin by asking God, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18). Then thank Him each time He does, for He certainly will. Be open to counsel and correction, ready to repent of and to confess any sin of which you are convicted. This, I think, is the way one uses Scripture and prayer to deal with problems. Above all, instead of taking matters into our own hands, we must be determined to follow the Guiding Cloud.

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The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"I will call upon Jehovah, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from my enemies" (18:3). "They cried, but there was none to save; even unto Jehovah, but he answered them not" (18:41).

God Answers Some, Rejects Others

There are some men to whom the divine heart is open; there are others to whom it is closed. The reason for the difference is seen in the condition of the *human heart*. If we love God (verse 1) and trust in Him for deliverance (verse 2) and call upon Him as one who is "worthy to be praised" (verse 3)—then He will hear us.

1. **God hears and answers His followers.** David was a man who trusted in God and acknowledged his dependence on Him. He was one who offered God praise—not just in good times, but also in times of darkness and difficulty. That is something that is hard to do. Praising God is easy when all things are going well in our lives; but when it seems that we are about to be engulfed by the inequities and perplexities of life, it is much harder. In times like these we need to remember God's past goodness. Trials are a test. And there are certain principles which we would do well to hold on to, whatever comes. First, *God's Fatherly care*. This relationship still stands. God does not change His love, though He may change His ways. Through every circumstance and affliction, He cleaves to His people. We must likewise cleave to Him. Second, *the power of prayer*. God has infinite resources, but they are only available to us by prayer. We may not be able to see how help can come, but we must not lose faith in God's word. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honor him" (Psalm 91:15). God's character is such that He is open to His followers:

"For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication" (1 Peter 3:12).

2. **God rejects those who set themselves against Him.**

These are the ones who "cried, but there was none to save" (verse 41). It may seem strange to us that these heathen enemies of David would cry to the Lord, but they *did* sometimes, as a last resort, pray to a foreign god when their experience showed Him to be more powerful than their own. When Jonah was fleeing to Tarshish, the sailors on the boat cried to their gods to no avail; finally they turned to Jehovah, and said, "We beseech thee, O Jehovah . . . let us not perish for this man's life . . . for thou, O Jehovah, hast done as it pleased thee" (Jonah 1:14). When one is set upon evil and is opposed to the Lord and His cause, God will not hear that man. It is written of Saul when the Philistines were coming against him that "he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly." The reason is given in the next verse, for "when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not" (1 Samuel 28:5-6). God's prophet warns us: "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud; for Jehovah hath spoken. Give glory to Jehovah your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jeremiah 13:15-16). It is foolish for men to cry out to God when the whole course and character of their lives is opposed to Him. Peter says, in contrast to God hearing the righteous, that "the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:12). And Solomon says, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination" (Proverbs 28:9). The apostle Peter tells Christian husbands that they must conduct their lives in a godly manner "to the end that your prayers be not hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

Yes, it is true that God answers some, but rejects others. But the reason is not that God is fickle. His response is different because the condition of men's hearts is different. Let us be sure that we so live that God will hear our prayers.

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1984.

Thoughts On An Old Vermont Well

Jeffery Kingry

I attended the tail end of a Milton Historical Society meeting recently. I had to miss the first part because of obligations to our Wednesday night Bible study. When I arrived with my family, I was interested to see an old map of the Milton area back in the 1850's. I picked out old buildings, roads, and landmarks and studied how things had changed and stayed the same.

There were two roads that went by my home over 130 years ago. Just above a split in the stagecoach road (which doesn't exist anymore) there was a mark on the map for an old homestead. I had found the stone foundation a few years ago, but was excited to see on the map the layout of the entire farm.

Returning to the old homestead I found the remains of the posts for the old barn, long since gone, and a half buried trash dump that yielded a few old bottles and some broken crockery. I found the well, too.

The original well must have given good water because I know that my well yields the best sand-filtered spring water I have ever tasted. But, this old well was gone. A dropped rock yielded only a thud, not a splash. Years of neglect had filled it up. I could visualize how it had happened. The old couple who had lived in the old house had passed away. No one fished out the rubbish that blew in. Then soil blew in and no one bothered to clean it out. It accumulated, and got worse and worse as the trees grew up in what had once been a carefully tended front yard. Leaves choked the well until it was filled. Roots grew through the well walls causing them to crumble. In time there was no longer any well in the bottom.

Looking down at the remains of the old well, I thought how similar it is with people. A stranded ship, an injured bird, an overgrown garden, a violin without strings, a church building in ruins—all sad sights, often associated with neglect and decay.

Jesus spoke of the life he gives to the believer as a "well of water springing up unto eternal life" (John 4:14). But, there

are some who call themselves Christians who have neglected the well, and there is no water there for them. Throw a pebble into the well and there is no "plunk." Their life has gotten filled with something other than the word of God. Jesus used another illustration of a similar nature—a neglected field, sown with good seed, but choked out by the "cares and concerns of the world" so that no fruit was ever set (Matthew 13; Luke

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18). It was such a sad thing looking down at the decayed remnants of a long-ago life.

Surely you overheard the conversation at the Spit & Whittle Club? Two men exchanging life-long observations. One rubbed his chin and sighed, "Have you noticed," he asked, "how that people always seem to get sick just before they die?" The other man leaned back and thought about that for a moment and

then spat, "Ahyup—very few die healthy."

I might add that very few die spiritually at the height of a healthy, active Christian life. The process is always the same. First they grow "weak and sickly" (1 Corinthians 11:30), and then they "sleep" the sleep of spiritual death (11:30b). People do not "just happen" to lose their health and die spiritually. It is like any other neglect—neglect prayer, fail to study the word of God, carelessly mingle with the rubbish of the world. When we "come down" with sin we make no effort to correct it. We grow weaker. If anyone suggests to us that we need to be treated, to take the divine cure, then we get angry, and declare that there is nothing wrong with us. And then we die. The seed is choked out. The well is filled with garbage and is no longer fit to drink from. The habitual sinner is no longer sensitive to the needs of his soul, his conscience seared and dead.

A doctor told the story about taking a man's medical history, and he asked if the patient's parents were still living. "No sir, they're both dead." "And, what was the cause of their death?" The patient thought a moment and then responded, "I don't rightly recall, but it t'weren't anything serious."

It apparently was serious enough. The patient probably had in mind the choice of cancer, diabetes, tragic accident or such like. Nothing dramatic—just fatal. People may congratulate themselves on the fact that they are free from the guilt of murder, and die from anger. We may never die from theft, but succumb to covetousness. And, so sadly, some people seem to die from nothing. They just "rest" themselves to death.

It will take a lot of work to clear out the neglect of decades. But, it can be done. Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scriptures have declared, Out of his innermost being will spring rivers of continuously flowing water" (John 7:38ff).

P. O. Box 26, Milton, VT 05468

Mining The Scriptures

PRACTICAL EXPOSITIONS



Paul Earnhart

The Sermon on the Mount

The Kingdom and God's Commandments

“Whossoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments . . .” (Matthew 5:19).

Jesus, having cut the ground from under any notion that He came to destroy the law and the prophets by promising their complete fulfillment (5:17-18), now extends His point by addressing the issue of the kingdom's relationship to the commandments of God.

One is tempted to think that Jesus is dealing here (verse 19) with some heady libertines who may have imagined, happily, that Jesus' troubles with the establishment rabbis meant that He intended to free men from the burdensome task of keeping God's law. The context, however, points to the Pharisees as the culprits (verse 20). The people primarily under the gun are not those who in weakness violate a divine command, but teachers of the law who go beyond personal transgression to breaking the very authority of the commands. This is a perfect picture of the Pharisees who by their traditions had subverted the law of God (Mark 7:1-13).

Still, though Jesus may have legalists more than libertines in mind here, His statement has valid application to those “free” spirits who see in the gospel an end to all law. Not only does this fly in the face of the testimony of Scripture (1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2; James 1:25), but it has implications of the most serious kind. Without law sin cannot exist (1 John 3:4) and without sin grace becomes unnecessary and meaningless (1 John 1:7,9).

It would be exceedingly helpful if students of the Scripture could realize that God's law or will for man inheres in creation, not in the covenants. The Creator's expectations for His creature, man, have been in place since Adam. The two greatest commandments (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:28-31) did not first have application when they were included in the covenant made with Israel at Sinai, but were clearly applied to man's behavior toward God and others from his inception (Genesis 4:1-12; 6:5,11-13; 18:20; Jude 7). A man is not under law to God because he is under covenant (new or old). He is under law to God because he is a man. One can only escape God's law by resigning from the human race. Resignations have frequently been tendered, but there is no evidence that any have been accepted. Man, under covenant, makes a commitment to be faithful to God and His commands and receives in turn the promises and blessings of the Lord—but whatever he does there is no escape from divine law.

But why, it is asked, does Jesus, in a sermon on the “gospel of the kingdom,” urge upon His hearers the careful keeping of the least commandment of the law of Moses? The answer is: because His audience was Jewish

and were, even as Jesus spoke, under that covenant. Whatever attitude they had toward God's law as expressed in the Jewish covenant they were bound to bring to the kingdom. The covenant is not so important as the principle of absolute trust and obedience toward God in everything. Anyone disposed to play fast and loose with the smallest command of God, whatever the covenant, is unfit for the kingdom of heaven. A new covenant would come but the principle would remain the same.

Some ordinances of God are manifestly greater than others because they sit closer to the heart of divine righteousness (Mark 12:28-33; Matthew 23:23), but no command of God is without immense significance since the breath of the Almighty is in it (2 Timothy 3:16). The one who rebuked the Pharisees for swallowing camels did not encourage them to eat gnats with relish (Matthew 23:23). James has sought to make us understand that the commands of God are indivisible since *He* is behind them all (James 2:10-11). It is not just a matter of breaking a command, little or great. It is a matter of defying God and breaking faith with Him.

Obedience is not limited as a principle to systems of justification by law (Galatians 3:10). It is also an expression of faith (James 2:14-26) and love (John 14:15,23-24; 1 John 5:3) in the gospel system of grace and justification by faith (Matthew 7:21). As such it has application to salvation in every dispensation (Hebrews 11). The kingdom citizen, like the faithful of all ages, is not seeking to justify *himself* by his earnest obedience to all God's commands, but to return the love which has been poured out upon him so undeservedly. The law of God is a dagger to the heart of the arrogant and self-righteous, but to the Christian it is the standard of righteous conduct to which, under the grace of God, he aspires (Romans 12:1-2). God intends not only to redeem His people but to transform them as well (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

“ . . . shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven” (5:19b). Many otherwise responsible commentators have sought to deprive Jesus' warning of its force by suggesting that those who treat lightly God's lesser commands will not suffer any serious loss. Admitted to heaven's stadium they will simply have to sit in the bleachers rather than in the box seats! We strongly dissent from this view because (1) the rest of the sermon does not agree with it (Matthew 7:21,24-27), and (2) the expression “great” or “greatest in the kingdom” is used by Jesus elsewhere in Matthew to refer to every citizen in the kingdom (Matthew 18:1-4; 20:26-28), admitting of no place for “the least.”

Beware of those teachers who think they know which of God's commandments are important and which are not!

Ways That Work

Harold Dowdy

A Happy Mistake

A few years ago E. C. Owen, a North Georgia preacher, had promised to visit an older woman who had been studying with other Christians. He forgot about the appointment until late in the evening, but decided to go see her in spite of the hour. After having some difficulty getting her to let him in, he taught her and baptized her the same night. The next day, he discovered he had gone to the wrong house.

E. C. was showing us how simple, not how easy, soul-winning is. In fact, there are only *two* elements involved in winning the lost. They are the *sinner* and

must be carefully managed by every Christian, or few sinners will be saved.

Spending our time presenting Jesus to the *right* sinner is also important. Therefore we need to have a means of measuring a man's interest in the gospel, lest we invest our time with those who will never obey. The only tool we dare use for this purpose is the gospel message itself.

That means that we should have a gospel *lesson* that we can present initially (and as soon as possible), which will weed out those who are not really interested. The first ingredient in

the Sunday worship services will likely invite you in when you knock on his door.

Which brings us to *knocking on the door*. That is how you get in the house. If you have not made your hand into a fist and knocked on someone's door who is not a Christian this week, then you probably have not done a big part in carrying out the Lord's commission, this week.

Obtaining the *first* contact is the most difficult. But you only need one contact to have a dozen, because your first student will have friends and family to keep you busy for a month. But you do need the first student. He can be recognized as the visitor at the services, or the caller on the Telephone-Bible-Message recording, the correspondence course student, the PTA president, the next-door neighbor, the spouse of a Christian, the parents of youngsters in Bible classes, etc., etc.

Remember the only thing that works in converting sinners is the *gospel*. Involve everybody in the teaching of the word in as many different classes as possible. Have no "personal work class" except actual teaching situations. That is, set up a class for your prospect and invite Christians to come and bring their Bibles, to read from the Scriptures, and to comment during the class. Of course, someone will need to guide the discussion. Make sure the class is in the prospective Christian's home. That way you teach teachers and convert sinners at the same time.

To summarize: the church that is *growing* (baptizing those outside the family) is the one which is conducting *classes* in the homes of the community. Therefore it takes someone's *time*, to *make a fist*, to *knock* on a door, and present a *Jesus-is-Lord* lesson, to a Sunday *visitor*, and set up a *class* for several in the church to follow up in the teaching.

Open a door, open a Bible, and open a heart—tonight. The one who winneth souls is wise.

2155 Parental Home Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32216

"In New Testament days it sometimes took a miracle to get the sinner and the gospel together. It's not easy to get that job done today. It is almost a miracle to find anyone with enough time 'to spare' to teach the lost . . . Therefore TIME is a crucial element in soul winning."

the *gospel*. Of course, not every sinner will become a Christian when exposed to the truth, but only the hearer can determine that everlasting issue.

In New Testament days it sometimes took a miracle to get the sinner and the gospel together. It's not easy to get that job done today. It is almost a miracle to find anyone with enough time "to spare" to teach the lost. The preacher is too busy with "church" things to teach in someone's home. It may be that he is too busy writing his bulletin or preparing for the great debate. Therefore *time* is a crucial element in soul winning. Time

winning souls is finding out right away who is responsive. The determination as to whether he is interested in the Lord can be made by the sinner's reaction when he hears that first lesson, the very first time you are in his home. So your first lesson needs to be a dandy—something that demands attention.

That brings us to another element. *Getting into* the sinner's home. Who would let you in his home in the first place? It depends somewhat on where you live in the world, as to who will let you into his house. However, in nearly every area, the person who has visited

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Restoring Warmth To Their Hearts

David E. Horton, Jr.

The temperature inside our house was a chilling fifty-five degrees Fahrenheit. Yet the temperature outside our home was six degrees below zero! To someone in Michigan or Wisconsin this may seem mild, but to this South Texas family, living in northeastern Arkansas, it was *cold*! I realized that something must be

that treasure to its proper position in his life.

There is a great need for Christians to restore the truth back to the hearts of mankind. The warmth of the gospel of Christ has been sacrificed to the creeds and theories of misguided men. Those who love the truth and the souls of

So my wife or I simply impress her with the consequences of her inaction. These consequences are not necessarily threats, even though they may be bad. Yet, once she grasps the magnitude of the consequences, usually she can and does accomplish the task.

When we sigh, "I can't spread the gospel," do we really grasp the magnitude of the consequences one faces when truth is lost from his heart? The impact of these consequences may be impressed in two ways. Man without the benefits of the gospel of Christ is lost, doomed to suffer eternal separation from God. His very existence on earth is also doomed to a reliance upon the futile theories of other men.

Christians must restore the Bible to the center of everyone's heart, because of the fearful consequences of separation from God (1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Peter 3:9). The first century Christians certainly perceived this need. Seeing men doomed should also stir our hearts to reach out to them with the gospel.

This message of salvation is so plain and positive that Christians should long for the opportunity, and create opportunities, to spread the truth. This is restoring the New Testament back to the hearts of men and women, both in spirit and practice. Yet as followers of Christ we will be discouraged. We must not be shocked to indifference by trials (1 Peter 4:12). We may, at times, be too easily discouraged by superficial obstacles.

The solution to this problem is simple. Take one step at a time. We must move forward and be constructive in the Lord's work, even as we weed out destructive attitudes and ideals (1 Corinthians 10:3-5; 15:58). It can be done! We must be a determined people who love the Lord and the souls of others (Romans 10:1; 1 Corinthians 10:33). For we are not alone. Remember those who have gone before. Noah loved God and the souls of others enough to preach righteousness to a world with only eight righteous souls (Genesis 6:1-5; 2 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 3:20-21).

1904 Deerwood, Jonesboro, AR 72401

"Christians must restore the Bible to the center of everyone's heart . . . The first century Christians certainly perceived this need. Seeing men doomed should also stir our hearts to reach out to them with the gospel . . . Yet as followers of Christ we will be discouraged . . . We may, at times, be too easily discouraged by superficial obstacles."

done to restore warmth to my home, and my family. It took only a brief moment to begin locating the problem in my heating system and solving it, with the assistance of some good brethren. The lesson to be ingrained is simple. When something valuable is lost, one is motivated to begin an effort to restore

others must seek to restore the truth back to the heart of man. That was the mission of God's people in the first century and it is the mission of God's people today.

My daughter has a bad habit of saying "I can't," when she actually can. "I can't" is her way of saying "I do not want to."

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

J. O. Gaidoo — Firstfruits of Ghana

How far will God go to give an honest man in the heart of Africa an opportunity to hear the gospel? I don't know. But I do know of one man whose opportunities seemed to be arranged by more than mere chance.

J. O. Gaidoo had been in the Salvation Army Church in Ghana, West Africa, for thirty years and was a Major. Yet, as he studied the Bible he was troubled: the Army did not practice water baptism, nor did they observe the Lord's Supper. Shortly before he was to retire, he resigned his post for conscience sake. But where was he to turn?

He responded to an ad in the *Moody Monthly* offering religious literature. Bennie Lee Fudge of Athens, Alabama, sent him samples and a correspondence followed which increased his interest. But the nearest gospel preachers known to Fudge were one thousand miles from Gaidoo.

Brother Fudge wrote to Nigeria asking if anyone could go to Ghana. Wendell Broom and I had one week we could spare, but we lacked \$200 needed to make the trip. Bennie Lee later reported that in the same mail which brought our estimate of need, there came a check from Spain for \$200 to be used "for some worthy cause."

It would be difficult for most Americans to imagine the difficulty of a thousand-mile trip from Eastern Nigeria to Ghana in 1958. Besides the hazards of poor yet heavily traveled roads, there were three national borders to cross. Red tape at one of these delayed the car and forced one of us to fly ahead to locate Gaidoo in time to make appointments for Sunday. This responsibility fell to me.

Seldom in my life have I felt more helpless than on that Saturday morning in the city of Accra — no transportation, limited funds, having only a few hours to find an unknown man in a remote village among people with whom communication was difficult. Seldom have I prayed more fervently or felt more strongly that Providence was with me. Twice my own initiatives were foiled, it seemed by coincidence; but had they succeeded, I would never have found the man I was seeking. Instead, I found myself at a reasonable hour, face to face with J. O. Gaidoo in a totally different village from the one where I expected to find him.

It was an exciting meeting. This tall, thin, extremely black man with the gentlest of features and the kindest demeanor, set me down in his mud house and rushed away to find fruit and cola for my refreshment. Meanwhile, among the books on the table, I found one from

Athens, Alabama. Opening it, I saw underscoring which indicated careful reading; a more welcome sight was a question mark, indicating discretion. Too soon I had to leave but an appointment was made for the next day.

By Sunday, Wendell had arrived and we drove eagerly to Nkum, stopping, as the little mud village came in sight, to ask God's blessings on this first preaching in Ghana. Gaidoo interpreted as we preached to large audiences on Sunday and Monday, and he urged us to return. It was evident that he needed more time to consider our message.

In November of 1958, Broom did return with several Nigerian evangelists. One of them, Solomon Etuk, baptized Gaidoo. Still, he was reserved; thirty years in error had taught him not to put trust in men.

Gaidoo's trust in God, however, became increasingly evident. A visit to Nigeria for study increased his confidence. Returning to Ghana, he began traveling at his own expense, preaching fervently the simple gospel, especially among those whom he had taught while in error. He baptized fifty-five and established at least three churches.

It was my privilege to visit those congregations with him in 1960 and to preach with him in many other villages. He spent a few weeks with us in Lagos, learning "the way of God more perfectly."

Then in July of 1961 came the sad message: "J. O. Gaidoo is dead." Burial was immediate but funeral services were delayed. Some Nigerian brethren and I made the tedious journey once more, this time in sadness.

On our arrival we learned the details of his death. At night, his family heard his devotions: a hymn in English, one in Twi, his prayer and reading of the Scriptures. Next morning, however, they did not see him. Entering his room, they found him still sitting up in bed, his Bible lying on his lap with his glasses resting on it — "asleep in Jesus."

We learned there had been considerable palaver in the village about where to bury him. He had left the Salvation Army; the Methodists did not want him; the decision was to bury him among the heathen. At the last moment a Salvation Army Captain who respected him intervened to prevent this dishonor. But what they could not know was that long before they decided what to do with his body, the angels that bore Lazarus to Abraham's bosom bore his spirit to Paradise. No, I cannot prove it; but may we not express with confidence our hope for one who was so manifestly — a "light in the world."

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

In Defense of the Simple-Minded

Years ago I received my favorite compliment. After I had been in St. Louis for a meeting, a brother there wrote to a friend, "We had Ed Harrell here to preach. He is a good preacher. You know, he is an educated man, but you sure can't tell it from his preaching." Not long ago one of the sisters in Fayetteville confirmed that judgment. She told my wife, "I just love to hear your husband preach. He's so simple-minded."

Simplicity in preaching is, of course, much to be commended. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"

(1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Nothing is more profound than pure, simple truth.

A celebration of simple-mindedness brings considerable comfort. It makes it easier for me to live with my own limitations. There have been times in history when a man could know everything that was known—when one could be a philosopher, scientist, theologian and poet. Even then, the truly wise knew that they knew nothing. In the contemporary world, specialization has consigned us all to artificial compartments isolated from the rest of the world. I not only do not know the same things as philosophers, scientists, linguists and physicians, I can not even talk to them. But we all have access to the same revealed truth.

Years ago while visiting somewhere to preach, I was approached by a young man with a question. He knew that I had a Ph. D. and thought I probably knew everything. He said, "Brother Harrell, I have agreed to talk at a local civic club on the subject, 'The Astronomical Origins of the Universe.' What would you say?" We subsequently had a serious discussion about his question, but my immediate answer was, "I probably wouldn't show up." I hate to tell you, but I know almost nothing about that subject. But what is worse, I know almost nothing about almost everything else. And so, my friend, do you. The height of presumptuousness is to think that one can read three books, or five, or fifty, and become an

authority on every subject known to man. One who so presumes has only learned enough to become a buffoon. As a Christian, I am not ashamed to confess the obvious—about most things I know nothing and about all things I know very little.

What I do know is simple but profound. "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world. . . . But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (1 Corinthians 2:6-7). I know it so surely, I preach it without adornment.

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The Joy of New Beginnings

I was never good at math. I guess I just didn't get off to a good start with arithmetic, and as a result I developed a bad case of dislike for mathematics very early in my life. I remember as a lad grappling so fervently with some algebraic equation and becoming so frustrated that in a fit of disgust, I would just wad up the paper and start all over again. About the only joy I got from such occasions was that of starting all over.

I once interviewed a basketball coach who had a fine team, but which team had just been defeated by one of obviously less ability. When I asked what he planned to do about the loss, he said, "We're just going to have to start all over again; we'll have to learn the basics—passing, dribbling, shooting—just start all over."

Most of the presidential hopefuls plan their entire campaigns around the *START OVER* concept. They have some "new frontier" they want to initiate, or some "new deal," or some similar idea. But it's always something having to do with the concept of starting afresh.

There's something special about mornings. Not just the bright sunshine, not just the fragrance of the flowers or the rise of the morning mist, but the freshness of a new beginning is in every sunrise, in every new dawn. Even the terror of the worst nightmare is bearable if you know the morning will soon come. It's just good to have the chance to begin again and mornings are an especially good time to do it.

Never is the *START OVER* concept any stronger or any more brilliantly displayed than in the fact of forgiveness. Starting over is what forgiveness is all about. It means that we have been pardoned, the slate has been wiped clean, the board erased. We have had our sins wadded up like an old piece of paper and thrown away, so that we can just begin all over. The new birth is related to this concept (John 3:1-5). It preaches the idea of being disburdened from the old man of sin. Further, the impression intended by the term "new man" as it is used in Scripture has to do with fresh starts, a new row to hoe, a new plan to follow, a new job to do, a new life to live (see Ephesians 4:24ff; Colossians 3:1ff; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

In Colossians 3:1, Paul said, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above . . . set your

affection on things above." The new beginning is only that—a new beginning. There must be that most important thing which is found in athletics, economics, art, and about everywhere else—*FOLLOW-THROUGH*. The golf shot will likely be missed without it, so will the tennis shot. So will the Christian life. It, too, takes follow-through. Paul here says, since you are risen with Christ (do you know of another thing from which a Christian would be raised than baptism?), or since you have been forgiven, cleansed, brought into a right relationship with Him, *FOLLOW-THROUGH*, that is, make the fresh start work for you.

Furthermore, if the *START OVER* philosophy is to work, we must remember where we came from—why we started over in the first place. Like the children of Israel, many who start over long for the leeks and onions of Egypt. But we must not be bedazzled by the lights of the far country from which we have been delivered by our new beginning. What is so good about the new start is that it brings you back to the right track. The fact that we needed a new start should serve to show us the inadvisability of returning to the old life of sin. If we will remember what we were before we got the new start, we will not long for the old life so much. It never was a very good life when you come to think about it.

To get on the right track, we have to start somewhere. And God has made it possible for all of us to have that glorious, fresh beginning. If there is in your heart a longing to be right with God, if there is within you a burning desire to find peace with God, I beseech you to accept His terms for pardon, His manner for making the new start. If you believe Him to be the Son of God (Mark 16:16); will repent of your sins (Acts 2:38); if you will confess your faith in Him before men (Romans 10:10); and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 22:16), you will have a new start, you will rise to "walk in newness of life . . . knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:4,6).

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature . . ."

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Send to: Christianity Magazine, P. O. Box 16488, Jacksonville, FL 32216



Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, 5235 94th St., Lubbock, TX 79424

A request for materials

The church meeting in Cookeville, Tennessee, has undergone considerable growth. At present we have about eight men who are capable of preaching. To help these men and others in the future the men have decided to put together a library. We are asking other churches who mail out bulletins to add us to their mailing list. This will help us in collecting material.

Also, if anyone has back issues of magazines they do not want, we could make good use of them in the library.

Our address is:

Jere Whitson St. church of Christ
329 Jere Whitson St.
Cookeville, TN 38501

Thank you.

A note of thanks from a grateful servant

Dear Friends,

Seven months ago, over \$10,800.00 in medical bills before us, we sat wondering and praying. Praying for help, strength, and guidance and wondering how we could ever meet such obligations. A bankrupt insurance company, threatening phone calls, collection agencies, and attorneys had become discouraging realities in our life.

Today, August 31, 1984, all medical bills have been paid in full and again we sit wondering and praying. Prayers of thanksgiving unto our God for His wonderful, caring family of which we are a part; and wondering how to adequately express the heartfelt appreciation and love that we feel toward you all. We received almost \$10,000.00 in less than five months along with encouraging cards, letters, and phone calls from all over the country.

In an age of prosperity, when individual Christians (for the most part) enjoy a degree of self-sufficiency in relation to one's brethren, the beautiful concepts of loving liberality among brethren as witnessed in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 are seldom experienced first hand. Judy and I have truly been strengthened and are better Christians today for having experienced the active manifestation of your love and concern. We thank each of you!

Special thanks to Dee Bowman for making available to you the details of our situation and to the editors of each periodical through which the information was dispersed.

Yours in our Lord,

Dale and Judy Hendricks
Nederland, Texas

A reader's observations

It is my feeling that *Christianity Magazine's* greatest point will be one I fear we haven't seen as much of as we should over the years, namely: positive and optimistic outlooks.

Seems like with the battle over "the issues" and other battles God's people have had to deal with (and are still dealing with), we too often have been on the defensive, rather than the offensive. Consider, for example, the controversy over benevolence. Sure, God's word has plain and obvious instruction concerning the church's funds in those areas, but teaching on the joys and excitement brought to one who personally lives a benevolent life and gives to others is also relevant to this issue. No Christian can please God and go to heaven without manifesting a manner of conversation as is seen through our Master's own life and of those He used to teach us this principle, as the good Samaritan.

As we negate what many are doing in abuse of benevolence, let's always strive to accentuate the positive. Let's not only show people what we are against, but namely above all, what we are for, in accordance with God's plan for the Christian.

I especially appreciate brother Bowman's effectual working in this area. His personality really shines through in his monthly, "That's Life." The other writers as well have clearly indicated thus far in this publication that stressing the blessings in Christ and of belonging to Him, far outweigh and overshadow any and every confrontation. Truly, let us "rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice." May He who died to share this joy with us richly bless your every endeavor for good.

Robert Wayne La Coste
Austin, TX

The Christian and peace of mind

Christians should be the most content of all people, but far too often this isn't the case. We see too many Christians always reaching who never seem to be satisfied.

Should someone ask me the one command in the New Testament that is most ignored and seldom obeyed, I would say it is found in Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always." Why can't we rejoice in the Lord and be content? "Godliness [taking God seriously] with contentment is great gain." If we attend worship, give, study, help the poor, and do other things we should—but are in constant discontent—there is no gain.

Some think they will have real peace when everything in their lives lines up in neat little rows and all is in order. They surely will have peace when those nagging imperfections are cleared up and they accomplish those things they deem important. "When," "When and If," "If"—these are the little devils that keep peace of mind just out of reach. Isn't it amazing that when most of the "whens" and "ifs" have come to pass, others quickly take their place?

You never find peace this way. You will find peace of mind when you *accept* your circumstances, duties, gifts, and limitations, including your financial limitations (Luke 12:15). Having done this, you can then really submit to God's will for your life and be blessed (James 4:6-10). "Peace, Peace, Sweet Peace, the wonderful gift of God's Love." Read Philippians 4:4-7 as a true guide to peace of mind. "Cast your cares on Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

Do you have peace of mind? If not, why not? Why not come to Christ and let Him have His way with you?

A Georgia Elder

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Preachers Out — People In

All of life is dynamic, constantly changing our natural and human panoramas. That change is exciting but disquieting, challenging but exhausting. But like it or not—it is life.

Those familiar with the history of efforts to restore New Testament Christianity in America are aware that the dynamic movement has repeatedly divided as each new generation put its own interpretation on the plea to be Christians only. In the 1950s those of us who opposed church-supported institutions (perhaps 100,000 people out of over 3,000,000 who had roots in the restoration movement) became pretty thoroughly isolated from our former friends in churches of Christ.

A new generation has arisen since the debates of the 1950s and 1960s which is largely uninformed about the "issues" which divided people (and their import) and who did not participate in the sometimes ugly confrontations in local churches. That new generation is taking its own look at the restoration plea as preached in the various wings of the movement and making its own judgments. That is as it should be. Though I cannot document it, I believe a pattern has emerged. Conservative, non-institutional churches are receiving a large and growing infusion of new members from more liberal churches. At the same time there is a small but steady exodus of preachers out of conservative churches into more liberal restoration groups and beyond. If these patterns persist (as I feel they will for a generation), they will result in considerable growth in non-institutional churches and will also protect the essential conservatism of the movement.

The patterns raise some intriguing questions about why? One explanation, I believe, has to do with

magnetism of vital, working local churches. Institutional churches have very generally grown fat and flabby, exhibiting little moral or doctrinal conviction. Honest, Bible-believing people in such environs will be drawn to a group that is working and trying to find scriptural authority for all that they do. Primarily, common people will be attracted because their religious life centers around a local church (as God provided) and they can tell the difference between pretense and commitment.

Too often, preachers identify themselves not with a local church, but with larger formal and informal communities. They seek influence in a "brotherhood" that resembles the denominationalism undenominational Christians are fleeing. Preachers on their way out are usually seeking a place in something larger than a local church.

There is also an intellectual explanation for these trends. Most of those people attracted to the restoration of New Testament Christianity respond to the spartan simplicity of the message. Most of those called, we know, are not theologians or intellectuals, they are the intellectually destitute seeking unequivocal answers from God. The everlasting problem of liberal religion is that it asks trivial questions and gives indistinct answers. The people will come to conservative churches because they speak the people's language.

Unfortunately, preachers too often become spiritual elitists. Young preachers too easily assume an air of superiority; they become too sophisticated for the simple truths which satisfied the older generation. The road to intellectual reputé leads out; it is a long and weary journey with many way stations but no stopping place. It is sad to see them go, but they are not of us.

A Man Who Knew the Text

As our Boeing 727 jet began its descent into the Los Angeles basin, we all marveled at the view—vaulted blue skies and puffy white clouds. You could even see Santa Catalina Island. Though I had lived in Southern California for many years, I'd never seen a clearer day.

I had flown into LA many times before—but this time it was different. I was coming back to help bury my friend and fellow gospel preacher, Floyd Thompson. Dee Bowman and Wilson Usrey (one of the elders where Dee preaches) were with me. I remembered that once every year or so we'd get a day like this and Floyd would tell me, "Brent, I remember when it was this way *every day*." He'd lived and preached there since 1934.

As soon as we landed we went to the house where his beloved companion of over fifty years, Ruth, was supported by a host of family and friends. We shared a meal together and sat around the table and reminisced about our mutual and separate experiences with Floyd. Ruth was doing well. We all laughed a lot—for Floyd was a delightful person. *He* laughed a lot.

Floyd Thompson was a great gospel preacher. There's no telling how many people he baptized. I asked him one time how many he'd baptized, and he answered, "Everybody that wanted to be." His lessons were very simple and always well thought out. He kept his outlines on 3 x 5 index cards.

And, of course, there's no telling how many people Floyd has influenced in his lifetime, but it must be in the tens of thousands. He has had more influence for good on the Lord's cause in Southern California and the entire West Coast than any man I know of.

To know Floyd was to know of his intimate and thorough acquaintance with the word of God. He simply referred to it as "the text." If anybody within miles around wanted to know what "the text" said on almost any subject, they could hardly go wrong by asking Floyd—and many of them did. When I was working with the Studebaker Road congregation in Long Beach and we started a call-in radio program on a station that had a signal covering most of the LA area, I knew who I wanted sitting beside me. I wanted the man who knew "the text."

Floyd's advice to young preachers who wanted to know what was the best thing they could do to prepare themselves to preach was simple. "Get your nose in the text and read it, read it, read it," he urged. "Wear the seat of your britches out sitting, reading the text." That recommendation will long hold.

The service was large—almost 600 people. Floyd's long-time friends, Homer Hailey and Elva (Junior) West fittingly spoke about him and about heaven. We buried him in Fairhaven Cemetery in Orange, California, interestingly enough near the place where T. B. Larimore, pioneer preacher, is also buried.

Floyd was a pioneer in his own right. He loved the text and preached it fearlessly. I'm so grateful to have had him as a fellow preaching cohort. But most of all I'm happy to say that I loved him and he loved me. He was my friend. I will long cherish his memory.

—Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

The Principles of Friendship (I)

It is an old axiom that God gave us things to use and people to enjoy. Most people in our society are unfortunately pursuing things and as a result they have no time for people. The first principle of friendship is a critical one:

1. Make it important to build relationships. Those who are so busy chasing after *things*—machines, hobbies, jobs and money—will never have many close friends. They are so consumed by other interests that it is impossible to build relationships.

All people who are deeply loved have this one thing in common—they see people as a basic source of happiness. Their companions are very important to them and, no matter how busy their schedule, they go out of their way to spend time with their friends. Emerson said, "We take care of our health, we lay up our money, we make our rooms tight, and our clothing sufficient; but who provides wisely that he shall not be wanting in the best property of all—friends."

So, mark this down. If you really want to have friends you are going to have to cultivate them as you would your garden. Lonely people complain about their lack of close companions, but they do little to cultivate friends.

Happiness does not come to those who pursue it. Most often it comes as a by-product, while we are in the midst of giving ourselves to another. Jesus taught this in several contexts: we find ourselves by losing ourselves (Matthew 10:39; 16:25; John 12:25).

If you are willing to genuinely and caringly do things for other people—you can build strong, deep relationships. It is difficult for one to forget some kindness done. To speak a word of encouragement; to go out of your way to bake a dish or mow a lawn at a time of need; to have someone into your home for a visit or a meal—these are acts of friendship not soon forgotten. And if you can do this in a selfless manner, with no expectations of anyone reciprocating—so much the better.

2. Be yourself; allow your humanity to show. People who have many friends are always open, honest and

transparent. They display a certain vulnerability by letting people see what is in their hearts.

People never get close to some of us because we hide behind masks. We build walls around us. The reasons for this are many, but the primary one is probably that all of us have the fear of rejection. We are somehow convinced that if other people see us as we see ourselves, they might not like us. Yet all of us have an innate desire to reveal ourselves to another. Honesty and self-disclosure can actually be a good insurance policy, preventing mental, emotional, and even physical problems.

One of the greatest blessings of life is to have a friend to whom we are not afraid to reveal ourselves. Most everyone has a "shadow side" of themselves, an inferior part of the personality that they are afraid to reveal. We are afraid that if we let others see this dark side, they too will hate us. Generally, however, others are able (and likely) to be more lenient with us than we are with ourselves. There is great benefit in having just one person to whom we can reveal ourselves. When you disclose yourself to another person, you actually come to know yourself better. Self-disclosure helps us to see things, feel things, imagine things, hope for things that we could never have thought possible. When we invite others into our lives, we really authenticate our personalities.

Marian Evans (George Eliot) must have had such a friendship to have written these words:

Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person; having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words but to pour them all out, just as it is, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keeping what is worth keeping, and then, with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.

No one really likes wearing a mask. If you would enjoy one of the paramount privileges of life—friendship—determine that you will spend some time at it and that you will be yourself. The rewards are well worth it.

Of Battles Fought And Wars Won

Richard W. Terry

Someone once wrote, "All weddings are happy; it's living together afterwards that causes all the trouble." Unfortunately, it is often true. We are told that the national average for divorces has dropped over the past few years, but we are still alarmed by the annual number of divorces in this country. Even more frightening are the increasing reports of preachers and elders whose marriages end in divorce. The sad reality is that while these men may know what God's word says regarding the sanctity of marriage and God's distaste for divorce, that is not always sufficient to prevent the breakup of their marriages.

Our papers teem with articles on the subject of divorce, warning of the consequences and dealing with the scriptural provisions for divorce. This is good, but should we not devote more time in writing about the sanctity of marriage? Should we not encourage couples to seek solutions to their marriage problems? Should we not emphasize that divorce is not a solution, but a cop-out?

Perhaps one of our problems with divorce is that many of the present generation do not find in their fathers and mothers adequate role models. I believe, however, that Jesus Christ provides mankind with a perfect role model for both the husband and the wife.

