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THE

Preacher's

MAGAZINE

HELPING
CONGREGANTS AFTER A
DISASTER

HELPING CHILDREN
COPE WITH THE
REALITY OF DEATH

THE MINISTRY OF
BEING THERE

BACK FROM OBLIVION



THE PERSONAL TOUCH
OF PASTORAL CARE

*God's Work
Done in God's
Way Will Never
Lack God's
Supply.*

*J. Hudson Taylor
(1832-1905)*

The Refreshing Spirit of Encouragement

by Randal E. Denny

Spokane, Wash.

Unlike some professions, pastors remain on call 24 hours a day. Most of us have been jarred awake in the middle of the night to face emergencies with our parishioners. We wouldn't want it any other way. The Lord we serve has grace to fit every crisis. He has commissioned us with the privilege of standing in for Him when people suffer distress, illness, and bereavement.

Summoned into some situations, I have felt unsure about what to say, or what to do, or what to expect. However, in the worst of those times, God enabled me to bring encouragement and hope. The Lord set me free when He taught me the invaluable lesson that just being there and caring for people was a ministry He could use.

Pastoral care, with all of its facets, calls for a "general practitioner" with a person-to-person ministry. In an age of specialization, people still need pastors with a compassionate common touch.

Writing to the Corinthian church, Paul referred to three persons of whom he exclaimed, "They refreshed my spirit" (1 Cor. 16:18). In his last letter, Paul expressed gratitude to Onesiphorus "because he often refreshed me" (2 Tim. 1:16).

The "refreshing spirit of encouragement" shines more brightly from the receiving end. In fact, having been refreshed by the pastoral care from others has served to make me more effective as a pastor.

My first memory of pastoral care focuses on Orville Jenkins, our minister. Though I was only a second grader, my pastor stood beside my bed as I recovered from an emergency surgery. From then on, I always felt he loved me.

Early in my ministry, on the day I received bad news of my father's stroke, my district superintendent,

E. L. Cornelison, came to my home. After sharing my sorrow and uncertainties, he prayed for me and my family. Being there when I needed him, he refreshed my spirit.

During my tenure as senior pastor at Los Angeles First Church of the Nazarene, I ended up in the hospital. My own associate, Victor Peters, ministered to me faithfully. He told me that my presence at church was missed and that he loved me. He read a few reassuring verses of Scripture and prayed for my recovery—and left in less than five minutes. Dr. Peters was a master at refreshing my spirit.

Passing through a career crisis 10 years ago, my wife and I had nowhere to go. After my resignation, we faced an uncertain future. However, our spirits were refreshed by ministerial friends who cared about us. Bill Draper, the late president of Point Loma Nazarene College, gave us a safe retreat and his personal attention. Respected pastor Maurice Hall prayed with us over the phone long-distance. General Superintendents William Greathouse and Jerald Johnson offered encouragement and support by phone and in person. In our lonely time of transition, fellow pastor Jack Eyestone spent time with us and encouraged us in the Lord. Forrest Stone turned his pulpit over to me for a month—I suspect more for my benefit than anyone else's. We felt the safety net of pastoral care, the refreshing spirit of encouragement.

As the black clouds of death gathered around my parents' home in Fresno, John Payton and Doug Samples moved beyond friendship and ministered to my family and me. In those days of bereavement, I received from them words of our hope in Christ, words of confidence in God's heaven, and words of strength to face life's changes.

From the receiving end of pastoral care, I have realized what a profound difference it makes. One no longer feels so alone in crisis. Reminders of truths one already knows helps to keep a balanced view of life and beyond. The Bible reassures, "For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Cor. 4:17-18).

I am a better pastor today for having received the touch of loving hands. I know better how to listen and reflect the emotions of hurting people. I know much more eloquently the supporting role of just being there when needed. I am far more sensitive to the high privilege of representing Jesus. Where human words fall short, I am more confident in sharing the Word of God—it's always the right word at the right time. From my pastoral friends who were there when I needed them, I have learned to be more lavish in expressing my love.

It is my prayer that our parishioners could say of you and me, "He often refreshed me."



If you have any questions or comments regarding the *Preacher's Magazine*, you may reach assistant editor Cindy Osso on Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M. Pacific time at 509-226-3177.

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Randal E. Denny

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Breaking Free:



The Adult Child's Codependency Problem

by Charles M. Sell
Deerfield, Ill.

I can never forgive him; he is the most insensitive person you will ever meet. He doesn't care about me." Louise was telling about her father. "After what he's done to me, I don't care if I ever see him again."

As her counselor, I was trying to piece these words with the rest of Louise's puzzling situation. She was unhappy, very depressed, and her marriage was in trouble. She constantly criticized her husband and was afraid she would lose her temper and hurt her baby girl. Could Louise's hatred for her father be spilling into her marriage like boiling water on someone's skin? Was she scorching her husband with her angry outbursts because of the wrath she felt for her father? Would her depression never go away until her anger did?

Many counselors would call Louise a "codependent," an adult child who grew up in a troubled home from which she never properly disengaged herself.

"Differentiation" refers to the task of making a healthy break from your parents after you've grown up. Grown children must attain some freedom in three ways: financially, functionally, and emotionally. It involves making enough money to

care for yourself without your parents' help. It also means being able to make decisions and solve problems without always asking Mom and Dad. You can ask for advice, but you don't burden them with your problems—or blame them for your mistakes. The emotional ties seem to be more difficult to sever. There are people who live 2,000 miles from home and make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, yet are still disastrously shackled to their parents emotionally. They are most likely to be from a dysfunctional home.

Codependency of Anger

Oftentimes, the emotion that ties us to our parents is anger. We can be so absorbed in our bitterness toward them that we can't take charge of our own lives. They made us victims. By dwelling on that, we make ourselves victims.

Codependency of Love

Emotions other than anger can keep us needlessly bound to our parents: love, pity, concern, and anxiety.

After reading my book *Unfinished Business*, a 27-year-old woman, Betty, called to ask me if I thought she was suffering from codependency. "My mother has been ill since I was a child," she explained. "After my father divorced my mother, I have cared for my mother and young brother up to the present time. My Christian friends are always commending me for being such a loyal daughter. However, I wonder if I am really doing too much for my mother and my brother. My mother seldom

allows me to leave her alone. Whenever I go out in the evening with my boyfriend, she tells me to have a good time, but she makes it clear that I should hurry back and that she will be miserable until I do. While I am out of the house, I constantly feel guilty and worry about Mom. My boyfriend, whom I would someday like to marry, thinks I am too concerned about my mother. My brother is also part of the problem. Reacting to my mother's sickness just the opposite of me, he never lifts a hand to help at home. Though he is now 22 years old, I still clean his room. If I were to stop, he would really be mad at me." Then she asked: "Do you think I am codependent?"