Christ, the Role Model for the Husband. When Paul wrote to Christians in Ephesus, he said, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He himself being the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23, NASB). His statement stirs in our minds a vivid comparison between Christ as the head of the church and the husband's responsibilities in the home as head. "Headship" means many things. To Christ it meant that He was responsible to His father for providing the church with direction, leadership, stability, sacrificial love, compassion and understanding. Jesus was accountable for His actions to His heavenly Father.

If we carry the comparison to its logical conclusion we quickly realize that the husband sustains those same responsibilities toward his wife and family. Jesus often claimed that He was not here to do "my own will, but the will of Him that sent me" (John 6:38). So, too, must the husband be lost in doing the will of the Father. All self-

centeredness, all personal desires must be relinquished in favor of the Father's will for him as a husband. When a husband learns to submit himself to God he is setting the best example possible for his wife to submit herself to the will of her husband.

As "head," the husband sustains two salient responsibilities. First, he stands as God's representative in the family unit. God has placed him over the home as His representative. The husband is not a "lawgiver" but rather he provides leadership and direction as he follows God's divine plan for marital happiness. Second, the husband is to distinguish himself as a sacrificial lover. 1 John 3:16 tells us, "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." If we keep in mind that man is the "head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" then it quickly becomes apparent what God expects of the husband in the marriage relationship. He expects a total commitment that shows itself by its sacrificial qualities.

A husband must also manifest profound understanding. One day while Jesus was teaching in the temple a woman was brought to Him, caught in the "very act" of adultery. Jesus exhibited a profound understanding. What this woman needed was not condemnation or criticism; she had been caught in the "very act"—there was no denying her sin. But Jesus looked beyond her sinfulness and saw a woman who needed understanding and compassion. As a husband exercises his headship he must do so with the same attitude as Christ. Peter wrote, "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way" (1 Peter 3:7, NASB). You must understand your wife's many needs. Learn what makes her tick and what "ticks her off"—and know the difference. One of the major flaws of our present-day marriages is that the husband and wife act as if they are competitors rather than teammates. If a marriage is to survive, husbands and wives must stop keeping score. I remember one man saying that when his wife got mad she became "historical." Someone said, "Don't you mean hysterical?" To which he answered, "No, I mean historical; whenever she gets mad she keeps bringing up the past."

Marriages cannot survive long in such a climate.

Paul clearly outlines the responsibilities of the husband and wife in writing to the Ephesians. First, he says that the husband is to love his wife with the same sacrificial love that Jesus demonstrated toward His bride, the church. He then tells the husband that he is to love his wife as his own body, to nourish and cherish it—that is, to show tender, loving care for it. As the husband does this, he will treat her with love and respect, as an "heir of the grace of life." Peter even says that to do otherwise will "hinder your prayers" (1 Peter 3:7).

Christ, the Role Model for the Wife. Paul further states, "Wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." Some have serious misconceptions as to the wife's role. When a man takes a wife he does not take a "slave;" a wife is not meant to be treated as a possession. Some husbands think their wives have been created to wait on them, hand and foot. Neither is a wife to be treated as if she were "inferior." When a woman marries she should not be expected to put her "brains on a shelf" and never think for herself or be able to disagree with her husband. The woman's subjection is not an invitation to be stepped on, but rather it is the voluntary lifting of another (the husband) above oneself. Being in subjection should not be interpreted as being inferior. Jesus subjected Himself to the Father and yet Paul tells us that He "counted not being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped." Submission does not mean inequality but rather voluntary subordination.

In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Paul tells us that love (even married love) is patient, kind, not jealous, does not brag, is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not easily provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, bears all things, believes all things, endures all things and never fails. I cannot think of any qualities that are more desirable in a marriage than those I have just stated. If those qualities are evident in a marriage, then it will not be a war or a battle—but a blessing and a success. God help it to be so with you.

Route 1, Box 293A, Houston, MS 38851



Jesus and His "Big Preachers"

Jesus was very careful and deliberate in His selection of the Twelve. He exhausted the night in prayer the day before He chose them (Luke 6:12-13). Upon the frail shoulders of these men was to rest so much that was critical. They were to be His chosen witnesses and messengers. The salvation of all men was to be dependent on the accuracy and faithfulness of their testimony. There would be no going back. If these men failed to get it right, it was to be a failure without remedy.

We know that the Lord must have chosen these twelve with great forethought, but even a quick study of the character these men displayed during the three years of their association with Him is enough to fill one with bewilderment. They were an unlikely lot from the beginning. Events were to reveal them as exceedingly ignorant, narrow-minded and superstitious, filled with popular Jewish prejudices and animosities. They saw every physical defect as punishment for sin (John 9:2). Their adulation of the rich was such that Jesus' observation about the difficulty with which the rich enter the kingdom caused them to despair that anyone could be saved (Matthew 19:24-25).

But these were the small problems. The most startlingly incongruous characteristic of these men who were privileged to live so intimately with Deity was their obvious carnal ambition. They were all in a great sweat to be "big preachers." They argued incessantly about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of God (Mark 9:33-34; Matthew 18:1-5). The sons of Zebedee once infuriated their fellows by trying to secure privately from Jesus the high places in the kingdom which they all desperately wanted for themselves (Mark 10:34-41). Still, the full ugliness of their prideful ambition was left to be demonstrated during the last Passover. With not even twenty-four hours separating their Master from death they fell to arguing again, beneath the very shadow of the cross, about which of them would be the greatest in the kingdom (Luke 22:24). It was the final repetition of this heart-breaking scene that moved Jesus to leave the table, don a towel like a common household slave, and stoop to wash their feet (John 13:3-5). Peter, visions of being a great one still intact, was having none of it until made to realize that otherwise he was through (John 13:6-9). Would these privileged men never learn the most fundamental lesson of the kingdom—that greatness was found in serving others, not in being served?

The Twelve were slow to learn other things, no matter how frequently and patiently repeated. In that last year with them Jesus began to speak insistently to these

specially chosen men about His now rapidly approaching humiliation and death. He had first raised the subject openly at Caesarea Philippi. Peter was so scandalized by it that he issued a stiff rebuke to the One he had just confessed as "the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:21-22). The Lord repeated the warning soon after His transfiguration (Mark 9:30-32) and while they traveled to Jerusalem for the last time (Matthew 20:17-19) but He could not make them understand what to their ambitious minds was inconceivable (Luke 18:34). The only future for the Christ of God was glory unimaginable and they were destined to share it with Him! Could they drink from the king's cup? Of course they could (Matthew 20:22)! So they ate the strange feast which Jesus appended to the Passover, understanding nothing, and slept with heedless unconcern in Gethsemane. While their Savior agonized over His impending death, they dreamt of glory.

Why did our Lord endure such men? Why did He chose them in the first place? There is little doubt that if we had been in His place we would have driven these clods out in utter exasperation before the first year was completed. But the Lord knew their hearts. All that we have observed about them during those three eventful years is true, but it is not the whole truth. They were ignorant and backward and blatant in their earthy ambition. They frequently did not understand half the Lord said to them, but one thing was their salvation. These men believed in Him so completely and their commitment to Him was so absolute that they were willing to learn any lesson and suffer any hardship for His sake. They were ultimately to swallow down the bitter dregs of Golgotha and rise up, powerful in their humble simplicity, transformed at last by their tenacious love and faith. Jesus knew His men!

There are many lessons for us in Jesus' dealings with the Twelve. Never doubt the willingness of our Lord to patiently endure the most egregious blunders of His disciple if only that disciple is committed. And don't be too quick to throw on the garbage heap what seem like hopeless cases. They may turn out to be another Peter or John. And besides all that, we are not so different from those men anyway. Altogether too many of us are still looking for our place in the sun. We have turned the kingdom of God's Son into an arena for working out our own selfish ambitions and we jealously guard our privileged status. "Big preachers" have to grow up if they are ever to be fit for the kingdom. We are not here to be served (adulated, elevated, adored) but to serve, in the humblest ways and in the humblest places our Savior may require.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Brent Lewis

The Growing Christian: 2 Peter 1:5-11

God tells us that we need to grow. He "knows our frame" (Psalm 103:14) and warns that all Christians are in perennial danger of lethargy.

So God's word stirs us up to growth. He challenges us to become what he ought to be—what we *must* be if we expect to be saved:

"Yea, and for this cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto

you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-11).

There are several things about this great passage that I would observe with you. First, we must be *diligent* if we are going to grow as Christians (verse 5). (The very fact that you are reading these lines says that you want to learn more, to be a better Christian. That is good. I commend you. We can be helped as well by a sermon on a page as we can by one from a pulpit.) Diligence is the opposite of indolence or laziness. You cannot grow if you are lazy. You must spend time reading God's word, praying and practicing your Christianity; if you do this, you will grow. So, remember *diligence*.

Secondly, the Christian "graces" or characteristics that Peter discusses here must be *added* (verse 5). They do not come naturally. It is not easy to grow beautiful flowers in a garden; they must be watered and fed and the weeds must constantly be removed. Weeds will grow without any effort—but not a Christian. If we want to add these virtues to our

character, we will have to work at it.

Thirdly, "if ye do these things, ye shall *never stumble*" (verse 10). That's quite a statement, isn't it? The Bible nowhere teaches the impossibility of apostasy, but it does tell how to "never stumble." How? We must *grow*. You see, as long as we are growing, advancing, making progress—we cannot be standing still or going backward.

And a Christian who is not growing is worthless. In the diamond mines of South Africa, a material is often found which is half-diamond and half charcoal. Miners call it "diamondiferous." This material should have been a diamond, but it stopped short in its development; it only half-became. And because it is only part diamond and part cinder, it will never adorn a king's crown.

Read the pages that follow. Resolve in your heart that you will become what you ought to be—not half-become. By so doing, you will "grow up in all things into Him, who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:16).

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN

The Need for Diligence

Harry E. Payne, Jr.

"AND BESIDES THIS, GIVING DILIGENCE"
(2 Peter 1:5).

Several years ago a young man enrolled as a freshman in a small junior college, excited about the challenges and opportunities of college life and also about the prospects of being a college graduate. He found the rigors of college life extremely demanding, particularly the long hours of study required to succeed in his classes. His grades were far below the acceptable level for his first two semesters. To most of those who knew him, including college officials, his chances for success in college were slim. However, after sitting

later used a braille system), in getting to class (others led him until he became so familiar with the campus that he could walk everywhere alone), in reading homework assignments (all had to be absorbed orally or by using braille), and in taking tests (all were given to him orally)! Those of us who have our eyes and depend so heavily upon them have little appreciation for the diligence, dedication, earnestness, study and hard work required of a blind person to accomplish the same tasks.

The portion of Scripture highlighted in this theme section (2 Peter 1:5-11) begins and ends with the exhortation to

The young blind man, or the Olympians we recently cheered, in their eagerness to excel stretched the very limits of human ability and endurance to achieve goals that could only be described as corruptible. Our Lord, who called us through the gospel, has given us exceedingly great and precious promises. Consider just a few.

"I am come that they may have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

"There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life" (Luke 18:29-30).

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

In view of these and many other precious promises, whose value for now and for eternity are without measure, how does our eagerness and diligence compare to those whose goals are tied to this earth? In most cases we should be ashamed of our lethargy and be challenged to give our utmost for the only cause that will last! The young blind man would put us to shame in terms of his sheer determination to achieve what was important to him.*

As we read the articles that follow, let us pray for the diligence to grow and develop, to work out our own salvation as God works in us "both to will and to do His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13).

*You might be interested to know that the young blind man has become a Christian and is applying his diligence to growing in the Lord. He has already led in prayer, read his Bible in braille, and given a short talk before a congregation.
414 Forest Park Ave., Temple Terrace, FL 33617

"As Christians, whatever we do we are to do heartily because we serve the Lord Christ. No half-hearted efforts are acceptable. But in a special way our diligence should be directed toward 'making our calling and election sure.'"

out one semester, he returned with new determination. Over the course of the next four semesters his grades steadily rose until, during his last semester of junior college, he made the Honor Roll while carrying a heavy load of courses. He graduated at the end of that semester and received the Dean's award for academic achievement against great odds.

This true story would not be particularly noteworthy were it not for the fact that the young man described was *totally blind*. Imagine the diligence required of him in taking notes (he taped lectures, had others read him theirs, and

give diligence. This expression is variously translated "make every effort," "be the more zealous," "do your utmost," "try your hardest," "exert yourselves," and "be all the more eager." In terms of human endeavor for a worthwhile goal, what an illustration of diligence we find in the young blind man described above! He put forth tremendous effort over a long period of time to gain an earthly reward. As Christians, whatever we do we are to do heartily because we serve the Lord Christ. No half-hearted efforts are acceptable. But in a special way our diligence should be directed toward making our "calling and election sure."

THE GROWING CHRISTIAN



Faith: Soil To Grow In

Morris D. Norman

AS WE ENTERED THE CONCERT HALL, THE orchestra was tuning up, each musician "doing his own thing." All was confusion and discord. Then the director came to the stand and all was quiet. Each musician waited for his command. He raised his baton and, where all had been only an uncertain sound, now there was a perfect blend of all the instruments into a beautiful piece by Beethoven. Under the direction of the maestro and according to the written music, the confusion and discord were gone.

Man in sin, doing his own thing, produces chaos and confusion. Only by the direction of God can man blend his human capabilities into the beauty of the divine nature. Faith in God, the grand director of life, is the only means by which harmony of character can be attained. Faith is the soil in which we plant that character so that we may grow up into Christ in all things, and by which we may never fall.

The American Standard Version, in 2 Peter 1:5 says, "in your faith supply." We begin molding into the divine image with the "like precious faith" and, with diligence on our part, supply virtue, knowledge, etc. The word "supply" comes from the Greek root meaning to orchestrate or lead a chorus. By faith in the director we supply the qualities of life that blend the character into the glory of His divine image.

Peter addresses those who have "obtained a like precious faith in the righteousness of" God and Christ. The faith has been supplied, not miraculously, but by testimony and evidence of God given by inspiration. "Faith cometh by hearing . . . the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Peter's confession of Christ was from what had been revealed, not by flesh and blood, but by the Father. In the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed. The gospel of Christ is preached and men believe. Our faith is in the quality and character of deity that has been revealed in Christ. How else could we partake of the divine image?

"Abraham believed God and it was accounted unto him for righteousness."

Abraham believed the promises of God and what would accomplish those promises because he first believed God. He saw in God's revelation of Himself the qualities that manifested true deity. We are to "show forth the excellencies of him who called us." Christ has "called us by his own glory and virtue." Faith in deity can only come by revelation and that revelation is in the Son, hence the gospel of His Son.

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Peter says it is a "like" faith. Perhaps Peter addresses Gentiles and tells them they have obtained a "like precious faith with us" Jews. In Jerusalem he said God "made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith." There is "one faith." It is a faith like all those who will partake of His divine image.

It is a faith like Abraham's. "They that

are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." A faith like Abraham's moves one at the promises of God, and that against all human odds. "Without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead (he being about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb; yet, looking unto the promise of God, he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what he had promised, he was able to perform" (Romans 4:19-21).

It is a faith like Abraham's that obeys though it seems that the command works against the promises of God. "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac . . . even he to whom it was said, In Isaac thy seed shall be called: accounting that God was able to raise him" (Hebrews 11:17-19). It is a faith obtained in the righteousness of God, through a knowledge of Christ. "I know him whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able."

It is called a "precious faith," and so designated for many reasons. It makes available to us what divine power has supplied. God's power works toward us in that He raised Christ from the grave and exalted Him (Ephesians 1:19-22). That power is invested in the gospel (Romans 1:16), by which means we have power to become the sons of God, but only by faith (John 1:12). It is precious because by faith we have access to all things that pertain unto life and godliness; by faith we have given unto us all the exceeding great and precious promises; by faith we can escape the corruption that is in the world through lust and be partakers of the divine nature; by faith we can supply all the qualities of character that can cause us to grow and abound so as to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ, that we may never stumble (God's power to guard us is our faith, 1 Peter 1:5), and so an entrance is supplied into the eternal kingdom. "Lord, increase our faith." "Help thou my unbelief."

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN

Virtue: Courage for the Christian's Fight

Colin Williamson

WE CANNOT APPRECIATE OUR PRESENT, nor look confidently to our future until we are aware of how much the Lord has done for us. How our hearts should expand with gratitude when we consider that we partake of God's divine nature and enjoy fellowship with Him! We should be filled with joy to know that God has granted to us His precious and exceedingly great promises. He has enabled us to escape the corruption in the world by His divine power, has provided all things that pertain to life and godliness. All of this Peter would have us know in his epistle. With such a perspective, we can surely grow as he urges (2 Peter 1:5-11).

The growing Christian is to add "virtue." There is some discussion among the scholars as to the precise meaning of "virtue" in 2 Peter 1:5. I quote a few of them as a basis for the direction I shall take in this writing.

"Virtue is enjoined as an essential quality in the exercise of faith" (Vine).

"It is Christian manliness and active courage in the good fight of faith" (Pulpit Commentary).

"To have whatever firmness or courage that might be necessary in maintaining the principles of their faith and in enduring the trials to which they might be subjected" (Barnes).

Often this quality, virtue, is absent from our lives. We know what is right but lack the moral strength to do what is right. God does not expect us to be spiritual weaklings with the Devil kicking sand in our faces all of our lives. True virtue requires great energy and boldness. If you feel weak and afraid, let me suggest a few steps you can take to develop the courage needed for the fight.

1. Develop a personal fellowship with God. "Take time to be holy" is often forgotten in the rush of modern days. Fellowship with God cannot be replaced with closeness to church members. Nor will involvement in a full schedule of "church activity" substitute for it.

We sing the words, "spend much time in secret with Jesus our Lord," but where is the practice in our lives? Thoughts of God are often left behind at the church building, or surface rarely among the cares and concerns of this world. The shepherd boy, David, had spent much time with God and that background provided the courage he needed to face the giant (1 Samuel 17:37).

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2. Have daily communion with God by prayer. Our Lord Jesus did not try to battle life without constant prayer to His Father (Luke 6:12; 9:28; 22:41-42). The Epistles are sprinkled with instructions to pray often. To "speak oft with the Lord" will help us keep life in perspective and really see our values and priorities. It will force us to make evaluations about our lives. Where am

I? Where am I heading? How does God, who sees all, see me? Daily communion with God leads one to "be holy as He is holy." Someone suggested that as Enoch walked and talked with God that one day God said, "It's closer now to my home than it is back to yours, so come on home with me." If we will strive to grow daily, the day will come when we, too, will be closer to God and heavenly things than to this old world. When we are prepared, God will invite us home.

3. Meditate and study the word daily. To refuse to listen to God is to show the greatest disrespect. It is to say we do not need His instruction or care for His wisdom. The Christian understands that all we do or teach must be firmly rooted in His word. Even more than this principle, we must love His word. Dig deeply with joy because it is *His* word. As we read and ponder, we have insight as to how God sees things and we learn to think about matters as God thinks about them. Desire to taste the word of God for its sweetness and beauty rather than a search for "proof texts" that we can use to win our encounters with the followers of error. When we "feed on His word" daily, its nutritional value will seep into every fiber of our spiritual being and make us strong. When we speak and live by the precepts of God, courage is a natural by-product of such effort.

4. Love God's children (John 13:34-35). "Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak." These words from the old hymn enjoin us to display our discipleship by concern and good deeds. An active disciple is a light to a dark world (1 John 3:18; 1 Peter 2:12). He is also a channel for good deeds to all within his circle. We must not dam up that stream, but let it flow freely to all men (Galatians 6:10).

Underneath all facets of our lives we need to build these four pillars. Weakness and fear will then be replaced by strength and confidence. This will enable us to be people who can always stand (Ephesians 6:13-14).

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN



Knowledge: Growing In Spiritual Discernment

Ed Brand

A WHILE AGO, A FRIEND OF MINE greeted me this way: "Hi Ed, what do you know?" I thought about responding this way: "Well, if you have a few hours, I will tell you what I know." While I smugly reflected on this smart comeback, he added to his original question these two words: "for sure." That changed the complexion of the conversation. What do you know—for sure?

It seems to me that so many activities among religious people are based upon ignorant assumptions. Most cannot tell why they believe what they do. It is an unfortunate and lamentable fact that many professing disciples of Jesus Christ are thus described. No true believer appreciates a "faith" which is blind and ignorant. More importantly, God in heaven said long ago, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). It is no surprise, therefore, that Peter writes over a dozen times in this second letter about knowing God, His Son, and His word. Furthermore, he exhorted and warned his readers not to forget what they knew. He treated knowledge as vital to the Christian's interest. So much so that he listed second in the golden chain of godly virtues—"knowledge."

A Know-It-All or a Know-Nothing?

There is nothing virtuous in being a "know-it-all." Most of us know at least one. His immense ego is filled to overflowing with all sorts of knowledge—most of it trivial. There are few Bible questions he cannot answer, rightly or wrongly. Not that he is vitally interested in putting any of that vast conglomeration of knowledge to work. His knowledge of Bible things is theoretical, academic, and bookish.

His cousin, "Know-Nothing" knows little or nothing about heavenly business. He is "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:7). He sees no real value in trying to know about "religious things" because they are such a dreadful waste of time.

By exhorting his readers to furnish knowledge in connection with faith,

Peter encourages no one to be either a "know-it-all" or a "know-nothing." He does suggest there are things disciples can and must know—"for sure." By knowing Christ, believers may "become partakers of the divine nature." Interested?

How?

Knowing Christ, in some respects, is like knowing any other person. To know one well requires time and effort.

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Ignorance has robbed
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It has sapped our
strength and made
us religious
chameleons.***

To know Christ requires becoming acquainted. To become acquainted requires becoming familiar with the word of God which brings the knowledge: the Who, What, When, Where, and Why of Jesus Christ.

There are no short-cuts to knowledge. I think many of us are mentally lazy. Yes, perhaps even I am. It is so much easier to say "I don't know" than it is to spend the mental energy necessary to

"know." Ignorance has robbed us of our vitality and enthusiasm. It has sapped our strength and made us religious chameleons.

To combat this mental lethargy, would you spend fifteen minutes a day reading the Scriptures? I will never "know" and know "for sure" until I make at least this minimal commitment. You must read, read, and read some more. And then, you must meditate upon what you read (Psalm 1:2).

Knowledge—Powerful Stuff

Knowledge is power. Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Someone wrote, "There is no wealth like unto knowledge; thieves cannot steal it." It is a fact that without seeking actively to know the truth, one cannot please God.

The benefits which knowledge brings to those who seek it are many and great. Consider these:

Knowledge provides the only secure foundation upon which to build. Jesus contrasted two builders in Matthew 7:28ff. The point of difference was not the house, but the foundation. The wise man heard and acted upon the words of Jesus; the foolish man did not listen. Seek to know the truth and build a worthwhile life on Jesus, "the solid Rock."

Knowing (and doing) the will of God produces an assurance of God's blessing. Peter says, "for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble" (2 Peter 1:10). John wrote, "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Seeking to know God's will, then making the application in life, will produce a sense of security and assurance all disciples need. Paul's confidence is expressed this way: "For I know him whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Timothy 1:12). I need to know for sure that I can please God and go to heaven when I die. I can have that knowledge and assurance—Peter has so written. I am so glad he did.

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN

Self-Control: Holding Yourself In

Richard Montgomery

AS THE DAWNING DAY'S FIRST BEAMS filtered through the stained glass atmosphere, a crowd began to form—people from all nations and tongues were making their way into humanity's cathedral and gathering at the base of what appeared to be a sacred monument. Very soon the multitude was innumerable—millions upon millions virtually mesmerized in the shadow of this strange obelisk.

"What are they doing?" "Do you smell smoke?" "Yes, something is burning—see, at the base of the monument, they're burning an effigy of a slave!" "But look at the people. They are bending low with their faces to the ground. Is this some kind of a shrine? Could they be worshipping?" "Yes, listen. It sounds as if they are giving praise. Hear the words?" "Yes, and they are hauntingly familiar: 'Have it your way,' 'Do yourself a favor,' 'I've gotta be me,' 'You deserve a break today,' 'I did it my way.'"

Is this Jehovah who is being paid such zealous homage? No! This is not the true God in whose image man is made. Yet, it is a god: a god who is made in the image of man's imagination; a god who is fickle, but whose worshippers are faithful; a god whose arch-enemy is Jesus' concept of true discipleship (Matthew 20:27). And, taking a closer look we see the shrine where the human race most readily prostrates:

I
MY
MINE
MYSELF

... and the "god" behind it all is SELF!

Can anyone deny that ours is an age of gross selfishness? Our commercial jingles reek of it. We put "self" on a pedestal and worship at our own shrine. We make every effort to "look out for number one" at all cost. I want "my" time, "my" space, "my" gratifications, and "my" way—and when even God makes demands of me I draw as far away as I deem safe. Wilbur Rees puts it best: "I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please. . . . I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack."

In other words, "self" says keep God at a functional but comfortable and unobtrusive distance. A sack full is plenty, but no more! Enough to escape hell in eternity, yet not too much to cramp my style in time. See how ugly old man "self" can be?

On account of this, it seems to me that Peter's inclusion of "self control" as an

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Elders will untiringly
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In the church individual
preferences will
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the interests of
the "team."***

attribute of the growing Christian has far deeper significance than not cussin' when you hammer your thumbnail instead of the galvanized one. Our entire relationship with God is dependent on "self-control" (literally, to hold oneself in). The larger self is, the smaller the reigning place for God. The smaller the

place given to self, the larger and more profound the effectual work and word of God. It's only when we "let ourselves go" rather than "holding ourselves in" that our relationship with God is breached by sin and our Christianity becomes a "brown bag" affair!

"Self" is behind all sin. James says that every person is tempted when *he* is drawn away of *his own* lust (James 1:14). He is drawn away from God and from innocence because of a greater respect for "self" than for God. Selfishness is the cause of all sin. Conversely, Jesus, being the sacrificial remedy for sin, came and "emptied himself." Why? Because He respected and considered the will of the Father above that of "self" (see John 5:30). He taught His disciples to do likewise: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24). His apostles adopted His "self-controlled" lifestyle: "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5). And the developing Christian today will apply Paul's antidote for selfishness: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4).

Such deep-hearted self-control will show in distinctive behavior. In the pulpit preachers will not seek to be the E. F. Huttons of the brotherhood; rather, they will point all attention to Christ. In the eldership men of advanced wisdom and self-control will untiringly give of themselves for the good of the flock. In the church individual preferences will be subordinated to the interests of the "team." In marriage each partner will be so "other" conscious that extra-marital capriciousness is unthinkable.

Why such extraordinary behavior modifications? Because, Christ and His word-based reign has spread so extensively in our hearts that there is little place left for "self!" This is the Christian growing in self-control—breaking in pieces the I-MY-MINE-MYSELF idol just as righteous King Hezekiah did the idol of brass long ago.

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Patience: Steadfastness in Life's Difficulties

Johnie Edwards

GOD HAS ALWAYS EXPECTED HIS PEOPLE to have the patience to endure. In admonishing Christians, Peter said, "And besides this, giving all diligence add to your faith . . . patience" (2 Peter 1:5-6). The word *patience* as used in this passage calls upon God's people to be steadfast. It takes a lot of courage to be steadfast and to possess a sense of perseverance. Cicero defined patience as "the voluntary and daily suffering of hard and difficult things, for the sake of honour and usefulness." We must have courage to accept what life can do to us and use even the worst events as steps to higher and nobler things.

Patience, however, does more than accept and endure. There is a forward look in it. It is said of Jesus, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus manifested an attitude of real steadfastness. In the sermon on the mount, He called upon His disciples to be happy when they would have to face persecution: "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matthew 5:10-11).

Let's look at some areas in which Christians must be steadfast if we expect to be pleasing to God:

1. In our worship. The first Christians were steadfast in their worship. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). There are times in the lives of all of us when it would be easier to just not get up and go to worship God. There are some members who would let a minor headache keep them from worship when the same problem would allow them to do other things they want to do! Do you know anyone like that?

2. In our work. Paul admonished the Corinthians, "Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your

labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The Lord's work must go on and the Lord's people are the only ones to do it! If we don't do the work of the Lord, it will go undone. We must not let problems, persecution or any of the adversities of life keep us from doing the work God has assigned us. We are stewards and must be faithful with our stewardship. If we are not

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careful, the judgment day will find us on the short end of the work we should have done. We would do well to be like Epaphroditus, "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (Philippians 2:30). We all do lots of things in vain, but the endurance that keeps us doing spiritual work will not be vain. Let's all work hard.

3. In the faith. There are entirely too many who obey the gospel but do not continue to be faithful. If we expect to be presented holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight, we must "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23). We must keep our eye on our goal of heaven and not let anyone or anything "overthrow our faith," or cause us to "make shipwreck" of our faith. We must keep on keeping on!

4. In temptations. Temptations will come, ready or not! James said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him" (James 1:2-3,12). Sometimes our resistance to the devil gets low and he is there, ready to lure us away from God. We must learn to say the hardest word in the English language—"No!"—when we need to. Only by learning to resist the devil will he go away for awhile so we can draw nigh to God.

Do you ever get to thinking, "Surely no one is tempted like me?" Take heart. Peter encourages us by what he said concerning the devil: "Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1 Peter 5:9-10).

When all has been said and done, patience, endurance and steadfastness will pay off. Endurance has always had its reward. As Jesus encouraged His disciples to faithfulness during their trials, He said: "But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). This is still so—for if we are faithful unto death we, too, will be able to wear the crown of life.

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN

Norman E. Sewell **Godliness: The Attitude of Pleasing Him**

I KNOW WE HAVE ALL HEARD THE OLD adage, "Cleanliness is next to godliness," and realized that though cleanliness is good advice, it is not really Scripture. That old maxim was probably thought up by a group of mothers trying to get their children to take a Saturday night bath. Certainly cleanliness is much to be desired, especially if you are to be around other people. But godliness is even more important. Cleanliness suggests the washing of dirt from the surface of the body; godliness, however, is straight from the heart—it is the attitude of piety, of that reverence with which we approach God.

We are not born with a built-in sense of godliness, although man does seem to have some inner sense of a higher and superior being. But Peter instructed us to "add to your faith virtue . . . and to patience godliness" (1 Peter 1:5-6). All of these things which Peter teaches us to add are essential ingredients in our becoming the complete, mature people that God intends for us to be.

Some Christians seem confused about such things as godliness, apparently thinking that it is something deep and theoretical. Actually godliness is a very practical thing. How can we truly serve God, obey Him from our hearts, without this deep devotion and reverence for Him?

There are several very important things that we can learn from the Scriptures about godliness. Peter wrote to Titus that the grace of God teaches us "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:12). "In this present world" means that the life God expects us to live must be lived right now. We can't wait to develop godliness. And if we are to live "godly" we must first have the proper attitude toward God, and that is "godliness."

How do we develop godliness, reverence and devotion for God in our hearts? Well, like anything else, we work at it. Peter wrote that we are to "add" it, among other attitudes and

characteristics. And Paul wrote to Timothy, "But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

There are at least two important things to see in those verses. One is that we must "exercise" ourselves, develop the spiritual muscles of reverence for

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God, and devotion to Him. The second thing is that this attitude of godliness helps not only by causing us to think about the life that is to come, eternal life; but it helps with the "life that now is." If you have added godliness to your faith, etc., this attitude of devotion to God will strengthen your respect for the rest of God's creation and your responsibilities as a part of it. If you truly revere God, then you will want to

follow His will. That, in addition to saving your soul, will make you a better husband or wife, a better parent, a better child, a better citizen, a better employee or employer. The reason that some Christians never develop in these areas of their lives is that they seemingly have little real reverence for God.

These thoughts suggest, then, that our *actions* must be in keeping with our *attitude*. When Peter wrote about the return of Jesus he said: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Peter 3:10-11). Our lives here upon the earth are temporary; thus, we must live in "holy conversation and godliness." This is to say that our daily lives must be holy, in keeping with an attitude of reverence and devotion to God. Paul even warned in writing to Timothy that women ought to dress themselves in modest clothing, not in ways which draw attention to the flesh, but "(which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Timothy 2:10). The way a woman lets her light shine is not by dressing in immodest or even extraordinarily expensive and showy clothing, but in the good works or deeds that she does. This shows her godliness.

Just as we might need to run from physical danger, we also need to flee those things which endanger our souls. Paul wrote: "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and meekness" (1 Timothy 6:11). The word for "follow" means to pursue, with the idea of gaining the thing followed.

Now, I hope you won't give up on cleanliness, since we might sit next to one another in worship sometime. But truly we all need godliness—that attitude which will cause us to want to please Him.

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN



Brotherly Kindness: A Special Kind of Love

W. Frank Walton

DID YOU KNOW THAT BROTHERLY KINDNESS (2 Peter 1:7) is a Christian's most obvious trait? Brotherly kindness (from *philadelphia*) literally means "love of the brethren" (Hebrews 13:1, NASB).

Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:35). This family love of affectionate brotherly kindness will arrest the attention of an unbelieving world. They'll know the Lord of love lives in us.

A hospital administrator of one of the world's largest children's hospitals in California saw an outpouring of brethren's kindness. A Christian couple's small son was cancer-stricken. Constant visits, calls, cards, prayers, and money from brethren flooded the hospital. He remarked, "In all my years of hospital work, I've never seen a greater display of love and kindness." All men will know!

A Clear Sign of Growth

Loving brotherly kindness is a most obvious truth and is an essential element of growth. "Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; . . . but we urge you, brethren, excel still more" (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10). How well do we apply this vital truth? Connie Adams properly wrote, "A major issue right now, is how shall we treat one another?" (*Searching the Scriptures*, November, 1983, page 4).

We've heard horror stories of brethren's opinionated personality clashes, hateful temper tantrums, *ad nauseum*. Church squabbles and splits spawn churches by dissension. This keeps the devil so happy that he can't see straight. In our rush to get back to the Jerusalem doctrine, have we flown over the city and crashed in the Dead Sea? "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone . . . is not of God . . . who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10). If we don't love brethren, we've missed the whole point of Jesus' life and teachings (1 John 4:7-8)!

The book of Acts is a living monument to brotherly kindness. "Those who

believed were one heart and soul . . . and abundant grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:32-33). As God's family, they gladly shared, prayed, worked, wept, suffered, and rejoiced together. Some even died together. Kind brethren visited Paul when he was held captive in Rome. "And when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage" (Acts 28:15). Refreshing!

Brotherly kindness, a special kind of love for brethren, actively serves, honors, accepts, bears with, builds up, admonishes, and submits to one another. It seeks and thinks the best, not the worst. It believes a brother to be innocent until proven guilty, not the opposite. It empathizes by causing us to get "into their skin" to see as they see, and feel as they feel. Yet this love is not soft, compromising or wishy-washy. Brethren are the most precious people in the world. A premium must be placed on brotherly relationships. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

Some "Don'ts" To Consider

1. Don't "bad-mouth" brethren for the sheer pleasure of it. Christ warns that carving our initials on the backs of our brethren with unkind and unwarranted words is verbal, backstabbing murder (Matthew 5:21-22). Don't say anything about a brother that you wouldn't repeat to his face. Talk to him first about his fault—not to everyone else (Luke 17:3).
2. Don't harbor jealousy or hateful grudges. To do so will poison your heart. God can't forgive the unforgiving (Matthew 6:15).
3. Don't be trigger-happy in judging others' motives and actions. "Don't get your exercise jumping to conclusions."
4. Don't blab to non-Christians about a church's problems.
5. Don't be so disgusted with a brother's weakness that you cease trying to help. "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). We don't excuse sin, we solve it.
6. Don't ignore brethren at worship and convey the feeling, "Don't bother me, and I won't bother you." We're members of one another (Romans

12:5). We assemble to build others up (Hebrews 10:24). We need each other! 7. Don't say "brother" or "sister" as an empty title. It's a meaningful relationship.

Some Positive Alternatives

"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Because of His love Jesus suffered, cried out in agony, bled, and died on a cross for the weakest brother. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). Let's cheerfully serve our brethren beyond convenience.

1. Mow or rake a widow's yard.
2. Visit the hospital or fix a meal for the sick.
3. Sincerely compliment a saint's encouraging example.
4. Give a brother a good book for Bible study.
5. Discover an unfamiliar friend's interests and hobbies. Ask him about them, and by taking a sincere interest, you'll get to know that brother (person) better. Brethren need a shot in the arm, not a cold shoulder.
6. Open your heart and home to have a singing or practice hospitality (1 Peter 4:9). We can't love each other if we don't know each other.
7. Initiate the solving of a problem with an angry brother (Matthew 5:23-24). Apologize if you're wrong. Admonish the brother if he was wrong.
8. Think of, talk about, and treat brethren just as you wish to be treated.
9. Send a birthday or anniversary card.
10. Write an encouraging letter to a preacher overseas or in a hard place. Let them know we're praying for them on the home front.

Closer, warmer relationships will solve many current problems. The church grows by the life-changing power of brotherly love and kindness (Ephesians 4:16).

Brethren, forgive my feeble words. The greatness and urgency of brotherly kindness is more that I can express. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Romans 12:10). "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another" (1 Peter 4:8). Amen!

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN

Mark Mayberry

Love: The Essence of Christianity

LOVE IS A MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISUSED word, partly because in our language it is a "catch-all" expression. It is used to describe everything from the lofty nature of God to illicit and even perverted sexuality. The Greek language was much more precise. It had a number of words to describe the various types of love: *Eros* is the Greek word for sexual love. *Storge* is the Greek word which describes the natural affection within a family. *Phileo* is the love of emotion, and has to do with those warm feelings that arise within us in response to the good qualities of another. We have a

comings. Love results in active kindness. It causes us to shun evil attitudes such as resentment and envy. Love doesn't allow us to become puffed up with pride; nor does it act in a boastful, rude, or unbecoming way. Instead, we treat others in a courteous and respectful manner. Love is not self-seeking. Selfishness is to be laid aside, and replaced with genuine consideration for the needs of others. Love doesn't allow us to become easily angered. If we truly love others, we will not keep a running ledger of their mistakes. Love produces a genuine morality. Whereas the world takes

We should express this love toward fellow Christians. It leads us to edify and encourage our brethren. Unfortunately, petty differences sometimes arise and we lose sight of the principle of love. Then we "bite and devour one another" (Galatians 5:15). We should "consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24, NASV). This should be our constant aim.

Love should be practiced at home (Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4). Husbands and wives claim to love each other, but sometimes take each other for granted and even treat one another with contempt. When this happens, the home becomes a place of conflict. Love should be enshrined in the home. Its expression should go far beyond occasionally mumbling a few words. Partners in marriage should be positive influences on each other, realizing that they will greatly affect the destiny of the other.

We should love those who are lost in sin. Our hope of salvation is based on God's love for us (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). We should be willing to share the blessings of Christianity with others. Sometimes, we fail to teach others the truth for fear of hurting their feelings or losing their friendship. A true concern for their eternal welfare will overcome such hesitation.