Betty's family is dysfunctional. Even though her mother's illness is legitimate, the way the family has handled it is not. Some parents don't want to push their children out of the nest. They depend too much on their children and make their children depend too much on them. These families don't draw normal boundaries around each other. They draw a line around the whole family and want to draw everyone into it. Individual interests, goals, and identities are somewhat denied in order to keep the system functioning around the dominating problem—an illness, anger, abuse, alcoholism, work, or a legalistic practice of religion. Members are not entirely free to be themselves: Their identities are blurred into the family circle. They are either ruled by it or rebel from it. Either way, they have a hard time being themselves.

It doesn't take much imagination to see how hard it might be to ex-



tract oneself from a dysfunctional family. Because these families are chained together around some dominant problem, there is a tendency to hang on to one another or escape from one another in unhealthy ways.

Lack of detachment shows up in our group every time we meet. "My dad called me last night and complained how Mom is such a problem to him. Yet, he's the alcoholic. I feel so depressed that I can hardly keep up with my classes." "I worry all the time about whether or not my father will hurt my mother." The strong

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Dysfunctional families don't draw normal boundaries around each other.

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emotional ties may continue to make adult children feel responsible for the welfare of their parents and siblings long into adulthood. This unhealthy attachment can interfere with their own marriages, disrupt their personal pursuits, and wreak havoc on their emotions.

Ways to Escape

There are some ways out of the codependency trap.

Deal with your feelings toward them. In his helpful book *Making Peace with Your Parents*, Harold H. Bloomfield calls this distorted picture of a parent an "inner parent." He claims, "The first step in making peace with your parents is to make peace with your inner parents."¹

Counselors often suggest several practical techniques to deal with inner resentment.

1. Make an inventory of your resentments. This suggestion may look strange to some adult children who know full well why they are angry with their parents. But, sometimes bitterness is an emotional blur, and the reasons for our animosity lie below the surface of our consciousness. This undefined emotional blob becomes a monster invading other areas of our lives. We become resentful of life itself and even bitter toward God.

Each day for a week or two write down your specific complaints, including details and incidents.

Let any feelings come up, and do not be afraid to cry. The resentments have been stored for a long time; releasing them may bring up feelings of anger, hurt, or loss. The list should not be shown to your parents. Sometime you'll want to talk about these issues if you've never done so. Getting some of the edge off your anger may enable you to do it in a way that helps rather than just hurts. A good guideline for confronting others is "Say what you mean, but don't say it mean."

2. Visualize your parents and have an imaginary conversation with them. This next technique is especially helpful for those who can't talk to their parents about their hurts.

3. Write a letter to them, expressing your feelings. Be careful how you handle the strong feelings that result from these techniques. You may want to pound a pillow or even scream; it's important to let go of feelings you have, but don't try to generate more. Voicing your feelings to God will help you deal with them.

Drawing New Boundaries

The codependent's problem is one of boundaries. To be separate from your parents, you must develop your own identity apart from them. You do not continue to feel about yourself the way you feel about them. You must not feel that they have to get their act together before you can feel right about yourself. You can become obsessed with solving someone else's problem because it has become your problem. Your nervous system is plugged into that person's actions. He stubs his toe and you say, "Ouch." Dad drinks and you feel guilty. Mom and Dad fight and you get depressed. Often, your pain is greater than theirs. Codependents permit themselves to become victims of someone else's problems. They get nothing but frustration from trying to solve someone else's problems in order to feel better about themselves.

This leads to the major reason why we should not be needlessly attached to our parents: it does them no good. A Christian view of love

can be summed up in the phrase: "Doing what is best for the other's highest good." Being a codependent falls short of that definition; not only is he not doing what is best for the one loved, but he fails himself as well. As long as you are willing to take their problem, they won't own it themselves. As long as you protect them from the consequences, they won't feel the results of their wrongdoing.

The Bible says: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Yet, a few sentences later it warns: "Each one shall bear his own load" (v. 5, NASB). The different Greek words used for "burdens" and "load" explain the difference. "Burdens" are like rocks too heavy for one person to handle. At times, troubles are such that we need others to help by giving us a lift. The "load" is like a backpack, representing what we ourselves are personally responsible for carrying. When we take someone's assigned backpack, we rob them of the opportunity to solve their own problem and make their own lives.

Detaching

To get out of this codependency trap, you have to become detached from your parents. You must signal to them that you will no longer bear

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There are ways out of the codependency trap.

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their problem. This is not the same as abandoning them or denouncing them. Usually codependents fluctuate from being overly kind to being overly angry. One day we protect, help, forgive, and utter kind, soothing words of comfort. "It's OK; I'm here; I'll take care of you." Then, we get disgusted and we threaten, blame, and attack. "This is the last time I'll help you; don't bother me with your problems." Detachment means you must first emotionally cut the tie between their problems

and your welfare. You must surrender the enormous need you have for them to be straightened out.

You must change your thinking: you must come to believe that your life doesn't depend on solving your parents' problems. You must get rid of the notion that they must be "OK" before you feel "OK." You will no longer tie your welfare to the outcome of their lives. Once that is done, you will communicate that to them. Actually, you won't even have to tell them; they will see it in your attitude and actions.

If your parents are very dependent on you, they will accuse you of being unconcerned and unloving. They may even suggest that you are betraying them. You will have to remember that they are threatened when you refuse to show the same kind of intense care because they will have to care for themselves. If you aren't worried anymore, they will have to worry. You'll have to say things that support them but don't substitute for them. "I know you can handle it," instead of, "When I get home I'll take care of it." "I know you'll find a way out," instead of, "I'll think about it and call you back with some advice." "I feel great about what's happening in my life; sorry you are having such difficulty," instead of, "I really feel crushed that

A codependent must become detached from his parents.

this is going on with you." Once you really get emotionally detached, it will show.

You must also get practically detached! This means refusing to do for them what they should be doing for themselves, which includes not protecting them from the results of their bad behavior. A biblical proverb makes it very clear that we must allow people to learn from the consequences of their own mistakes: "A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again" (Prov. 19:19).

The offender will have to hit bottom so hard he is jolted into admitting he has a problem. Not only will you have to stop bailing out the parent with the problem, but you will have to stop helping the other parent bail him or her out.

Being Healthily Concerned, Not Worried Sick

When detached, we can still be concerned. Love is costly; we cannot love someone who hurts without ourselves hurting. But, concern is different from the codependent's obsessive anxiety. The Bible charges: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil. 4:6). Replace any obsessive, anxious attempts to rescue or change your families with intelligent actions. There may be things you can do to assist them in facing their problem instead of solving it for them. Along with praying for them, we can try to teach them about dysfunctional families. Read about your family's particular problem. Talk about the problem with any family member that will listen. Break the dysfunctional rule of not talking. Discuss the cover-up. Change the way you act in the family. Be prepared to be attacked. The first member of a dysfunctional family to see through the deception is usually in for it. The system's strong denial is tough to break through.

You may take steps to protect brothers and sisters. You can do for them what you wish others would have done for you. If they are young children, talk to them about their feelings. Find out how they are handling the abuse or the alcoholism. In the case of abuse, you may have to consult a social worker who can take professional action. You must resist the temptation to continue protecting the offender, but rather do something for those whom he or she is hurting.

Being Adult to Adult

The best thing you can do for yourself and your parents is to try to establish an adult-to-adult relationship with them. The dysfunctional family will try to keep you in the child-parent relationship. "I hate to go home because, when I do, my mom treats me as if I am nine years

old. The problem is that I respond to her as if I am nine." Home brings out the child in you that has to grow up. You must not wait to grow up until Mom stops treating you like a nine-year-old. You have to stop responding like one.


In an adult-to-adult relationship, each person permits the other to be himself. Dysfunctional families typically won't allow their members to "live and let live." Instead, they criticize and give advice in an attempt to control.

One adult child told us about the

Replace obsessive attempts to rescue your family with intelligent action.

good progress he was making in breaking free from this control. "My mother has made me so angry. She calls almost every morning at 8 A.M. She does this on Saturday despite the fact that she knows I want to sleep in. Now, instead of just getting upset, I have told her not to call Saturday morning. I'm not sure she will listen to me, but it has made me feel better to be assertive instead of angry."

Facing Your Loss

Some adult children are still tied to their parents by their feelings of regret. They still yearn for the approval, acceptance, and care they needed from their parents but never got. If their parents are living, they keep hoping for more from them. If the parents are dead, they can't accept the fact that they never will get from them what they wanted. Breaking from codependency requires being brutally frank with ourselves and accepting the fact that we may never have the parenting we longed for. We must throw off our past losses and get on with today. 

1. Harold Bemenloombfield, *Making Peace with Your Parents* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1983), 30.

Based on Charles M. Sell's book *Unfinished Business: Helping Adult Children Resolve Their Past* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah Press, 1989).



Back from Oblivion

by Karen Miller

Father, what do I have to look forward to in this marriage 20 or 30 years down the road? Please, I need to know—"

Suddenly her prayer was interrupted by the slamming of the door as her husband stomped angrily into the kitchen, screaming at her for playing the radio too loudly. What was wrong with her? He was working on the roof—didn't she care about his safety? How could she have heard him if he had needed help?

"Oh," he screamed, "you think you're so perfect, don't you!"

She stared at him, too stunned to say anything. What she saw terrified her even more than the disjointed insults he had just hurled at her. His face was contorted—evil; the veins in his neck protruded and pulsed violently.

She felt her danger. He stood between her and the door, and she wasn't even near a window where she could cry out for help. But know-

ing better than to move, she stood silently rooted to the spot.

Like so many times before, an hour passed before he calmed down. But during that hour she reached a decision that had been more than six years in the making. While he was screaming at her—after the initial terror had worn off—she was declaring in her heart, "You cannot touch me anymore; it is over."

Other than a slap on one occasion, he had never used physical force against her. But like 25 percent of the women within the Christian church at large, she was a victim of domestic violence.

Not Only Physical Abuse

Domestic violence usually takes one of the following forms:

1. *Physical abuse*—the husband actually assaults his wife by punching, slapping, or beating her, throwing things at her, stabbing her, or in some other way inflicting physical injury on her.

2. *Destruction of pets and/or property*—the husband beats or kills his wife's animals, damages her car, or interferes with her attempts to better herself through education by destroying her learning tools such as her books and research work.

3. *Sexual assault*—this form includes the husband forcing his wife into sexual situations against her will.

4. *Psychological abuse*—by constant subtle insults and insinuations, by cutting remarks and rude behavior, or by violent threats and gestures, the husband demoralizes and degrades his wife.

Why do I care about spouse abuse?

The answer is simple—I was the woman trapped in that kitchen.

One night a few weeks after we were married, my husband went into a rage and committed a violent act that all but destroyed my self-respect and my respect for him. I cried myself to sleep that night because I knew I could not walk away. I had nowhere to go; he hadn't actually hit me, and my parents had said I was welcome back home only if he beat me. Besides, I did not want to admit failure so soon after the wedding. But during the oppressive darkness of that night I realized I was locked in a prison, and the horror of what had happened threw me headlong into the deep, slimy well of oblivion that so many women silently occupy.

Like most abused women, I had no job and no access to money. Since my husband took care of all our financial matters, he did not find it necessary to allow me even to sign checks. This kind of control played its role in keeping me demoralized and utterly dependent.

It was not until I stumbled into a job that eventually led me into the field of my training and choice that the slow process of my recovery began. However, even with a job I was not comfortable about building friendships. I was afraid my husband would view them as a threat, and things would become worse, rather than better, at home.

Yet through all of this, I did not see myself as an abused woman. I simply felt that I was doing something wrong, that somehow I was not good enough. I felt that this was

God's way of punishing me for going ahead with a marriage of which I felt He disapproved. If He had given me this burden to carry, who was I to complain? I would go on in silence.

Over a period of several years God was able to reach down through my confusion and open my eyes to the greatness of His love. With this insight came the realization that fear is foreign to His nature. At this point my chains nearly broke, and I nearly walked away. But my husband threatened to kill himself, and the assurance from our counselor that he was serious blocked my move.

Abuse exists within the church.

Two years later, on a night just before he was to return from a business trip, I considered ending my own life. How could I possibly go on with such oppressive darkness crushing me? But instead we went for more counseling and had a few months of relative peace. Then came the screaming tirade that fell like an ax on the remains of our marriage. Two days later I moved out of the bedroom. In order to keep up a front to the community and because I was still on a very limited income, we simply occupied different parts of the house. But to me the marriage was over six hellish years after it had begun.