Finally, the Bible tells us to love our enemies. We may not always appreciate their actions, and their sinful ways may keep us from having a close emotional attachment to them. However, remember that *agape* is not simply an emotion. Even toward our enemies, we should conduct ourselves in a way that seeks their highest good. We show love by not returning evil for evil, but rather by doing good (Romans 12:17-20). By conducting ourselves as Christians in such circumstances, we show the reality of our faith, and will perhaps lead them to the Lord. This should be our aim in the first place.

Acting in love should be the basis of all our dealings with God and man. This is the essence of Christianity.

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"AGAPE is the highest form of love. It is not simply an emotion which arises unbidden in our hearts, but it is a principle by which we live. It involves seeking the highest good of another. Such love is to be directed toward God, as well as all mankind."

special affection and friendship for those we are close to. This love is directed toward our family, friends and brethren. *Agape* is the highest form of love. It is not simply an emotion which arises unbidden in our hearts, but it is a principle by which we live. It involves seeking the highest good of another. Such love is to be directed toward God, as well as all mankind.

Agape love is a multifaceted jewel. This is demonstrated by the discussion of its qualities in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. It causes us to be patient with others, and not quickly retaliate against their short-

comings. Love results in active kindness. It causes us to shun evil attitudes such as resentment and envy. Love doesn't allow us to become puffed up with pride; nor does it act in a boastful, rude, or unbecoming way. Instead, we treat others in a courteous and respectful manner. Love is not self-seeking. Selfishness is to be laid aside, and replaced with genuine consideration for the needs of others. Love doesn't allow us to become easily angered. If we truly love others, we will not keep a running ledger of their mistakes. Love produces a genuine morality. Whereas the world takes

pleasure in sin, he who practices biblical love delights in the truth. Love is steadfast: it bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. *Agape* is the summation of godly conduct.

The primary focus of our love is the God of heaven. We are to love Him with all our heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:37-38). How does this love control our actions? It causes us to realize that sin brings shame and dishonor upon His name. If we love God, we will live in such a way as to glorify Him. We show our love for God by keeping His commandments (John 14:15).

THE GROWING CHRISTIAN



The Stagnant Christian: A Sad Waste

Steve Goff

A TRUE SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION OF WHO we are, where we are going and from whence we have come is an absolute necessity to every growing Christian. In 2 Peter 1:8-9 the apostle gives two reasons why we must be adding the seven graces to our faith (verses 5-7). First, these graces are necessary characteristics of bearing fruit unto the Lord. And second, the absence of these graces marks a stagnant and meandering child of God who is not aware of his mission in life and who has forgotten the great blessings God has given to him.

To fail to bear fruit is a crime of grave consequence. Jesus made it a test of discipleship (John 15:8), and said that every fruitless branch will be removed and burned in the fire (verse 6). In motivating Christians to grow, Peter affirms God's assurance that the possessor of these graces will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ.

The stagnant child of God is slipping back into the world of sin. He has lost his spiritual eyesight and can only wander in darkness. And this is the greatest waste in the history of mankind. He is wasting his time on earth. He is wasting his ability. He is wasting his influence upon others. And, most important, he has wasted that sacrifice which made his salvation possible: the precious blood of the Son of God. Peter describes this anemic Christian in three ways:

1. **He is blind.** He has no vision of who he is. The Christian who is not maturing spiritually has failed to keep his affection on things above. His eyes, once focused upon the cross, are now dimmed to the spiritual. Though he wears the name of Christ, he has forgotten that Jesus is his Lord. His judgment and self-control have been affected by eyes which have turned back to Satan's allurements. Like the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14-22), this idle one perceives himself as independent of God, and in need of nothing. Whereas, he is really "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Such a one needs to

anoint his eyes with the eyesalve from Jesus in order to see clearly who he is.

2. **He is shortsighted.** He has lost all vision of things afar. He no longer looks to heaven as his goal. He no longer dreams of eternal glory where saints will bask in the radiance of God and the Lamb. Having lost his goal, he has robbed himself of that hope which is the anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19) and

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the helmet of the Christian's armor (1 Thessalonians 5:8). And, being nearsighted, this one does not see his own potential in the kingdom of Christ. Man's greatest limitations are those he places upon himself. This is the one who for years cries, "I cannot teach!" He is the one who does not aspire the good work of overseeing a local church. He shows up for some of the services of the church, sits close to an exit, never

commends, never expresses concern for others, and is the first to criticize and complain that "this church is dead." This shortsighted one could be a teacher and a great encouragement to the saints in his community if he would apply diligence in growing in the graces of 2 Peter 1:5-7. Spiritual exercise would greatly improve his eyesight.

3. **He is forgetful.** He does not remember the joy that he felt when he arose from the water grave. He has forgotten the many blessings God has showered upon him, and he no longer expresses thanksgiving to his Father in heaven. His first love is gone. His fire he has quenched. And, perhaps worst of all, his perception of himself is that of a good person, better than most. What could be worse than an adopted child of God who is not thankful for his entrance into the royal family? What is more pompous than the pardoned sinner who forgets the sacrificial act which freed him? And who is more ungrateful than the beneficiary who forgets his benefactor? To forget the great salvation and magnificent blessings which are in Christ Jesus is to exhibit a gross insensitivity and a total lack of spiritual vision.

What a miserable picture is painted of this stagnant Christian! He is blind to who he is. Shortsighted, he does not see his goal (heaven) and his eyes are dimmed to his own potential in God's service. He does not remember his redemption from the bonds of lawlessness. And all this, he did to himself.

Brethren, we need to give diligence to make these graces a part of our character. As we mature, our love of Jesus will increase. Our appreciation of His sacrifice, our faith in His promises and our understanding of His gospel will be continually enhanced. By constant spiritual growth, we will see a true picture of who we are. Our eyes will be focused upon heaven, and we will be able to envision a future of serving God. And, growing in the knowledge of Christ, we will not forget how far we have come.

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THE GROWING CHRISTIAN

Growing in the Direction of Heaven

Don C. Truex

HEAVEN. THE MERE MENTION OF THE word causes us to envision an endless array of grand images. To bask in the radiance of God Almighty; to sing the worthiness of the Lamb; to reside in the prepared mansion; to converse with the great men and women of God both ancient and modern; to sit by the river of life with the Savior and humbly say, "Thank you;" to be free from this body of toil, care, and anxiety—oh, truly, "How beautiful Heaven must be!"

And how benevolent was our God in providing for us "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away" (1 Peter 1:4). To the Christian, the grandeur of the City of God is not a "pie-in-the-sky" fantasy; rather, it is a valid "hope" which serves as "an anchor of the soul" (Hebrews 6:19). It was this hope that motivated Abraham to willingly wander, "for he looked for a city whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 10:10). This hope motivated Moses to endure a ceaseless series of privations, "for he had respect unto the recompense of reward" (Hebrews 11:26). And, it is this hope that motivates us, after the similitude of Jesus, to "run with patience the race that is before us"—for we, like Him, envision the "joy" that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Notice carefully, however, that the crux of the passage under consideration (2 Peter 1:5-11) is that entrance into the "everlasting kingdom" is predicated upon diligent effort. These wondrous virtues *must* be cultivated in our lives. The Christian *must* grow if he would make his "calling and election sure." It seems clear, though, that Peter sees some impediments to our inculcating these characteristics and thus securing our eternal home. Satan would distract us and, thus, Peter urges us to consider the following:

First, *diligence must be given* (verse 10). I am persuaded that few Christians will miss Heaven because they are adulterers, thieves, homosexuals, alcoholics or murderers. But I fear that many will lose their inheritance because of a lack of diligence. Too many have

decided they are not going to Heaven anyway, so why bother even trying! Have we lost sight of the "great and precious promises" of God (2 Peter 1:4)? Did He not assure us that if we add these impressive qualities to our lives we need "never fall?" Must we join with those who foresee gloom, doom and despair and forfeit our hope? No, indeed! *But*

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we must be diligent. We must give the very best that lies within us. Those truly convinced of the inevitability of an interview with God cannot live idly and listlessly. If Heaven would be our home, all diligence must be given to grow as God's child.

Second, *the virtues of the Christian life must abound, multiply and increase.* God calls upon us to daily move for-

ward. There is the ever-present danger of "growing weary in well-doing" (Galatians 6:9). That euphoria surrounding our initial obedience to the gospel is often tempered by the harsh reality of daily living. We must understand that all of life is not a mountain-top experience. Life will not always be the glory of Moses on Sinai, Elijah on Carmel, or Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. The valley, too, must be traversed. But this should not drive us to despondency or despair, for even here Heaven is our help. From the portals of Heaven Jesus calls us to "come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). I think of the great soldiers of the cross—men like Franklin Puckett, James P. Miller, and, most recently, Floyd Thompson—who have now laid their armor by. Their lives, like ours, were touched with adversity. Yet, read their words or listen to their sermons and you hear the hope of Heaven flow from every line. We must remember: "Our citizenship is in Heaven, from whence we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

And, of course, there is the peril of complacency. It is difficult to abound and increase; it is easy to accept the *status quo*. But God did not create us to be average; He did not call us to live by the lowest common denominator. He calls us to exertion, enthusiasm, and intensity of effort—to excel. With the apostle Paul, we ought to say, "This one thing I do . . . I press on toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). No, it is not always easy to have the discipline of mind and body necessary to develop faith, moral strength, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. Oh, but in the end it is well worth the effort expended, for as our beloved brother Bowman is fond of saying: "If we miss Heaven, we've just missed all there is!"

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That's Life!

Dee Bowman



SOME OF YOU MAY RECALL a piece I did in *Searching the Scriptures* (still one of my favorite papers) some time ago concerning Bob Darnell, the young Jewish boy who obeyed the gospel. I think I should tell you that he has not only continued faithfully in his new profession, but is now preaching some. I saw him recently. He and his wife are expecting a baby and there is a confident glow about them. What an encouragement to see the gospel work in such unique and wonderful ways!

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL: "If I can learn not to be petty in my judgment of others; if I can learn to speak less often and listen more attentively; if I can learn to project myself empathetically into others' difficulties; if I can learn to stand up straight when I know full well I am about to be hit; if I can learn to work on when I don't feel like it; if I can learn to encourage someone who is obviously a discouragement to me; if I can learn to accept a compliment as an asset to growth instead of a means of self-inflation; if I can learn to pray when I don't particularly want to; if I can learn to wait and not judge too quickly; then I'll be just a tiny bit more like Jesus."

* * *

I HAD A LETTER sometime back from William V. Beasley, who preaches for the brethren of the Northside church in Tucson, Arizona. He signed the letter, "Bill Beasley, servant." I like that.

VETERAN NEWSMAN DAVID BRINKLEY recently made a statement on *Viewpoint* (ABC, July 9, 1984) that rather intrigued me. He said that in his long career as a broadcast journalist he had received thousands of letters of disagreement which also stated, "You are biased," but that he has never received a single letter that said, "I agree with you, but you are biased." I thought it an astute observation. Isn't it funny how *my* opinion quickly becomes doctrine, while the other man's doctrine just as quickly becomes merely *his* opinion?

* * *

I HEARD ROBERT HARKRIDER PREACH recently. He did a fine job. I'll tell you what I like most about Bob's preaching. Who he is comes through in it. The fact that he is a good and caring person shows through; and I like that a lot. Incidentally, Bob has written some new class material that is outstanding. It is attractive and filled with good, sound scriptural material. I have found it to be good for personal study as well. Write him at P. O. Box 35, Nacogdoches, Texas 75961.

* * *

WHEN JESUS SAID, "sufficient to the day is the evil thereof," He actually forewarns us that some days won't be too good. The mere recognition of that fact should deepen our appreciation of the good days and help us to keep on during the ones that aren't so good.

Following the Guiding Cloud (II)

L. A. Mott, Jr.

We must learn submission and trust even when things seem to be going wrong, saying with Eli, "It is Jehovah: let him do what seemeth him good" (1 Samuel 3:18). Think, for example, of Paul when, as he describes it, "we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: yea, we ourselves have had the sentence of death within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:8f). There was divine purpose in those desperate circumstances. God used them to teach Paul and his companion(s) trust in one "who raiseth the dead." The same was true of Paul's "thorn in the flesh." Twice Paul says it was given "that [he] should not be exalted overmuch" (2 Corinthians 12:7). He was praying for the removal of the very thing God was using to help him develop character.

You can trust the Lord even when things seem to go wrong. He loves you; He wants good things for you; and even when you do not understand God's purpose you should realize that He has one and that He is using your difficulties to accomplish some good thing in you.

A friend of mine was unfairly passed over for promotion. My children have all missed out on positions they greatly desired. All of us have experienced disappointments which could cause a person to become embittered. But those are the times to open wide your eyes with excitement and anticipation. For God wants to do good things for you. And if you thought the thing you missed was good, then think what great thing He has for you in its place. Remember who you are! You are a son or daughter of the King. God is not going to allow you to be deprived of some great thing in order to give you some second-rate, shoddy thing instead. But you must not abandon the lead of our Guiding Cloud. We must follow His lead and trust Him even when the way is dark.

As Israel remained encamped as long as the cloud was over the tabernacle but broke camp and followed the cloud when it was taken up, disciples of Jesus,

as God's elect people but sojourners and pilgrims in the world, must trust the lead of their Guiding Cloud. I have discussed the necessary commitment to God's will, the constant use to be made of the Scriptures, the need to follow God's lead in making decisions and solving problems, and have urged submission and trust even when things go wrong. Finally, consider: What about making decisions when the trumpet blows "an uncertain sound?"

The passage about the guiding cloud (Numbers 9:15-23) is immediately followed by one giving directions with regard to the two silver trumpets

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(Numbers 10:1-10). These trumpets were used to signal various occasions. There was a signal for the congregation to gather at the tabernacle; another for breaking camp and taking their journey; a third signal indicated an armed invasion; a fourth, the occasion of various religious festivals.

Have you ever had to make a decision when the trumpet was giving "an uncertain sound" (see 1 Corinthians 14:8)? One or two instances stand out in my mind—times when a decision was required and, although I did my hardest thinking and praying, really trying hard to find some indication of God's counsel,

the trumpet never blew with a clear signal. What does one do when the trumpet blows an uncertain sound?

I have sometimes wanted God to shine a bright light on the alternative I should choose. But sometimes that bright light has not come, and I have realized that I was really wanting God to take the decision out of my hands—to make it for me. The fact is, I needed to make the decision. Going through the process of making a decision, considering important spiritual factors, is a discipline that we need for the development of character. Going through the process of making the decision is often more important than the decision itself.

Here is the course I think one should follow. If the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, one should, of course, proceed with all possible caution, watching for any slight indication of God's will. Above all, we must make sure we are looking for His will and try to avoid ever acting out of harmony with divine revelation in the Scriptures or so that the decision would be a worldly compromise.

In my judgment, the discussions of recent years have tended to develop in us institutional attitudes toward the church. There is a crying need for much more emphasis on individual discipleship. The thrust of my pieces on the Guiding Cloud has been to encourage the development of a personal relationship with the God who really is there and who goes before us as a Guiding Cloud—a relationship of trust that touches every phase of our lives as disciples of Jesus.

Soon after I began using this guiding cloud illustration I was asked to give a talk on how a Christian faces death. I decided I mostly just wanted to repeat my Guiding Cloud lesson. For if we live day by day learning and practicing trust in our Father, following the Guiding Cloud, then we will be able to trust the lead of that Cloud without wavering even when it guides us over the Jordan and into the land.

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The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: in keeping them there is great reward" (19:10-11).

The Incomparable Benefits of God's Words

Benefits. We are all interested in benefits. What advantages will be mine in serving the Lord? Will I have a better life by following what God says? The psalmist answers these questions in three ways:

1. **The words of God cause delight (verse 10).** There is no gold that can be compared to them and even the sweetest of honey is inferior to the attractive taste of God's word. There is something in God's word which causes delight to one who partakes of it. It shows us the way to riches (Deuteronomy 28:1,5; Proverbs 3:1,5-6,10) and to a long and full life (Psalm 34:11-12). It even points the way to royalty, so that we can become part of a kingdom (Matthew 11:11; Hebrews 11:28). We only need to "taste and see" that the Lord is gracious (Psalm 34:8; 1 Peter 2:3); and once we have partaken of God's word we will consider those hours we spend reading it as precious and sweet as did Jeremiah: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of my heart" (Jeremiah 15:16).

2. **The words of God warn us against evil (verse 11).** God's words, if heeded, will keep His servants from the evil way. They tell us of the *duties* we are to perform, of

the *dangers* we are to avoid, and of the *destruction* that is to come. We live in a world that is filled with warnings. All of us are better off because of this. No less is true of God's word. It "tells it like it is" — and we had better listen. God's book is filled with messages of warning spoken by His servants to alert men to danger before them. "So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me" (Ezekiel 33:7). His word warns the wicked not to go on in his evil ways and it warns the righteous not to turn from his good paths. All who are truly God's servants listen to and benefit from these warnings.

3. **The keeping of His words bring a reward (verse 11).** This reward is not just *for* keeping them, but it comes *in* keeping them (Matthew 5:5; 6:33; 19:29). The joys, the rest, the peace, the comforts, the smiles that the saints of God enjoy *now* is indescribable. Our service to God brings *present* satisfaction and pleasure. It makes our comforts sweet and our crosses bearable; it makes life truly valuable, and death actually desirable (Philippians 1:20-23; Luke 18:30). And even though our reward is not *for* our good works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Luke 17:10), yet we *shall have* our good works rewarded — and have a good reward in connection with our works (Revelation 14:13).

Think soberly and often about the blessings that are a part of your life as a follower of God's words. Without God you are like a ship without a rudder in the midst of a trackless sea. But with Him and by the direction of His words you can know with certainty where you are going — and the journey will be joyful and incredibly fulfilling.

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1985.

Farewell, Friend

August 28, 1984. Floyd Thompson died. Sunday morning early. It's odd how many outstanding preachers die on the Lord's day.

I first met Floyd Thompson in the late 1950s. We (The Bowman Brothers singing group) had gone to Los Angeles to try and promote a recording contract. The church where brother Thompson preached was recommended to us as a good place to worship while we were there. We found it to be so. Several more trips were made to that area over the next few years and we always worshipped with Brother Floyd when we were there.

After we quit singing I had no occasion to be in LA for several years—fifteen or so. Only in 1976 did I return to the area. I came, along with brother Homer Hailey, to speak at the first Fairview Lectures. The church had been there all the intervening years, and had remained strong and active. One of the reasons was the preaching of Floyd Thompson.

Floyd Thompson was one of the most interesting and likeable persons I ever met. He was a portly man, big of heart as well as stature, with an immense friendliness. He was exceptionally bright and you only had to be around him for a short time to know it. He had a big, booming voice and was one of the best Bible readers I ever heard, a fact which I attribute to his oral readings of what he fondly called "the text" at the breakfast table each morning.

He preached to some of the same people for well over forty years, a tribute to both his wonderful rapport with people and his exceptional patience. He was a true expositor and a fiercely independent thinker and his Bible classes were an especial joy to the brethren where he preached. The people loved his teaching and they loved him. He used to kid about how he stayed so long at the same place. He would answer: "When someone would come to me and say, 'Floyd, we think it's about time for a change,' I'd say, 'Well, where are you going?'" It was typical of his wry and clever humor.

Floyd was a stickler for the precise, as well as the concise. He deplored long announcements and long, involved prayers—especially those which repeated what had already been said. "You'd think we didn't have enough faith in Him to think He heard us the first time," he'd often say. I have finished preaching at Fairview and he would follow me to the pulpit to make closing remarks and say, "It was a good sermon—dismiss us, brother Smith."

He was good to me and from the very first we had a close relationship. One of my great joys was hearing Floyd read the Scriptures at the breakfast table. I enjoyed it as often as I came to Southern California to preach. The last time was in February of this year. As we were about to partake of one of sister Ruth's famous California breakfasts, he passed out the Bibles and began to read from Revelation, chapter four. He was so overcome by the awesomeness of the scene about which he read that he could not finish. We all wept unashamedly. It was a rich and rare moment.

I've thought a lot about how to close this small tribute to this great preacher of the text. Actually, he would be embarrassed by the whole thing. But knowing Floyd and how he liked brevity, I decided I'd just close by saying, as he said to me many a time, "Farewell, friend." I loved you, Floyd.

—Dee Bowman



The Sermon on the Mount

A Different Kind of Righteousness

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). Jesus has opened the body of His sermon on the nature of the kingdom righteousness by making two clear statements. The first is that He came to fulfil rather than to destroy the law and the prophets and to demand reverence for every command of God (5:17-19). The second is that He came to make war on the "righteousness" of the Pharisees. His quarrel was not with God's word. It never had been. But the corruptions of the establishment hypocrites had shut the door of the kingdom against the people (Matthew 23:13). Jesus knew that if ever the nation was to understand the true righteousness of God the Pharasaic distortions of God's law had to be blasted away. The view of the Pharisees notwithstanding, the great threat to the divine kingdom did not come from Gentile impurity but from their own grotesque mutilations of the very law they proudly boasted of protecting. Here Jesus denounces their wholly inadequate system of righteousness by name, and warns that it will never suffice to see a man into the kingdom of heaven (5:20).

In this very irenic age which treasures peace and harmony even above truth and righteousness the plain language of the Savior will make many uncomfortable. The Son of God was never cute or needlessly severe in His treatment of false teachers but He did not hesitate to "call names" when it was necessary to identify the well from which His people were being poisoned. It needs to be remembered today that Jesus attacked the religious establishment, not out of personal vanity and ambition, but because the souls of men He loved hung in the balance. We would do well to imitate Him. We must be prudent and fair but we must speak plainly when the salvation of lost men requires it.

The "righteousness" of the Pharisees was a particular way of looking at things which would always have been inadequate in the kingdom of God even if served up by the carloads. It was not the quantity which fell short but the quality. It was the wrong *kind* of righteousness.

It is possible that the Pharisees had not always been what they had become in Jesus' day. Even then there were Pharisees of deep integrity like Saul of Tarsus. Their ancestors, unable to keep inviolate the holy city, were

determined to preserve from Gentile pollution the holy law. This strict party of separatists likely had their origin at sometime during the second or third centuries B.C. when Greek thought was threatening to engulf the Jews. But the resistance which began so nobly was soon reduced to an accentuated formalism without spiritual depth (Matthew 23:27-28) and their sense of separation from the world turned to an arrogant self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14). The movement that had begun to bring glory to God was now dedicated to the exaltation of a smug, sanctimonious elite which had interest only in itself. And, most ironic, the effort to protect the sanctity of the law had resulted in its corruption by endless scribal traditions (Mark 7:8-9).

The Pharisees were in a superb position to know the law and could have been brought to the humble service of God by an awareness of its full demand. From such a position of honesty they would have felt an increasing sense of the need of God's help to attain to righteousness. Instead, rather than face their own inadequacy, they simply chopped the law and the prophets down to the measure of their own moral and spiritual dwarfism. The law was now reduced in their hands to little more than mindless rituals possessed of justifying merit and its spiritual heart was cut out by turning its profound moral precepts into a superficial civil law. Above all, it no longer had any connection with love. The kingdom of God had no place for this hypocritical, self-righteous configuration of human traditions which Pharasaism had become (Matthew 15:3-20). The righteousness of the kingdom from above is one of the heart—a righteousness that begins at the fountainhead of thought and will and issues in deeds and words (Luke 6:43-45).

As the succeeding verses will reveal, the righteousness about which Jesus now speaks is primarily a righteousness of life and conduct—the transformed life of the kingdom citizen. There is no teaching here of justification by works. This kind of transformation comes only to the poor in spirit who know only too well their need for God's mercy, but it is a transformation that is necessary. If we are to succeed in the kingdom life we must do our Father's will (5:19; 7:21,24-28) and grow up into His perfect love (5:44-48).

Destructive Criticism

Dusty Owens

Someone has said that there is no such thing as "constructive criticism," and that may very well be true. No one really likes to be criticized or judged to be wrong.

There is a time when it is necessary to take one aside and correct a situation, or give some good advice. In Acts 18:26 we are told that "when Priscilla and Aquila heard him [Apollos], they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more accurately." If someone is teaching error, it is right to take him aside and correct the erroneous teaching in a spirit of humility and love.

But, most of the time people are not wanting to "correct" a situation; they only want to talk to others about it. Many times it is destructive, not constructive criticism. It tends to destroy a person's character or worth in someone else's estimation. In this sense it is akin to "gossip."

One of the definitions Webster gives for "critic" is "one given to harsh or captious judgment; a caviler or carper." He goes on to say, "Critical, hypercritical, faultfinding, captious, caviling, carping, censorious mean exhibiting the spirit of one who notices faults or defects. In precise use, critical implies an effort to see a thing clearly and truly in order to judge it fairly; in less precise but acceptable use, critical implies harshness in judging. In the latter sense, hypercritical is often preferred. Faultfinding, a colloquial term, usually implies querulousness or an exacting temperament; captious implies a readiness to detect trivial faults or to take exceptions on slight grounds; caviling stresses the act or habit of raising picayune objections; carping implies an ill-natured or perverse picking of flaws; censorious implies a disposition to be severely critical and condemnatory of that which one criticizes."

Included in the above "job description" of a critic would be the practice of faultfinding condemned by Jesus in Matthew 7:1-5, which begins with "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (see also Luke 6:37-42). Here, Jesus is talking about forming the

habit of judging hastily and harshly the motives and intentions of others. It includes the practice of always tearing down another's work with unjust criticism.

Many times we are quick to see faults in others when we do not see our own imperfections. As Jesus states in a question, "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own

Destructive criticism tends to paralyze a good work. People get discouraged and quit doing if their work is harshly judged. Teachers quit teaching, preachers stop preaching and bishops stop overseeing. Brethren have been known to cease their praying or waiting on the Lord's table because of unkind words expressed in criticism.

eye?" "The meaning is, that we are much more quick and acute to judge of small offences in others, than of much larger offences in ourselves" (Albert Barnes).

Someone has said, "If he who carefully picks holes in the character of others would but expend the same skill upon himself, what could prevent him from breaking through the bonds of ignorance?"

Destructive criticism tends to paralyze

a good work. People get discouraged and quit doing if their work is harshly judged. Teachers quit teaching, preachers stop preaching, and bishops stop overseeing. Brethren have been known to cease their praying or waiting on the Lord's table because of unkind words expressed in criticism.

The habit of destructive criticism grows out of a discontented mind. The thoughts of criticism that enter our mind are usually the most common form of negativism. In judging others we are apt to be judging ourselves subconsciously. We tend to censure and criticize in others the things which are at fault in our own lives. This is what Jesus was talking about in the sermon on the mount. If the criticism is truly coming from a heart bent on improving one's own ways of living and thinking, it might be productive—but when criticism degenerates to the level of undermining others, it can only result in producing division and unhappiness in the lives of others. Destructive criticism is an indication of an inferiority complex and is used to "put down" another to gain a superior position.

More importantly, the disposition to judge in this fashion leads to wranglings, fightings, ill-will and other consequences, which will condemn and keep one from inheriting the eternal kingdom of God! The apostle Paul included in a list of "works of the flesh . . . enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings . . . of which I forewarn you . . . that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:17-21). "Wherefore thou art without excuse, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest dost practise the same things" (Romans 2:1).

There is only one way to handle destructive criticism when we feel the welling up inside to "help" someone this way—and that is to throttle it in its incipency, whenever and wherever it appears.

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Can We Break the Circle Back To Sodom and Gomorrah?

Jim Lamberth

I recently saw a TV talk show where a family was being interviewed concerning their son's "coming out of the closet." This show disturbed me because it vividly pointed out how the public, even mothers and fathers are coming to accept the *sin* of homosexuality. As the story was developed, it showed how the "red neck" father blew his stack when he first discovered his son was a homosexual. There was no way he was going to accept this. It was very apparent that he gave no thought to the fact that his role as a father could have contributed in any way to this catastrophe. If anyone was to blame, it was his wife. They developed the story from this point to the time and place where father and mother had come to accept their son's "different life style."

You might think this story had its setting in Sodom or Gomorrah, but it did not. It happened right here and now in the "godfearing" U.S.A. I can't help but wonder if this is how Sodom and Gomorrah got their start. Noticeably absent in this talk show was a concern for God's word or any mention of religion or the Bible. I just wanted to crawl into the TV screen and ask them, "Hey, have you read the Genesis account of Sodom or have you studied what the writer of the book of Romans has to say about this?"

It was then that I reminded myself of the many members of the church I had discovered who didn't realize this was what these inspired writers were telling us about. I encourage you to read the entire chapter 19 of Genesis. But look particularly at verses 5, 7-8, and 11: "And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may *know* them . . . And [he] said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof . . . And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great so that they wearied themselves to find the door."

Can you imagine any father who would offer his own daughters to be raped and ravaged by a mob of lustful

men? Can you imagine a group of lustful men who would turn down the offer of virgin girls because of their lust for sex with other men? (Yes, this is what it is talking about!) Do you wonder why Lot didn't offer himself to them? Did he, like many today, feel that fornication was a lesser sin than homosexuality? Or did he find himself between a rock and a hard place like the "red neck" father? He may have wanted to protect the messengers from the lusts of the homosexuals outside, without engaging in their sin himself. When you make a diligent study of this account, it really turns your stomach, doesn't it?

The big question is, "How did they get to this point?" Even after they had been blinded, would they grope about trying to fulfill their ungodly lusts? Had they ignored what God had to say on some seemingly lesser points like adultery, wife-swapping, sowing "wild oats," and such like? Had these practices become socially accepted instead of exposed for the sins that they were? Had the parents ignored the fact that their children were not associating with other God-serving children? Were the parents a little lax in who they socialized with and what they themselves condemned and allowed? After all, social drinking and missing services to go fishing were "small" sins when compared to the sin of homosexuality (if they were sins at all).

How did those old men get to be homosexuals? Did they, as young men (for whatever emotional reason), excuse themselves by realizing that their sin was no worse than the sins their parents overlooked? When I say "no worse," I am guessing how they feel and reminding all of us that there are no large and small sins in God's eyes.

Society doesn't look through God's eyes. I have heard many say, "Why don't they just go ahead and identify a 'red light' district, move the prostitutes into it and let them alone?" For those who don't know, a red porch light is often used to identify a house of ill repute. I have been told that a green porch light is used to identify a house of homosexuals. I don't know if this is true, but I will stick to white or bug-repellant yellow.

I hope that this article will do two things: (1) inform the unlearned concerning what God has to say about homosexuality; and (2) encourage those

who may be involved in or tempted by homosexual tendencies to turn their back on the sinful practice. Yes, say, "Satan, get thee behind me!" When a person is tempted to commit adultery by being attracted to someone of the opposite sex, they must say to themselves, "It is written," and resist this temptation. A person who is attracted by someone of the same sex must do the same thing. The only difference is that there is an attraction between those of the opposite sex that is acceptable and pleasing to God. There is no sexual attraction between those of the same sex that is acceptable in God's sight.

I encourage you to read Romans 1:17-32. Verses 26-28 say: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." The writer of Romans is not talking about a "different life style," he is talking about a deplorable sin that will condemn one's soul to an eternal hell. One may enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, but eternity is much longer than a season. I do not claim to understand this type of "pleasure," but I do believe I have presented God's displeasure with those who practice it.

Let's please not let our society become another Sodom and Gomorrah. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). God was so displeased with the people of Sodom and Gomorrah that He totally destroyed the cities from the face of the earth. The Roman writer lets us know that God still hates these sins under the law of Christ. Is He even at work at this time against men that commit them? Think about the disease of AIDS and who it primarily affects! One thing is certain—in eternity, God, in His wrath, will take vengeance on those who commit these sins!

517 McDougal, San Antonio, TX 78223
(Jim Lamberth is an elder with the Pecan Valley church.)

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Modern Pioneers

How does a preacher decide where to move? Should he go where they offer the most money? Where they have elders and a "good program underway?" To a prestigious church which will enhance his reputation? To the largest church possible or to the church with the nicest building or preacher's home? To the church that is closest to his family or to one where the fishing and hunting are good?

By any of these criteria, Robert Bunting and his wife Sara have made bad decisions. And look at the consequences: after thirty-four years of preaching experience he is working with a little church which meets in an old converted residence and does well to reach sixty in attendance. By all the standards of men, Bob Bunting is a failure.

But the standards of men and those of God have always been different; Bob's purpose has been to please God. Finishing school in Nashville in 1950, he went to Camden, South Carolina, to work with a very small group of Christians there. Soon, however, a migration of DuPont workers from Tennessee brought the church to sufficient strength to allow him to leave to help two families begin a church in Beaufort, South Carolina. Four years later, with the Beaufort church well on its feet, he was off again to begin a church in Orangeburg, South Carolina.

The Buntings are wise enough to understand that pleasing God may not always mean going to the smallest churches or to cities with no church. Sometimes a well-established church may offer the greatest opportunity for service. God must be pleased when one accepts such a work for the purpose of serving. The church in Hueytown, Alabama, was such a church in 1960. Institutional controversies threatened division and made selection of a preacher especially difficult. This unknown preacher from South Carolina was perfect for the job. Soon that great church was infected with the same evangelistic zeal that motivated Bob, and their concern for souls in their own community and around the world became an example for churches far and wide. Needless to say, unity was restored.

After four pleasant years at Hueytown, the pioneering spirit was stirring again. An isolated family in the Northeast challenged their attention and, with full financial support from Hueytown, they moved to begin a work in Newton, New Jersey. Though no church now meets in Newton, three congregations trace their roots to that work and the Buntings' influence for good is still felt

throughout the state.

Succeeding years have found this family back in Middle Tennessee, working still where they can feel most needed. After association with two congregations in Murfreesboro, they moved four years ago to begin a work in Springfield. The attendance of sixty mentioned above represents a growth from zero and the converted residence will soon be replaced with a permanent meeting place. More significantly, during Bob's recent illness, the brethren have done their own preaching and growth has continued unabated.

Though Bob has many outstanding qualities, his most noticeable asset is his irrepressible optimism.

It is this that has helped him to believe that churches could be established where none existed. It is this that has convinced him—and enabled him to convince others—that seemingly insurmountable church problems could be overcome. It is this that has made it difficult for callers to learn his true physical condition during his ongoing fight with cancer.

But as one comes to know the Buntings better, it becomes evident that what appears to be optimism is really faith in its finest form. It is a total awareness of God and of His power, wisdom, love and nearness.

This faith has shown itself in his independent unconcern for human approval. Old classmates from Tennessee were appalled at what he was preaching in New Jersey. They threatened to report him to the president of the school he had attended. Thoroughly chastened (?), Bob replied: "Then I suppose I will have to turn in my New Testament."

This faith has shown itself in unconcern for financial security. In many of the places they have lived, especially in the early years, necessities did not come easy. In one, baby food was the first purchase made from the meager paycheck to make certain the little one was not deprived. Yet, there was no complaint or change of approach.

Such faith has its reward. Having sown bountifully, the Buntings are now reaping bountifully. When brethren learned of Bob's mounting medical bills, they immediately responded with financial assistance—so much so that some funds "will have to be returned." Bob's assessment: "Everyone should have to spend some time in the hospital to learn how good the brethren are."

Bob, you will forgive me for writing this if you ever realize how much your example will encourage others. But you probably never will.

3230 Chamblee-Tucker Rd., Atlanta, GA 30341



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

Going To Church

My father, Dr. David Edwin Harrell, Sr., was a man's man—large and imposing in stature and commanding and impressive in appearance. A physician by vocation and a businessman by avocation, he spent much of his time being a Christian. He did all of those things with the same individuality and ferocity, which had its good and bad points.

Through the years many people became indebted to Dr. Harrell. He loaned the money to build probably twenty-five church buildings in the South, gave money to scores of preachers and students at Florida College and helped many Christians who had encountered hard times. I don't believe he ever expected anything in return, but he got something anyway.

As my dad grew old (he

never knew how old for sure because his birth as the ninth of ten children in a Georgia sharecropping family was unrecorded), his fine mind faded before his vigorous spirit. Hard of hearing, he continued to attend services, sitting on the front row with his hand cupped behind his ear and leaning forward to hear the sermon. I preached to him a few times while visiting in Jacksonville and wondered as I watched him how much he heard and how much he understood.

But he never lost his spunk. Harold Dowdy, who preached for the church regularly, would stand immediately in front of my dad so he could hear. If some stranger wandered into the pulpit uninstructed, my dad would soon wave for him to come stand in front of him. The congregation bore it well

because they knew him and they loved him. But occasionally he disrupted the services too much, and my sister and brother-in-law, with whom he lived, had to warn him that he could not attend if he did not behave better. That was a hard duty. He would do better for a while.

I learned a lot watching the interaction of that church and my father. Their care for him reflected a maturity, loyalty and love which I have not often seen. They did a lot to pay brother Harrell back. There are lots of other older folks around who need and deserve the same payments.

But I also perceived that the congregation learned from my dad right up to the end of his life. After my father's funeral, one of the deacons of the congregation, Augie Quesada,

haltingly told me: "Ed, your dad taught me a lot of things through the years, but I never learned more than by watching him struggle to come to church during his last few years." Deaf and brain-numbed, the first day of the week remained the Lord's Day.

My dad knew—somehow more and more in those last years—what a privilege it was to go to church. If, or when, you get lax and lazy, remember that the time may come when you will fight to go one more time to sing the songs of Zion and receive once more the holy kiss of those of like precious faith. And if you do savor that spiritual association now, rest assured that the appetite will grow stronger with age and that those who love the Lord will love you no less when you are old and feeble.

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**HE THE GREAT
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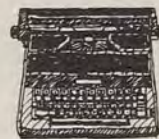
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Tongue Control

Recently I preached a sermon on the proper use of the tongue. I talked about the statement in James three, "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man and able also to bridle the whole body." I then applied the context of this passage by saying something like, "We should all have a bridle for our tongue."

One of the ladies, a very clever one, took the message to heart. When her husband returned from work the next day he found next to his plate a small bridle, just right to slip onto his tongue, with reins and all.

It is hard to control the tongue. It resists restraints and bucks up against control. And yet, control it we must! Solomon said, "He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction" (Proverbs 13:3), and again, "He that refraineth his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19). Tongue control aids in solving problems. It is a grand tool among all wise people.

There are several areas where control of the tongue is necessary for a peaceful, yet fruitful life.

Sometimes the best tongue is a silent tongue. Speaking of the wisdom of one of his colleagues, a well respected linguist said, "He can be silent in seven different languages." James echos the sentiment when he says, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). The right kind of silence promotes peace, maintains harmony. Very few quarrels last when one of the participants has the good sense to remain silent. Truly "a soft answer turneth away wrath" (Proverbs 15:1).

But at other times the best tongue control is one which speaks up. The wise man said, "There is a time to remain silent," but he also said, "There is a time to speak." Although it may seem that we more often have trouble being silent, I aver that we have about as much trouble not speaking out when it is time. How many times have you come home and thought, "Why didn't I speak up for him?" or "I should have defended the truth on that issue," or "I wonder if they thought I agreed, since I didn't say anything to the contrary?" Peter said, "Be ready always to give an answer," and to fail to do so is not only unwise, it may be cowardly—even sinful!