It has been well established that abuse follows a cycle. The first stage is the honeymoon period. This is a time when everything is wonderful. He may treat her like a queen, bring her flowers, take her out to eat—do all the things they did while they were dating. It is this side of her husband that keeps her from leaving.

Tension marks the second stage. He starts getting irritable. She soon learns to watch her step very carefully. She makes sure that the kids are outside or in their rooms when he comes home. She fixes all his favorite foods. Still, she knows that the explosion is coming, and her only hope is that this time it will be a minor one.

Clergy Can Help

As a member of the clergy, what can you do when confronted with the broken remains of a marriage caught in the stranglehold of abuse? The answer is not a simple one; it will never be cut and dried. But the first step that you must take is the simplest: admit that abuse exists within your church.

Domestic violence knows no bounds. It has infected every walk of life. Every religion has members who abuse and are abused. Every culture, every economic level, every vocation—including the clergy—participates in this evil.

For very obvious reasons, women who are victims of abuse soon learn to distrust others. People have hurt them, men in particular. Imagine how dark your future would appear if one minute someone loved you tenderly and the next that same person threw you violently to the floor and kicked you. Among women, about 25 percent of suicide attempts result from domestic violence.

Often, however, an abused woman will allow herself to trust the person who stands before her each week telling her of God's gracious love. If a woman comes to you claiming to be abused, listen to her. She needs someone who will understand her and pray with her. Remember that you may be her last hope.

Do not second-guess her. Do not condemn her to her marriage by threatening to remove her name from the church books if she leaves her husband. And don't challenge her to "love him back." She is probably so drained of love that there is simply nothing left to love with. Instead, over a period of time, encourage her to forgive him.

Remember, we are in a sinful world. Satan will do anything to destroy, and even if he does not manage to destroy her body, through her husband he may be able to do the one thing that we must all fear—he may be able to destroy her mind and soul.

At this point, as a member of the clergy, you should not be so concerned about saving the marriage as about salvaging the soul. Yet it is not your job to condemn the marriage, either. You must allow her to make that painful decision on her own,

but she must know that you support her.

The typical abused woman is not the type who easily gives up hope on another person. Though deep in her heart she is probably aware that he is not likely to change, she is forever believing that if she stays just a little longer, he will. Yet if he does decide to change, it is not she who will change him. It will usually require his firm decision, outside counseling—and God's help.

Often, the mere fact that she does not leave encourages her husband to continue his progressively more violent cycle of abuse. Since he knows she will not leave, why should he change? Abuse has become such a part of him that it takes a major shock before he will admit his problem. Often only the shock of her walking out the door is sufficient to awaken him.

Abused women are amazingly tough. To survive, they have to be. But they are also extremely dependent women—everything they have comes from their husbands. I often thought, What would I do if I left? Of course, that question reveals that I

Don't challenge her to love him back. Probably there is simply nothing to love with.

had forgotten God's promise to take care of me. When I did leave, God provided.

Don't Be a Hero

Remember, as the term *domestic violence* implies, *violence* is what you are dealing with. Don't try to be a hero. Approximately 25 percent of the law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty were killed while dealing with domestic violence. So be mindful that abuse can be deadly.*

You should become familiar with the social services available in your area. Find out what help is available

to women who are abused, and learn what the criminal penalties are for the abuser. Seek out groups that meet to help abusive men and find out if they have a training program in which you can learn how to handle domestic violence within your church.

Let these social services know that you are interested in helping where you can. I often hear the social service agencies asking, "Where are the clergy? We have their wounded, and we feel that if they knew about abuse, they could handle these Christian women much better than we can."

Some victims of domestic violence cannot escape the memory of what has happened to them. But others totally deny that the assaults have taken place. Such denial will never allow them to make the changes they must to end the abuse. Abused women must come to face the reality of what is happening to them and of the damage they are suffering.

If an abused woman who comes to you feels the need of repeating again and again the stories of the assaults against her, let her do so. This telling will help her get what has happened out in the open and will help her face reality. It will also help her ventilate the anger of being hurt so deeply by the one she loves.

Encourage her to attend a support group for battered women. These meetings will help her to recognize that she is not alone, that there are others who understand the pain she experienced.

One major point you must understand is that the battered woman must lead a double life just to survive. She must stand straight and smile in public, while in private she is forced to bow down and cry. She will find it very difficult to reverse this so that she can stand straight before her husband without fear while allowing herself to admit to those around her what has happened. However, if she can talk to other women who have been battered and have broken the cycle, she may be able to summon the courage to stand up and take whatever action must be taken. At this point you can best help her by supporting her and encouraging her to move forward carefully.

Phone Number for Help

For women who live in rural areas, reaching out for help has been even more difficult simply because any phone calls they made searching for help usually were toll calls. This in turn meant that when the phone bill came, the woman making such a call would have to explain to her spouse why she had made a long-distance call and to whom she had talked.

However, on October 1, 1987, Johnson and Johnson Company funded and cosponsored with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence the first nationwide 24-hour toll-free hotline. Trained personnel who offer counsel, understanding, and referrals to shelters in the victim's area staff this hotline. Calls made there will remain confidential and will not appear on the phone bill at the end of the month.

Among women, about 25 percent of suicide attempts result from domestic violence.

This number, 1-800-333-SAFE, will no doubt prove to be a lifesaver for millions of women.

It takes courage for a battered woman to come into your office and ask for help. It took me six years to call my pastor. Then, even though he is probably one of the kindest people I know, I was still frightened when I walked into his office and sat down. I was terrified that he would tell me that somehow I had to make my marriage work.

But instead of condemning me, he listened. He asked questions when he did not understand something. Then when I looked up and saw tears in his eyes, I knew my fears of condemnation were groundless. The comfort that the feeling of being valued as a person gave me is beyond words.

Just before I left his office, he asked to pray with me. We knelt to-


gether, and while he prayed, I soaked the carpet with my tears. He was the first counselor who had prayed with me since the nightmare had begun. Down deep inside I sensed that this horrible chapter in my life would soon end.

When a battered woman comes into your office, listen to her. Let her cry. Support her and pray with her. Never ask her what she did to upset her husband—doing so will only confirm her in her belief that his actions are her fault.

Over the long term, dealing with her fear and anger will give her more trouble than anything else she will have to face during her recovery. Encourage her to send up little emergency prayers when she feels herself being engulfed by either of these.

Encourage her to become involved in the church, and encourage other women in the church to include her in their activities. She will probably be a little shy at first, but once she knows she is welcome, wanted, and valued, she will be able to gain new strength and confidence from her friends.