The tongue can do so much good, if it is used right. People everywhere are discouraged, distressed, exasper-

ated with life. And you have at your disposal an instrument to do something about it. What one writer called "the educated heart" is so called because it continually looks for some word which will build up, encourage, edify. A kind word, fitly spoken, has great power for good. It can cause change for the better. It can bring peace, restore the spacious view, make the way bright again. Speech "seasoned with salt" can preserve relationships, give taste to an otherwise drab existence, cause the downtrodden to look up. Someone once told me a story about a man who had lost all he had during the great depression of the twenties. He had taken to begging. One cold wintery morning, as he begged in front of a fashionable Chicago hotel, he encountered a wealthy man. The man would not give him a dime. As the man walked away, the poor man said to him, "If you can't spare a dime for a cup of coffee, could you just give me a kind word?" Sometimes all we need is to know that someone cares. For encouragement's sake—say it!

Gossip is probably the poorest and most inefficient use of the tongue. In his book, *God's Psychiatry*, Dr. Charles Allen says, "Those of great minds discuss ideas, people of mediocre minds discuss events, and those of smaller minds discuss other people." Our failure to think good thoughts, to fill our minds with things that are good, lovely, holy, of good report makes gossip an easy way to use the tongue. Solomon said, "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth" (Proverbs 26:20).

In his little book *Beauty Care for the Tongue*, Larry Koopman cites four reasons why people gossip. They are worth repeating. (1) We gossip because we lack healthy self-respect. (2) We gossip because we haven't sufficiently stimulated our minds with more important things. (3) We gossip because we are idle. (4) We gossip because we get into the habit of doing it. These things are worth careful consideration the next time someone delivers to you some juicy morsel through the age-old gossip chain. You can keep the tale going, or break the chain by the proper use of the tongue.

"If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26).

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Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, P. O. Box 360277, Melbourne, FL 32936

Soundings is intended to be a true reader response column. We want to know what you, the readers, think about this paper and what we are saying. The reason is simple—our effectiveness depends on our capacity to determine that. And the only way we can know if we're "on target" is to hear from you. Why would you write to us?

1. To suggest a subject. There may be some topic which you would like to see treated in the magazine. A portion of each issue of this paper will be on a particular theme. Those of us who serve as editors all have some ideas about themes. We think they are good ideas. But we would welcome suggestions from you. We cannot promise that we will follow each suggestion, but we will certainly value and consider each one.

2. To comment on an article. If we do the job we expect to do, we are going to "stir up your sincere minds" in each issue. You may want to write us in order to "amen" a particular piece. "I enjoyed the article on such-and-such. I believe brother Smart got to the heart of the matter. Something else I would add is . . ." In the same way, you may wish to disagree. "I appreciate the article by brother Not-So-Smart on . . . However, I do not agree with his conclusion. It seems to me such-and-such." All we ask is that you write in a brotherly spirit and keep it brief—under 150 words.

3. To edify, exhort and encourage. You may have some beneficial and constructive observation that you believe needs to be stated. We cannot promise that every comment will be carried here, but those that we believe to be of

enough interest and profit to others will be used. The format and nature of this magazine precludes the acceptance of unsolicited articles. But this is a place where you can "sound off" on some things that may help others. You don't have to be a preacher to say something

***This
is the
place where
you, the
reader,
have the
opportunity
to say
what's on
your mind.***

that needs to be said. In fact, maybe you need to sound off about preachers! At any rate, please observe the 150-word maximum.

4. To comment on current events. Things are happening around us every day. We are all involved in them, to some extent. The things you read in the

newspaper and see on television may cause you to want to speak out. You may want to call for others' response on the same issue. This is the place for you to do that. We can all profit from your thinking.

Paul said, "For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7). Those of us connected with *Christianity Magazine* recognize the many and varied contributions that others can make to this endeavor. We are not in this alone; we solicit your help, your cooperation and your participation.

Christians are all interrelated. Someone has said, "We can see that life is a cycling phenomenon which occurs in many forms within a single system. Nothing stands alone—no individual, species, or community; no rain drop, snow crystal, cloud or stream; no mountain and no sea—for in a cycle each thing in one way or another is connected with everything else." We are connected with you. We value what you have to say. Let us hear from you.

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

The Grand Hotel

Located in the midst of downtown Calcutta, the Grand Hotel is probably the most opulent and elegant setting I ever entered. A remnant of the British Empire, it is filled with ornate courtyards and beautiful furnishings. Turbanned porters are ever ready to be of service. It is a strain of luxury little understood by those of us who live in societies where machines are our servants rather than people.

I have visited the Grand on several occasions; it always left me with a queasy feeling. That feeling began at the hotel's entrance. Calcutta's streets are filled with literally millions of homeless residents and swarms of them gather at the entrance to the Grand hoping that some rich person will give them a gift. When one disembarks from a taxi, crowds rush toward you. They are kept at bay by several doormen who carry long sticks to beat the people away from those entering the hotel. It is a shocking, violent scene; starkly impressed on one's memory by the tranquility and elegance once one enters the hotel.

The first time I visited the Grand I remember walking to the window to view the swarming masses outside, just one floor beneath me. I must have stood there for hours, hypnotized by the squalid drama outside my window. There, scores of people sat aimlessly on the pavement. They had broken a hole in the water main and they drank, played and bathed in the water that bubbled out of it. When evening came, they cooked and ate, and then they stretched out on the pavement to sleep. It slowly and incredulously dawned on me—this was their home. They lived outside my window.

Those scenes, like many others I saw while living in India, remain etched on my memory, never to be forgot-

ten. There is much for an American to learn in such encounters about the incredible blessings we enjoy. Responsibility surely must go with that abundance. I feel a pressing burden to help the Indians (not so much to relieve their physical suffering which is a problem which simply defies human solution but to help them spiritually). Many others in other lands (and in our land) need similar help.

But there is another image that the Grand Hotel always conjures up in my mind. As I sat in the comfort of my room, gazing at the squalor outside, my mind reached and strained to grasp the meaning of the wall that separated us. Outside that thin wall were thousands of human beings living in subhuman conditions—filthy, diseased, hopeless. Inside was air conditioned and lavish. It was an eerie, unsettling perception. But it was a piece of the real world. They could not come in, and I was thankful that I did not live outside.

Though the parallels are not precise (I do not mean to assign any immoral significance to the poverty of Calcutta's masses), I can never think of those scenes without remembering Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Remember Abraham's word to the rich man: "And beside all this, between us and you is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:26). Can you imagine the writhing anguish of torment on one side of the gulf and the sublimity of heaven on the other? That barrier is more final than the wall of the Grand Hotel. Those on the outside can never cross over. Life goes on outside the Grand Hotel, though it is grim. But it is unthinkable that we should end on the wrong side of that everlasting gulf, never to leave the horror.

Some Misapplied Passages

Dean Bullock

There is, among religious groups, wholesale misunderstanding of Bible teaching. Anyone conversant with truth recognizes this fact. The average person has subscribed to traditional ideologies and practices. His concept of many Scriptural themes is distorted and far removed from the doctrine of Christ. But misapprehension of spiritual matters is not confined to members of cults and sects of the denominational world. There is unimpeachable evidence that some brethren have been influenced by street-corner philosophy. Careful Bible investigation is sorely needed among citizens of the kingdom of God. This is an effort to cite some verses that are often misapplied even among us.

1. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of war: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6). This verse is sometimes construed to mean that there will be wars and rumors of wars until the second coming of Christ. There may be, but such is a misconstruction of this passage. The context shows that Jesus was telling of events that would happen before the destruction (end) of the temple. History records that the Jewish temple was destroyed about A.D. 70. To talk about and pray for world peace is not contrary to the statements of the Lord here. The matters mentioned here actually characterized the period immediately preceding the termination of the Jewish nation; they have been literally fulfilled.

2. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14). Does this text indicate that Christ will not come the second time until the gospel is proclaimed to the present nations of the world? It is often given this application; but to handle the verse in this manner is to mishandle it. This passage must be considered in the same context as the above. The Lord was enumerating things that would occur before the downfall of Jerusalem. The prophecy

here was announced about A.D. 33; it came to pass before A.D. 70. The kingdom was set up on the day of Pentecost; within a period of about thirty years congregations were established throughout the Roman world; every nation received its testimony before the end of the temple. The apostle Paul wrote the following words about A.D. 62: "For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; which is come unto you, as it is in all the world" (Colossians 1:5-6). We have here and in similar verses an account of the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy. Remember that times and seasons regarding the return of the Redeemer are unknown. Each day, for the child of God, is to be one of vigilance, preparation, watchfulness, wakefulness and readiness.

3. "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). This is the sixth commandment of the decalogue and is adduced by some to prove that capital punishment is prohibited in the Bible. Such an application is far from the truth. When God said, "Thou shalt not kill," He then said what would be done to the one who violated this law. "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death . . . But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die" (Exodus 21:12-14). The sixth commandment referred then to murder; Jesus plainly said that it did (Matthew 19:18). To make it refer to civil government punishing the evil doer is unwarrantable. When Noah came out of the ark, God told him that no one should kill his fellow-man and announced this law: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6). Relative to civil power the New Testament says: "For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain" (Romans 13:4). The sword was an instrument employed

to inflict the death penalty.

4. "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Timothy 2:1). Occasionally the contention is made that this teaches that public worship must open with a prayer. The argument is that "first of all" means first in order or from the standpoint of time in the service. Hence, once in awhile someone will object when the worship does not begin with a prayer. Is the objection scripturally valid? It seems to me that Albert Barnes strikes at the real meaning of the passage in these comments: "First of all. That is, as the first duty to be enjoined; the thing that is to be regarded with primary concern . . . It does not mean that this was to be the first thing in public worship in the order of time, but that it was to be regarded as a duty of primary importance."

5. "For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths" (2 Corinthians 12:20). This verse is frequently used to prove that it's wrong to debate religious questions. But Paul is not here condemning public discussions of spiritual matters. The American Standard Version omits the word "debates" and gives instead the word "strife." Quarreling and wrangling are condemned; but public discussions for the purpose of learning truth and maintaining propositions are in harmony with Bible teaching. Jesus engaged the religious leaders of His time in controversy (Matthew 22); Stephen was involved in "dispute" with certain synagogues (Acts 6); one of the qualifications of an elder is "that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). Our attitude and deportment must be, at all times, in accord with Bible principles; but let's be "set for the defense of the gospel." Such is the will of God.

From *The Preceptor*, Vol. 6, p. 229.



My Brother/My Self

The Principles of Friendship (II)

G. K. Chesterton once said that the meanest fear is the fear of sentimentality. Many of us withhold expressions of love and friendship because we can't bring ourselves to say them. We quietly say "Thanks" when we mean "That really meant a lot to me," and "So long" when we mean "I will really miss you a lot." Here, then, is the third principle of friendship:

3. Talk about your affection openly. Why is it that we are so reluctant to say plainly that we care for another? There are plenty of reasons. There is the possibility that our expression of warmth will not be reciprocated and we will be rejected. And even worse, especially among men, we are afraid of being laughed at for our sentimentality. There is hardly anything more frightening than outright embarrassment, and most of us will go to great lengths to avoid it.

But those who have friends are people who throw caution to the winds and dare to talk about their affection. If you would have friends, you must express your feelings for other people—just take the leap and tell them how much they mean to you. It is sad when two people enjoy being with one another and like what they see in the other, but, because both are shy, they do not declare their affection—and the relationship sputters and dies.

Two thousand years ago, Seneca said: "If you wish to be loved, love." That is still a good rule and it is virtually infallible. Other people will care for you and you will develop lasting friendships if you will concentrate on expressing your affection for and appreciation of others.

There are some pitfalls to avoid, however. Never gush out inappropriate and artificial emotion. People are quick to detect insincerity. So don't say anything you don't feel, but do express every good feeling you have about others. Never put pressure on others to return a

compliment. Expect nothing in return; just let your words be the free expression of what's going on inside you.

4. Give attention to the little gestures of friendship. Love is something you do. When you take the time to think what might bring a moment of happiness to someone and then do that thing, you are taking care to cement your friendship. The miniscule act of kindness is powerful because it shows that you have not taken your friend for granted. These gestures are the things that bond people together and prevent fractures when the relationship is under strain.

Husbands and wives cement their love with many ceremonies: kissing goodnight, celebrating anniversaries, giving jewelry, telephoning when they are apart, bringing a morning cup of coffee, taking an evening walk together. The person interested in deepening his friendships will be on the lookout for similar rituals. A weekly lunch together, a regular golf date, a yearly hunting trip can be important events.

One of the oldest gestures of friendship is the giving of gifts. They do not have to be lavish. It's the thoughtfulness that counts. True friends have their eyes and ears open as to what might please the other. Someone has said that the test of a great man is the way he treats little people. If one can develop the habit of looking for gestures that build goodwill—he will never want for true and abiding friends.

Christians, above all people, should be friendly. It is a natural extension of Jesus' statement, "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them" (Matthew 7:12). There is hardly a greater blessing in life than having good friends—nor is there anything much more important than *being* a friend. Determine that you will give more time and attention in your life to this. The rewards will be rich and immeasurable.

Going the Second Mile

Martha Ladyman

What distinguishes a *good* worker from an *excellent* worker? Why do you prefer to shop at one supermarket, rather than another? Why do you go back to one restaurant time after time, even though you know of others that are almost as good? Is it because one tries harder than another, is more pleasant, fits your lifestyle better? Even though both may be good, is one doing just a little bit more to please you? This is known as *going the second mile*. Jesus mentions this in Matthew 5:40-41 when He says: "And if any man would go to law with thee and take away thy coat,

killed the false prophets. He burned the idols and their 'sacred groves.' He went so far as to burn the bones of the false prophets on the altars of their gods, and then scattered the ashes and destroyed the altars. He tore down the houses of evil that were bordering the temple in Jerusalem, and ordered the rebuilding of the temple.

Now, sitting back at ease and seeing all that he had done, he could be content. He had certainly done all that could be expected of one man, had he not? And yet, when the repairmen in the temple found a scroll of Moses with

What is the message of Josiah? He did *more*. He *went the second mile*. He could have pointed proudly at all he had accomplished and said, "I have wiped idolatry from the land. I have done many mighty things for the Lord. Now, let me rest and let someone else carry on. I've done my share." But Josiah made the extra effort. And the Scriptures say of him that "like him there was no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to the law of Moses; neither after him arose there like him" (2 Kings 23:25).

The lesson of Josiah shows to me that it is not enough to set easy standards for myself, and effortlessly live up to them; my Lord has set standards for me, and I must try to live up to *them*. Josiah is saying to me today that I must put out extra effort, I must do better, I must go *the second mile*. It's not enough merely to attend classes Sunday and Wednesday—I should study for these classes ahead of time, and participate in them. It's not enough for me just to warm that pew. I'm expected to give the sermons my full, undivided attention, meditate on them, study them afterwards, and apply them to my life. My singing should not be merely for my pleasure; it is an act of worship to God, and so I should study the lyrics of the songs I sing, and do my singing with *both* the spirit *and* the understanding. My prayers should come from both my heart and my head.

And yet, this is still not all the Lord expects of me, or you. He expects us to live for Him, doing His will; not only Wednesday night and twice on Sunday, but every day of our lives. The church today has an enormous supply of talented, imaginative, dedicated people within it. If we all did, not just the minimum we think is needed to "get by," but more—if we all *went the second mile*—what wonders we would accomplish, and what glory we would give to the Lord!

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"The lesson of Josiah shows to me that it is not enough to set easy standards for myself . . . my Lord has set standards for me, and I must try to live up to THEM."

let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two." In other words, do extra, give a little more, 'be more than you have to be' (as the TV commercial says). This can be clearly seen in the example of King Josiah, as found in 2 Kings 22.

Josiah became king of Judah during a time of wicked and corrupt men. The kings before him had introduced idolatry into the land, and the people had forgotten God. Josiah, not disheartened by a seemingly impossible task, began to erase idolatry from the land. He threw out the false priests from the temple, and

God's law written in it, Josiah demanded that it be read to him, and that a prophetess be consulted about it. And when he found out how great Judah's sin was, and how far they had strayed from God, he rent his clothes and poured ashes on his head and commanded that the scroll be read before the people and the laws be kept. He commanded the Passover be reinstated and kept such a Passover feast that it was said, "And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a Passover as Josiah kept" (2 Chronicles 35:18).



Thinking About Heaven

The lyrics of an old "spiritual" speak about "Everybody talkin' 'bout heaven. Nobody goin' there." Today, it would appear, nobody is even talking about it.

There is a distinct sense of "nowness" about so many modern disciples. Talk of heaven is rare. Our songs about it even seem *pro forma*. They do not engage our thought and our imagination. Philip Yancey recently observed in a popular "evangelical" journal that the quiet in religious circles on the subject of heaven was deeply disturbing (*Christianity Today*, 9-7-84, p. 53). How, he asked, can people who hope to spend most all of their lives in a place have so little interest in it? It is a very good question.

Yancey offers three reasons for the waning interest in man's eternal home. (1) Our present affluence has given us what former suffering generations longed for in heaven. (2) We are being taught a pagan acceptance of death as life's natural conclusion. And (3) biblical imagery of heaven fails to appeal to modern man. Is there any merit to this analysis?

It is certainly true that in the western world our affluence has given some, if not all, of us an occasional illusion of utopia with its freedom from want, pain and fear. Earlier ages of man were not so much subjected to this temptation. But these illusions are individually, if not collectively, short-lived and disease and death finally run us down. The pagan effort to get us to make our peace with death is certainly being made but will always run against the grain of the human spirit. Death is an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). It seems to me that even at best there is altogether enough pain and heartache in this world to provide fertile soil for a heavenward yearning.

As to the lack of appeal to modern man in the Bible's imagery of heaven, I'm not sure that these figures were ever intended to attract men of any age in their literal sense. Much of this imagery is found in the book of Revelation which conveys its message in a series of striking visions filled with symbolic meaning. Does the Lord intend us to understand that the heavenly city will actually be constructed of pure gold and surrounded with massive crystal walls encrusted with a rainbow of precious stones? Or is this an effort by the Holy Spirit to convey a message which beggars words—the glory of God's redeemed people? The pictures of hell in these visions of John seem to be an effort to describe the indescribable—a lake of unquenchable sulphurous fire which ministers unending torment (Revelation 14:9-11).

We suspect, though do not know, that God has gone to the very limits of human language in an effort to give us some sense of the horrors of hell and the glories of heaven. But keep well in mind that the reality is always greater than the figure. Hell will be far worse and heaven more wonderful than all this imagery can convey.

James certainly opens up new vistas on the chilling terrors of hell in his penetrating discussion of the power of the tongue. He describes the tongue as a fire which "is set on fire by hell" (James 3:6). Human hatred and viciousness can give us a foretaste of perdition in this life, but imagine the hereafter where all the bitter hatred and malice of human history will be poured together in one great hellish mix of utter despair. The darkness of that nether world will doubtless make this moral twilight look like noon day. Hell is the place where God is not, and where, consequently, there is no love, no gentleness, no purity and no hope. In the consummate moral and spiritual sense it will truly be the "outer darkness" where there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). Our worst nightmares about hell will not serve to do it justice.

How much more true this is of our dreams of heaven. The accommodations (gold mansions), likely figurative anyway, are not of primary interest. One must always question the love of a bride who is more interested in the new china and silverware than she is her prospective husband. From where we are here the thought of a place where there are no tears, no sickness, no dying (Revelation 21:4) has a compelling appeal. Even more, perhaps, a place where there is no sin (21:27). But it is who will be there that really makes heaven glorious. "And the city hath no need of the sun . . . for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (21:23). When death hung like a dark curtain around Paul in Rome he said nothing about golden streets or gates of pearl but longed "to depart and be with Christ" (Philippians 1:23). The definition of heaven for the true Christian is easy—wherever God and the Lamb are, and with them all the love, joy, peace and purity of eternity. Heaven is to be but the intensification above of a grand relationship which began here. The message of all the imagery and figures is this: Heaven is something unparalleled; something which defies description, a grandeur beyond words; something beyond our grandest imaginings. And how could it be otherwise if He is there? I want so desperately to go to that place. But if it is built on a relationship with God and His Son, I know that heaven is something that must begin now.



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Dee Bowman

Follow the Leader

Edmond Burke (1729-1797), the British politician and orator, made a rather incisive observation when he said, "Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other." That may be somewhat of an over-simplification, but it is generally true. And I think the Lord must have had that in mind when He taught people with a number of illustrations, parables, allegories, and the like while He was on the earth. Jesus knew the power of example, the need to show the principle at work in practical circumstances.

Not only did Jesus make use of examples in His teaching, He was the great example of all that He said. He illustrates in His character all the things necessary for pleasing God. He shows in His handling of the various situations of life what is the right course of pursuit. His attitudes are examples of the highest sort; his dispositions display of the kind of thinking that is not only wise, but compassionate and caring. His tongue was used only for edification, an example hard to follow, but nonetheless brilliant. Never once do we see His life unordered, without direction, in any state of disarray. Nor do we ever see

Him incapable of handling any of life's situations. He was ever the manifestation of all that is good.

Examples, I remind you, are for following. We should emulate, as best we can, all that Christ was and said. We should speak as He spoke, act as He acted, react as He reacted, show ourselves faithful as did He. To follow the leader requires at least three things:

1. **A surrender of one's will.** If we are not willing to let Him have His way in our lives, we are not qualified to follow Him. Only as we allow Him to plot the course, direct the way, and call the shots can we have the grand advantage of His leadership. When Jesus said in Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me," He says nothing of denying oneself things, though that certainly may be necessary at times, but rather that a man must deny *self*, meaning the voluntary surrender of one's own control in preference for that of Christ.

2. **A complete trust in Him.** Paul says, "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17), indicating that complete confidence in Him who leads is the reason for having faith. Faith leads us to have

no doubts about following Him, no matter where He leads us. Even His suffering is an example to us (1 Peter 2:21) so that we are sustained in time of trouble.

3. **Constant contact with Him.** If we are to put our will at His disposal and make Him the object of our total concentration, then we must have constant contact with Him. This contact is maintained by listening to Him speak through His word (John 6:63,68), as well as by speaking to Him in prayer. Such contact promotes a cognizance of His nearness to us in all situations and of His care for us as we strive with the evil round about us. It furthermore enhances our faith, buoys our hope, increases our love.

In the pages just ahead, you will thrill to the great example of Jesus. You will see His example in various circumstances and by that be constrained to be like Him. You will learn about His feelings about family, friends, enemies, and how He handled everyday life situations when He was on earth—situations just like you and I face every day. You will catch a glimpse of the greatest human being who ever lived. What a sublime joy!

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

Jesus, the Declaration of God

W. Frank Walton

THE MOST IMPORTANT DECLARATION ever considered in the minds of men is the message and man of the Lord Jesus. "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18). The eternal Word left the privileged glory of heaven to become the unique God-man in the stream of human history.

"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The Law thundered from Mt. Sinai, as fire, lightning, earthquake, and smoke unveiled the awesome and unapproachable Jehovah. Yet, God ultimately and dramatically expressed Himself in the gift of His Son, as a baby born in a barn. Jesus eloquently expressed the invisible Father, ultimate truth, and embodied God's kingdom. He removed all speculations about our Creator. "God . . . in these last days has spoken to us in His Son . . . who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Our holy, infinite God wants a living, personal relationship with us as our Father and Friend. The transcendent I AM bridged the great gap to a race of rebels by communicating in His Son. We must listen!

God Is Spirit (John 4:24)

Jesus' life and teaching declared the priority of the spiritual over the temporal (Mark 8:35f). Man is a forever-living spirit, temporarily housed in a physical body. Since God "set eternity in their heart," men long to reach out and find God (Acts 17:27). In Jesus, God is available to anyone at anytime. As the "Bread of Life," only He can feed our spirit. The needs of the spirit far outweigh the enticements of the secular. Jesus showed the spiritual realm yields the greatest profit of a better life with eternal significance (Matthew 11:28ff; 1 Timothy 4:8).

God Is Light (1 John 1:5)

"There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (John 1:9). Only Jesus, the

infallible "Light of the world," shows where we came from, where we're going, and why we're here. In the black midnight of human despair, Jesus shines as the lone beacon of deliverance and hope. "The people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Matthew 4:16). All life is impossible without light.

His God-given miracles "manifested His glory" (John 2:11). It's staggering to think Jesus' mere words could command death to surrender its prey, still the raging winds and churning waves, evict demons, and heal all diseases. Such astonishing deeds and radiant power documented His deity.

**God
ultimately
and dramatically
expressed Himself
in the gift of
His Son, as a
baby born in
a barn.**

His greatest miraculous light shines in His resurrected glory. He "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). The resurrection erases the gloom of the grave and provides a bright hope for all. His Good News is the living words from a living God radiating the "light of life"—the greatest quality of life known to man. Planted in human hearts, it forever keeps us from death (John 8:51).

His life has lighted a way back to God, so that we can be "sons of light" and "partakers of the divine nature." This answers life's greatest questions and fulfills our deepest needs. We behold his glory, to think, act, and be more and more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). In Him, we're more than human beings;

we're human becoming. What enlightening potential!

God Is Love (1 John 4:8)

The very love God has for the Son is the exact love Jesus has for us (John 17:23). This measure of divine love is beyond our comprehension. He "became flesh" and endured the moral stench of sinful men surrounding His sinless self. In compassion, He allowed anxious, ungrateful mobs of the infirmed to press upon Him (Mark 3:10). He taught and traveled to the point of exhaustion. Love was His mission's heartbeat.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). He bore the message of God's unfailing love. Jesus spread open His arms upon a cross of merciless agony and utter shame, to die personally for you and me. Nails didn't really hold the bleeding Jesus. Love did. He despised or abhorred the cross' shame (Hebrews 12:2). His innocent, loving heart revolted at the bitter stigma of guilt, for the cross was reserved for the worst of evil doers. Yet love is stronger than the hate of godless men who put Him there. Jesus sought our highest good and paid the awful debt of our sins. Praise God!

God Is A

Consuming Fire (Hebrews 12:29)

Jesus is the dividing point of human destiny. He sought to save, not destroy (John 3:17). But all men have an appointment before the judgment seat of Christ, because He is the final standard of human conduct (Acts 17:31). A pale and powerless Christ is the root of our indifference today.

Jesus confronts us now with a decision. There is no compromise or neutrality. To reject, ignore, or misunderstand His ringing declaration is to lose everything forever. Absolute submission to His authority lifts us to an abundant life here and an assured reward hereafter (Revelation 3:20f). Let's gladly heed God's declaration—the Lord Jesus Christ.

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

How Jesus Dealt With Authority

Mark White

"AUTHORITY"—THE VERY SOUND OF THE word makes some people cringe. But the Christian is a man under authority. He does not direct his own footsteps for this is the apex of foolishness. The Christian places himself under authority because Jesus left this example for him to follow.

Jesus did not rebel against authority. He did not foolishly exploit his position as the Son of the Creator of the universe. The "Child of the King" was not a spoiled brat. He recognized and submitted to authority throughout His life. Christ demonstrates for us how to stop, look, and listen to the right of those who are in authority to direct our lives.

Jesus respected the authority of His parents. As He grew into a young man He lived with His mother and father in subjection to their rule and care (Luke 2:51). He was not a rebellious child, nor do we see even so much as a hint that He was ever disrespectful to His parents as a grown man. He worked with His father and learned the carpenter's trade; and His love, care, and concern for His mother was demonstrated throughout His life—even at the Cross (John 19:25-27). Jesus grew up under their guidance willingly and respected their responsibility toward Him.

Jesus taught His disciples to respect the authority of civil government. Jewish leaders tried to make it appear that Jesus despised and rejected the powers of the Roman government. But Jesus recognized the right of the civil government to rule in His affairs. Matthew 22 records that the Pharisees and Herodians tried to entangle Jesus over the matter of paying taxes to Caesar. Yet Jesus teaches that we must pay whatever is due to Caesar. With His unique wisdom He lays down a timeless principle. Every Christian must realize his dual citizenship. He must fulfill whatever obligations his country imposes upon him which are moral and right. He must also remember his obligations to the kingdom of heaven. The Roman taxation was despised by the Jewish people. Yet their hatred for it did not negate their responsibility to submit

to the authority Christ recognized the government had to demand it.

Jesus recognized the authority of the Scriptures. Yet He abhorred the traditions of men, and rejected them as the basis of religious authority. His purpose in coming to mankind was to fulfill the Scriptures rather than destroy them (Matthew 5:17). He taught that the Scriptures cannot be broken (John 10:34). He taught that the Scriptures should be searched (John 5:39). He read the Scriptures (Luke 4:16-21). He even preached from the Scriptures (Mark 12:10; Luke 4:21; John 7:38; 13:18; 17:12). The "Word" taught His disciples to have an appetite and respect for the word of God.

Him and His words would be rejected by those words in the day of judgment (John 12:48). Jesus was not only a man under authority, He was a man possessed with all authority. He was not a "little shot" trying to be a "big shot." His possession of authority as the Son of God gave him no excuse to not play by the rules. He had all authority, and respected the authority given to others.

Jesus appreciated the power and authority of God. The Son knew His place before His Father's throne. His prayer in the garden on the night of His betrayal demonstrates that He insisted that the will of His Father be carried out (Luke 22:42). Jesus teaches that He can do nothing of Himself, but that He does

"Jesus was not only a man under authority, He was a man possessed with all authority. He was not a 'little shot' trying to be a 'big shot' . . . He had all authority, and respected the authority given to others."

Jesus dealt with His own authority in an uncompromising and humble way. The Son of God declared Himself to have "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). His was not a showy, ostentatious pretense, but a display of power that was unrivaled by any other religious teacher. "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes," writes Matthew. People were astonished at His teachings. Jesus knew that He was God's Son and that His mission on earth was of the utmost importance. He did not compromise on this great truth when charged with blasphemy by a jealous Jewish hierarchy. He even states that those who reject

what the Father teaches Him. He made it His aim to do those things which were pleasing to God (John 8:28-29). If Jesus had not recognized the power of God, we would not be able to read so many of His prayers to the Father. He communicated with the Father, so that the will of heaven might be accomplished among sinful men.

If Jesus is going to be our example, we cannot help but notice how He dealt with authority. We must look to Jesus and become men under authority, rather than seek the wild, unrestricted, unrestrained lifestyle of the "wild asses of the wilderness" (Jeremiah 2:24).

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

How Jesus Treated His Enemies

Byron Gage

IT IS A GENERAL CONCLUSION THAT OUR "enemies" are those who are openly and actively opposed to us. However, in the New Testament, when referring to the enemies of Jesus, such is not always the case. Paul wrote to the Romans, "while we were still enemies, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). While Paul (Saul of Tarsus) was certainly openly and actively opposed to the church and therefore, Jesus (Acts 22:7), the citizens of Rome were probably not. Yet they were also called the enemies of Christ. Enemies of the Lord, in the New Testament, may fall into various categories. Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matthew 12:30). James wrote, "Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (4:4b). So, one's enmity against God and His Son may be either actively or passively demonstrated.

Jesus said that we are to deal with our enemies in love. "You have heard that it has been said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matthew 5:43-44). Did Jesus practice what He preached? Paul said that He did. Peter said that He did. "Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten" (1 Peter 2:22-23b).

But what about the tense confrontations with the Pharisees, the epitome of the enemies of Christ? What about when He pronounced woes upon them calling them fools, blind, and hypocrites, and their proselytes twice as much sons of hell as themselves (Matthew 23)? Jesus' accurate appraisal and scathing rebukes of the Pharisees grew out of His being a righteous judge, His ability to look into the hearts of individuals, and His ability to ascertain their basic thoughts and motivations. Unlike Jesus, we cannot always tell when one is playing a part. We do not always know why someone does what he does. Exposure and cen-

sure of false teachers is often necessary, but must still be done properly. Jesus did not violate His own principles even in His most vigorous attacks on the character of the Pharisees. And, He died for them.

Reconciliation was the goal in all of Jesus' dealings with His enemies. Jesus, whose epitaph was, "He went about doing good," was motivated by this consideration. Correction is necessary on the part of the offending party,

*Our
Savior's
words upon
the cross
declare His
attitude toward
His enemies in
the most
demonstrative
way imaginable.
"Father, forgive
them, for they
know not what
they do."*

therefore, Jesus had to correct and even rebuke people on occasion. We must sometimes do this, too, but we must recognize the goal and proper motivation which is reconciliation.

When Jesus dealt with His enemies He used the only offensive weapon that the servant of God has at his disposal—the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Confronted by his archenemy, Satan, during His temptation, Jesus used

the word to answer and rebuke the tempter. When truth was set aside by tradition, Jesus corrected the situation by quoting and properly applying God's word. When dealing with our enemies, we must speak the "truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

The greatest obstacle which we must overcome in dealing with our enemies is our attitude or disposition toward them. Negatively stated, we must not hate them, retaliate against them, ignore them, show hostility toward them, or refuse forgiveness of them. Positively stated, Jesus said to love them, pray for them, and do good to them. Our Savior's words upon the cross declare His attitude toward His enemies in the most demonstrative way imaginable. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Who can live without making enemies? The sinless One could not. Each of us, as truth-seekers and truth-speakers will make enemies by virtue of our mistakes. How will we deal with our enemies? First, seek the truth in any situation. If we are at fault, tell the other party so and ask forgiveness. If we are not at fault, then speaking truth in love, tell the other party the problem. Tell him the truth, don't tell him off. Make it known that you seek reconciliation and that your forgiveness is readily available. Make it as easy for him as is ethically and scripturally possible. Confirm your love for him (remember, show him, don't just tell him). Pray for the person and ask God for wisdom in dealing with the situation. Do something good for the person regardless of whether or not it will be received. Do whatever you can scripturally and conscientiously do to correct the situation. Then, and only then, you may have to rebuke the error and leave any further action to the other party. Continue to pray for the person and leave it in the hands of Almighty God.

Jesus did all that He could do to reconcile His enemies to Himself. Can we do any less?

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

Jesus, Our Example of Holiness

C. Titus Edwards

BURT REYNOLDS? JOAN COLLINS? PRINCE? Just who would you consider your idol to be? I suppose all of us have someone that we greatly admire; that we look up to and even imitate from time to time. Role models are a powerful force in shaping a person's beliefs and lifestyle. Unfortunately, we often select people of the world, with worldly lifestyles and no true concern for God as our role models. Let me suggest that Jesus be looked up to and used as our example in holiness.

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:21-22). Not only is Jesus our example, but a perfect example in holiness, for He lived upon this earth without sinning! Jesus, indeed, is "he that is holy" (Revelation 3:7), possessing the "spirit of holiness" (Romans 1:4). While we can never be perfect in our holiness as Jesus was, we must be constantly striving to be and growing toward that perfection of holiness exemplified in Jesus.

Holiness involves the idea of separation. It comes from *hagios* from whence comes the sanctification words. We, as Christians, have been separated from our past sins and the world through obedience to the gospel. Holiness is a life of purity and righteousness, as we seek to live apart from sin. To the Greeks, holiness was the idea of that which was dedicated to the gods. Holiness also involves being sacred, consecrated to God.

We have all seen movies where the natives brought fruits and nuts to place before some stonelike structure they revered as a god. Those items given to their gods were not to be used by anybody else or for any other purpose, for they were holy. In a sense, we have been offered unto God. We should recognize that we are to be devoted to His service.

Dedication is so sadly lacking today among Christians. We get so involved with life here, we forget why we are really here. We forget we are just

pilgrims passing through this life, and that our true citizenship is in heaven. Let us truly strive to "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1).

Jesus, in His work on the earth, never forgot why He was here. He was totally devoted to doing the Father's will. Nothing could deter Him—not family, friends, or difficult circumstances. I pray

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circum-
stances.*

that we could be so single-minded in our devotion unto God, no matter what self-sacrifice may be involved! That means taking time, money, and effort away from seeking after creature comforts here and using them in God's service. It might mean missing your favorite television show to go out and do some personal work. It might mean turning down that overtime to worship God.

Whatever it means, holy people have their priorities straight, and that means they belong to God first and foremost.

As we devote our lives to God, we recognize the importance of living purely. Holiness can never be separated from purity and righteousness. In the temptation that Jesus went through, recorded in Matthew chapter four, He was able to say "no" to each temptation. He did so with an appeal to Scripture each time. If we seek to be holy, we must know what the Bible teaches so that we can say, "It is written" as we refuse to give in to temptations. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

Sin surrounds us on every hand. It is made to look almost beautiful on television and in the movies. But sin threatens to destroy our holiness! We need to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). But recognize that you are in control! You cannot blame your sinning on anyone or anything else—no, not Satan or the circumstances. You either choose to "yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin," or "yield yourselves unto God" (Romans 6:13). The choice is yours! Jesus can help. He knows what it is like to be tempted. Prayer can be a valuable tool in our fight for holiness.

Ronald Reagan said, when he was governor of California, "I believe that birth control, prior to marriage, starts with saying no!" I believe that holiness starts with us saying no to sin, just as Jesus did. We recognize that we are to be different from the world around us. We belong to the Lord. We have devoted our lives to please Him. Let us strive to be holy, following the example of holiness left us in our Savior.

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

Jesus — His View of Heaven

Joel Meier

JESUS, IN EXPLAINING A DIFFICULT OR intangible concept, often illustrated His topic with familiar subjects easily understood by the unschooled populace. We often think of His parables when we analyze this compelling method of revealing the spiritual in earthly terms, but certainly His teaching was not limited to parables. Christ spoke in such rich metaphors that one sentence becomes a gem waiting for the hearer to perceive its value. So it is with His revelation to us of the glories of heaven. His view of heaven is not summed up in one long passage in our New Testaments — we must piece together “glimpses” as they are disclosed by our Lord to

broadens this figure of access to one of eternal sustenance: “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). We not only enter the kingdom of heaven through Him; we feed upon Him forever after that (see John 6).

Heaven itself is described in various ways by Christ, perhaps most often as a kingdom. In keeping with our examination of metaphors concerning heaven, though, the kingdom of heaven is more of a direct title rather than a clarification of a difficult concept. Christ is our King and He does reign; the kings of earth are the weakest comparisons of His majesty.

Two other descriptions are more metaphorical, though: heaven as

affected by his culture, the portrayal of blessings to come for the Christian in the hereafter transcends his carnal station in place and time.

The Christian's activity and pursuit of the heavenly reward are the subject of many parables and sayings of Jesus, but they all point to the necessity of our willingness to sacrifice the temporal for the eternal, to deny the fleshly lusts for spiritual fulfillment. Our endeavor is not one of laying up earthly treasure just to see it finally corrupted, but rather to commit in our hearts our energy to opportunities on this earth so that treasures will be laid up in heaven (Matthew 6:20).

In addition to making sure of our spiritual priorities, Jesus tells us that we have limited time in which to busy ourselves with this task. We are warned that just as the rich man, our soul may be required of us this very night (Luke 12:20). The image of a thief in the night is used by Paul to exhort Christians to stay alert for Jesus' return (1 Thessalonians 5:2). Just as the thief comes unannounced, many will not be expecting our Lord's triumphant return. Three times in the last chapter of the Bible the Savior admonishes, “I come quickly.”