An abused woman grows and heals slowly. The wounds that she has received are deep, and the scars will remain for years. You must not let her become totally dependent upon you. But if you let her know that you care and that you believe in her, you will probably see her slowly and painfully extract herself from the abusive situation and become a new person.

Above all, do not condemn her. Allow her to come back from oblivion. 

"Some people wonder why a woman would turn on someone who has come to her rescue. Bizarre as it may seem, it is simply one of her defenses. She fears that later, when her husband gets her away from the scene of the crime, he will beat or belittle her even worse because she did not come to his rescue and save him from embarrassment."

(Karen Miller is a pseudonym.)

RECOMMENDED READING:

Holly Wagner Green. *Turning Fear to Hope*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984. Presents a Christian perspective on how to deal with an abusive marriage.

Theresa Saldana. *Beyond Survival*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986. Addresses the emotional trauma and the process of healing that victims of violent crimes go through on their way to recovery.

Daniel Jay Sonkin and Michael Murphy. *Learning to Live Without Violence*. San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1982. Presents steps people can take to break the cycle of violence.

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The Great Need of the Urban Church

by Neil Hightower

Calgary, Alta.

The great need of the urban church is to be a "safe place."

A "safe place" does not imply an easy place or a comfortable zone. But it does involve being a sheltering place in the time of storm, as the prophet Isaiah saw it in Isa. 4:6.

Understanding the multiple needs of urban congregations, this conclusion grows out of a ministry spent, for the most part, in urban settings and from observations flowing out of many conversations with pastors and laymen in urban environments.

In the initial generations of the holiness movement, being a "safe place" would not have defined our urban church needs. But, in this era, when we have again turned to planting churches in the cities, this seems to be a primary need. Urban life is so complex, so fast-paced, so multi-cultured, so intimidating at many levels, that the need for a "safe place" cries out unconsciously from the hearts of many urban dwellers.

Though percolating in my mind for several years, this concept came to fruition as I read the book section of the November 1990 issue of the (Canadian) *Reader's Digest*. Titled "Not like the Other Kids," it has a summarizing excerpt from the book by Mary MacCracken, *Turnabout Children*. It vividly describes the life pathos and the great possibilities inherent in many learning disabled children. This warm and moving book depicts her observations as a special tutor for this class of students.

The final conclusion, which Mrs. MacCracken draws from her experi-

ence, is that these children need a "safe place" in their homes and schools if they are to blossom to their potential. She identifies the qualities of a safe place:

1. *Kindness*. "In a safe place people are kind." Rudeness and backbiting are not appropriate here. "Kindness, consideration, and forgiveness are the usual way of life."

2. *Laughter*. "In a safe place there is laughter . . . real laughter that comes from sharing meaningful work and play."

3. *Rules*. "In a safe place there are rules." These are simple and few and fair. They "are made by the people who live and work there, including the children."

4. *Listening*. "In a safe place people listen to one another. They care about one another, and they show that they do."

From my perspective, these qualities also define the kind of church our urban areas need. In the article, a question is asked that is profoundly applicable to our churches: "Which of us doesn't need a safe place somewhere in our lives?" Which of us hasn't gone searching for it if we haven't found it in our homes or schools?

The pressure of daily rush-hour traffic, by car or public transportation, is enough to heighten the urban dweller's feeling of intimidation and to place one's feelings upon the banana peel of depressing fatigue. Standing morning and evening holding tightly to a handrail, trying to protect one's toes from being trampled by the ever-swelling press of people, is not cause for "hallelujahs!" The hassle of paperwork and decision making and accurate planning in the midst of declining, sometimes volatile economic

conditions is sufficient to pile on the heavy weight of fatigue.

Wrestling with fear of the impact of godless, drug-infested, and sex-oriented school environments is sufficient to heighten the tension that parents feel. Getting children off to school and meeting the colliding scheduling demands is enough to drive mothers up the wall. Balancing the demands of work requirements with family needs by working parents or single parents feeds mounting tension. At the same time, constant vigilance and determination is called for to combat the threatened inundation of spiritual goals by a materialistic and self-centered social environment. This often leads to family tension.


No wonder the need for a safe place in our churches suggests itself as an absolutely urgent need. Urban worshippers on Sunday and at all church gatherings need a place to catch their spiritual breath. Worship ought to be a time when pastors lead people to a quiet citadel of strength.

The church as a "safe place" recognizes the great nurturing task of the church. This is not to sidetrack the other call of the church, evangelism. However, our evangelism will not be effective where people have not previously discovered the church as a safe place. This "safe place" cannot be perceived as a smooth, head-counting operation.

Small-group gatherings of church life—Sunday School, nurture groups, youth societies, missionary chapters, and others—must be oriented to nurturing. Our churches must be characterized by kindness; laughter, rules, and listening. Without this primary atmosphere, the nerve for reaching out will be cut, and the enthusiasm to risk for God will die.

Says Mrs. MacCracken, "I believe that we must explore and dare and discover. But we also need to know that there is a safe place where we can find comfort, courage, and confidence to conquer our feelings of inadequacy . . . and failure so that we can go out and risk again." That is an apt description of the need of urban churches.

Christ's Great Commission to "go" must be balanced by His other call, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, RSV).

Effective urban churches will understand and heed that balance. 



Keep the Lambs Close

by Arthur L. Rouleau
Garden Grove, Calif.



For the first few weeks of their lives the lambs must be kept close to the ewes because they are learning to follow and they will follow anything.

"He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom."—Isa. 40:11, KJV

Lambing was over. Spring was a promise in the air. A shearing tent had been erected at the sheep company's main camp in the hills east of Taft, Calif. A system of chutes led from the pens of woolly creatures, waiting to be stripped of their winter coats, to the tent.

During the day it was a bedlam of activity. Dogs barked, men shouted, and sheep vocalized their protests. Shepherds herded sheep from the pens to the narrowing chutes. Dogs leaped over fences into the chutes, joining in the frenzy, to help drive the animals or turn around ewes disinclined to be driven toward the shearers.

After shearing, the sheep were released from the narrow pen beside the tent into another chute where they were marked, then moved into larger, fenced areas or to pasture in the distant hills.

The shearers were an ethnic, age, and cultural mixture. One, a friendly, well-educated New Zealander, was shearing his way around the world. Others turned away from strangers or vanished when a camera was used.

A few words from an old, experienced sheepman, working in this scene, taught me a dramatic lesson.

The sheepman was in the chute leading to the tent, marking the ears

of certain selected sheep. I watched for a few minutes, then struck up a conversation with him. At his ranch in southern Utah, he breeds sheep to upgrade flocks of other sheepmen in the West.

The large fenced area on the other side of the chute contained some ewes that had lambed late. I called his attention to them and mentioned that often, when I was in the pens with new lambs, one or more would try to follow me.

He studied those sheep and their little ones before responding. Then he made a significant statement I will never forget.

"You know," he said, "shepherds have to keep the lambs close to the ewes for the first two to five weeks. During that time they are learning to follow. And they will follow anything that moves—a tumbleweed, dog, coyote, or man."

How like sheep we are! "Keep the lambs close."

The considerable loss of new Christians from the walk of faith is often due to a lack of shepherding by pastor, church leader, or mature fellow Christian. By whatever name we choose to call it, we must keep them close and nurture them in Christian fellowship.

It is not enough simply to lead a babe in Christ through a form of

church indoctrination by catechism, pastor's class, or other methods. Often, after teaching and prescribed steps are taken, there is a waning of concern, a loosening of the reins.

They are lambs, however old or young their chronological age. They have a new, young love. If they are being shepherded by a loving, mature Christian, they feel loved as well as fed. Love responds to love, though sometimes with awkward steps. For a lengthy period of time they need help because "they are learning to follow."

Watch the ewe with the lamb. She teaches that energetic sprite with long legs and slight, woolly body by example and by the use of assertive action.

The new lamb stays close to the warmth of the ewe in the cold, new world, particularly in the beginning. Then it becomes more adventurous

(Continued on page 15)





Doorbell Theology

by J. Phillip Johnson

Tulsa, Okla.

Ring-g-g! Ring-g-g!

"I hope nobody's home! I hope, I hope, I hope!" Those words by the comic salesman Elmer Blurp, on old-time radio, always brought a laugh. But when a pastor says that under his breath as he stands at the door of a parishioner, it is no laughing matter.

Pastoral visitation may be called "doorbell theology," though today one is more likely to hear a gong or musical chimes playing anything from "Dixie" to "Amazing Grace." In many places the practice of pastoral calling has, unfortunately, gone the way of the old-fashioned doorbell. The complaint one hears most often from church members is, "Our pastor is a good preacher, but he doesn't visit."

Surely it is an apocryphal story, but one churchgoer tells about getting this message on a pastor's answering machine: "The parson you have reached is not in service at this time. But don't worry! Read Rom. 8:28 and call me in the morning. This is a recording."

Most pastors admit that routine visitation is the most difficult, discouraging, and in some ways dangerous task they have to perform! By "routine" we mean, not the requested calls in times of crises—like sickness, death, domestic problems, etc.—but the regular, systematic visitation of all the members of the church.

If you find yourself diffident about calling on your members, be comforted, you are not alone. Reinhold Niebuhr confessed that as a young pastor in Detroit he usually walked past a house two or three times before he summoned the courage to go in. After he had made a call, he would find



some excuse to quit for the afternoon—to regain his self-respect.

Methodist Bishop Gerald Kennedy wrote, "I learned something about pastoral calling in that first parish, which was that I did not like to do it. One of the hardest things of my ministry has been making calls on people, and I do not know why it is. But to ring a doorbell has taken more courage at times than proposing to my wife. . . . It is a good thing to learn that some things have to be done whether you like to do them or not."¹

Doorbell theology, like all good theology, is built on the firm foundations of the Scriptures, tradition, and experience.

Biblical Background

God thundered to the spiritual leaders of ancient Israel, "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! . . . Ye . . . have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings" (Jer. 23:1-2, KJV).

The Hebrew word for pastor is *ra'ah*, translated "shepherd" in the NIV. The only time "pastor" is found in the New Testament is in Eph. 4:11, where the Greek word is *poimen*, which also means "shepherd." How meaningful, then, are Paul's words to the overseers of the church at Ephesus. He had set an example of going "from house to house" (Acts 20:20). Now he charges, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (v. 28).

In this apostolic pattern they seemed to be deliberately following the example of our great Pastor-Shepherd, Jesus, who visited people individually, even in their homes (Matt. 26:6; Luke 7:36-50; 10:38-42; 14:1-24; John 2:1-2).

Professor Thomas C. Oden of Drew Theological School has pointed out,

The pastoral office is by definition a shepherding task that involves not just a single meeting with the flock, but continuing oversight and feeding. The analogy suggests a deeply involved relationship. It requires vigilance, constancy, at times "watching through the night," and above all, a caring heart.²

Historical Highlights

Traditionally, successful ministers have been those who were faithful to visit their people. Chaucer, in *The Canterbury Tales*, writes of "the Parson":

*His cure was wide, with houses far asunder;
But never did he fail, in rain or thunder,
In sickness and in mischance, to visit all,
The furthest in his parish, great or small.*³

The writings of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and Asbury leave no doubt that they were models in pastoral care and demanded the same of their followers.

Pastors of some of the world's greatest churches found time to make parish calls. Phillips Brooks, one of America's most illustrious preachers, was rector of Trinity Church, Boston, for many years. Though he had a large membership, he "spent his forenoons in study and his afternoons in the homes of his parishioners."⁴ [Editorial note: In today's society it is very difficult to find anyone at home in the afternoons.]

Alexander Whyte of St. Andrews, Scotland, was a great pulpiteer. His church officials made it clear that they did not expect him to make calls, yet he gave himself painstakingly to pastoral visitation.

When Henry Sloane Coffin was minister of the famed Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City, he went to his people's homes, calling them all by name. A thousand calls a year was his minimum! His successor, Dr. George A. Buttrick, said to a group of preachers, "You can never build up a strong congregation solely by preaching. You must go to the people yourself. You build up a spiritual church by wearing out shoe leather and automobile tires."⁵

This tradition is faithfully carried on by many successful pastors today. Rev. Lyle W. Curtis, pastor of First Church of the Nazarene in Tulsa, Okla., says, "I believe that pastoral calling is an essential part of pastoral care. I strive to be in every home in my church at least once a year. There must be personal contact in order to provide proper pastoral care."

Visitation Values

In spite of scriptural admonitions and examples given, you may still be asking, "But why visit? Is it really profitable?" Consider these principal benefits of pastoral visitation.

The shepherd will get to know his sheep. In their home you will learn things about their needs, their hurts, and their hungers that you will never learn at a public service. Not only will you know how to better minister to them, but also you will know how to more effectively pray for them.

The sheep will get to know their shepherd. They will be more apt to want to attend worship services and hear you preach. It's an old but true saying, "When we go, they come." There's another old saying, "If the preacher is invisible all week, he will be incomprehensible on Sunday!"