Our final destiny as Christians is one of joy indescribable by this or any other mortal tongue. The saved are called joint-heirs of the glory that pertains to the Lord (Romans 8:17). Not only are the sanctified looking forward to salvation through the One who died for them, but they equally can expect to share His inheritance in eternity. The human heart in pondering this swells, not with pride, but with humble thanksgiving for the glory to be shared.

And what will that glory be like? Imagine the brilliant sunrises you have seen in your life and then read Matthew 13:43: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” It is appropriate that in trying to comprehend Jesus' view of heaven, we have such a magnificent visual portrait of what awaits us.

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“His view of heaven is not summed up in one long passage in our New Testaments — we must piece together ‘glimpses’ as they are disclosed by our Lord to understand His view of heaven.”

understand His view of heaven. To attempt to enumerate the passages yielding Jesus' pictures of heaven on this page would be folly, so we must choose among the many Scriptures to represent the Master's skill in preparing us for the glories to come.

Many are the figures that Christ used to refer to Himself in this heavenly scheme. He speaks simply and boldly to us when He states, “I am the door” (John 10:9). This assertion leaves no doubt in our minds that only through Christ can we gain entrance into heaven. Nathanael was told that he would see angels “ascending and descending upon the Son of man,” which fulfills God's promise of heavenly access (John 1:51). But Christ

Abraham's bosom and as paradise (Luke 16:23; 23:43; Revelation 2:7). I acknowledge that the two terms in the gospels describe a pre-judgment bliss, but paradise in Revelation seems to refer to heaven itself. Regardless, Abraham's bosom in the Jewish mind would be a place of comfort, a sharing of the reward of the faith that the forefather had also exhibited. Paradise was in the Oriental mind a garden and so would convey the tranquility of a fruitful, cultivated place. Perhaps when Jesus said there were many mansions in His Father's house (John 14:2), visions are elicited in our Western minds of a regal environment and thereby to us represent the pinnacle of rewards. But no matter how one is



HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

How Jesus Preached

Clarence R. Johnson

JESUS DESCRIBED HIS EARTHLY MISSION in several different ways: "To seek and save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10); "That they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10); "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38). Not as well known, but just as significant is the explanation in Mark 1:38 and Luke 4:44, "Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also, because for this purpose I have come forth." Preaching, then, was an integral part of the divine mission of the Son of God.

Jesus Preached Authoritatively

"And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). Jesus knew the Old Testament Scriptures as no man had ever known them before, and He came down from heaven with a new message of love and faith and hope. His miracles were the credentials that proved He came from God (John 3:2). When Jesus preached and taught, He neither stuttered nor stammered. He refused to be drawn into petty arguments or take sides in human opinions. See Luke 12:13-14, etc. When Jesus preached, "He preached the word" which came from God (Mark 2:2).

He Comforted the Afflicted

As foretold by the prophets, Jesus preached to the poor and to the suffering, a message of freedom and peace, of love and rest and hope, culminating in heaven. See John 8:32; 14:27; 15:13; Matthew 11:28-30, etc. "And the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37).

He Afflicted the Comfortable

But not all of Jesus' sermons were of such pleasant subjects. As He preached from city to city He found many who had settled down comfortably, nestled in human traditions and doctrines of men (Matthew 15:1-13; Matthew 23). His sermons offered no comfort for those who refuse to humble themselves before God, repent of their sins, and

obey the will of the Father in heaven (Matthew 7:21-23).

He Illustrated

Jesus frequently sprinkled His sermons and conversations with illustrations from everyday life that His disciples could understand, and with which they could identify. Christ could have simply stated that God is always ready to forgive the penitent sinner. His words would have been true, but quite forget-

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God.*

table in the hustle and bustle of life. But who could ever forget the story of the prodigal son—which illustrates our Father's willingness to forgive the penitent.

He could have simply said, "Keep praying." But note how much more strongly that admonition is impressed upon our minds by His parables of the unjust judge and the friend at midnight. Such illustrations not only made His sermons easier to apply to the generation

who heard them first, but they keep His message alive for every generation.

He Lived What He Preached

How did Jesus preach? Authoritatively, He preached what His hearers needed to hear. He preached of hope to those who had been hopeless—and He sought to take away the false hope of those who were satisfied to fall short of God's will. He illustrated His lessons in such a way that those who desired to apply God's truth could easily see how God's great spiritual truths complement and enhance the truths they had already observed in everyday life.

But, perhaps the one thing above all others that made Jesus' sermons so effective for then and for all times, is that He lived the truth He taught. He spoke of putting God first, and He did it. He taught that the greatest in the kingdom of God is he who serves the most. He taught His followers to love even their enemies and be kind to those who persecute and abuse. Then, as He died for us on Calvary's cruel cross—as His enemies mocked Him, beat Him, and spit in His face—with iron spikes driven through His hands and feet, experiencing the most painful and shameful form of death ever devised, His prayer was for His tormentors: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). And through it all, He never sinned (1 Peter 2:21-25).

An Example for All

The gospel preacher has a great heritage. He is privileged to preach of "so great a salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed . . . with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:3-4) and in this endeavor, he has before him in Jesus the perfect picture of what every servant of God should seek to be. Jesus is the great example for both preacher and hearer.

"Pure was the mind of Christ, sinless
I see
He the great example is, and pattern
for me."

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

How Jesus Dealt With Problems

Ron Halbrook

JESUS IS OUR GREAT EXAMPLE IN THE WAY He faced and overcame problems.

1. In controversy with His disciples, Jesus patiently taught, rebuked, and encouraged as necessary (Mark 9:33ff; John 13:1ff). His goal was to edify, not to inflame or divide. Yet, many were offended "and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). Rather than compromise with sin and error, Jesus did open battle with His adversaries. "Hence the Prince of Peace never sheathed the sword of the Spirit while he lived. He drew it on the banks of the Jordan and threw the scabbard away" (A. Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, 1830, p. 41). With courtesy and dignity, with clarity and power, Jesus exposed the fallacies of false teachers for all to see. Even when He could not help his wily opponents, the common people learned the difference between truth and error *by witnessing the debates*. False teachers were so offended that the disciples asked Jesus if it were not possible for Him to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. "But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:1ff).

Jesus saved men by first showing them the sinfulness of sin and the damning nature of false doctrine. No one else in the Bible referred to eternal punishment as often as He did (check your concordance)! Compared to our Lord's message and method in the crucible of controversy, Norman Vincent Peale's obsession with the "positive" is appalling. Robert Schuller's infatuation with "self-esteem," making people feel good about themselves by flattery and entertainment, leads to the fantasy that "Jesus never called a person a sinner" (Schuller in *Christianity Today*, August 10, 1984, p. 18). No one ever loved souls more than Jesus did, nor exposed error and false teachers more directly.

2. Jesus was truly God and truly man. His temptations were genuine. Satan enhances temptation by perverting good desires and attaching worthy goals. Temptation results from "the excitement

of desire" (James 1:14) and "the greater the desire the greater the temptation" (McGarvey, et. al., *Fourfold Gospel*, p. 91). Jesus was vulnerable from every standpoint when Satan came with all his cunning art (Matthew 4). The Son of God was beginning His public ministry—the son of man had not eaten for over a month. Satan planted a seed of doubt in Jesus about His divine identity and mission, but implied that *turning stones to bread would resolve the doubt*. The need for food was intense, but to produce it as a test could not convert Satan. Must Jesus prove to Himself who He was? That would be scratching an itch that otherwise would have gone away; but, once scratched . . . see the point? A fearful, vacillating spirit is not true to God's word. Jesus went hungry rather than give place to doubt.

Hoping to pervert Jesus' self-confidence, Satan challenged Him to jump from the temple to receive divine deliverance. Again, Satan could not be converted by the test and God had not willed it as the means to convert the temple crowds. Self-will and presumption are as sinful as doubt and fear. Jesus refused to *test God's power for an idle display of pomp*.

Then, Satan offered *spiritual compromise* as the way for Jesus to obtain the *allegiance of the world*. With righteous indignation, Jesus rejected "Satan's sweetest temptation" *ibid.*, p. 99). The defeated adversary fled! His every approach was blocked by Jesus' use of God's word: "It is written!"

3. Jesus passed through the trials of suffering with prayer, tears, profuse sweat, and intense grief. Excessive sorrow and strain put Him on the verge of collapse as He came into the Garden (Matthew 26:36ff). The death He faced was shameful—preceded by torturous pain—the punishment for every sin and vile deed known to man. That does not fill the cup of woe. There was rejection by His own nation; treachery, desertion, and denial by His closest friends; the mockery of truth and justice by religious and civil leaders. He suffered "more than

any sorrow that falls to the lot of man" (*Pulpit Commentary: Hebrews*, p. 139). How did He remain true to God through it all? He found grace to endure by prayer, by faith in God, by humble obedience, and by love for those who wronged Him.

4. Social problems of injustice, inequity, and inefficiency abounded, but Jesus focused on man's spiritual needs. Rather than lead protest and pressure groups to restructure society, Jesus restructured the individual—the inner man. He was no social revolutionary, reformer, or renegade. Nor did He isolate Himself as an ascetic. Jesus was in the world without being of it. He attended weddings, taught men to act as neighbors, wept with the bereaved, and made time to take up children in His arms (John 2:1ff, 11; Luke 10:29-37; Mark 10:13ff). Tax collectors in Jesus' time were especially abusive and so were outcasts as a class. But Jesus did not hesitate to visit and talk with them when they showed an interest in spiritual things, though He was criticized for it. The same is true for people who had put themselves beyond the pale of polite society by their many flagrant sins (Luke 5:30; 7:31ff; 19:7).

5. Governments ordained to keep order are run by imperfect men and present problems. Jesus respected civil power as from God even when those in office abused it (John 19:10f). Men faced with insult, injustice, and inconvenience imposed by the state were taught by Jesus to accept wrong rather than retaliate (Matthew 5:38ff). Man finds it hard to seek redress or alleviation from such burdens without unleashing a vengeful spirit which causes destructive upheavals. Jesus' teaching rose above the compromises of men who sell their faith for the favor of rulers and above the extremes of rebels who resist all rule, in God's name. "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

How Jesus Prayed

Bob F. Owen

MANY YEARS AGO I HEARD HARRY Pickup, Sr. tell the story of a little boy in Sunday School who, along with the rest of the class was drawing a crayon picture to relate a Bible story. The children had been working on their pictures for some time when the teacher noticed this one little boy had quit drawing and was down on the floor next to the little chairs, on his knees. When asked what he was doing, he replied, "I'm asking Jesus to help me draw this picture."

The unashamed and unabashed manner of this child's praying is not unlike that of the Lord Himself during His earthly ministry. While His praying never had any semblance of a public spectacle, neither was it a secret that He prayed and that He prayed often.

Sometimes Jesus made only a one-sentence appeal to the Father. Sometimes He prayed all night. Obviously He prayed before making great decisions such as the selecting of the twelve. All know He prayed through the night before the agonies of the cross. Perhaps the greatest significance is not the technique of His praying but the fact that He prayed at all. If prayer was so meaningful to Him surely we should be "oft in prayer."

Quite obviously, prayer is multi-purposed. While it is true that we are to "repent and pray" for the pardon of sins (Acts 8:22; James 5:16), and to make our "requests be known unto God" (Philippians 4:6) it would be unfortunate if our praying emphasized only these items.

Jesus had no sins, yet He prayed often. Jesus knew all things and could work miracles and could call down the angels for assistance but He appealed to the Father for help.

In Luke 11:1 the disciples noted the praying of Jesus. They must have known what He was doing for "when he ceased" one of the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray. In the two preceding chapters at least five other references are made to praying including two cases where Jesus "went apart" for that purpose. The Lord prayed. He prayed

often. He made specific occasion for praying.

The frequency and the intimacy of Jesus' praying reflects the companionship Jesus felt with the Father. The fact that He would go apart from His disciples to be with the Father in prayer shows a common bond and togetherness we can describe as intimate.

We could debate the chicken-and-the-egg-question as to whether an intimate association with the Lord prompts prayer or whether prayer prompts the intimate relationship. The fact remains that the two will go together. We need

pray and not give up. This is an illustration by Jesus Himself. He strengthens the point further by arguing that if a selfish and unjust judge can be persuaded to action, how much more readily will a loving, caring God be moved to action by the cry of His children?

On the heels of this parable Jesus showed that the character of the one praying and how he prays is important. A haughty, self-righteous Pharisee thanked God that he was so wonderful. A publican (a tax-collector who would have been a social outcast) stood at a distance and humbly asked for God's

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to feel the constant presence of God in our lives for purpose and strength. We cannot have this in the absence of prayer.

The value Jesus places on prayer can likewise be seen in two parables from Luke 18. A widow who had been wronged took her case to court and found herself before a judge "who feared not God, and regarded not man." Repeatedly she made her appeal. Finally, he granted her wish lest he be worn out "by her continual coming."

The Scripture tells the purpose of this parable: that men should continue to

mercy. Jesus shows it was the latter who was heard.

Like human fathers, God is moved by the repeated requests of His children. He is most influenced when those who are intimate companions and who are morally righteous come to Him humbly and sincerely. These prayers would not be simply a want list of favors requested. They would be warm, personal visits with a beloved friend and would reflect the genuine joy of being allowed such an honored relationship.

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HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

Wayne S. Walker

Jesus, Our Example of Obedience

THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT JESUS LEFT US an example that we should follow in His steps. One area in which Jesus was an example for us was in His obedience. "Though he were a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). By breaking this verse down into its basic parts we can gain a better understanding of Jesus as our example of obedience.

Jesus is the Son of God. While all humans are sons of God by creation and all Christians are sons of God by regeneration, Jesus is the Son of God in a unique sense. This concept is comprehended in the phrase, "the only begotten Son." Thayer says the word translated

Christ's is an extra-special position.

Yet, even though Jesus occupies this special position by reason of His divine Sonship, He claimed no special privileges on that account—but learned obedience. The word translated "obedience" means compliance or submission. The verb form means to listen or hearken. The winds and the waves obeyed the voice of Jesus. Servants are to obey their masters. Abraham obeyed the command to leave Ur for Canaan. In a similar way Christ obeyed the Father's will to carry out the saving purpose of God. The Greek here has "the obedience" to underscore the idea of the well-known, complete obedience in experien-

mortals we do not fully understand the depth of His suffering—the loss of heaven's glory in His condescension, being tempted in all points like we are, the loneliness of Gethsemane, and the shame of the cross, among other things. Yet, He willingly obeyed the Father's will to experience all this so that we might be free from sin with its horrible consequences and have the hope of eternal life. We should ever be thankful for His sacrifice.

As those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, it should be no great surprise to us that we must also suffer. The same world which mocked and crucified the Savior will scarcely look with any greater favor upon His disciples. As we live upon this earth, we will be called upon to endure persecution, ridicule, hatred, and deprivation for His sake. It has ever been so. Early Christians were thus persecuted and they rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. The time may come when we will suffer as they did.

Yet, in the midst of our trials, we must still obey. Tribulation is no excuse to compromise our convictions to gain the approval of an ungodly world. We must learn that being different has its consequences and face up to them. Again, Jesus is our example for He "when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). May we react to our sufferings in a similar manner.

Yes, Jesus is our example of obedience. Because He is *the* Son of God, by His life we can know what it means to be *a* son of God. He learned obedience and as He obeyed the Father's will for us, so must we obey His will to become His followers. Even when we must suffer in this life we must continue to obey Him. Jesus once said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). No one could demand our obedience with any more authority than the One who Himself perfectly obeyed God's will and thus became our example of obedience.

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"How did Jesus learn obedience?

It was by the things which He suffered

... As those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus, it should be no great surprise to us that we must also suffer."

"only begotten" means "single of its kind, only." Further, he points out that this phrase does not denote that Christ was the offspring of the Father but that He possesses the essential nature of God and is therefore divine. This is what we are saying when we confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

To say that one is a son implies a special position. Just ask any father if his son is special to him and see what kind of answer you receive! Jesus illustrated this idea in Matthew 17:5-6. "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers." Why? Because the king's sons occupy a special position and are therefore free.

ing absolute submission to God's will, implying both the duty and the necessity of obedience.

One example of His obedience was His baptism. He was baptized to "fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:13-15). Christ was not baptized for the remission of sins, as are we, because He had no sin. Rather, He did so because it was a command of God to be obeyed. Christ has commanded us to be baptized. Thus, we must also obey, for "being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

How did Jesus learn obedience? It was by the things which He suffered. Jesus suffered for you and me. As mere



HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

Jesus—Both Human and Divine

Leonard White

"Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me" (Psalm 131:1).

With these words of David in mind, it is with some "fear and trembling" that we approach a discussion of the subject before us. The uniting of deity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ is undoubtedly one of the most sublime and transcendent truths which God's Spirit has revealed to us lowly creatures. It is a concept which has challenged the thinking of countless saints through the centuries. Some of the most intense theological debates among Christians have focused upon the question: How could Jesus be both human and divine at the same time?

There have been, and still are, those who claim to be Christians and yet deny either the humanity or the divinity of Christ. The Ebionites, while conceding that Jesus lived as a man, denied His godhood. In the fourth century Arius and his followers perpetuated this error in a slightly different way. It still survives among some sects (such as Jehovah's Witnesses).

Conversely, the influence of Gnostic philosophy led many early Christians to question the real humanity of Christ. As all things material were viewed by the Gnostics as inherently evil, it was inconceivable to them that God could actually come to the earth and live as a man in a mortal body. One group among the Gnostics, the Docetists, theorized that Jesus only *seemed* to have a fleshly body, but that in fact there was no reality to it.

While recognizing the limitation of our finite minds to fully comprehend all that is involved in the incarnation of our Lord, we can be sure of this one thing: *the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus was BOTH human and divine!*

If one reads the epistles of 1 & 2 John with any degree of comprehension, he is forced to realize that the humanity of Jesus is indispensable to the gospel message. One who will not confess that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh" is not

of God (1 John 4:3) and is following the deceiving antichrist (2 John 7). Jesus' physical, fleshly existence was not a mere apparition (as taught by the Docetists), but there were eyewitnesses who could testify "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

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In his Gospel, John tells us that this "Word" who "became flesh and dwelt among us" as "the only begotten of the Father" (1:14) was the same Word who in the beginning was with God and *was* God (1:1). Paul boldly declared to the Colossians that "in Him *all the fulness of deity dwells in bodily form*" (2:9, NASB). Jesus' own repeated claim to deity was well understood by His enemies. In John 10:33, they said to Him, "For a good work we stone thee

not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." (See also 5:18; 8:58-59; 19:7). Of course, had Jesus' profession of deity been false, this indictment would have been valid.

One of the strongest statements of the deity of Christ is found in Hebrews 1:3, where we are told that He is the "brightness of his [God's] glory" and the "express image [exact duplication] of his person [essential nature]."

It is this divine aspect of Jesus' nature which gives us some insight into the nature of God the Father. In John 1:18 we read that, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath *declared* him." The word "declared" means to explain or make known, and is related to our English word "exegesis." In the person of Christ we are provided a glimpse of God Himself, or as Jesus said to Philip, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

However, it was equally imperative that Jesus share our human nature. The writer of Hebrews says that "it behooved him [he was bound by necessity] to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17). In order to fully sympathize with the frailties of man, Jesus lived, suffered, and was tempted as a man (Hebrews 4:15). He was made perfect (complete) by His suffering in the flesh (Hebrews 5:8-9). As one who has Himself been subjected to the human experience, He is eminently qualified to come mercifully to our aid (Hebrews 2:18). During His life here upon the earth, Jesus felt the whole gamut of human emotions: from joy to deep grief, fulfillment to frustration, tender compassion to sharp anger. Whenever we need to turn to someone who can truly understand how we feel, we have Jesus who "has been there."

Finally, as shown in other articles in this issue, we see in the perfect life of Jesus as a man the ideal exemplar for us who are "made in the image of God."

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THEME

HE THE GREAT EXAMPLE IS

How Jesus Dealt With His Friends

Steve Goff

A TRUE FRIEND IS NOT EASILY FOUND. A trustworthy associate who consistently manifests affection for us and who honestly seeks our best interest without ulterior motive is rare in this life. But one such friend available to all men is Jesus Christ. In temptation we can find no greater comfort than from Him who was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin. In tribulation we have no surer companion, in victory no more joyful comrade. And His actions toward His disciples serve as a perfect illustration of what a true friend is.

Jesus loved His friends. His was not a selfish love, spent as an investment, expecting a reward for feigned affection. Rather, Jesus sought the best for others. And His love for His friends was constant. Not a fair-weather friend, Jesus exemplified Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loveth at all times." He cried at the tomb of Lazarus, even knowing that He would raise this friend from death, prompting some to say, "Behold how he loveth him" (John 11:36). And He performed the ultimate expression of love, giving His own life as a sacrifice for sinners. Jesus explained, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Jesus was loyal to His friends. "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). While teaching in Capernaum, Jesus was told that His mother and brothers waited to speak to Him. His loyalty to His disciples was exhibited by His reference to them as His true kin: "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matthew 12:50). In life, Jesus forsook personal gain and comfort in order to teach His friends. And after His death and resurrection, Jesus promised His disciples, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Through thick and thin, Jesus is a loyal friend.

Jesus told the truth to His friends. Friends speak the truth, even when the words are hard to utter. A true friend

will rebuke and admonish when such is needed. Jesus told the lukewarm Laodiceans, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19). When His disciples displayed a lack of trust during a storm Jesus rebuked them (Matthew 8:26). Jesus was friend enough to prepare His disciples with instruction in the will of God. He was friend enough to warn them of Satan's deceits which would ensnare even Peter (Matthew 26:31-34). Jesus was friend enough to express His innermost emotions as He anticipated the agony of crucifixion, saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38). And

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Jesus displayed concern for His apostles, foretelling of His death and telling them, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1).

Jesus encouraged His friends to be righteous. This is the mark of a true friend. Young people (and others) often mistake interest for friendship. Those who claim to be friends may exert pressure to engage in premarital sex, drinking, taking drugs, or lascivious dancing. But these are not friends. What true friend would persuade us to sin? What true friend would encourage action resulting in the loss of one's soul? A true friend wants us to do what is

best. Jesus was that kind of friend, encouraging His followers to shine forth in good works (Matthew 5:16) and to walk the narrow way which leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14).

Jesus prayed for His friends. In the final hours before His betrayal, Jesus prayed for His disciples. He prayed for their unity (John 17:11). He asked the Father to keep them from evil (verse 15). He prayed for their faithfulness to the truth (verse 17) and for their salvation and reward in heaven (verse 24).

Jesus set an example for His friends. Our Lord never asked His disciples to do anything new, untried, on their own. In all things He paved the way and promises to be with us every step of the way. His impeccable life serves as our example, that we should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Teaching obedience, He obeyed even unto death. Teaching love for others, He gave His own life for mankind. Teaching humility, He washed the feet of His servants. Teaching forgiveness, He forgave those who, through hatred and envy, nailed Him to the cross. He the great example is!

From this study we conclude two great lessons. First, the life of Jesus provides our greatest example in how to treat friends. A true friend acts in love, is loyal to the end, encourages righteousness, prays for his friends and sets an example worthy of emulating. Second, we are reminded that all these benefits of being a friend to Jesus may be claimed by those who obey Him. Jesus said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). To know that we have a loving and loyal friend who lived and died for us is to be assured that ours is the best friend a man could ever have. And so with appreciative hearts and fervent voices we sing, "Jesus is all the world to me, And true to Him I'll be; Oh, how could I this friend deny, when He's so true to me? Following Him I know I'm right, He watches o'er me day and night; Following Him by day and night, He's my Friend."

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That's Life!



Dee Bowman

IT'S AMAZING HOW MUCH PERSPECTIVE has to do with everyday life. A lot of what we get out of life depends on how we view it. I saw somewhere that the same letters used to state that "God is no where" also state that "God is now here." Just depends on how you look at it.

* * *

A THING CONFIDENTLY SAID IS EASILY BELIEVED. Adolph Hitler is the best illustration of that fact I know.

* * *

C. S. LEWIS ONCE SAID, "... corporate guilt perhaps cannot be, and certainly is not, felt with the same force as personal guilt" (*The Problem of Sin*, McMillan, pp. 60). It is for that very reason that some can be charged with sin in the preaching service and, rather than repent, go away feeling cleansed, thinking, I suppose, that they have had their "whipping" for their sins just out of the fact that they were in the audience.

* * *

FROM MY JOURNAL: "I have seen Stan Kenton, the famous father of contemporary big band jazz, as he coaxed the talent out of his young bandsters and guided them skillfully through thrilling musical passages. I have seen Steve Allen as he seemed to caress the piano, causing responses that were unutterably beautiful. I have watched Sammy Davis, Jr., master showman, as he teased and thrilled, and delighted the audience as if it were a single person. I have watched Buddy Holly as he hiccupped through a recording session, putting on electronic tracks musical innovations that he never realized would affect the musical scene for generations after his untimely death. But none of these rivals the sight of some simple person who unashamedly says, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,' and is baptized into Him."

* * *

GEORGE OTIS, JR., in his book *The God They Never Knew*, quotes Dr. George Winters as having said, "By the way, I bought a fourteen-foot boat last week. I have named the two oars, one 'faith,' the other 'works.' I have found that if I row ever so hard with faith alone, I go around and around in a circle; and strange as it seems,

works does the same thing—gets nowhere. But when I bend my back and pull both faith and works, I can get to where I want to go." A pretty good way to put it!

* * *

WHEN A MAN TRIES TO SUPPRESS THE TRUTH, no matter how small that truth or how large the measures he uses to suppress it, he seeks to put out a fire by pouring gasoline on it!

* * *

WHEN THE WISE KING SOUGHT TO DESCRIBE the quality life, one of the things he said was, "Whatsoever thy hand find to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). A person, to be truly happy in this life, must try hard. Nothing rivals the peace that comes from knowing you have done your best. Happiness has peace at its base and no man can have happiness without the peace that comes from the knowledge that he has done the best he could. Someone once said, "No one is as tired as the one who has done nothing."

* * *

THE REAL TEST OF A PERSON'S CHRISTIANITY comes when he is under fire. It's really not too hard to live right during the Bible classes or in worship services, or when you're with one of the elders somewhere. But what about when you are in the midst of difficult surroundings? What about the times when to speak up will almost certainly cause difficulty? What about the times when it's easier to go the other way? What about the times when you'll have to be the only one not to do it? What about those times? Brother, then it's hard. But remember, "The trial of your faith worketh patience (the ability to endure)."

* * *

WHEN YOU GET A LITTLE OLDER your eyes don't work right. The problem is with focus. Focus is vital to our ability to live a normal life, both physically and spiritually. The man who can't focus can't do a very good job. But the man who has focused in on the right things and is giving them the kind of emphasis they deserve, that man will secure for himself a good place—both here and in the hereafter.

Principles of Church Growth

Rodney M. Miller

"They went everywhere preaching the word." These were the words of Luke in Acts 8:4 describing the New Testament church. That church was a growing, living, moving body of believers that turned the world upside down. The results of their activity is found on every page: "The number of the disciples continued to increase" (Acts 6:7); "so the church . . . continued to increase" (9:31); "the word of the Lord continued to grow and was multiplied" (12:24); "so the churches were increasing in number daily" (16:5); "the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing" (19:20); "teaching . . . with all openness unhindered" (28:30-31).

Can we really say that we are experiencing that same kind of growth today? Can we say that we have restored the faith and zeal of the early disciples that brought about this world-wide explosion? No, we are conforming to some other pattern than this New Testament example. Where, then, have we failed and what corrections can we make to steer the ship of Zion back to the New Testament pattern?

I certainly recognize that many of the methods I have used in the past are not the answer. All the guilt-inflicting sermons that blistered the paint from the auditorium walls were not. All of the well-conceived plans and procedures which were approved in business meetings, but dropped from the regular announcements because they were either ineffective or nobody was interested were not the answer.

What, then, is the answer? What must we do as preachers, elders, deacons and members to cause the church to grow? I believe that the first principle of church growth is this:

We must recognize that the power is in the Living God!

Consider the life of Moses. In Hebrews 11:24-27, we see Moses as a man of faith, conviction and decision. He chose to endure affliction with God's people rather than to enjoy the pleasures of the palace. Here was a man who was on track for the Lord! Stephen described him as a man "educated in all the learn-

ing of the Egyptians," a man of power when he spoke and when he acted (Acts 7:20-36). He went to be the deliverer of his people. However, verse 23 begins with "but"—it presents a dilemma. In spite of Moses' talent and ability, the Hebrew slaves wouldn't follow him. Verse 25 says that "he supposed his brethren would understand," but they didn't. So here we have a man of faith, of commitment, and one with the right goal—and yet he was ineffective. Everything was right but one thing: he had not yet *met God*! It would take Moses forty years in the wilderness before he was ready to be used by God. He simply could not be God's deliverer while relying on his own strength, wisdom, personal charm or appeal.

Moses needed to wander as a shepherd for forty years in God's desert training program before he would be ready to be the deliverer. In Exodus 3:16 he is finally ready for the power. He is now ready to be commissioned to do the job he thought he could accomplish forty years before.

God's power was made manifest to Moses in a burning bush. It is not so unusual that a bush could burn in the desert; what was unusual was that the bush did not burn up. If Moses had done a chemical analysis on that bush, he would have learned that it was just like all the other bushes on the desert. The dramatic difference in this bush, however, was that *God was in it*! And Moses learned that *any bush will do as long as God is in the bush*.

Moses had already tried to work with his own natural abilities and he failed miserably—so badly, in fact, that he had to flee the country. Now he learns that all he needs to do this job is God. This experience with God began a beautiful and developing friendship that would last until his final moment on earth. Exodus 33:11 says that God spoke to Moses "face to face just as a man would speak to his friend." He prayed in verse 13: "Let me *know thy ways*, that I may *know thee*." God promised that His presence would go with him and Moses replied: *If thy presence does not go,*

then I'm not going from here. Finally, in verse 18 Moses prayed, "Lord, show me thy glory."

This is the primary principle of motivation! We must be filled with the presence of the glory of God. As long as Moses was going to try it on his own, he was forced to flee in failure—even though what he was trying to do was right, was good, and was what God wanted. However, when he was molded by his own failure in the desert training school for forty years, he finally learned that what he needed was God.

We must learn exactly the same lesson that Moses learned. It will not be our pep, programs or propaganda that causes the church to grow—but it will be when each person in his own congregation begins to do what Christians in the past did. Read the word of God daily, pray daily, and meditate on the spiritual kingdom; then we will start to move in the right direction. All of our radio programs, television programs, telephone call-in messages and door-knocking will only make us tired and discouraged—unless God is in the bush! We organize our personal work groups and our visitation calls with our home Bible studies—but we are staring "burn-out" right in the face if we are seeking to do it in our own strength.

The goal of a congregation ought to be to have one hundred percent devotional participation. Every member needs to know what to pray for each week. The power is in the prayer! A congregation that is not reading God's truth and is not praying for the souls of mankind will never grow. The one thing that God *will not do* is share His glory with another! If we were to become successful without prayer, then we could claim that glory. Yet, all will know that when we have spent all night in prayer for a Bible study and someone is then baptized into Christ there can be no doubt as to who gets the glory. The church must have a rebirth of spirituality! We must plug in to the "current" of the Living God in our lives if we are to find that power.

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The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Grant thee thy heart's desire, and fulfill all thy counsel" (20:4). "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips" (21:2).

God Will Grant Your Heart's Desire

Psalms 20 and 21 have an intimate connection; Israel is praying for its king, that he will have victory over his enemies. They pray that God will grant the desire of David's heart (20:4) and then they thank Him for doing so (21:2).

Is it wrong to desire? What should regulate our desires? Is God even concerned about what our heart desires? Can we pray for God to grant our desires?

First we must understand that desire (lust) is not wrong in and of itself. Desires may be good or bad, noble or base, loving or selfish. Our Father clearly distinguishes between these. And *motive* for our desires is terribly important. If our motivation is *evil*, God will not grant our desires. "Grant not, O Jehovah, the desires of the wicked; further not his evil device, lest they exalt themselves" (Psalm 140:8; see also 112:10; 10:3; Proverbs 21:25). However, if we are *righteously* motivated, He will grant our desires. "Delight thyself also in Jehovah; and he will give thee the desires of thy heart" (Psalm 37:4; see also Psalms 10:17; 145:19; Proverbs 10:24). Of course, we are speaking in generalities; God hands us no *carte blanche* for our every whim.

The entire drama of life would come to a standstill were it not for desire in the human heart. Hope and effort would die and be displaced by apathy and lethargy.

There is nothing wrong with desire. But because desires are often wrong, or unregulated, the word "lust" in the Bible, which simply means "pleasure" or "desire," has come to have a bad connotation (see Romans 10:1 for a good usage of the word). James puts his finger on all these ungoverned, inordinate desires as the source of all the strife which disturbs the world (James 4:1-2).

But *what we desire* is all-important. It is, in fact, the test of our *character*. "When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently him that is before thee; and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties; seeing they are deceitful food. . . . Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainties: for as he thinketh within himself, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee" (Proverbs 23:1-3, 6-7; see also Proverbs 19:21-22). True motivation—what a man really desires, what is in his heart—that is his *character*.

As to prayer, God wants His children to ask their heart's desire, but He wants them to desire only what is right (James 4:3). The whole panorama of human desire is open to God's eye. He knows what we desire, even if we do not pray for it (Jeremiah 17:9-10). At the same time, we should be thankful that our heart's desires are not the limits of God's giving (Ephesians 3:20). His greatest "unspeakable gift" came to a prayerless, thankless, godless world (John 3:16; Romans 8:32).

But God gives us a practical test of our Christianity. It is this. Will our desires fit into our prayers? Can we conscientiously ask God for what we really desire? If not, we had better rid ourselves of these desires. Can we come with boldness to the throne of grace, and say, "Lord, all my desire is before thee" (Psalm 38:9; Isaiah 26:8)? Prayer should be the pouring out of the desires of our heart—but it must be a heart attuned to the things of God. If our hearts are consistent with His will, He will truly grant to us the desires of our heart.

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1985.

Parents' Page

Reaching the Wisdom Level

Joanie Greer

In the last article [see February, 1984, p. 26] the steps in forming conviction were presented. These were listening, talking, sensing the value, establishing a system of values, and forming conviction. Now we are ready to go on and learn how we can help our children go through these steps. Conviction cannot be formed until certain levels of learning have taken place. These levels of learning, mentioned in Colossians 1:9-10, are knowledge, understanding and wisdom. Note that the Scripture points out that those who possess these levels are able to "walk worthy." What greater aspirations could we have for our children than that they "walk worthy before the Lord?" Therefore, it behooves us as parents and teachers to become informed about these levels and how we might be instrumental in guiding our children through them.

The *knowledge level* is the accumulation of factual information. When one is on the knowledge level, he is able to quote a Scripture, tell the events in a story, or perhaps know the words to a song.

The *understanding level* is sometimes referred to as the "so what" level. It is made manifest when one is able to see how some particular information is important, how it is relevant to his life, and to put it in his own words. Failure to reach this level was the problem with the one in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:19). Here the "evil one" came and snatched the word out of the heart because understanding was lacking. That's exactly what is happening to our young people when we leave them on the knowledge level and do not lead them on to understanding. The understanding level answers questions like, "How did they feel?", "Why did they do this?", and "What does this show?" The understanding level investigates motives and emotionally projects the learner into the situation being studied.

One is on the *wisdom level* when he is able to take the knowledge and understanding and make application of it. The teacher takes the student to the wisdom level by providing him with a variety of

circumstances with which to practice this application. These circumstances can be presented in the form of discussion, demonstrations, role-playing, or contrived experiences.

When educators measure learning, they do it by calculating "time on task." "Time on task" does not include the time the teacher spends talking. The role of the teacher is not that of one who knows all and pours it forth, but rather one who sets the scene so that learning can

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take place. One excellent way to do this is by arranging your lesson as a series of questions that promote the mental and verbal participation of the learner. Christ, the master teacher, frequently used this method. The following is an example lesson that is divided into the levels of learning and follows the question-answer format.

Knowledge Level

Each child is to say Ephesians 4:28: "Let him that stole steal no more." (Memory work is knowledge level

material.)

Understanding Level

1. Who has ever had something stolen? How did you feel when you realized something of yours had been stolen? (Make a list of words describing these feelings. Try to help the children see that stealing hurts others.)

2. How does one feel about himself when he steals? (Make a list of words showing how it destroys dignity.)

3. How do others feel about someone who steals? (Make a list of words showing how it ruins one's influence.)

4. How do you feel when you work for something? (Make a list of words that show how stealing denies the dignity and happiness that comes from "working with [your] hands.")

Wisdom Level

Sally was walking to school one day. No one was on the sidewalk ahead of her, but she came upon something lying on the walk. It was a new jump rope. "All right!" she thought. "This is really neat." Sally wondered whose rope it was. She looked around but didn't see anyone. "Well," she thought, "I guess I can have it. Finders, keepers; losers, weepers."

Is that what we live by? Is that right? Does the rope belong to Sally now? How will the real owner feel when she can't find her rope? What should Sally have done?

Conclusion

Of course, the true test of wisdom comes in everyday living. But children need practice before they're confronted with these situations in real life.

Parents and teachers need to be aware that week after week of filling in the blank in a lesson book is spiritual devastation for our youngsters. As our children mature, they're going to be trying to "get their heads on straight" about right and wrong, establishing a system of values, and making the transition from childhood to the adult world. Their hope for success depends on our getting their instruction up to the wisdom level.

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The Sermon on the Mount

The True Righteousness

"Ye have heard . . . but I say unto you" (5:21-22). With this oft-repeated contrast beating a heavy cadence Jesus opens the heart of His discourse on true righteousness. But it was not a sermon preached in a vacuum. The problem of Pharasaic righteousness has been openly raised and now this baneful system will be methodically cut to pieces by the Lord's penetrating and authoritative observations. It was not too much devotion to the law which elicited Jesus' devastating attack on the Pharisees, but too little. With arrogant hypocrisy they had produced an empty parody of God's law. Jesus rejects their sham and exposes it for what it is in the light of the true and unchanging righteousness of God.

If, as some suppose, Jesus was here quoting the Old Testament Scriptures He uses a different approach than at any other time. On no other occasion did He ever introduce Scripture with, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time." Earlier, when tempted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus introduced three passages from Deuteronomy with the words, "It is written" (Matthew 4:5,7,10). He used the same form in Matthew 11:10 and 21:13. In other instances the Lord indicated the writer from which He was quoting (Matthew 12:17; 13:14,35; 15:7; 21:4; 22:43) or simply cited "the scriptures" (21:42). The different treatment in Matthew 5:21-48 is too marked to be ignored. Here Jesus is citing, not the Scripture, but "the tradition of the elders" (Mark 7:5).

The context of this part of the Lord's sermon points in the same direction. Jesus has just made a point of expressing His reverence for the law and the prophets (5:17-19). Is it reasonable to think that He would then turn and unleash a withering attack on that very law? The immediate concern of the preacher as He begins this section of His address is the sham righteousness of the Pharisees (verse 20) and this is the problem with which He deals in the succeeding verses (21-48).

The contrast being drawn in these verses is not between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. It is rather a contrast between the Pharasaic corruptions of the Old Testament and the true righteousness of the kingdom; a righteousness that was anticipated in the law and brought to its fulness in Christ. As we have earlier observed, the ethical teachings of Jesus do not represent a radical departure from the Old Testament ethics. The foundation commands of the law—to love God supremely and one's neighbor as oneself (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18)—are taken by the Lord as the bulwark of His own teachings (Matthew 7:12; 22:34-40). The ethical

principles of the Old Testament were not superficial ordinances which governed muscle but not mind. The tenth commandment of the Decalogue addresses itself directly to the mind and heart (Exodus 20:17). And who could read this ancient Jewish covenant and imagine that the God who spoke from Sinai would allow His people to hate as long as they did not kill, or lust as long as it was not consummated? It was He who said, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart" (Leviticus 19:17) and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" (Deuteronomy 5:21).

The law of Moses, in its essence, reflected God's true ethical demands. While it is true that the law made concessions to Israel's "hardness of heart" (Matthew 19:8; Mark 10:5) and contained many "carnal ordinances" (Hebrews 9:10), yet at its heart, as Paul affirmed, "the law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14) "and the commandment holy, righteous and good" (Romans 7:12).

The ethical demands of the Sermon on the Mount are simply the flower that issued from the Old Testament bud. While it is true that grace and the fulness of truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17), it is also true that there was ethical and spiritual truth in the law and a clear anticipation of the grace to come (Galatians 3:8).

So, though it is accurate to say that Jesus is exposing Pharasaic perversions of the law, it is not accurate to say that Jesus does no more than give a correct exposition of Old Testament ethics. Jesus clearly anchors His ethical teaching in the ethics of the law, but He does not stop there. He goes on to expand them into the law of the kingdom of heaven.

The aim of the kingdom is the righteousness of God (Matthew 5:48; 6:33). In order to lead His hearers to an understanding of that moral and spiritual order of things Jesus begins with the more obvious moral imperatives of what it means to love others (5:21-48). There is an ascending plane in these verses. The Lord begins on a negative note—with the prohibition that most commends itself to men even in their lowest estate—"Thou shalt not kill." As the chapter concludes He has risen to love's most positive and demanding thrust—not love as men know it, but love as God in His holy perfection demonstrates it.

These verses are not comfortable to read and they are often challenging to understand, but the student must always keep in mind that beneath all these instructions is that second of the great commandments, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In terms both practical and to the point we are now to be confronted with what it means to be a citizen in the kingdom of heaven.

"Our Father Who Art in Heaven . . ."

Ray McClendon

The Scriptures teach us many things in many different ways. One of the avenues that the Holy Spirit has used to teach is through figurative speech—words which teach us by suggesting an idea or principle. For example, in addition to plain statements and commands in the Bible about the nature of the Lord's church, God teaches us about it through figures. He states that the church is the "temple" of God, teaching us that it is the place where God is to be found and worshipped. When He states that the church is a "vineyard," we learn that it is a place of work. The fact that the church is a "kingdom" suggests that it is a place where subjects voluntarily yield themselves to the rule of the King of kings, respecting His authority and living by His laws. In the same way, elders are "elderly" because they are older men, and "pastors" because they lovingly care for God's flock. To take any of the above figures for granted is to take their ideas (what they communicate) for granted. If we were to do that, we would lose a great amount of edification and insight.

Do *you* take your heavenly "Father" for granted? If you do you will miss a figure which depicts and teaches something that is exceedingly precious and marvelous beyond comprehension. What a tragedy that so many of us who are called "children" of God only *say* Father and do not *think* Father. How sad it is when we can only *say* we are God's children and not *feel deep down inside* that we are! Let's take some time to see what we can learn about God simply by realizing He is our "Father."

We love and appreciate our earthly fathers because of all they have done for us and for their character. They gave us life, provided us with necessities, protected us, and taught us how to stand on our own two feet. We appreciate the love and the discipline they gave us. Our love for them is very real and tangible, and our maturity causes us to realize that we could never do anything that would hurt our fathers. To hurt our father would be to hurt ourselves; to

bring shame upon him would be to reproach ourselves.

Could any less be true of our heavenly Father? He is the giver of life because He created life itself (Genesis 1:26-28) and He is the giver of every blessing, including eternal life (Matthew 6:11,25-34; James 1:17-18). He is our protector and refuge, and He promises that we will finally overcome (Psalms 91, esp. vv. 14-16). Have you ever wondered why your father seems so

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close while God seems so far away? Especially in times of trial and stress? "Well, after all, I've *lived* with my earthly father. I've *seen* my earthly father. I've *talked* with my earthly father. I *know* my earthly father. But when it comes to God, I uh, er, uh . . ." You what? You haven't done all those things with God? Well, *why not*? Who is far off from whom? If you can come to realize that it is contact you *want* and contact you *need* with God to draw

closer to Him and cement this Father-child relationship, then you are halfway there. All that remains is to begin living a holy, conscientious, spiritual life every day.

Those who neglect study, prayer, and daily efforts to live according to the will of God, and who likewise forget to *think* about His presence and *meditate* upon His blessings and counsel will never feel like they are the true children of God. They must change or their lives will lack luster. They will never know what true motivation, strength, comfort or peace is. To so live is to render ourselves spiritually destitute orphans—not because our Father died, but because we have run away from home! God said, "Except ye become as little children . . ."

Remember the little boy (was this you?) who got disgusted because things weren't going his way? He packed up his valuables in his "one-o-four," set it on a stick over his shoulder, hopped out the window and took off. About a block away from home he started to get chilly, a little lonely and frightened by all the funny noises that seemed to be coming from everywhere. He turned around to gaze at the warm, sunny squares of the windows of the home where he had been fed, clothed, loved and protected. Just then a bull frog croaked at his feet, and a bird flapped out of the tree with a loud rustle—and the little guy forgot all about any domestic troubles and high-tailed it for home! He wasn't so dumb after all.

Would we be? Let us lay aside our self-sufficiency and remember that God loves us, cares for us, works for us, and gives us every benefit of the doubt. He is on our side, rooting for us! The realization of these things should dawn upon us with such force that our level of service and devotion will increase not just temporarily in a fit of emotional fervor—but permanently because of a genuine recognition that we are the family of God, children of the Most High, and that He is "our Father who art in heaven . . ."

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An Open Letter to Subscribers: Plans for 1985

The editors of *Christianity Magazine* met recently and decided to commit ourselves to publishing the paper for another year. We have been encouraged by the enthusiastic support we have received from those who have subscribed to the magazine. We believe it is doing good and for that reason we have determined to continue another year.

The progress of the paper has been good, if not spectacular. We expect to end 1984 with a subscription list of about 4,000. That number has continued to grow each month and we are hopeful that the growth will continue.

The growth of *Christianity Magazine* has not been sufficient, however, to make the paper financially solvent. All of those involved in the magazine have given freely of their time; in addition a sizable cash subsidy has been required. The editors greatly appreciate the assistance of those people who have contributed articles and other work to help us get started.

We solicit your help in 1985. We cannot continue to publish the magazine indefinitely unless we secure sufficient subscriptions to pay its publication costs. Here are some ways you can help:

1. Resubscribe. Many of your subscriptions will be due for renewal near the first of the year. We need your prompt attention to renewal. When billed, you will notice that the price for 1985 has been raised to \$15 per year. We feel that the higher price is realistic and it is essential for our survival.

2. Gift Subscriptions. Nearly twenty-five percent of the present subscriptions to *Christianity Magazine* were presented as gifts. We hope that many of you will resubscribe for those receiving the gifts (if they will not do so themselves) and that you will consider giving it to others. *All gift subscriptions will remain at the price of \$10 per year.* After your initial subscription you may send as many as you wish for \$10. If you wish, we will notify them of your gift by sending an attractive presentation card.

3. Church Bundles. We are also providing a number of churches with bundles of the magazine to be distributed to all members. These are sent directly to their homes. A number of individuals have chosen to do this, too. You may send 25 subs for only \$18.75 per month (this is the cheapest way possible to subscribe). If you would like to know more about the bundle rates, see page 3 and/or contact Bob Hardage at business office address and phone on that page.

4. New Subscribers. We have not reached many of the Christians who we believe need to be reading the upbuilding material we are publishing. Many have not heard of the magazine. You are our best avenue to those people. We need your help in reaching them. *Tell a friend they need Christianity Magazine!*

We will keep you informed about our progress and we are looking forward to having you aboard in 1985.

The Editors

P. S. Please let us know your change of address well in advance of your move. It is very costly and time-consuming for us when you do not do this. We will appreciate your help.

The Noble Nike

Ramon A. Madrigal

With the Twenty-third Olympiad still fresh in our minds, it might be a good time to consider the glorious conquest and triumph to be found in Christ Jesus our Lord. Yet we must first think about the relative and short-lived nature of all physical endeavors, including the Olympic Games. Not many people concerned with worldly success and physical accomplishments reflect on the temporal nature of their achievements. Yes, even the wonderful medals and records of the Los Angeles games will be forgotten with the passage of time.

exercise is of little real profit (1 Timothy 4:8). Yes, the true measure of success is not in the winning of medals, but in the pursuit and attainment of the true crown of life. The apostle Paul calls Christ, in this regard, our "hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). He goes on to say that physical death, the eternal plague of mankind, is swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54). The Bible word here for "victory" comes from the Greek word *nike*, a familiar name in athletic footwear. Yet, our hope of glory does not rest in the outcome of a twenty-six

throne of God.

The picture is one not unlike the spectacular scene during the opening ceremonies of the Twenty-third Olympiad at Los Angeles. Only here the spectators have all participated in the events themselves. Notice, for example, the "great cloud of witnesses" just mentioned in Hebrews 11—heroes (runners?) like Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Gideon and others. These Old Testament faithfuls are cheering us on in our spiritual marathon. Of course, the pioneer and perfecter of this event is Christ Jesus Himself, of whom we receive help in time of need. He can be considered, for all practical purposes in this figure, our training coach.

All the pain and pressure of preparing for our personal race has already been endured by Christ Jesus Himself. He sweats when we sweat. When temptations and other obstacles stand in our way, He is able to give us the strength and stamina needed to rise to the occasion (see Philippians 4:13). Hebrews 4:14-16 may be of special interest in this regard:

Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.

The Scriptures contain many references that allude to the victory that comes by faith. The second and third chapters of the Apocalypse describe in many figures this great triumph (see 2:7,10,17,26; 3:5,12,21). This *nike* can be yours and mine if we endure until the end (Revelation 2:10). When we contrast the eternal nature of our spiritual crown with the temporal quality of Olympic gold, it's really no contest!

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"The true measure of success is not in the winning of medals, but in the pursuit and attainment of the true crown of life . . . The Bible word for 'victory' comes from the Greek word NIKE, a familiar word in athletic footwear. Yet, our hope of glory does not rest in the outcome of a twenty-six mile marathon, but in the running of a different race."

Unfortunately, while much of the glamour and golden glitter of the Olympics lingers on in the minds of many Christians, we often forget the eternal nature of our spiritual victory. It is most encouraging to me, especially in the wake of athletic shortcomings and personal gymnastic failures, to consider the great crown that awaits the faithful child of God.

While I understand that everyone should do his or her best to maintain a healthy physique, it is spiritually comforting to know that even aerobic

mile marathon, but in the running of a different race. This is the venue described by the Hebrew writer (12:1-2):

Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the

Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Harry and Ruth Henderson — Lights in Australia

"We would rather have the world against us at present than to have God against us on judgment day." Such words are easy to say when we are surrounded by a host of Christian friends who share our sentiments and applaud their expression. But the circumstances under which Harry Henderson wrote them in 1967 were not so favorable.

Harry and his wife, Ruth, had only recently been disfellowshipped by the church. They were not disfellowshipped for immorality—their reputation was above reproach. They were not disfellowshipped for inactivity—he was serving as treasurer, trustee and "Sunday School Superintendent," aided and assisted by Ruth in all of his good works. They were not disfellowshipped for causing division. Their "fault" was that their study had led them to convictions which were contrary to those of the local preacher and, as far as they knew then, contrary to those of all others in Australia.

The words quoted were their reaction to a letter which had been circulated in Australia reporting their disfellowship and warning of the coming of three American families who shared their views. Harry and Ruth, along with Rolly and Nancy McDowell, met those three families at the ship, making friendly and happy an arrival which could have been lonely and cold. But as proof of the absence of bitterness or desire for division, they advised the beginning of a new work in another part of Sydney, far from where they had formerly worshipped.

The new effort was begun in the Port Hacking area. Such a beginning required long hours of door-to-door canvassing and Harry was always eager to do his part. As the new work began to take root, a residence was purchased for a meeting place and Harry used his wood-working talents to prepare pulpit furniture and communion ware. Meanwhile, Ruth's talents as a homemaker were constantly used to provide hospitality for preachers, prospects and new converts.

The location of the new work, though encouraged by the Hendersons, was a problem for them. It was sixteen miles from their home through heavy traffic. The money and time spent in travel could be put to better use and their residence in the community where the church met would increase their usefulness. A move was clearly necessary. But the cottage where they had been living would be paid for by retirement age and payments on any new acquisition would run well beyond that date.

Harry's income was modest and retirement benefits would be meager. Yet with faith in God, they moved to the new location, trusting Him to work out future problems. And their faith was rewarded. Unforeseen inflation escalated the value of their new purchase so that when retirement came they were able to sell their home and obtain a comfortable condominium debt-free. They sought "first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" and the necessities of life were provided.

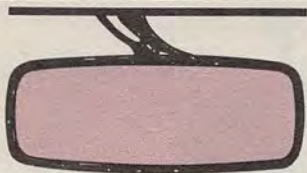
It has now been ten years since the last American evangelist moved from Port Hacking. Some Americans wonder if we shouldn't be sending someone to work with that congregation. Those who worry about Port Hacking do not know Harry Henderson. Since his retirement, his energies have been expended almost exclusively in the Lord's work.

And Harry's energies are prodigious. More than one younger American has been embarrassed by competition with him in anything from a foot-race to American football. His physical strength and agility made possible an early career as a circus acrobat and they have made possible his tireless house-to-house teaching of the gospel over many a square mile near his home. Speaking of his prospects of living to the age of 100, he expressed considerable optimism. But he added thoughtfully, "I don't want to live that long if I can't continue door-knocking for my Lord."

This is not to say that others would not be welcome to work at Port Hacking. Indeed, all teachers of truth have found an open door to teach in the church and an open door to stay with Harry and Ruth in their hospitable home. But whether Americans or any others come to help, the cause of Christ will be fostered in that community.

The kingdom of God is not dependent upon the financial and doctrinal soundness of American churches. In many corners of the world there are servants of God like Harry and Ruth who are standing for the Lord without financial support from America or from anywhere else. And as they have stood for the Lord when, as far as they knew, all the brethren in their homeland were against them—they will stand when as far as they know all Americans are against them. In fact, their sentiment will always be: "We would rather have the world against us at present than to have God against us on judgment day."

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Rear Views



Ed Harrell

On Looking in the Mirror

In spite of the slanderous rumors which are abroad, the sketch of me which appears regularly on page six of this magazine does not flatter me. I have been told, among other things, that it looks like a refugee from Dachau and E.T. I can only protest that however grim the picture appears, it is by no means the worst looking one in the magazine. Aside from Brent Lewis and Sewell Hall (figure out who that leaves), *Christianity Magazine* must have the ugliest editorial staff ever assembled. I can assure you that some of the people pictured in this magazine actually look considerably worse in person.

Fortunately, there is nothing wrong with not being pretty. I have noted, however, that it is a very difficult thing to remember. Sometimes when

my spirit is soaring and I am feeling good, I get all spiffed up and momentarily feel like Robert Redford. Then I look in a mirror. Reality can be disgusting.

Mirrors can also be useful, says James: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what mannner of man he was" (James 1:22-24). Mirrors keep us in touch with reality; everybody needs a good one.

Mirrors can be used to deceive—like those distorted ones at the fair that show us taller and thinner than we really are. The Christian's

mirror is the "perfect law of liberty" (James 2:25). The Bible tells no lies and allows no room for weak rationalizations and excuses. I must maintain my ability and willingness to look it square in the face and to see myself as I am.

That, after all, is the way to improve. Which is why young folks (and some older ones as well) spend those long hours in front of the mirror. They are not overlooking the blemishes but looking for them so they can repair them and cover them up. I should read the Bible with the same introspection—to see what it tells me about myself. I cannot go away from a brief encounter with that spiritual mirror without a profound sense of my need for deeper spirituality and compassion. That's what mirrors are for.

But the problem is remembering. Soon I'm my old gregarious self again, forgetting my big nose and gray hair, acting like a movie star. More harmful is forgetting the spiritual mirror. When I return to it after sinning, the sight is repulsive to me. We need to use that mirror regularly.

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**FERVENT
IN SPIRIT**
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The Gnawing Problem of Erosion

I grew up in sandstorms, blue northers, and booming West Texas thunderstorms which could drop three or four inches of rain in a matter of just a few minutes. Tumbleweeds were a part of our playthings when I was a boy. We made crude houses with them and chased after them on windy days; but most of all we liked to burn them. Solomon's statement in Ecclesiastes 7:6 always reminds me of burning tumbleweeds. "For as the crackling [sound] of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool."

Wind is part of living in West Texas. So is rain. We always had too much of the former and too little of the latter. These elements brought soil erosion. And blowing sand. I remember one bracero house (a place where legal Mexican aliens, called "braceros," were housed during cotton harvest time) where the sand blown in by a norther would so completely cover the back part of the long, narrow structure that you could actually walk right up to the top of the building. When the poet speaks of "the shifting, whispering sands," he speaks close to home for me.

Erosion is a problem, both in West Texas and in the lives of Christians. It gradually depletes faith in the Christian, just as it gradually eroded the soil on the South Plains of Texas. Most of the time erosion goes unnoticed because of the gradual nature of it. You don't actually see it going on; you just wake up some morning and it's happened.

"Erosion" is from the Latin *e*, carrying the force of out or off; and *rodere*, which means to gnaw, and from which we get "rodent," a gnawing animal. The thought conveyed by it is gnawing a layer at a time or just taking a little here and a little there.

Waste of time is a type of erosion. Procrastination is a thief, robbing us of precious activity, causing us to delay actions for good. The Scriptures are replete with warnings against wasting time. "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16; see Hebrews 2:3; 4:7). We must use our time wisely, always guarding against procrastination. We are living on probation and have no assurance of other than today. A man told me just today, "How could I have been out in the

yard cutting bushes yesterday and in this hospital bed today?" And the fact is, it could be worse than that.

Attrition is a form of erosion. It is subtle, silent, but deadly. Attrition is a gradual erosion caused by constant pressure or stress—a sort of subtle abrasive. Society is an abrasive. It slowly wears down resistance. Paul's admonition to Timothy speaks of false teachers saying, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:14). Such is the course of evil. When a man embraces it, it begins immediately—but ever so slowly—to spread its evil. By such a process the Devil is able to bring about spiritual deterioration with very little effort.

Discouragement, becoming weary and tired because of the constant burdens imposed by the nature of our walk, is another dangerous form of erosion. Paul said, in the context from which we just read, verse 12, "Yea, and all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." And that persecution takes its toll if we are not careful. It's easy to quit—especially when we get to feeling like nobody cares. But God knew of this possibility. "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not," says the Book (Galatians 6:9; see 1 Corinthians 15:58). The hope of heaven steadies, holds us on course. We must, as the current political slogan suggests, "stay the course."

Erosion produces no good. It is a difficult-to-detect and silent killer which pervades the thinking of even good people. It can inflict its deadly venom without pain or warning, but it will wear away at the vital spiritual organs over a period of time until it finally surfaces with deadly consequences. Only when we place our confidence in God's word can we ward off erosion. But it must be used regularly, fairly, and with purpose. We should further be advised that little doses of the world is not the answer to being immunized against this deadly dissipation.

West Texas farmers learned to control erosion by proper soil conservation procedures. This meant that if they cultivated carefully, gave special attention to the possibility of erosion, they could help keep it from eating away at their land. We can't keep the wind from blowing, but we can keep it from eroding our spiritual character.

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Soundings

Send to: Brent Lewis, P. O. Box 360277, Melbourne, FL 32936

Soundings is intended to be a true *reader response column*. We want to know what you, the readers, think about this paper and what we are saying. The reason is simple—our effectiveness depends on our capacity to determine that. And the only way we can know if we're "on target" is to hear from you. Why would you write to us?

1. To suggest a subject. There may be some topic which you would like to see treated in the magazine. A portion of each issue of this paper will be on a particular theme. Those of us who serve as editors all have some ideas about themes. We think they are good ideas. But we would welcome suggestions from you. We cannot promise that we will follow each suggestion, but we will certainly value and consider each one.

2. To comment on an article. If we do the job we expect to do, we are going to "stir up your sincere minds" in each issue. You may want to write us in order to "amen" a particular piece. "I enjoyed the article on such-and-such. I believe brother Smart got to the heart of the matter. Something else I would add is . . ." In the same way, you may wish to disagree. "I appreciate the article by brother Not-So-Smart on . . . However, I do not agree with his conclusion. It seems to me such-and-such." All we ask is that you write in a brotherly spirit and keep it brief—under 150 words.

3. To edify, exhort and encourage. You may have some beneficial and constructive observation that you believe needs to be stated. We cannot promise that every comment will be carried here, but those that we believe to be of

enough interest and profit to others will be used. The format and nature of this magazine precludes the acceptance of unsolicited articles. But this is a place where you can "sound off" on some things that may help others. You don't have to be a preacher to say something

***This
is the
place where
you, the
reader,
have the
opportunity
to say
what's on
your mind.***

that needs to be said. In fact, maybe you need to sound off about preachers! At any rate, please observe the 150-word maximum.

4. To comment on current events. Things are happening around us every day. We are all involved in them, to some extent. The things you read in the

newspaper and see on television may cause you to want to speak out. You may want to call for others' response on the same issue. This is the place for you to do that. We can all profit from your thinking.

Paul said, "For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7). Those of us connected with *Christianity Magazine* recognize the many and varied contributions that others can make to this endeavor. We are not in this alone; we solicit your help, your cooperation and your participation.

Christians are all interrelated. Someone has said, "We can see that life is a cycling phenomenon which occurs in many forms within a single system. Nothing stands alone—no individual, species, or community; no rain drop, snow crystal, cloud or stream; no mountain and no sea—for in a cycle each thing in one way or another is connected with everything else." We are connected with you. We value what you have to say. Let us hear from you.

We are happy to carry your responses to our articles or your observations on current issues that are of interest to all Christians. Please keep your comments to 150 words or so and send to the above address. We truly want this to be your part of the magazine. May we hear from you this month?



Past, Present and Perfect

Ed Harrell

Baptism in History

My reading of the New Testament makes very clear the meaning and intent of baptism—it was a “burial” that put one “into Christ” and resulted in the “remission of sins” (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38). Of course, we should always be willing to examine our reading to see that it is not prejudiced. Recently I was rereading Kenneth Scott Latourette’s massive *A History of Christianity* and found his discussion of New Testament baptism fascinating.

Latourette was a distinguished Yale historian and his multi-volume history is a classic. Near the beginning of his chapter on “Admission, Worship, and Discipline in the Christian Community,” he wrote this passage: “As we have seen, admission to the Church was through baptism. In the first few decades of the Church, baptism might be administered on a simple profession of faith in Christ. Thus on the famous day of Pentecost, often regarded as the birthday of the Church, when about three thousand are reported to have been to the fellowship of the disciples, the injunction was to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Whether all were baptized on that day is not explicitly stated, but we hear of the Ethiopian Eunuch being baptized after only brief instruction and of a jailer at Philippi receiving the rite, with all that were in his house, on the very night in which he seems first to have heard of Christ, with the simple requirement of believing ‘in the Lord Jesus Christ.’ . . . Baptism seems to have been by immersion, at least normally.”

That description of the practice of the early church reminds me of an experience I had while a Fellow at the Ecumenical Institute at St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville,

Minnesota. This large Benedictine Monastery has a beautiful modern church on its grounds and my family and I toured it shortly after we arrived. Immediately upon entering the building one encountered a set of steps which led down into a depressed area in the foyer with a fountain in it. The monk who guided us pointed out that this was the church’s baptismal font. It had been placed in the front of the building, he told us, because because in the early days of the church baptism had been the means of entering the church. So it was, I nodded. The steps leading down to the fountain symbolized, he further explained, that baptism in the early church had been a burial. Ah, so.

Both Latourette and my guide confirmed in me the conviction that our difficulty with many questions is not so much deciding what the New Testament says (and consequently what the New Testament Christians did) as it is in grasping the significance of those historical truths.

To say the least, such insights into baptism strongly challenge the fundamental Protestant teaching that man is justified by faith only. One can understand the historical dynamics which led the reformers to protest against the corrupted Catholic belief in justification by works, but the Protestant rebellion, like many revolutions, went much too far. A fair reading of the New Testament leads to the conclusion that first century Christians understood baptism to be a burial which preceded “the remission of sins” and provided entry “into Christ.”

The Three R's of Maturity

David W. Miles

The doctor and I had been chatting casually in the hospital corridor about my father's surgery when he suddenly pulled me to one side and said in a low voice, "I don't know what to do about my daughter. Ever since this drug thing she's been rebellious and resentful." He put his hand to his forehead and added quietly, "I'm afraid we're losing her."

The anguished plea expressed by this physician and father I, as an educator, have heard echoed countless times by distraught parents desperate for someone to help them salvage their children—for someone to give them a last-ditch, magic formula that will make their sullen and incorrigible kids into responsible, constructive, mature adults.

This same concern is also being voiced by members of the church who are rightfully alarmed at the staggeringly high percentage of young people who either settle into a nominal, non-involved, pew-warming Christianity, or who drift away from the Lord entirely. The cry to "save our young people" rings out at congregations across the country.

What is to be done? Some argue that the key is to have constant social activities arranged for teen-agers—pizza parties, watermelon cuts, burger bashes, and the like. Certainly there's nothing wrong—and a lot right—with such attempts to keep young Christians involved with each other. But is this the solution? Will parties insure that teens will mature into responsible Christian adults? No. Many young people in small, struggling congregations and with few Christian peers manage nicely without such things.

Others clamor for the hiring of a "youth minister"—someone who dresses "cool," speaks teen jargon, and wears open-necked shirts exposing a gaggle of gold necklaces and medallions—someone who can "relate" to young people. The idea seems to be to have a man who can keep the youths whipped into an emotional high by staging religious pep rallies and retreats: "Gimme a 'J'! Gimme an 'E'! Gimme an S-U-S! Whattaya got?! Jesus! Jesus! JESUS!" But this is not the answer, either. In fact, most teens resent this kind of patronizing condescension. I

vividly recall my own contempt as a teen-ager for such over-aged hippies who apparently thought us incapable of behaving and thinking like adults—so they had to behave like kids!

Certainly I am not so arrogantly presumptuous as to set myself up as having all the answers. Indeed, I have already made several large meals of my own words regarding child-rearing—uttered in total confidence *before* I became a parent! However, my eight years as a father, seven years as a classroom instructor, six years as a school administrator, and twenty-three years as a student of God's word have convinced me that there are at least three indispensable benchmarks of constructive adulthood which we must imprint upon our youth from the cradle onward. I call these benchmarks the three R's of maturity: respect, responsibility, and remembrance.

1. Respect. When a student is sent to my office for misbehavior, one of the first things I look for is a respectful attitude. If the student is sullen, cocky, and defensive, if he grunts "yeah" and "no" to my questions, then the punishment I impose is always relatively severe.

If, however, he is polite, contrite, owns up to his misdeed, and responds with "yes, Sir" and "no, Sir," then the punishment is usually lessened. Cockiness and arrogance are two of the more obnoxious characteristics of immaturity and we must warn our children against them.

We must teach them that the Christian life is one of submission and respect for higher authority. As Bob Dylan says in one of his recent songs, no matter who you are or what you are, "you gotta serve somebody."

Scripture clearly teaches us that we must respect parents (Ephesians 6:2), civil authority (Romans 13:1ff), employers (Ephesians 6:5), church leaders (Hebrews 13:7), and older persons (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

Parents, look at your children closely and objectively. Do they "talk back"? Are they arrogantly self-assured and contemptuous of those who occupy positions over them? If the answer is even close to being yes, then buckle

down! A child who has little or no respect for parental authority will become an adult with no respect for *any* authority, including that of God and His word.

2. Responsibility. One of the most irritating spectacles I encounter in my work is a teenager who is always blaming someone or something else for his own misbehavior, and who has 1,001 reasons why he shouldn't have to pay the price for his actions. Moreover, how transparently pathetic is the sight of parents who have an always-at-the-ready laundry list of excuses for their child's mistakes: the teacher is unreasonable, the principal is unfeeling, the other kids are distracting, the book is too hard, the room is too dark (too hot, too cold, too noisy).

We must instill in our children the biblical principle that "every man must bear his own burden" (Galatians 6:4-5). Our children must learn that every act has its own set of consequences, good or bad depending on the nature of the act. But when Mama is always there to clean up the mess, to pick up the pieces, our kids learn the opposite.

When we excuse our children's misbehavior with, "Well, he's tired (or hyper, or disappointed about not going to the lake)," we appear to condone their misdeeds. Sure, we understand that kids get cross when they are tired, but we cannot let them get the idea that being tired makes misbehavior acceptable. Tired or not, hyper or not, they must face the consequences and "pay the fiddler."

A few weeks ago I caught a 15-year-old jerking the skirt tail of a girl up in the air, exposing her in front of her mates. I told him to tell his parents what he had done and to return with their permission to give him two licks with the paddle. I later received a long-distance call from the father who said that his son claimed that the whole thing was an "accident." I asked the youth about this, and he readily admitted that the claim was a lie. I sent him home a second time with an admonition to be truthful with his father.

The next day I received another long-distance call from Papa who, instead of

(Continued on page 9)

Brent Lewis



My Brother/My Self

Some Guidelines for Friendship

Mark Twain once said, "I can live for two months on one good compliment." Most of us share his feeling. There is nothing that lifts one's spirits or more greatly affirms one's validity than hearty approbation. Here are some guidelines for developing real friendships.

1. Be lavish with praise. I do not suggest that you be insincere or become a back-slapping, glad-handing hypocrite in order to gain friends. Nobody likes that kind of person and rightfully so. But I am saying that there is nothing manipulative about stating what you feel—seeing a person's strengths and praising them. There is much to see if you are looking for it; and if you train yourself to look for the good in other people, you will be surprised how many good things you will find. Compliments cost nothing, yet there are those around us who would do almost anything to receive one. Your friendships will be multiplied and greatly enhanced if you develop the habit of affirmation.

2. Develop your conversational skills. Talk is cheap, they say, but it is an essential ingredient in real relationships. If you are the kind of person who will talk with and listen to others, you are a prime candidate for a person with many friends. Of course, the mere flow of words between two people does not guarantee intimacy; but there can be no intimacy *without* conversation.

A woman wrote to Ann Landers with this complaint: "My husband doesn't talk to me. He just sits there night after night, reading the newspaper or looking at TV. When I ask him a question, he grunts 'hu, 'unhu, or uh'huh. Sometimes he doesn't even grunt. All he really needs is a housekeeper and somebody to sleep with him when he feels like it. He can buy both. There are times when I wonder why he got married." Such complaints are not uncommon. Only friends communicate and being husband and wife unfortunately doesn't guarantee that two people are still friends. Some time ago a psychologist conducted an experiment measuring the amount of conversation that goes on between the average wife and husband in a week's time. To make the experiment

accurate, he actually strapped portable electronic microphones to the subjects and measured every word they said—idle conversation while driving to the store, requests to pass the butter, everything. Of the 168 hours or 10,080 minutes in a week—how much of that time do you suppose the average couple spends talking to each other. Well, it was not ten hours, or one hour, or even thirty minutes. It was seventeen minutes. To know and love a friend over the years, you must have regular talks.

Be a good listener. The secret to being interesting is to be interested. There are few people who care enough to genuinely listen to what others are saying. The person who will draw out the other person will have all the friends they can handle. "The road to the heart," wrote Voltaire, "is the ear." Good listeners listen with their eyes, too. Communication experts say that even when our mouths are closed we are saying a lot. Eye contact is an indicator of your attention and, thus, your interest. If you are staring at the wall or glancing at your watch, the speaker gets a strong impression of how little you care about the conversation. But if you look one directly in the eye as he speaks, you will be amazed at how quickly he gets the compliment. Good listeners also never break a confidence. If you wish to have friends, you must never break their trust; learn to zip your lip. Nothing causes people to clam up and to abandon your friendship more quickly than to find out you spilled the beans. To be a trusted confidant, and thus a true friend, you cannot be a leaky repository. An inebriated man came stumbling out of a bar and almost knocked down his preacher who happened to be walking past. "Oh, Preacher, I'm so sorry for you to see me like this," he said. "Well, I don't know why you should be sorry for me to see you this way, Bill. After all, the Lord sees you now, doesn't he?" "Yeah," said the drunk, "but he's not near as big a blabbermouth as you are!"

Remember: if you will develop your conversational habits, be lavish in your praise of others, and be a good listener—you will not want for genuine friends.

Youth Forum

Are We to Be Trusted?

Keith Pierce

One weekend recently I wanted to go out with my friends. So I asked my folks for permission. They refused, because these "friends" of mine were not the "right" kind of people. But I persisted, giving a detailed account of our night's plans. They finally agreed that I could go, but insisted that I be in by 11 o'clock. Can you believe 11:00? But it was either 11:00 or nothing, so I agreed.

On Friday night everything went according to plans: a movie, cruising around and then ice cream. While we were eating we got into conversations with friends and before anyone realized it the time was 11:05. We were a long way from home so we jumped in the car and flew across town. We pulled into my driveway at 11:30. I did not think that was too bad, but guess what met me

at the door? The FBI, CIA, and the Supreme Court all rolled into one. Questions came from everywhere. Where have you been? Do you know what time it is? Have you been drinking or taking drugs? Come here and let me smell your breath. You will be grounded for a month! What do you think you are trying to pull—staying out this late?

Do you ever get the feeling that your parents just don't trust you, that they just don't give you a chance? Well, you're not the first to have this problem. That same problem is addressed in 1 Timothy 4:12.

First, the passage suggests that older folks don't always trust younger folks. "Let no man despise your youth." Should the older people be blamed? Maybe, but not on the basis of this verse. It places the burden on the younger folks. They are to "let no man despise" their youth. It is a simple matter of showing the older folks through your works that you desire to be a Christian. Here are a number of ways we can do this.

In word. Nothing is more sacred in a relationship than trust in one another's word. We all realize this, but do we practice it? If we go back to our story we find our young man telling his parents that he would be in by 11:00. He did not keep his word. His parents in turn start to doubt the honesty of his word.

In manner of life. How do you act in your daily routine? With whom do you associate? The young man in our story had friends that were not Christians, people who did not put God and His will first in their lives. These are the kind of people he chose to be with and to be influenced by. How can this be pleasing to God? His parents questioned his judgment in his choice of friends and his judgment in the temptations that he subjected himself to. It is so important that we associate with Christians. They will help us in times of temptation.

If we add love, faith, and purity to an honest word and proper manner of life we will find that we will not be despised. We will also find ourselves in heaven. But it is for us to do.

"The Three R's . . . continued from page 7

being embarrassed by and angry at his son for humiliating a young lady in public and then being blatantly dishonest about the deed, told me that his son was "just kidding around." Furthermore, he understood that the girl in question "kind of leads the boys around." He concluded that his boy had committed an "error in judgment" and that I could paddle him. I was flabbergasted! "Just kidding!" An "error in judgment!" That boy learned something about responsibility in that incident, but it wasn't something very good, I fear.

Parents, let us be diligently preparing our youth to face that "day of wrath" in which God "will render to every man according to his works" (Romans 2:5-6).

Another aspect of responsibility which is vital to spiritual maturity is the idea of behaving correctly simply for its own sake. The use of behavior modification techniques—rewards, tokens, money, etc.—is an extremely valuable tool in training children. I've used it myself with my own children. However, we must exercise great care so that our kids learn quickly and well that we do what is right simply because it is the right thing to do, and because it pleases the God who loves us. In Ephesians 6:2, Paul commands children to obey their parents, "for this is right." The child who behaves only when it gets him some material reward will eventually learn that bad behavior means poverty, and that therefore what makes me materially wealthy is good and what makes one poor is bad. The eventual result: a graspingly materialistic and carnally-

minded adult who does right only when it benefits him to do so.

3. Remembrance. One of Jesus' favorite teaching techniques was to point to the past experiences of others, such as Jonah. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10:6, tells us that the evil deeds of the Israelites of old are recorded for us so that we might not "desire evil as they did." Too many youths, however, have only contempt for the past. They are allowed to ignore their own past errors, to sneer at the wisdom that their elders have derived from their experiences, and to scorn the lessons contained in human history in general. We do our children a great disservice when we fail to teach them to revere the past, for it is the key to the future. To paraphrase the philosopher George Santayana, those who choose to ignore the past are doomed to repeat it. How many divisions and apostasies the church could have avoided had its members heeded Santayana's maxim! I wonder how many more such cleavages will occur in the future because we are allowing our young people to believe that the past is nothing more than a boring pile of dust and dead people!

Respect, Responsibility and Remembrance—these are the keys to securing the future of our children, and with them the safety of the church in the coming years. Parents, take heed! God will hold us accountable as to whether we succeed or fail in this task (Ephesians 6:4)!

2401 Jacobs Rd., Birmingham, AL 35216



When Dreams Don't Come True

"Somewhere over the rainbow, skies are blue; and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true." So sings Dorothy longingly in *The Wizard of Oz*. In a world of heart-crushing disappointments everyone longs for a life with "a happy ending." It is a uniquely human thing to dream dreams—to be able to imagine the ideal and long for it. And God, far from discouraging our longings, has put a vision of the future in our hearts which is free of suffering and sin, a life of unending joy and peace (Revelation 21:3-8). Paul assures us that our imagination in its wildest flight is incapable of overstressing the bounds of what God can do to transform our lives (Ephesians 3:20). We are encouraged to dream great dreams of what we can become and accomplish in the power of God's Son (Philippians 4:13).

It is true that frequently we have dreamed the wrong dream. The Lord has duly warned us about that (Jude 8). The lust of the flesh, the hunger for things, are not capable of being satisfied when made life's reigning passion, and will result in a nightmare of emptiness (Ecclesiastes 5:10; 6:7; James 4:1-3). We must learn to dream God's dream—to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Yet, those who have dreamed the great dream are not to be faulted for having other hopes and aspirations that attend upon it. Bright expectations for active and fruitful service. Earnest visions of happy homes, faithful companions, godly sons and daughters. Unlike heaven, however, these cannot be assured. Absolutely nothing can steal away our ultimate hope (as long as we treasure it above all else) but there is no such guarantee about the way we take to reach it. Sometimes cherished hopes for our lives are smashed. What are God's people to do when their dreams are simply lost irretrievably?