Visitation often provides vital homiletic material. The needs the people reveal and the questions they ask will kindle a fire in your heart. Catherine Marshall wrote, "Most of the time Peter got his ideas for sermons from life, from the needs of the people on Main Street as he uncovered them through . . . pastoral visits."⁶ This doesn't mean you will betray their confidences or "use them as an illustration." "A minister's breast should be like the old lion's den in the fable, into which

many strange things were seen to enter, but out of which none ever returned."⁷

Practical Pointers

Pastors often say, "I don't have time to visit," or "My congregation is too large for me to make calls." The late great Theodore L. Cuyler answered, "The excuse that is sometimes made that a congregation is *too large* for any man's oversight is absurd. All things are possible to the faithful man who understands the value of time, and is a miser of the minutes."⁸

It is a matter of priorities. We do what we feel is really important. A foursome of preachers was on the golf course. One was playing especially badly. His partner said, "He must be keeping up his pastoral work. His game is lousy!"

Nazarene educator Richard Shelley Taylor wrote, in *The Disciplined Life*, "[A] truly disciplined character has the ability to subordinate the lesser to the greater. Here is the problem of priorities—probably the most crucial problem of life. On its solution hangs success or failure, improvement or degeneration."⁹

The solution to the problem is to have some sort of system for visiting. Here are some simple suggestions on how to set up a visitation program and make calls.

Divide your parish or city into geographical categories, and then visit a different day in each one, possibly in alphabetical order so that it will not look like you are showing preference.

Announce from the pulpit what you are doing. Some send a card or have the secretary make a phone call so that the member will expect you. Your plan to visit in a certain area might be published in the weekly bulletin.

When you enter a home, be friendly but not frivolous. It is not primarily a social call or a business call. You are there as a physician of souls. Turn the conversation to spiritual matters as soon as possible.

The call doesn't have to be lengthy. Some pastors stay only 15 or 20 minutes unless there is a special need. But don't give the impression you are in a hurry and that you are only calling perfunctorily to discharge a duty.

Close the visit with prayer unless there is a good reason not to do so. Read a suitable, short passage of Scripture.

It is very effective to follow up the call with a brief message in the form of a letter or card.

Keep records. A chronological record in a datebook will let you know how many calls you have made in a month. It might motivate you to set a goal or to give yourself a "par" of 50 to 70 calls a month! On a card bearing the member's name, address, and other personal data, make a note of the date and nature of the call. It will be helpful to you in the future.

J. M. Barrie, in his classic, *The Little Minister*, portrays the old, retiring minister, after he has walked about for the last time in his parish, as noting that there was scarcely a house where he had not visited and prayed. Then he has him speak these meaningful words to his young successor: "Ah, sir, these are the scenes that make the minister more than all his sermons. You must join the family, Mr. Dishart, or you are only a minister once a week. And remember this, if your call is from above, it is a call to stay."¹⁰

Recover the ministry of pastoral visitation, for which there is no substitute. Practice "doorbell theology." As Peter wrote, "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; . . . And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 Pet. 5:2, 4).

1. Gerald Kennedy, *While I'm on My Feet* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1963), 60.

2. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1983), 171.

3. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (ca. 1386-90, interlinear trans. by V. Hopper, Brooklyn: Barrons, 1949), 41.

4. Eugene D. Dolloff, *The Romance of Doorbells* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1951), 51-52.

5. *Ibid.*, 26.

6. Catherine Marshall, *A Man Called Peter* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1951), 206.

7. William Meade, *Lectures on the Pastoral Office* (New York: Stanford and Swords, 1849), 185.

8. Theodore L. Cuyler, *How to Be a Pastor* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co., 1890), quoted by David M. Dawson, Jr., *More Power to the Preacher* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 45.

9. Richard Shelley Taylor, *The Disciplined Life* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1962), 35.

10. J. M. Barrie, *The Little Minister* (Chicago: M. A. Donahue and Co., n.d.), 21.

The Ministry of Being There

by J. Grant Swank, Jr.
Windham, Maine



In the late 1960s, my wife had to go to Mayo Clinic for extensive tests. We were young and idealistic. We were not about to bow to sickness, let alone death. Nevertheless, the weights of pain hung around our necks.

One afternoon at the clinic when light poured upon houses outside, darkness stole over me. My wife was having scans.

I wandered out of the antiseptic environs to a nearby sanctuary. In the cool shadows of the Prayer House, I bent my tired body over the back of a pew and began to cry.

In time my vision focused on the cross. Then I heard a movement behind me. Cautiously, I turned around. I made out the form of a small man seated in the back of the church. Around his neck was a white collar. Having seen him, I relaxed and twisted my body once more in the direction of the cross above the altar.

A certain peace took control of me. The bones in my neck and back rested, and my breathing steadied. The cold aloneness gave way to a blanket of warmth.



What made the change? The realization that I was not forsaken. Someone else was with me. Though to me he has remained anonymous till this day, yet he ministered by simply being there.

My wife and I left the clinic for Boston, where she later had brain surgery. Today, she is in good health. I measure part of my good health of soul to that instrument of the Lord who was seated there in the sanctuary when I was in desperate longing for sanctuary. He helped me carry the load.

Individuals often gauge their so-called success by standards that are simply inadequate, incomplete. Only God can finally bring together all that is done for the Kingdom. Charts, graphs, and annual statistics simply do not suffice. One ministry they cannot calculate is that of "being there."

I was reminded of this reality again the other day.

Several years ago, two young fellows from a nearby college would call me at the parsonage phone. They would not identify themselves because they wanted to share their problems with another human without the dread of their confidence being broken. I accepted their terms of communication. We formed a bond that permitted in-depth analysis, scrutiny, and caring.

Call after call would come to my home from these students in their early 20s.

After a while I lost contact with

these men. The calls came to me no longer. I surmised that I had done all I could for them, and they carried on with life in some other channels.

The other evening, however, Mark phoned again. I recognized him immediately. We chatted briefly, catching up on what had happened to each of us in the intervening years.

Then, the truth came to me again. He wanted me to be there, for he had some desperate items on his mind once more.

"Say, remember my roommate?" he asked.

"Sure," I replied. His roommate was the other caller.

"He has had some real problems lately. In fact, since I last talked with you, he suffered a nervous breakdown."

The details spilled forth.

"Why don't you suggest that he call me again?" I said. It was only about three minutes till Jack was on the phone, calling me from out of state.