We are not the first to wrestle with deep disappointment over the course our lives have taken. The Scriptures are full of examples. What of the hopes and dreams of that faithful young man, Abel? Can it not be imagined that he wanted a family; and that he dreamed of living a long and faithful life in the service of the God he worshipped? But, of course, it did not turn out that way. The "seed" of woman (Genesis 3:15) was to be the descendent of Seth, not Abel. And what of Stephen, and James the apostle? These men must have had their dreams, too.

But perhaps those who lived out their full lives with their hopes unfulfilled faced an even greater challenge. I have often wondered what visions of the future must have filled the mind of the young Jeremiah while he grew up in Anathoth. It would only be natural that the son of a priest should dream of serving God in a place of honor

before the altar in Jerusalem. Perhaps, too, he looked forward to marriage and to children. He seemed to be the kind of man who would have cherished family life. But though Jeremiah lived a long life none of these things were ever to be. He was destined to serve God, not in a place of esteem, but in a miry pit of degradation. He seems to have been more often in prison than in the Temple. Instead of love he came to know hatred and abuse even from his own close friends and kinsmen. Plots were hatched against his life. And there was to be no wife and no children (Jeremiah 16:1-2). He dreaded his calling as a prophet and felt inadequate for the task (1:6). The experiences of a young man were denied him because his harsh message made him an outcast (15:17). At times the burden of his isolation almost overwhelmed him with despair (20:7-18). Jeremiah evidently died in Egypt—an aged man amidst a company of faithless Jews who carried him there against his will. Tradition has it that he was stoned to death. These are not the things a young man's dreams are made of.

And what of Samuel who as a young lad saw the tragedy of Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:17-26; 3:10-14), and yet lived to see his own sons repeat the same folly (8:1-3). What a bitter disappointment this must have been to this godly father.

So what are we to do when many of our dreams turn to nightmares? What are we to do when we are overwhelmed by heartbreak almost to despair? We are to do what multitudes of faithful men and women have done before us. We are to endure—trust God and endure. We are to remember that it will serve no purpose to throw our own lives on the funeral bier of our lost dreams. We have dreamed a greater dream than these and it is imperative that we never turn loose of it.

It only takes a few minutes to read of the lives of these godly men and women who preceded us, but we need to remember that it took years for them to live them. Their trials often went on endlessly. They compass us about as a great cloud of witnesses to the truth that by the power of God we, too, can patiently see our troubles through to the end (Hebrews 12:1). And we need to remember that we will not always see our trials as we do now. Heaven will swallow up everything. After we have lived a few "years" in heaven, we will not even remember what it was like to suffer. Paul said it plainly: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to usward" (Romans 8:18). We can know that only by faith. Endure, my dear brother and sister. It will be worth it!



Christianity Magazine

Theme Editorial

Editor: Ed Harrell

Fervent In Spirit

The Bible is replete with warnings against sloth and exhortations to work: "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11). Central to the gospel of Christ is the obligation to tell it to others, to share the good news, to wear ourselves out in the service of the Lord. It is a perversion of Christianity to imagine that one can retire to the seclusion of a monastery or the solitude of the desert to contemplate one's own salvation. It is just as wrongheaded to think that my only obligation is to denounce those in error without making an effort to reform them. Too often, non-evangelical bigotry has left behind shattered churches with no sense of who they are and what use God has for them. Converting the lost is not an alternative to doctrinal soundness, it is a corollary to it. A busy church is less likely to have time to bicker about the doctrinal and personal eccentricities which too often devour us.

There are many growing and good-spirited works in our nation today. I have asked three men who have been exceptionally successful in building up local churches to share some of their ideas. Sewell Hall, who now works in Atlanta, Georgia, is a mature preacher, and he has done good around the world. Sewell has thought much about this subject, he has been a great encouragement to many others (as his regular column in *Christianity Magazine* shows), and there is a profoundly practical ring to his advice. Darrell Hymel and Steve Cawthon are relatively young men. They are typical of scores of other fine young evangelists I know who have solid understandings of undenominational Christianity and who have a will to work for the Lord. There is no real mystery behind their success—the secret is work. They are both "fervent in spirit." In the articles that follow they tell us some of the means they have used to convert the lost. It should be apparent

that there are no set rules about *how* to get the work done, but the pages that follow ought to give us all some new ideas.

It needs to be restated that baptizing people is not an end within itself. There is much to be said about feeding the sheep and bringing new babes to maturity. Perhaps in some future issue we can discuss those vital themes. For the moment, be sure to read Tommy Poarch's article on that subject in this issue. We must do better in nurturing the struggling young babes who fight to survive in a wicked world. And we can never allow zeal for saving the lost to become a substitute for doctrinal soundness and a concern for being faithful in all things.

In fact, a fervent evangelical spirit should help us in all of those areas, not hinder us. Those who truly love the lost will also love the babes and they will love the Lord.

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FERVENT IN SPIRIT

Sewell Hall

"Sir, We Would See Jesus"

THE FIRST CHAPTER OF ROMANS contains a horrible description of the moral abyss into which the Gentile world had fallen when "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." But as is often true of generalizations concerning great masses of society, there were exceptions to the rule.

Soon after the birth of Jesus, when Herod was seeking to kill Him, "behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him'" (Matthew 2:1-2).

In the last week before the greatest of passovers, while controversy, conflict and conspiracy surged all around our Lord, "there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'" "

Wisdom of the Greeks

It was to the credit of these Greeks that they looked past the bigotry and hypocrisy of the Jews to recognize that the God of the Jews was worthy of worship. It was also to their credit that they were able to look past the ignorance, the pride and the general imperfection of the disciples to seek Jesus.

Many people in our modern world are turned off by all religion. Others, seeing the division and sham in professed Christianity have decided that among the world's religions, one is just as good as another. But there are still a few whose voices can be heard or whose hearts burn with the unspoken request: "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Sometime such people drop into our services. Sometime they read our tracts or listen to our radio programs. More often, perhaps, they watch our conduct hoping to catch a glimpse of the Savior of men. How tragic if they fail to see Him among us.

Wisdom of the Disciples

It is to the credit of the disciples that they did not try personally to satisfy the

needs of these inquirers. Once before they had attempted to keep mothers and their babes from Jesus, only to be rebuked by Him. The request of these Greeks was taken directly to Jesus for His response. We have not always been so wise.

A modern slogan among us has been: "Investigate the church of Christ." The impression given is that people should find a sign reading, "CHURCH OF CHRIST" and investigate the people

A modern slogan among us has been: "Investigate the church of Christ." The impression given is that people should find a sign reading, "CHURCH OF CHRIST" and investigate the people worshipping behind it.

worshipping behind it. A very popular tract begins, "Churches of Christ—who are these people?" I will tell you who they are. They are an all-too-often proud group of weak and sinning people, many of whom are constantly disputing and dividing, and some of whom are drunkards, adulterers and liars—a pretty motley lot! No wonder we find it so difficult to get people to "become members of the church, give to the church, be loyal to the church and put the church first!" There is not very

much that is attractive enough to beget such a response.

The only thing in the body of Christ worth investigating is its Head—not its members. The only thing of which the kingdom can boast is its King—not its citizens. The authority of the King must be magnified and our own ineptitude in obedience conceded. Only when all of this is clearly established are we in position, very humbly, to invite others to join with us in our efforts to follow Jesus—to be truly a church of Christ. The apostle Paul said it this way: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Showing Jesus to the World

1. **In Word.** There was a time when most of the religious people about us believed in Jesus and accepted His authority. About all that was necessary was to show them that they had missed His teaching on some point. This is no longer true. We must now establish the divinity of Jesus and His right to the last word on every subject. This does not require elaborate discussions of external evidence. It simply means more teaching from the gospels—more emphasis on His life and teaching. Jesus is His own best witness.

2. **In Deed.** The apostle Paul could write: "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Galatians 2:20). Those who saw Paul saw Jesus in him. Today, Christians in whom Jesus dwells will stand out in a crowd, in a home, in a neighborhood, in a school, in an office, in a plant, even in a business transaction. These are true disciples of Jesus and it is only to such disciples that men of the world will come saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

In the conversation following the request of the Greeks Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). We would not hang Him again on the cross, but we must see that before the eyes of all men He is "openly set forth crucified" (Galatians 3:1).

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FERVENT IN SPIRIT



The Right Hands of Fellowship

Darrell Hymel

IS IT BEST FOR A CONGREGATION TO support forty different men with \$100 per month, or four men with \$1,000? Would it be best to support men who have worked in your own congregation that you know personally, or send support to men who you know only through a letter in the mail? Which method would help the men in the field the most? Which method would allow the elders of the church the greatest opportunity to be faithful stewards of the Lord's treasury? But, of greatest importance, which method conforms closest to the scriptural pattern of cooperation between churches and preachers? Is there a pattern at all?

When the gospel spread rapidly among the Greeks in Antioch, the brethren in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to help. As many more were added through his encouragement, he brought Saul to Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). After laboring a year there together, the Holy Spirit directed the church to send them into Asia Minor (Acts 13:1-3). After churches were established in several cities, Paul and Barnabas went back through, strengthening and encouraging the disciples and appointing elders (Acts 14:21-23). After returning to Antioch, they joined hands with other teachers to continue spreading the gospel in that area (Acts 15:35). Paul and Barnabas later left Antioch separately after they "had been committed by the brethren to the gracious care of the Lord" (Acts 15:40). As Paul came again to Lystra and Derbe to strengthen those churches, he found a young man, Timothy, who "was well spoken of by the brethren" in that area. To prepare Timothy for his work among the Jews, Paul had Timothy circumcised and gave him a spiritual gift (Acts 16:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:6). It was no doubt at this time that the elders laid their hands on Timothy, not as an ordaining service, but simply suggesting the right hand of fellowship they would have with him in preaching the gospel in other parts of the world (see Galatians 2:9; Acts 13:1-3).

The first congregation established by

their work in Macedonia was Philippi. As Paul was driven to Thessalonica and beyond, notice what the Philippians did; "at the first preaching of the gospel after I departed Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone, for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs (Philippians 4:15-16). When Paul got to Corinth, other churches he had established in Macedonia also sent wages (2 Corinthians 11:8-9). Paul did not take wages from the Corinthians while with them, but made it plain he expected help in preaching the gospel in realms beyond them (2 Corinthians 10:15-16). One area Paul specifically had in mind was Rome (Acts 19:21). He wrote the Romans from the city of Corinth and told them of his plans to come to them (Romans 1:11, 14-15) and he let them know of his hope that they would help him on his way to Spain (Romans 15:20-24).

We have just gone through a brief review of the entire spread of the gospel in the first century. The gospel was preached to the whole world without any denominational headquarters, missionary society, or sponsoring church arrangements. What can we learn from the simple pattern that we have seen in the book of Acts and the epistles?

First, churches like Antioch, Lystra, Philippi, Corinth, and Rome that benefited from the work of a preacher, felt indebted to send him to another area. Second, they supported men like Paul, Barnabas, Silas and Timothy with whom they had worked first-hand. Third, when these men left to labor in other fields, they did not necessarily pay a replacement to fill the pulpit. The men left behind were well equipped to carry on the teaching (2 Timothy 2:2). This point does not give credence to the no-located-preacher argument, for Paul and Barnabas returned later to Antioch for an unknown period and Apollos and Cephas labored at Corinth after Paul left (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). But we must get out of the idea that when a full-time man leaves the area that we are without a

preacher. Fourth, notice the close ties that Paul had with Antioch through the years (11:25-26; 13:1-3; 14:26-28; 15:30-35; 18:22). To all churches that supported Paul, he was more than a name on the bulletin board and a point of discussion in the yearly budget. These churches were much more specific in their prayers than "be with the preachers of the gospel the world over." They were eyewitnesses of the love and service of the men they now supported in foreign fields and had complete trust in their ability and use of time. Many who gave on the first day of the week were spiritual fruit of these men, and rejoiced that they now could have fellowship with them in teaching the gospel to others. Fifth, the messengers of the first century focused their labors on the large metro areas (Acts 19:9-10). The philosophy that every village in the USA must have a full-time preacher before sending abroad was not the philosophy of the first century. Sixth, when Paul went to Athens by himself, that was the exception, not the rule. Preachers usually did their work at least in pairs.

The gospel will flourish today where this pattern is used. I worked six years with the Huffman church in Birmingham, Alabama. They were the only source of financial support as I moved my family to Colorado to begin a new congregation. But our fellowship has been more than them receiving a monthly report and me receiving a check. Heart-warming letters of encouragement and exhortation have flowed both ways. Telephone calls and visits by vacationing brethren have been frequent. As we returned last summer to preach a week's meeting, we returned to a hundredfold of mothers, fathers and brethren in the faith. Several young men have grown up in that faith in that congregation. As young Timothys who had a good report of their own brethren, they have been sent out to regions beyond. Thank God for congregations who practice this pattern.

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FERVENT IN SPIRIT

The Local Church and the Work of Evangelism

Steve Cawthon

IN THE APOSTOLIC DAYS, THERE WERE NO missionary societies, no sponsoring churches coordinating the work of their affiliates, no extra-congregational organizations through which churches could do the work of evangelism. But somehow, the gospel was spread into all the world (Colossians 1:6). The key to that success was not activating the universal church; it was activating the local church. The same needs to be done today.

The local congregation should function like a physical body. "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, it is not therefore not of the body" (1 Corinthians 12:14-15). Every member of the body plays a part in the function of the whole. In his hymn, "Room in God's Kingdom," J. R. Baxter, Jr. expressed the idea this way: "There is room in the kingdom of God, my brother, For the small things that you can do." The beauty of God's plan is demonstrated when Christians are motivated to work together in the local fellowship and "sound forth the word of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Just as there were diversities of gifts in the first century Corinthian church, talents, abilities, and opportunities will vary among members of a local church of God today. But there is work that we all can do, from the inexperienced new convert to the knowledgeable elder; and from the young mother with small children to the wise and aged widow. Many Christians have felt the guilt and frustration that comes from knowing the obligation to teach the gospel, but not knowing exactly what to do. In addition to preaching on the responsibility to evangelize, we preachers need to explain how it can be done. Many disciples are eager to work for the Lord, but are left with the unanswered question, "What then must we do?" (Luke 3:10). The following suggestions are offered for the purpose of demonstrating the practicality of God's plan for evangelism through the local church.

The first step is to find out who is will-

ing to work and what they are willing to do. In the church in Fayetteville, we have asked each member who desires to participate to indicate a two-hour time segment to work each week. Those with more flexible schedules can list a number of alternatives. The types of work that need to be done offer something for everyone. Here are some examples: (1) Write personal letters to visitors to the services. (2) Grade and mail Bible correspondence courses. (3) Apply address labels to courses for bulk mailings. (4) Set up home Bible classes for others to teach. (5) Teach a home Bible study with another teacher. (6) Visit other members of the congregation.

*There
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(7) Visit newcomers to the community to invite them to the services of the church. (8) Teach a series of lessons to new converts. (9) Visit with new converts or weaker members regularly. (10) Maintain equipment used in home Bible studies. (11) Schedule the home Bible studies and assign needed equipment to those teaching the classes.

Don't be discouraged if only a few members of the congregation express any interest in the work initially. Look what twelve men did in the first century. And if a few people will work diligently, souls will be saved. Everytime someone is baptized as a result of a contact through the correspondence course or a

home Bible study, others will want to get involved. It's like Paul told the Corinthians, "Your zeal hath stirred up very many of them" (2 Corinthians 9:2). So far this year, the church in Fayetteville has seen five people baptized as a result of an initial contact through bulk mailing the correspondence course, two more through a radio program, one through a booth at the county fair (95 more have enrolled in the correspondence course from the fair booth), two contacted at a local rest home where some of the members teach on Sunday afternoons, and nine more through personal acquaintance with some member of the church. And with each conversion, the church's zeal for evangelism increases.

It seems to me this kind of thing is happening all across the country. I'm hearing more and more about congregations becoming active in preaching the gospel to their own community. In a recent meeting with the North Boulevard church in Tampa, Florida, we had about 75 members come out on Saturday morning to discuss personal evangelism. Their interest was fervent. With 75 people working two hours a week under the direction of their fine elders and with their full-time evangelist, Vic McCormick, the city will be filled with the message of Christ. And in a similar meeting in Forrest City, Arkansas, most of the members expressed a desire to be active in spreading the message of salvation. Last week, I received a letter from Dan Graham saying he is moving to Forrest City to help with the work. Dan wrote, "They have recently had some success with mass mailing of a correspondence course, and they plan to do it again in the near future. However, many of them have jobs that require a great deal of time, and they do not have the time they would like to study with everyone who responds. Their zeal for reaching the lost was very impressive to me, and I am sure that with God's blessing the work there will grow." Amen, Dan! The harvest indeed is plenteous.

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FERVENT IN SPIRIT



Finding the Lord's People

Sewell Hall

IN OUR MODERN SOCIETY EFFORTS TO save the lost have been increasingly discouraging. People seem to be too busy, too hungry for entertainment, too sports-minded, too religiously prejudiced, too intellectually proud or too immoral to be interested in the simple gospel.

If anything, attitudes Paul found in ancient Corinth were worse than they are today. We can easily identify with him as he observes: "Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:22-23). Perhaps the thing which kept him going was a special message from the Lord recorded in Acts 18:9-10.

"Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.'" In that message Paul received a revelation, an exhortation and a consolation.

It must have been a *revelation* indeed that the Lord had many people in Corinth. Impressed as Paul was with the gross immorality of the city, he must have wondered where they were. The Lord did not mean that there were already Christians there; much less that there were some who were irrevocably predestined to salvation. He was simply assuring Paul that there were many in Corinth who would accept the gospel.

The Scriptures clearly identify two different types of lost individuals. Some are good soil who will receive the seed and bear fruit, while others will never produce fruit (Matthew 13:19-23). Some come to the light while others hate the light (John 3:20-21). Some want to do God's will (John 7:17) while others "love the approval of men rather than the approval of God" (John 12:43). Some already have the nature of sheep and prove it by following when they hear the voice of the Shepherd (John 10:27). Others will not follow.

The Lord's people in Corinth were

those who would hear the call of the Shepherd. Paul's task was to find them. How was this to be accomplished? The Lord's *exhortation* was the key: "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not keep silent." Let the voice of the Shepherd be heard! Paul obeyed and the result was that those who were the Lord's people heard His voice and came out from the rest to follow Him. Paul found that "to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

The separation accomplished by preaching was not always peaceful. In

In whatever place we may be, we can be sure that the Lord has people there. It is for us to find them in the same way that Paul did.

cities where Paul had previously preached Christ both Jews and Greeks had reacted violently. What *consolation* there must have been for Paul in the words of the Lord: "I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you."

The Message for Us

Doubtless Paul's experience was recorded for our benefit. In whatever place we may be, we can be sure that the Lord has people there. It is for us to find them in the same way that Paul did—by preaching Christ crucified to every person in the community. This will not only call out the Lord's people; it will save them that believe (1 Corinthians

1:21).

Once we understand this principle, that nagging sense of failure which so often burdens us is removed from our efforts. If the purpose of the gospel is to repel those who cannot be saved as well as to save those who can be, we are no longer the ones being tested—it is the hearer. If he rejects we have not failed; he has. By his rejection he proves that he is not one of the Lord's people. We can only fail if we fail to confront him with the gospel.

The imperative, then, is to get the message out to every creature. The "how" is not as important as we have made it. We have worried too much about nice buildings and good public relations for the church; about a smooth manner and professional appearance for our preachers; and about training personal workers to be polished salesmen who can get people into the water with an irresistible "close" at the end of a presentation. All of this suggests the power is in us.

The power is in the gospel and it will only save one kind of person. No skill we may possess or technique we may learn will save even one of those "who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). On the other hand, about the only way that we could keep a sheep from hearing the voice of the Shepherd would be to distort His voice by our own un-Christlike attitudes or demeanor.

It appears that more churches and individuals are doing more to reach every individual in their communities just now than in many previous years. Telephone messages, direct mail, correspondence courses, newspaper advertising, door-knocking, radio and TV programs, home studies and several other methods are being increasingly utilized. Yet we have only begun to fulfill our commission. As we become more conscious of the words of our Lord, "I am with you," surely we will increase in zeal until all have heard.

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FERVENT IN SPIRIT

Darrell Hymel

Teaching the Whole Counsel of God (I)

THE ENTIRE THREE YEARS THAT PAUL WAS in Ephesus he did not cease to admonish each one with tears (Acts 20:31). As a faithful teacher he did not shrink from declaring anything that was profitable to the Ephesians, making use of both public places and private homes (20:20). Paul's planning and effort were so complete that he could honestly say, "Therefore I testify to you this day, that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:26-27). How many preachers and elders today can sincerely make this statement with Paul? What are you doing to make sure the whole counsel of God is taught in your congregation in a reasonable length of time? In Paul's case it was three years.

I know first-hand where one congregation took 2½ years to study the book of Genesis and then proceeded to start Exodus at the same speed. At this rate one would have to be older than Methuselah to hear the whole Bible taught. Even if it were physically possible to live that long, I don't believe most Christians can spiritually survive under such circumstances. In the article that follows on this subject we have provided a recommended curriculum for making sure all the Bible is taught in three to four years. This article will deal with specific suggestions on how to reach this goal.

1. **Realize the great value of survey courses, especially on books of history.** Survey courses are a must for new converts and can serve as refresher courses for more mature members. Every member needs to see the complete spiritual forest, before he examines each tree. Individual verses and chapters become impossible to understand when we do not first see a panoramic view of God's purpose.

2. **Don't come to class to read the text.** While some reading is needed, teachers should assume that all their class has read the portion of the word of God under consideration and attempted whatever assignments might have been made. This may be a large assumption in

some congregations, but do not lower your class standards to suit those who are not hungering and thirsting. When we gather for the purpose of a spiritual feast, feed the ones that are hungry. Those without appetites will need attention alright, but in the form of a personal visit to attempt to restore them to spiritual health.

3. **Lesson plans by the teacher are absolutely necessary.** Teachers should be assigned a particular book or topic and be given a specific time period to cover it. You should know before you teach the first class what is going to be covered in every class. All my American History teachers made the mistake of being on the Civil War when the school

I know first-hand where one congregation took 2½ years to study the book of Genesis and then proceeded to start Exodus at the same speed.

year ended because of a lack of planning. If you have 13 weeks to teach Hebrews, outline that book so that you cover *all* the book successfully. If you spend so much time on one verse, you will forget its relationship to the whole book and context. It is not your job in the class periods to analyze every plausible interpretation given by commentators nor define every Greek word. Your job is to help people to understand, be able to teach it to others, and whet their appetites for more in-depth study at home. If questions are asked that distract from your main purpose, these make good assignments for research outside the classroom.

4. **Convey the goals of your class at**

the first meeting. They should be able to remember several key points from each week and at the end of the course be able to outline the book from memory.

5. **Not every book and topic has to be covered on Sunday and Wednesday.** Design week-long meetings with special themes on a particular book. Have concentrated studies on short books during weekend lectureships. Minor prophets make a good special class for advanced students for three to four weeks in your home. These sessions are great for covering more difficult books and offer excellent times to get to know one another better.

6. **Assign topics and teachers at least six months in advance** so that ample time for research and planning can take place. If the congregation is large, courses for both the mature and babes should be offered at the same time. If there is only one adult class, more difficult subjects should be offered at special times as an elective. If at all possible use of the auditorium for classes should be discouraged. Classrooms should be designed for writing, taking notes, and an occasional test.

7. **Use the pulpit for preaching through various Bible books,** letting the text dictate your choice of topics. If doctrinal and controversial subjects are allowed to occupy weeks of a study designed for an understanding of the text, the context is often lost and the original purpose of the author is forgotten. These subjects are best addressed from the pulpit with question-and-answer sessions to follow, or in classes with topical purposes in mind.

8. **Many topics can be taught in homes with evangelistic purposes in mind.** Classes on "How We Got the Bible," "Marriage Enrichment," etc., are ideal ice-breakers that can lead to permanent studies with non-members. It is in these settings that non-members can best see the marks of true discipleship (John 13:35), and our goal of teaching the whole counsel of God can be aided at the same time.

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FERVENT IN SPIRIT



Teaching the Whole Counsel of God (II)

Darrell Hymel

[Recommended courses and descriptions along with suggested time frames in weeks. Books of history should not be given the same time and attention as New Testament epistles and the teachings of Christ. Of course, the time needed to cover a particular book may vary according to your purpose. For example, you may cover the gospels to understand the teachings of Jesus, or you may cover them very quickly, simply to get an overview of His life story.].

Books of History make good **Survey Courses**. **Genesis to Ruth** (26) will outline the history of this period; a detailed study of the law of Moses will be the subject of another study. **The United Kingdom** (13) covers the lives of Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon (1 Samuel-1 Kings 12; 1 Chronicles-2 Chronicles 9). **The Divided Kingdom** (13) will cover from the reign of Rehoboam to the captivity of Israel and Judah (1 Kings 13-2 Kings; 2 Chronicles 9-36). **The Captivity and the Return** (13) covers the first six chapters of Daniel, plus the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. The teacher should include the life and main message of each of the prophets during these studies. **New Testament Backgrounds** (13) is a survey of the history between the testaments with emphasis upon the political system at the time of Christ, government officials, the synagogue, religious sects, and customs. An excellent source is *New Testament Backgrounds* by Fields (College Press). **The New Testament Book by Book** (26) gives background for a different New Testament book each week. **The Life of Christ** (26) makes one harmonious account of the four gospels. **The Church Begins** (13) traces the beginning of the church in Judea and Samaria (Acts 1-12). **The Life of Paul** (13) takes information from the epistles and places it chronologically with Acts 13:28. **Bible Geography and History** (39) is even a more rapid survey of all Bible history with an emphasis on where things took place. A good set of maps and a workbook by Bob and Sandra Waldron are

recommended. **Church History** (13) covers religious history since the death of Christ.

Recommended time frames for New Testament Epistles are as follows: **Romans and Galatians** (26), **Ephesians and Colossians** (13), **Philippians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians** (13), **1 & 2 Timothy** (with special study on qualifications of elders) (13), **Titus, James and 1 John** (13), and **1 & 2 Peter, Jude, 2 & 3 John** (13).

More difficult books should be offered to students who have completed most of the survey courses and other books. **Revelation** (26), **Ezekiel** (13), **Jeremiah** (13), **Isaiah** (13), and the **Minor Prophets**

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(26) should only be offered when an alternate course is offered or on a special night of the week. Individual Minor Prophets make good home study material for one to four weeks.

Old Testament books of Poetry can be covered in a variety of ways. Studying all 150 Psalms could be very tedious. Try giving a couple of weeks introduction to the whole book and then selecting a variety of Psalms (13) for closer study. **The Way of Life** series has a good selection for this purpose. **Proverbs and Job** (13) may not seem like enough time to study these two lengthy books, but the right preparation will entice your

students to make them part of their daily meditation for years. **Proverbs** is best studied topically. **The Living Word** series offers an outline for this purpose. After the theme of the book of Job is clearly set forth, the students should receive a good outline of the book and be able to analyze the basic argumentation in each section. **Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon** (13) are probably the two most neglected books in the Bible. Neither book is easily understood after the first reading, but every young adult ought to master these books before setting off on their own.

Topical Studies ought to be chosen for the needs of the hour. Thirty years ago, a class on the Charismatic Movement and Tongue Speaking would not have had much interest. I will not try to list all possible subjects for classes, but will suggest a few that will need to be on our curriculum permanently. **The Law of Moses** (13) can be broken down into several general themes: the priesthood, the sacrifices, the death penalty, moral code, civil laws, marriage laws, the tabernacle, etc. **The Sermon on the Mount** (13) should not be dragged out to cover a whole quarter, but special studies on the Beatitudes, Marriage and Divorce, and the proper understanding of the Sermon being the very foundation of the New Covenant should be emphasized. If you still have extra time, bring in a later sermon of Jesus in Matthew 24. **Marriage Enrichment** (13) is a good class to encourage non-members to attend. **Denominational Error** (13) is a course designed to gain information about what other churches teach and how to refute their teaching. Other courses that need to be taught on a regular basis are **The Work and Qualifications of Elders** (13), **Preacher Training** (13), **How to Teach the Lost** (13), **How We Got the Bible** (13), **Is the Bible the Word of God?** (13), **Evolution vs. the Bible** (13) including a study of the Genesis Flood, **The Holy Spirit** (13), **The Work and Worship of the Church** (13), and **Raising Children** (4).

15 Princeton Circle, Longmont, CO 80501



FERVENT IN SPIRIT

Evangelism and the Assembly of the Church

Steve Cawthon

ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL FISHERS OF men in our generation was the late Paul Andrews of Tampa, Florida. Brother Paul taught and baptized hundreds of people. I recall vividly a morning when I sat at the kitchen table with him discussing the Lord's work. "One of the greatest tools for evangelism," he told me, "is the assembly of the saints." Like the apostle Paul, brother Andrews was keenly aware of the presence of unbelievers in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:24). They should be given a grand opportunity of seeing Christianity in action as devoted worshippers lift up their voices in praise and thanksgiving. They should be granted the privilege of hearing "the old Jerusalem gospel" presented simply, fervently and kindly. They should be greeted as they enter and invited back as they leave.

Too often we hear of people who visited an assembly where no one even spoke to them. (In all fairness to the churches, however, we must acknowledge that some visitors challenge the world record for the 100-yard dash as they exit the building scarcely before the last "amen" echos from the rafters.)

I shall never forget the admirable attempt to welcome their visitors by a church in New Orleans my wife and I visited a few years ago. We were on our honeymoon and knew nothing of the congregations in that city. Having found in the phone directory the location of a church, we made our way to the meeting house just in time for worship. Upon entering, we discovered that we were the only white folks in the all-black congregation. I explained our situation to the preacher who assured me that we were welcome to stay. "And if anybody tells you you can't stay, just tell me and I'll kick 'em out," he promised. A brother wearing a large "usher" button asked us to fill out a visitor's card, and later in the services he picked it up. Following the sermon, announcements were made. After the usual mention of the sick and other matters of local interest, our brother said, "We are happy to have visiting with us today brother and sister

Steve Cawthon. Will you please stand?" he requested, as though no one had noticed us up to that point. As my new bride and I rose hesitantly from our seat, a roar of applause broke out from the congregation. With greatly restrained smiles, we sat back down. Then, as if that warm welcome were not enough, the preacher shouted out, "They're on their honeymoon!" The congregation responded with even louder applause, laughter, and shouts. After that, the

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only two white faces in the auditorium turned rosy red. Admittedly, such an exuberant welcome would be deemed inappropriate in most of our assemblies. But in spite of the embarrassing shock, we left that congregation knowing that our brethren were glad we came and would welcome us back any time. Such is the message every church should convey to the visitors.

I have appreciated one brother here in Fayetteville who always remembers our visitors when he leads the congregation

in prayer. He expresses thanks to God for those who are visiting, and requests for them the Lord's blessings, and safe travel as they go on their way. How could one possibly manifest any greater interest and love for another than to intercede to God on his behalf?

A word needs to be said about the preaching in the assembly. Indeed, many sermons must be directed to Christians. Exhortations, admonitions, and instructions are all necessary (2 Timothy 3:16). But evangelists should always be aware of the needs of non-Christians as well. At a gospel meeting at Old Wire Rd. in Fayetteville a few months ago, our visiting preacher presented a lesson from the Old Testament. When the assembly dismissed, one black brother bluntly said to the preacher, "That was *almost* a good sermon." When the preacher asked wherein his sermon was lacking he was told, "You didn't tell them how to get in." A good point. Unbelievers need to be told how to get into the right relationship with God—how to "get in" His church.

Another vital, but often neglected, aspect of the assembly as an evangelistic tool is the follow-up. Visitors' cards should be distributed, collected, and used. Several of the ladies in the congregation in Fayetteville write personal notes to our visitors. This is much better than a copied form letter. In addition to the letter, local visitors are personally contacted—especially those who are not members of the Lord's church. They are offered an opportunity to have a series of Bible studies presented in their homes. Chances are good that those who have enough interest in Christ to visit an assembly of His disciples will want to learn more of His will.

While it is true that many, even most, good prospects for the gospel are to be found outside the assembly, churches need to realize that their visitors are often "honest and good hearts" searching for the truth. Let's not ignore this great door of opportunity.

1857 Choctaw Ct., Fayetteville, AR 72701



Convicting the Lost

Sewell Hall

THERE ARE THREE CONVICTIONS WHICH must be formed in the hearts of the lost if they are to be saved: (1) that they are sinners, (2) that righteousness can be attained only through Jesus Christ, and (3) that certain judgment makes righteousness their most urgent quest.

How do we produce these convictions? Undertainty on this point prevents many Christians from attempting personal evangelism. Jesus told the apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to accomplish this task: "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:6-8).

From Pentecost onward, the Holy Spirit was doing what Jesus had promised He would do: convicting the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The result was thousands of converts in just a few days' time. The Spirit did not do His work directly, but through the words of the apostles whom He inspired. We have those same inspired words in the Bible and if we can bring the lost to read them, the Holy Spirit can do His work of convicting today just as He did in the first century. This simplifies our task.

For years we have used charts, filmstrips, printed lessons, etc., extensively. These still have their place, but the fact that most of those we contact know little or nothing of the word of God limits their usefulness. Such people are embarrassed as they fumble through the Bible looking for the verses we cite. Even if we help them find the texts, they know nothing of the context. The end result may be that they know more about baptism than about the crucifixion, and more about the church of Christ than about the person of Christ. Furthermore, the materials we supply form a barrier by making us the teachers and them the students. They also say "denomination" to many who consider them a presentation of a particular "interpretation" of Scripture.

Several years ago, Jerry Earnhart in Switzerland and Glenn Jones in Germany began approaching individuals

who were totally ignorant of the Bible with a proposal that they read together one of the gospels, usually Luke. If interest warranted, they then read through Acts. Brief, carefully planned comments were made along the way, but the emphasis was on reading, following a definite time-table. All along, the student was asked what he perceived the message to be, and often the first-time reader saw the true message with surprising clarity. It should not be surprising that such a

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reading of the gospels produced sufficient faith to cause several to ask the same question asked by those who heard the same gospel in Acts: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

More recently we have heard of others using this method and we are increasingly confident that it is a wise one. It takes a little more time, but it has the advantage of making Jesus the teacher and all who are reading students. It assures that the message is balanced and that the focus is where it belongs. New converts can lead such readings and may

even be more effective than mature Christians who tend to talk too much.

There are many opportunities. Congregations have announced Bible readings on a given night each week and had visitors who would not have come for a sermon. Families have had Bible readings in their homes and invited neighbors who came because they realized their need to know more about Jesus. New converts have been strengthened by mature Christians who read with them each week. Prospects have been converted in this country as well as in Europe.

Linda is a fine example of one who was converted in this way. She had already begun some reading with fellow university students. As she reports it, however, she was knee-deep in outlines and study guides. Mary, a Christian neighbor, proposed that they just read the Bible together. Linda was impressed as Mary held up the Bible and said, "It is all right here between the covers of this book." They read through Mark, pausing only for such discussion as seemed to be necessary. Mary's purpose was not to show how much she knew, but to let the Holy Spirit do His work. Next they read Acts, and when it was finished Linda was ready to be a Christian.

After reading Acts, it is wise to go back for a brief topical study, picking out the verses that tell what sinners must do to be saved and how they worked and worshipped together after they were saved. It is especially important to draw a clear contrast between New Testament teaching and modern teaching on these subjects; between the New Testament church and modern churches. But by this time readers know the context of the passages cited and realize that what they are seeing is not our "interpretation" but Scripture teaching.

There are many people out there who will read with us. If they cannot be convicted by the Spirit's words, they would not be convicted by any other means we might use.

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FERVENT IN SPIRIT

Darrell Hymel

Couples Like Aquila and Priscilla

WHEN CONGREGATIONS GROW IT IS OFTEN the preacher who gets a pat on the back and abundant praise. Paul was certainly successful in spreading the gospel all over the Roman Empire, but he was willing to give credit where credit was due. He wrote to the Romans, "Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who for my life risk their own necks, to whom not only do I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles; greet also the church that is in their house" (Romans 16:3-5). Paul realized that he was not the only one indebted to this couple, but all the churches of the Gentiles. If Paul's successful labors were so dependent on

driven from Rome and having to set up a new home and business, it would not have been convenient for Priscilla to have a permanent guest. But Priscilla, like Mary (Luke 9:38-42), was not distracted by the extra preparations; she wanted the full benefits of sitting at Paul's feet and learning. She and her husband could learn more about God's will in one day making tents with Paul, than going to services for a year. As Paul lived so intimately in their midst, "their hearts burned within them" as they were qualifying for a greater work: "to expound the way of God more perfectly" to others. When Paul headed to Ephesus they went with him and the text appro-

nature and purpose. If the kingdom is to grow today like it did in the first century, more couples are going to have to form spiritual teams that lay down their lives for the brethren. When my wife and I moved to Longmont, Colorado, to begin a new congregation here, we were blessed with two such couples: Mark and Denise Qualls, and Kevin and Toni Pape. Their lives and sacrifices for the kingdom's sake have been an abundant source for thanksgiving to all that are saints in Longmont. As the congregation has steadily grown, other couples have imitated their example.

Ways That Work for Modern-Day Aquila and Priscillas

1. **Use your business to further the kingdom.** Transfer where the kingdom is the weakest. Let the church use your business equipment such as computers. Help find employment for the saints.

2. **Adopt new converts.** Teach them at least one class a week, but also let them see God in your lives at work and play.

3. **Seek proper training.** Prepare for the time when you might be "left behind" like Aquila and Priscilla. You will be responsible to see that the work does not suffer when the preacher leaves. Be able to convert those who are mighty in the Scriptures as was Apollos. Have the ability to recognize false teachers and deal with them. This training will take hours of sitting at "Paul's feet;" don't depend on three hours at the building.

4. **Have an open heart and an open home.** Provide gatherings for the saints both for spiritual and social refreshment. Seek to minister to the teens in a congregation, even when your children are not that age.

5. **Form a husband and wife team.** Teach the pre-school class together; due to divorce and fathers who don't attend, many children never see a spiritual male model at this age. Visit at least one night a week to set up classes or strengthen the weak. Take the whole family to paint a room at the building. Conduct a class in your home together on marriage enrichment, or on raising children.

15 Princeton Circle, Longmont, CO 80501

"If the kingdom is to grow today like it did in the first century, more couples are going to have to form spiritual teams that lay down their lives for the brethren."

this couple, can preachers of the twentieth century do without such couples? This writer has been blessed in his association with many modern-day "Aquila and Priscillas," having discovered that the fruitfulness of any labor in the Lord's vineyard is directly proportional to the number of couples "who will risk their own necks" for the gospel's sake. What can we imitate in this couple's life that will lead to ways that work in our time?

Paul first came in contact with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3). Because they were of the same trade, he lodged and worked with them for about eighteen months while spreading the gospel in Achaia. Having just been

priately says, "he left them" (Acts 18:19). Being now prepared for every good work, they did not shrink back from explaining the truth to Apollos, a preacher mighty in the Scriptures, though in error on some points.

While in Ephesus and again in Rome, a church met in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:5). They were willing to sacrifice their own privacy and personal rights for the salvation of others. They manifested the principle of stewardship before their brethren, showing them that what God has given us is yours. One characteristic of this couple is that their names are always listed together. All that each accomplished was the result of a common spiritual



Setting Up A Home Bible Study

Steve Cawthon

I LIKE MONDAY NIGHTS. THAT'S WHEN MY brother-in-law, Bud Sharp, and I go out and arrange home Bible studies. We try to set up enough classes for everyone in the congregation who wants to teach the gospel.

Many of our contacts have come from the bulk mailings of Sewell Hall's correspondence course, "Jesus, The Way." When the final lesson in that series is returned to the church, the husband and wife who grade the courses give me the prospect's answer sheet. I type the name on a certificate of completion (available at most religious book stores), and we make a personal visit to the prospect's home. Some brethren make an appointment by phone or mail before the personal visit. But the only advance notice we give is in the introductory letter mailed with lesson two. It says, "When you finish the course, you will be given an attractive certificate of completion." For us, this has worked better than making an appointment for a visit.

The best time to make this visit seems to be Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday evening between 6:30 and 8:30. Bud and I nearly scared one poor girl to death by appearing on her doorstep at 10:45 one night. She saw Bud's face and refused to let us in. Since then, we've decided to make our calls before 8:30 and to let Bud stand behind me. We've had much better success with this procedure.

When the prospect comes to the door, we immediately show him his answer sheet, which he recognizes. Since the identity of the congregation has not yet been revealed, most people are eager to find out who has provided the postage-paid course for them. They also seem very pleased to receive the certificate of completion. Some even frame and display them in their homes.

In identifying the church, we try to emphasize that we are simply a non-denominational group of Christians. We are a church of Christ in the biblical sense and are not affiliated with any other church or institution. Many have found this information to be refreshing.

They are tired of institutionalism—including "Church of Christ" institutionalism.

My friend, Skip Sebree, found that in doing personal evangelism in New Jersey, many assumed he was a Jehovah's Witness. He found it necessary to initially tell his prospect, "I am not a Jehovah's Witness," to which one lady responded, "Well, I am!"

After identifying ourselves, we then ask about the correspondence course which was taken. We ask questions like, "How did you enjoy it?", "Did you find it helpful?", and "Was it based entirely on the Bible?" Obviously, these questions are usually answered with some sort of compliment to the study. If the prospect didn't like it, he wouldn't have completed seven lessons. After his evalua-

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tion of the course, we have a natural lead-in to offer the home Bible study.

If the prospect has indicated on the seventh answer sheet of the correspondence course an interest in a home Bible study or another correspondence course, we simply show him what the next study will be. Regardless of the requests, or lack of them, on the final lesson, we go to the prospect with the intention of arranging a home Bible study. "Here's another course I believe you will enjoy," we often begin. Most of the time we proceed to explain the study using a booklet from Jule Miller's "Visualized Bible Study Series." The advantages of using the Miller slides are: (1) They are attractive to the prospect. (2) They are easy to teach. Nearly anyone in the congregation can set up

the equipment, play the cassette tape, and advance the slide projector at the sound of the tone. (3) They are easily adapted for use by the more experienced teacher who wants to present some material of his own. I recommend J. L. Brazell's booklet, "Saving Other Souls," which offers suggestions for adapting the Miller slides to the teacher's personal materials and comments.

While demonstrating the proposed study, we emphasize that each of the five lessons will be completed in about an hour. This is vital. Unless it is at the student's request, the class should end after an hour. If we are arranging a study with a lady, we mention that some of the ladies from the church are available to conduct the class with them if they prefer. Some classes are also expedited by having a baby-sitter available for the children. (We've even had some classes where an armed guard would have been helpful.)

If there is a reluctance to accept the offer, we suggest a "trial lesson." We can show the first lesson and then the prospect can decide whether he wants to continue. It is very rare that anyone will want to stop after seeing lesson one.

It is very important to set the appointment for the first lesson. Suggest a possible time for the class such as, "How would next Tuesday evening from 7:30 to 8:30 suit your schedule?" Do not ask, "Would you like to have the study?" Avoid making the appointment later by phone. We have found that calling a prospect by phone usually results in a cancellation. Do not even call the prospect to confirm the appointment. Just be there on time—and leave on time.

The vast majority of those who complete brother Hall's correspondence course will agree to a home study. If they do not, we offer to enroll them in another course by mail. (We use John Hurt's eight-lesson series for this second course.) At the completion of those lessons, we again return with a certificate and attempt to arrange a personal study.

1857 Choctaw Ct., Fayetteville, AR 72701



FERVENT IN SPIRIT

Darrell Hymel

Advertising That Gets Results

THE TWO-COLUMN, ELEVEN-INCH AD began, "Three families in the Longmont area have fully dedicated themselves to worship and actively work as a congregation according to the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles." Wearing the bold heading, "RELIGIOUS NOTICE," the ad only mentioned the words CHURCH OF CHRIST in the following sentence: "Since God and his Son are owners, we are content to be known as belonging to the church of God or the church of Christ." After giving more teaching on our desire to be "Christians only," information was given on who to contact and an invitation given to join us in our search for truth. This ad appeared in the Longmont Times Call the same week we began a brand new congregation that met in my house. The forty inquiries we received served as motivation to continue advertising this way. No conversions resulted from this original ad, but a newspaper reporter was soon sent out to interview me concerning the new congregation. The resulting article led to four baptisms in the following months.

Since moving our services to an office complex four months after our beginning, we have advertised as "Christians meet at 16 Mountain View." This has proved to be an effective way of erasing preconceived ideas about who we are and what we believe. Instead of "I know what you believe," people ask for an explanation. It has also provoked some critical remarks from brethren in other congregations which shows a very denominational concept of the church. Because we do not always put "Church of Christ" in our ads, one brother accused me of being ashamed of the church of Christ. I wonder if he is ashamed of the church of God because he doesn't use that description? One lady from a church that supports human institutions, trying to persuade another member not to talk to me, said, "He is not even a member of the CHURCH OF CHRIST, he is just a Christian."

We never use the traditional "Gospel Meeting" to advertise services inviting

non-Christians. We advertise controversial subjects with the topic in bold print, a small paragraph describing the content and format, a map, and phone number. We do not use valuable space advertising the speaker's name and hometown, but do let them know of a question-and-answer session after each lesson.

The ad entitled MARY, FACT OR FICTION? got us a call from the Catholic Bishop and a visit from ten Catholics and two other visitors. The question-and-answer session was lively and they held a special mass the following Sunday to counter our influence. The reaction to this sermon, plus ads on other controversial subjects led several

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months later to another interview with the newspaper, front page headlines, and a half-page article and picture. The bold heading, PREACHING ANOTHER JESUS was followed with the invitation "to hear the Jesus of the Bible compared to the Jesus of the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Catholics and Protestants. Three came on a Sunday night and three personal classes were set up. The same lesson was used on the university campus in Boulder and fourteen students came. The same format, but focusing only on the Mormon Jesus, drew about twenty just last week at another university campus in Ft. Collins. The same type of advertising for a

series of meetings in Succasunna, New Jersey, last November saw twenty-five non-members come. The brethren there used the newspaper as well as door-to-door handouts. They now do this with a new topic each month with success.

The church in Longmont prepares a telephone-tape message we advertise as Bible Call. Most ads list the week's topic in bold print to draw attention. The week on TONGUE SPEAKING drew forty calls per day. We alternate the topics between controversial and devotional subjects. With every daily message we offer tracts or correspondence courses and receive many contacts this way. Sometimes we have a one-column ad that lists all the topics for a whole month. Business cards have also been printed for members to use in advertising Bible Call.

A list of newcomers can be obtained from your city (electrical or water hook-up) or a business called Welcome Wagon. We have prepared a folded, 8½" by 14" brochure which gives a brief description of the church, what our services are like, offers printed material, gives contact number, map, and advertises our Bible Call. Sent out monthly to every newcomer, we usually have at least one visitor at our services from this method.

We also make use of free advertising offered as a public service by the newspaper. The church here budgets about \$125 per month for advertising. Longmont is a town of 45,000 with newspaper circulation of 18,000. In larger metro areas the cost would be higher, but so should the results. It must be pointed out that no advertising works unless contacts are followed up with personal attention. I have collected the ads the church has used in the three years it has been in existence. Write me if you would like copies. Please send \$3 to cover the cost of copying and mailing. I would love to hear from you about ways you have found that work. It is my prayer that we all may be "fervent in spirit."

15 Princeton Circle, Longmont, CO 80501

That's Life!



Dee Bowman

AT ASTROWORLD, A FAMOUS AMUSEMENT PARK in Houston, there are clever and strategically placed maps all over the grounds. They are all just alike except for one very important distinction: each of them has a little arrow, each pointing to a different place, which says, "You are here." A sense of direction begins by first knowing where you are. God's word tells where we are in relation to where we ought to be.

* * *

I WAS ENROUTE FROM ATLANTA to Louisville recently. I sat on the airplane by a lovely young lady, perhaps in her mid-thirties. We had talked only a few minutes before she told me of her recent divorce from a Baptist preacher. Then, in what to me seemed like an effort to excuse the lack of success in her marriage, she began to tell how successful she had been. She told me of so much success in such a short time it became obvious that her stories were just an effort to cover her feelings of guilt, fear, and insecurity. Too much emphasis is no emphasis at all. Instead of being impressed, I was sorry for her. Truly, "a prudent man concealeth knowledge; but the heart of the fool proclaimeth foolishness" (Proverbs 12:23).

* * *

IF YOU WANT TO SPEND AN EXCITING HOUR or so sometime, look around where you live and search out some older person and ask to come see them for a while. If you will just ask them some simple questions like "Where are your people from?" or "Have you been a Christian for a long time?" or "Tell me about how things were when you obeyed the gospel," you will stimulate one of the most interesting conversations you've had in a long time. Older people are an untapped resource for encouragement.

* * *

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE. There have always

been, and will always be the Judases, the Demases, the Pilates, and those of the order of Diotrophes. Sadly, they will do their dastardly deeds among us. But thanks be to God, there are always some who want to do right, and who are willing to make whatever changes are necessary to do it. What a joy they are! How about the Sauls, the Corneliuses, the Apolloses, those after the order of the Bereans? What changes God wrought in their lives! Remember, our best work is just to do what we can.

* * *

THE ENGLISH WORD "OPPORTUNITY" was originally a nautical term. It meant "going toward the port." It was said of the wind when it was favorable in the direction of the destination. It still conveys that some concept of a convenient time, or favorable conditions. The Scriptures enjoin that we "redeem the time," another way of saying, be watchful for opportunities. They further require that "as we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men." Opportunities are like cold fronts, they come and they go. We must make the most of them while they are here, because they pass through in a hurry.

* * *

LOVE IS THE DIVINE MUCILAGE. It binds together all that God wants. It is the bond which holds a marriage together, giving it time to grow. It is the adhesive for a good, lasting friendship. It is the tie that binds our hearts in Christian kinship. It unites a man's faith with his actions. It is the bond which connects a man's attitude with the acts of his worship to God. Truly, we should "put on love, which is the bond of perfectness."

* * *

SOME OF THE MOST ENJOYABLE THINGS I'VE DONE have come from my doing things which I at the first didn't want to do.

Principles of Church Growth (II)

Rodney Miller

The second principle of church growth is absolutely vital:

We must be a joyous and happy people!

The Lord did not come to make His disciples a bunch of spiritual "Scrooges"—sour, bitter and irritable. He came "that they may have *my joy* made full in themselves" (John 17:13). A preacher was recently heard to say, "There is no life in me and no life in the church." It was different in the New Testament. The man from Ethiopia went on his way rejoicing. Yet, somewhere along the line we have lost the *joy* of worship! We have also lost the joy of fellowship by becoming such a hostile and argumentative people!

Christianity has about the same effect on many brethren as a bad case of the "flu" does. We come in the door of the building and sit as far toward the back as possible, sing as slowly as possible, go to sleep as soon as possible, and leave as fast as possible. Who do we think we can infect with this kind of "Christianity?" Would that kind of religion attract you if you were looking for help in your daily life? Many of our young people are running for the door as soon as possible because they see that if this is the fruit of their parents' faith, they want no part of it. Christianity ought to produce husbands and wives that love each other and brethren who care for and respect one another. It ought to produce the only people in the world who *can really cope* with society and understand *what is important!* Everyone else, you see, is on the road to a Christ-less eternity, so they really do not have any right to laugh and be happy. We have to show the world that Christianity can make a difference in the way we adjust to life. Instead, we are selling fear, guilt and negativism—and wondering why in the world everyone is not in a rush to buy our product. Look at the book of Philip-
pians, an *epistle of joy* written from the chains of a Roman prison. Still, Paul said, "Finally, brethren, *rejoice* in the Lord." What made New Testament Christianity attractive? Men like Paul

who rejoiced when everyone else was coming apart at the seams!

But how can we have this attitude of joy? I submit to you that we need to preach and talk about the fact that God is *for us* and He *loves us*. We are not a joyful people, in great measure, because we do not see God as a God of love. We picture God as just waiting to zap us down the chute, or that He delights in

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finding out all the flaws in our character.

Isaiah saw something different in the shadows of his prophecy: he saw the servant of God who was to come in love. "Behold my servant . . . He will not cry out or raise his voice . . . A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish" (Isaiah 42:1-4). Consider the promise in this beautiful prophecy. The reed was used

for measuring. It was also cut to a certain size and used to measure that distance. It was much like a yard-stick of today; while it was to measure with, it was also handy for many other purposes. And oftentimes, when being used, it would break. But it was so common that when it broke, it was quickly thrown away. But *not by my Lord! He* would not cast aside a broken reed. To the world it was of no value, but to Him who *loved unconditionally*, it would not be cast aside. The same is true as to the smoking flax. It was a commonly disposable item around their homes. The oil would burn out of the lamp and the flax or wick would smoke and cause irritation to the eyes. When this happened, the owner of the house quickly snuffed out the wick. No so with our Lord! *He cares. He loves. He will bring back life* to that smoking flax!

Isaiah again makes this theme clear to us in Isaiah 40:9 where he says: "*Behold your God!* Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom and He will gently lead the nursing ewes." *Our God is for us!* If we can ever get all our brethren to really *feel His love* for them, they would then become a happy and enthusiastic people. They would then have something to share with a lost world. They would then have something to communicate. All of us are only as smoking flax or a broken reed. We are no better! Yet *He* has unilaterally chosen to love us. He has chosen to love us *without conditions!* All men are loved by *Him*. Therefore, when we feel like a loved people, we will certainly have something to share. Why are the Pentecostals outside telling everybody about their brand of religion? Because they have found something which to them is *special*. What they have found is not doctrinally correct, but they do not let anything influence or change the way they feel about it. Brethren, doctrinally *we have the truth!* Shouldn't we feel better about having the *truth* than our religious friends feel about error?

15 W. Par Street, Orlando, FL 32804

The Psalms in Practice



Brent Lewis

PSALMS SNAPSHOT:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? And who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood, and hath not sworn deceitfully . . . them that seek after him, that seek thy face" (24:3-4,6).

The Man Whom God Will Accept

What kind of man will be acceptable to God? The psalmist gives a concise but comprehensive description of true holiness. Notice the four or five conditions which are requisite to acceptance with God:

1. Abstinence from evil acts. "He that hath clean hands" (verse 4). The Bible places great emphasis on what one does with his hands. "Hands" are a symbol of *work* (Psalm 111:7), and "clean hands" are hands whose work is faithful and thorough (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Our work should be a reflection of an honest and diligent character. Hands are used as a symbol of *earning* and *paying*, getting and giving (Proverbs 10:4); thus "clean hands" are those never defiled by dishonest gain (Isaiah 33:15). Hands were also used as a symbol of *mutual faith and honor* (Genesis 14:22-23); thus, it means untarnished honor and faithfulness (Psalm 15:4). Though Jesus was the only one who was perfect in this (Hebrews 7:26; John 8:46), who truly had "clean hands"—still we must do our best to keep our actions clean and pure. "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

2. Abstinence from evil thoughts. "He that hath . . . a pure heart" (verse 4). The man whom God will accept

must be as good inwardly as he seems to be outwardly. The heart is the source of all evil (Matthew 15:19-20). Harsh, unkind words and wicked acts spring from an impure heart. So, here is the need for inward holiness—right motives, feelings, aims. The world often concerns itself more with conduct than with motives—but God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). God even accepts the things we do not actually accomplish, as long as the motivation is right (1 Kings 8:17-18; Hebrews 11:17 and Genesis 22:16). On the other hand, the holiest service with an impure motive is distasteful to God (Proverbs 21:27; 1 Samuel 15:22-23). If we would keep "clean hands," then we must pray David's prayer: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10).

3. Abstinence from evil affections. "Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity [falsehood, ASV]" (verse 4). This man does not spend his time pursuing vain or untrue things—those which have only a show, but no substance. Materialism is a constant threat to the man who would please God. But the one whom God will accept is not inordinately inclined toward the wealth of the world, the delights of the eye, or the praise of men. He sees these things as both uncertain and unsatisfying.

4. He remembers the vows made to God and man. "And hath not sworn deceitfully" (verse 4). He has not broken his promise, violated his covenants, nor taken any false oath. Those who have no regard for truth and no resolve of commitment are unfit for a place in God's holy hill.

5. He is a praying man. "That seek[s] thy face" (verse 6). This man is greatly concerned about God's favor and the doing of His will. He approaches Him often (Luke 18:1; 1 Peter 3:12).

What a beautiful portrait of the man whom God will accept! Let us each strive to be the kind of person described by the psalmist here and resolve to put "the Psalms in practice" in our daily lives.

This article is taken from *The Psalms in Practice* (Vol. 1), an adult Bible class study book to be published by the author in 1985.

Babes Brought to Maturity: A Vital Work

Tommy Poarch

We are thankful for the renewed interest among many saints in personal evangelism. The work that is being done is a source of encouragement to those who learn of it and are motivated to take like action. Ways that work need to be shared and applied. We have concluded that most methods work when applied by faithful people. The key is that faithful people are working.

a proper environment to live in, he will most likely turn out "bad." The same result can be expected in the spiritual realm.

Some excuse their lack of evangelical fervor by asking: "We know they are baptizing a lot of people, but how many are still faithful?" The answer for churches failing to train and nurture babes to full maturity in Christ is not to

whom Thou hast given Me I lost not one' " (John 6:39; 18:9). Jesus' followers were taught to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*" (Matthew 28:19-20).

What Do Babes in Christ Need?

1. Babes need food in order that they may grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mature saints should immediately set up a class with the new convert. They might begin with a weekly showing of the filmstrip series, "Now That I Am A Christian." Each week, different saints should be invited to join in this class so that the new convert will make needed ties with other Christians. After this series, it is good to continue a weekly class having a mature Christian help the new convert prepare for Bible classes. Babes need help in learning to wear the clothes of righteousness and humility (Isaiah 61:10; 1 Peter 5:5). They need someone to teach them and *show* them the way of righteousness.

2. Babes need time to grow, for it takes time to grow and mature in Christ (see Hebrews 5:12). Adults are patient and charitable with children, knowing that they will make childish mistakes in their journey to maturity. Likewise, babes in Christ do not possess the minds of mature Christians, and therefore, they will make immature judgments. They need love, patience, instruction and time.

3. Babes need a good environment for proper growth. They need new companions and friends. Evil companionships will destroy them (1 Corinthians 15:33). Will you be a true friend and help them?

We do want to keep stressing our need to seek and save the lost—we must not fail in this task. However, bringing one to Christ is the beginning, not the end. Are we properly loving and caring for the babes in Christ? We must develop ways that work if we are going to do the work of God.

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"As we appropriately rush headlong into the work of teaching the lost, one warning needs to be sounded—the work is not over when one is baptized. God refers to a conversion as a new birth. In the physical realm we understand that one's work is not over when a child is born—the work truly has just begun."

As we appropriately rush headlong into the work of teaching the lost, one warning needs to be sounded—the work is not over when one is baptized. God refers to a conversion as a new birth. In the physical realm, we understand that one's work is not over when a child is born—the work truly has just begun. If a child does not get proper training and

curtail their efforts in teaching the lost, but to fortify their efforts in training the saved.

Jesus keenly felt the God-given responsibility of training His disciples. "And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing . . . that the word might be fulfilled which He spoke, 'Of those



The Sermon on the Mount

"Whosoever hateth his brother . . ."

This section of the sermon (Matthew 5:21-48) begins with a consideration of how the kingdom citizen is to deal with his own inclination to evil, and then closes (verses 38-48) with a study of how he is to meet evil in others.

There is in these passages the description of a radical kind of love. If it startles us who stand this side of the cross, what a jolt it must have given those who first heard it *before* the unthinkable events of Calvary. Though only anticipated in Jesus' summit address, it seems evident that God's radical love for men in Christ was to be the indispensable foundation for such a holy and selfless devotion to others. Like the woman whose prodigal expression of love for Jesus shocked the Lord's Pharisee host (Luke 7:36-50), we love much because we have been forgiven much. God's radical love for us releases within us a radical capacity for good will toward others. And the nature of that love, like our Lord's, is to be sacrificial (Matthew 16:24-25). As Jesus emptied Himself for our sakes so must we empty ourselves for the sake of others (Philippians 2:1-8).

But why all these specifics? Why not issue the simple instruction to love one's neighbor as oneself and be done with it? It is because we are all so lacking in understanding of our own best interests and, consequently, those of others. A drunkard, practicing "neighbor love," might give his fellow sot another drink of whiskey. Thomas Harris raises this problem rather lefthandedly in his book, *I'm O.K., You're O.K.*: "The Golden Rule is not an adequate guide, not because the ideal is wrong, but because most people do not have enough data about what they want for themselves, or why they want it." The missing data is provided in the teachings of Christ and His apostles. Their instructions fill out the practical details of what it means to love God and to work for the real best interests of other people. This information does not arise from our own unguided wishes or judgments as Harris and situation ethics suggest, but from God's divine wisdom. It cannot be otherwise. From our very restricted human point of view we cannot possibly know all the implications of our behavior even when well intended. God informs and guides our love with His moral instruction. As John observes: "Hereby we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and do his commandments" (1 John 5:2).

The Pharisees were always inclined to lower the moral and spiritual level of the law and increase the ceremonial demand. Jesus begins this section with a perfect example of Pharasaic reductionism. "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not

kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment" (5:21). The troublesome thing about these citations is that they at times seem to be exact quotations of the law. "Thou shalt not kill" is straight out of Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17. The "judgment" of the second citation refers to the local council or court, and although the citation is not an exact quotation of the law it accurately reflects the words of Numbers 35:30-31. And yet in the hands of the Pharisees these were not the law but ideas lifted from the law and perverted. The concern of the establishment hacks was that no one should commit an act which brought down a civil penalty. The only crimes which disturbed their conscience were those which could be treated by human tribunals. They were deeply disturbed by murder, but hatred and malice caused them no serious consternation. However abusive their ways toward others, as long as there was no blood-guiltiness they felt themselves righteous before the law.

Jesus' response (5:22) accommodates itself to their fixation with civil penalties. The truth is, He says, that the man who harbors a loveless anger against his brother is in danger of the local court. John later reflected this concept in His memorable statement, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15).

Having addressed the problem of the heart Jesus extends His application to the tongue. Not only do bitter feelings put one in jeopardy but so also does the contemptuous abuse they are disposed to foster. How many hearts have been brutalized by words that cut like rapiers. At times murder would be more humane than these verbal atrocities! We lash out at people in utter scorn and leave them, as we intended, broken. For this, the Lord warned, you will be "in danger of the council" (a likely reference to the Sanhedrin) or, more to the point, "the hell of fire." It is evident that the Lord's use of "judgment" and "council" here are accommodative. Civil courts cannot treat of wicked thoughts, but the tribunal to which Jesus refers can cast the offender into hell (Matthew 10:28).

Our youthful reaction to this teaching disposed us to call a man anything but sensible but to avoid calling him a "fool" at all costs. ("Raca" gave us no problem since we didn't know what it meant anyway.) The Pharisees would have loved this interpretation!

The problem of murder must be dealt with at the fountainhead—both heart and tongue, as well as hand, must be cleansed of hatred's brutality. The law taught this (Leviticus 19:17) but the Pharisees in their great sweat to obtain cheap righteousness managed to overlook it. The Lord does not intend that we shall.

Peace in the Church

Rod Boston

The little church where a dear friend of mine worships has divided over whether or not the Holy Spirit dwells in God's people personally. There is not another church within a sixty-mile radius of this one, and I would guess there are 100,000 people living within driving distance of the meeting place.

Until the division, many class periods had included confrontation and argument of one kind or another. The preacher had presented a series of lessons on the Holy Spirit, and the lessons seemed biblically based and well-researched. The next time the preacher was to be out of town one of the men eagerly volunteered to preach. His subject? Let it suffice to say that he preached an opposing position to what the preacher had presented on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He was known to hold the position, and he had talked to others about it, but until now his efforts of getting people to "see the light" hadn't picked up much steam.

I have often thought of the frustration and helplessness my dear friend must feel in witnessing such goings on. I pray for her strength and the strength of the church there. I believe her to be a credit to what a Christian must be in such adversity.

It is a well accepted fact among brethren that people will lose their souls because of believing false doctrine, and that a defense of the truth is our obligation. I certainly would not speak to the contrary. However, setting doctrinal issues aside for a moment, it is also true that people will jeopardize their souls in ways they might not expect during the heat of an "issue."

Many of the divisions I have heard about in conservative churches cannot be separated from personality clashes, power struggles, personal pride, underhanded tactics, and matters of opinion. Purity of doctrine is the banner plea, but to watch the fight, and the results, you would soon lose sight of the "noble" cause. The source of true doctrine has never been impure. It is man that must remain pure, and that is done through love for God, His will, and, lest we forget, a genuine love for His people

(1 Peter 1:22). I have become more keenly aware of John's demand on us when he wrote "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). This truth is to regulate all that I do, even when I feel obligated to expose false doctrine (Philippians 2:3). A battle against error is an honorable fight but the cry of "false doctrine" can also be a rallying ground for the prideful, the impetuous, the power hungry, and the foolish.

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Churches that are busy in evangelism rarely seem to be plagued by constant internal strife. When a church neglects its work and focuses attention inward it almost always ends in some kind of devouring of one another. Congregations with nonexistent or inept leadership are very susceptible to this kind of trouble. Churches without elders must lay ground rules. The public worship and classes cannot be open forums for everybody to air their peculiarities. For a church to be about its business brethren must agree that priority

demands that the average of four hours per week they spend in collective worship must emphasize edification and spiritual growth. God's people are likened unto a family, an army, and a body—a local church has its hands full simply striving to have the care, the closeness, and the unity those pictures demand.

I've seen more harm done over a wrangle between two people in an auditorium class than all the good you could hope to do in the same amount of time. I've seen what happens to churches on a steady diet of friction. Paul wrote that God's people are to walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:1-3). With that attitude even disagreements can be handled properly and the church can be the gathering of God's people where one can go and be encouraged and strengthened.

Serious doctrinal disagreement cannot always be avoided, and at times division is exactly what is needed. We must remember, however, that how a man behaves and what motivates his perceived defense of the truth will have as much bearing as his doctrinal accuracy on whether he stands ashamed or in confidence before the throne of God. There will always be those who seem to have reduced the gospel to one or two "key" doctrines. The quibbler, the quarreler, the false teacher, and the proud but ignorant, rarely see themselves as such, but spiritual people must be equipped to spot them; and he who thinks he is wise needs to think twice (James 3:13-14). It is a sad day for the weak and misguided who are led afar off by false teachers, but there is a stricter judgment reserved for us who would be teachers and yet fail to accept the accompanying responsibilities of study, humility, and love for others (James 3:1). It is difficult to believe that in the midst of all the turmoil some churches are having there are good brethren who "hate evil and do good" as well as "seek peace and pursue it" (1 Peter 3:11).

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An Open Letter to Subscribers: Plans for 1985

The editors of *Christianity Magazine* met recently and decided to commit ourselves to publishing the paper for another year. We have been encouraged by the enthusiastic support we have received from those who have subscribed to the magazine. We believe it is doing good and for that reason we have determined to continue another year.

The progress of the paper has been good, if not spectacular. We expect to end 1984 with a subscription list of about 4,000. That number has continued to grow each month and we are hopeful that the growth will continue.

The growth of *Christianity Magazine* has not been sufficient, however, to make the paper financially solvent. All of those involved in the magazine have given freely of their time; in addition a sizable cash subsidy has been required. The editors greatly appreciate the assistance of those people who have contributed articles and other work to help us get started.

We solicit your help in 1985. We cannot continue to publish the magazine indefinitely unless we secure sufficient subscriptions to pay its publication costs. Here are some ways you can help:

1. Resubscribe. Many of your subscriptions will be due for renewal near the first of the year. We need your prompt attention to renewal. When billed, you will notice that the price for 1985 has been raised to \$15 per year. We feel that the higher price is realistic and it is essential for our survival.

2. Gift Subscriptions. Nearly twenty-five percent of the present subscriptions to *Christianity Magazine* were presented as gifts. We hope that many of you will resubscribe for those receiving the gifts (if they will not do so themselves) and that you will consider giving it to others. *All gift subscriptions will remain at the price of \$10 per year.* After your initial subscription you may send as many as you wish for \$10. If you wish, we will notify them of your gift by sending an attractive presentation card.

3. Church Bundles. We are also providing a number of churches with bundles of the magazine to be distributed to all members. These are sent directly to their homes. A number of individuals have chosen to do this, too. You may send 25 subs for only \$18.75 per month (this is the cheapest way possible to subscribe). If you would like to know more about the bundle rates, see page 3 and/or contact Bob Hardage at business office address and phone on that page.

4. New Subscribers. We have not reached many of the Christians who we believe need to be reading the upbuilding material we are publishing. Many have not heard of the magazine. You are our best avenue to those people. We need your help in reaching them. *Tell a friend they need Christianity Magazine!*

We will keep you informed about our progress and we are looking forward to having you aboard in 1985.

The Editors

P. S. Please let us know your change of address well in advance of your move. It is very costly and time-consuming for us when you do not do this. We will appreciate your help.

Reflections on Life

Wilson Adams

"It is better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart" (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

I was extremely apprehensive about the trip, being uncertain of the reaction that the young man would have. We were going to the Wall—the 494-foot V-shaped wall containing the names of the 58,000 American servicemen killed in Vietnam. I had been there before. However, this visit was special, for out of those 58,000 names so carefully chiseled in the polished granite one name, to this young person at least, would be more memorable than all the others—the name of his dad. It was his first trip to the Wall.

We parked our car just a few feet from the Potomac River. As an Eastern jet thundered directly overhead I pointed out the 14th Street Bridge and the approximate place where several people lost their lives in an air disaster just two years prior. We walked on, briefly turning our attention to the home of Robert E. Lee which gracefully sits atop a hill overlooking Arlington Cemetery, as we continued toward the Lincoln Memorial. There we paused momentarily, commemorating the great achievements of our 16th President who succeeded in piecing together the broken fragments of our once shattered nation. And there, just a few hundred yards to the northeast was the Memorial Wall.

I went on ahead as my friend lingered behind to find the name from the alphabetized directory. I searched until there on panel 25E, line 104 was found the reason for our trip. As he approached I wondered about his thoughts and reactions. I have seen both young and old lean against the giant wall and weep in uncontrollable sobs. I have read notes of affection scribbled by a young wife and left attached to the name of a dead husband. I have observed fellows in their forties wearing worn out fatigues staring teary-eyed as they thought about a buddy, a friend, a name on the wall. So naturally I

Sometimes I get too busy. Do you have that problem?

watched with emotion as he drew near and as I pointed out the name that meant everything to him.

This is not a political statement nor is it intended to be a reflection of my own feelings toward the Vietnam campaign. Rather, it is a simple statement about life and how we often take it for granted. At least I know I sometimes do.

Sometimes I get real busy, in fact, too busy. Do you have that problem? I'm often so engrossed in my daily labors (which never seem to be finished) that I don't have time to "stop and smell the roses," to enjoy the good things of God and to take into account the many and varied blessings that He has so graciously bestowed upon me. That's too busy.

Folks, there never was anybody any busier than Jesus. There never was anybody sent on a more important mission than was He. There never was anyone who had more to do in less time than the Master. Yet, how many times did our Lord take the time to bend down and talk with the little ones, thus showing His affection for children? Once he even rebuked His followers for implying that the youngsters were burdensome, by saying, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). And obviously Jesus enjoyed the scenery of nature that He Himself had created. He often would leave the urban city centers and the crowds that were constantly pressing near to Him, hoping to see another miracle or possibly hear another grand declaration of truth from the lips of the Master Teacher, and escape for a few hours of quiet solitude on the Sea or in the mountains where He could be alone with the Father. He never got too busy to do that. And . . . He never was so overly preoccupied that He didn't have time for His friends. The hours our

Lord spent at Bethany with good friends and good food must have been some of the richest in His short stay here below. Little things meant a lot to Jesus. He took nothing for granted. What a lesson for us.

Solomon well said, "Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting; to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward" (Ecclesiastes 5:18). Solomon's advice is to never become so busy that we haven't the time to enjoy the good things in life. "Count your many blessings . . . name them one by one." Try sometime to catalogue your blessings. Such is but an exercise in futility, an impossible task—for God has given us so much. Just the blessing of life itself—of being alive, of living, of being created in His image and in possession of an eternal soul that will live on when this body wears out is an immeasurable gift. Let us never become so busy that we take life for granted or fail in our appreciation by not living life to the fullest. And may we always be aware of the fact that the quality life, the rich life, the abundant life begins with Jesus Christ.

I watched as he approached. He stared silently at the name, savoring the moment and reflecting upon that which he only knows. And, then, a smile broke through—a smile of pride for a father he barely remembered and a good feeling of honor for a man his country appreciated. We took a few pictures, then turned and walked away.

As we walked along in silence I couldn't help but think about the blessing and opportunities that God has so bountifully bestowed upon me and to reflect momentarily that as great as it is to live here—much more advantageous and enjoyable it will be to live with Him in the hereafter. I hope and pray that I never get too busy in living that I forget what life is all about. I'm trying hard not to. That day helped.

6434 Auburn Ave., Riverdale, MD 20737
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Lights in the World

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE



Sewell Hall

Harris J. Dark

Can an intellectual, highly educated mathematics professor in a state university maintain a child-like faith in God and in the Bible as God's infallibly inspired word? Anyone who knew Harris Dark would have to answer, "Yes!"

Dark's credentials as an educator were unquestionable. His record as a student seeking his doctorate was outstanding. He served as head of the Mathematics Department at David Lipscomb College in the 1950's and at Middle Tennessee State in the 60's. Many former students credit him with the math foundation upon which their successful careers in various fields have been built.

During the same years, the name of Harris J. Dark was widely known among churches of Christ. He preached for some of the largest churches in the Nashville area. His Chapel Avenue sermons were printed for distribution and many were reprinted as tracts for wider circulation. He was in demand for gospel meetings across the nation.

Why would such a man want to preach? His success as an educator would have been more than enough to satisfy his modest ego. He certainly did not preach for money. The fact is that his faith simply would not keep silent. With Paul and with the ancient prophet he could say, "I believed, and therefore I have spoken" (2 Corinthians 4:13).

To a man of faith, every phase of life is service to God. This man of faith believed that a study of mathematics improved his ability to reason and, therefore, his ability to arrive at truth. By teaching math he was teaching skills which would enable others to do the same. He sometimes startled classes by introducing long, involved mathematical calculations demonstrating the probability of God and the improbability of the spontaneous generation of life. He also viewed teaching as a means of support for preaching in places he could not otherwise have gone, and as a source of funds with which he could help others who were preaching in such places.

The summer of 1959 was one which could have been filled with meetings among large well-paying churches. Instead, he spent it preaching to very small groups in homes and rented halls in remote parts of Australia. The result of that summer's work was that three congrega-

tions were reclaimed from the Association/instrumental music digression, one new congregation was begun and a young man converted who has become a most outstanding evangelist in that country.

Recently, Joel Dark said of his father, "Dad sought for truth; and he didn't care where he found it." Many can attest to the accuracy of that statement. It can be added that when he found the truth, he did not care where it placed him. He came to be considered a part of "a sect . . . everywhere spoken against," associated with often poor and less educated people whom the world would call his inferiors. To him, they were his brothers if they had fellowship with him in truth.

This search for truth was evident in his preaching. Unlike the child who finds the answer in the back of the book and figures how to get to it, Dark, like the professor that he was, took the facts given in Scripture and by carefully measured steps of logic pursued his conclusion, confident that it would be a correct one—indeed, the only correct one. This made for memorable preaching. Especially unforgettable is a sermon in which he very logically and impassionately arrived at the conclusion that a widely publicized project of the church for which he was preaching was unscriptural.

Suffering a cerebral hemorrhage in early 1968, just before retirement, brother Dark began a long decline in mental and physical health which terminated in his death September 20th of this year. With declining health came diminishing influence. His excellent book of sermons, *God Hath Spoken*, was sold out long ago, and only a few of the effective tracts he wrote are still obtainable. Many younger Christians do not know his name.

But Harris Dark will not be dead as long as many of us live. He will live on in us, not because he planned it that way but because he did *not* plan it that way. His is the influence of one who was not so concerned about what people would think of him in the future as about what he was in the present. It is the influence of one who was more involved in building a character than in building an image. This is the kind of influence that endures. His name may have been "Dark," but for a long time to come he will live on as a light in the world.



Rear Views



Ed Harrell

On Human Vanity

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud" (Proverbs 16:18-19). No greater disaster can overtake one than to become enamored by his trivial accomplishments. Whatever one achieves in life, it separates him but little from the rest of humanity. I have only to glance about to see those who excel me in countless skills and graces.

Among the many personal experiences which have taught me a measure of humility was an encounter Deedie and I had in Europe a few years ago. I had been invited to deliver a paper before the International Conference of the Historical Sciences in Bucharest, Romania. Though I have been

around professors long enough to be aware that there is much fraud about, I confess that the conference was a heady honor and I might have been tempted to take myself too seriously.

We decided to fly to Paris and drive from there to Bucharest. That probably was a mistake. By the time I got to Yugoslavia I not only did not know where I was, I could not say where I was (Kragujevac). Lost on a country road, I spotted two old farmers standing nearby. It seemed unlikely that they would be able to tell me anything, but I decided to stop and ask directions. Opening my window I asked, "Do you speak English?" They consulted one another and then one of them asked me if I spoke German. "No," I replied. The other asked if I spoke French. "No," I replied. They then

asked me if I spoke Romanian, or Italian, or Greek. Finally, I turned to Deedie and said, "If these guys keep asking questions, we're all going to figure out who is the ignoramus in this crowd." They finally resorted to sign language to get me back on the road.

Most human presumptions of superiority are so superficial. Brilliance, skill, and beauty are all judged on such subjective standards. Farmers are often smarter than professors—sometimes they are even more learned. But the real lesson is that no man should "think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried."

—G. K. Chesterton

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