Around 11 P.M., I had finished with these two fellows; but it was after midnight before I got to sleep because a sense of contentment pervaded my soul. Why was I feeling so good inside?

It was because I had helped two persons in the evening hours. I did not know their names or addresses. I had never seen their faces.

But I thanked God for a special chance to minister to others by simply being there.

How to Make Effective Hospital Calls

by Montford L. Neal

Bristow, Okla.

Hospital calling is an ongoing experience in the life of the pastor. One of the most important pastoral ministries is effective care giving to those persons needing help during a time of sickness. It is important to take careful consideration in making those visits as vital and effective as possible. Listed below are some helpful hints.

Simplicity

Having a workable plan is vital. Often this includes the need and urgency of the patient. The most critical are given top priority. However, in large hospitals it is often necessary to follow a systematic sequence of room numbers and make sensible

use of time. Also, keep the format simple so that you capitalize on making the most of the call. Get to the visit in a winsome, yet urgent manner.

Sensitivity

Pray that you will be able to identify the mood or feeling of the patient. Be open to other factors such as hospital personnel, family members, and the general welfare of the patient. The Holy Spirit will provide you with able assistance during times of great stress and acute circumstances.

Supportive

Your call is basically to strengthen


and support the patient as his pastor. You represent one of the largest caregiving institutions in the world, God's Church! Your comments should be seasoned with the Holy Bible and thoughtful expressions of faith-building love and consideration.

Spiritual

Every person needs spiritual assistance. Patients are especially conducive to spiritual guidance. Allow them to express their concerns. One approach is to ask them what they want you to pray about. Often it is not for their health, but for someone or something that concerns them at the time. Spiritual alertness is a key in visitation.

Short

A southern Indiana hospital has on its elevators a simple message: "PLEASE MAKE VISITS 15 MINUTES OR LESS!" Ministers are very busy persons. Time with the patient is quality time. Brief calls are more appreciated than staying too long. Polished etiquette will serve the pastor well.

Hospital calling is here to stay. Ministers face a new day of medical care: outpatients, new surgeries, new techniques, counseling rooms, various types of waiting rooms, specialized medicines making it necessary to go to even more hospitals, and other stresses. Professional care giving with strong convictions about spiritual matters make a good marriage for today's minister. 

Keep the Lambs Close *(Continued from page 11)*

as it adds days. With the ewe, it learns to eat the grass, drink the water, lick the salt lick, and respond to the herding of the shepherd and the sheepdogs.

If the lamb wanders, the ewe bleats caution to her lamb to return. When the lamb doesn't heed her call, she leaves even the most succulent grasses and attempts to nose the wandering one back to the safety of the flock. She may return to her browsing still bleating. If her lamb doesn't follow, she will try again, or the shepherd will notice and take action. And it is a good thing, because:


"For the first two to five weeks . . . they will follow anything."

The glow and enthusiasm of new Christians stir the heart as they tell how the Good Shepherd saved them. They bring an infusion of fresh energy to a body of believers. Without shepherding, that glow may dim and their enthusiasm lapse into indifference. Then the crushing news is

heard that they have drifted back into their former life.

How could they? New Christians do not mature by glow and enthusiasm alone. Shepherding can come from any mature Christian, not only from the pastor, elder, deacon, or teacher.

New members and babes in Christ need more than the friendliness that drops its iron curtain at the door of the church on Sunday, after the final handshake. There is a whole week before them, and they need fellowship. If they are new to the community, they need new Christian friends to replace those left behind. A change of life-style is not an overnight transformation. The hunger for fellowship will encourage "followership" until they are well integrated into the Christian community, or they may be inclined to "follow anything that moves." That movement may be found in another church, a cult, or activities outside the faith.

Keep the lambs close! 



Setting Pastoral Goals for Patient Care

by A. Wayne Pittard

Bethany, Okla.

In a profession as nebulous as ours it is sometimes difficult to measure the outcome of our work. For that reason we get involved in things like statistics and programming, where we can see results and gain a sense of satisfaction from our efforts. It is my belief that if we were to set down our expectations in patient care, we would get an idea of whether or not we have accomplished our goal with a given patient. This would eliminate the need for others to tell us we did a good job or were helpful or not. Not only is it unprofessional to depend on the praise or disapproval of others for our own sense of fulfillment, but also it is foolish to set ourselves up to be measured by the standards of those who understand our work less than we do.

The purpose in setting goals for pastoral care, in addition to a more effective ministry to the patient, is to realize our own expectations and to decide for ourselves whether we have accomplished what we intended to accomplish with a particular patient. Setting of pastoral goals for patient care frees us to minister rather than to be ministered to by the praise of others.

Let me define the word "goal" as that which we aim to accomplish. I would define "objective" as the means we use to reach our goal. Goals of pastoral care are unique. There may be a temptation to take the goals of the medical profession

or of nursing, but our uniqueness calls for self-evaluation and measurement by theological as well as pastoral criteria.

General Goals of Pastoral Care

It may be the primary goal of health care to deal with illness and health, but it is the primary goal of pastoral care in a hospital setting to deal with the grief that patients experience. Grief may be dealt with by other therapies than the profession of pastoral care, but grief is primarily a spiritual experience and calls for more than grief management. It calls for the relief of despair.

Despair is made up of depletion and depression. The depletion refers to the loss of inner resources for coping with life situations. Depression involves feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Pastoral care deals with the relief of despair and offers a sense of fulfillment and hope. It attempts not so much to remove despair as to offer hope, but in offering hope, that is exactly the outcome.

Other general goals of pastoral care can be described as falling into the somewhat arbitrary categories of *theological*, *spiritual*, and *religious*, three different facets of pastoral care. The theological goals for pastoral care have to do with the patient gaining a sense of holy perspective on his situation and placing that situation into the context of his entire life to that point. This perspective has the note of eternity in it, although it must focus on the practical necessity of life rather than death. The spiritual goals of pastoral care have to do with the spirit of a person, which responds to the Holy Spirit in faith or doubt, love or hate, hope or despair. Religious goals of pastoral care deal more with the

functions of pastoral care such as meeting the systemic needs of patients. These systemic needs are met through the sacraments, prayer, Bible reading, and worship.

A Tool for Defining Pastoral Goals

As a discipline in setting goals for pastoral care and as a means of defining their uniqueness, I have developed a sheet with four categories for each patient. The categories are: *Objective data* about the patient (related more to their religious background and present situation), *subjective data* on the patient (feelings the patient expresses to me and others), *pastoral issues or concerns* (uniquely theological, spiritual, and religious), and *pastoral response* (what I intend to do in response to the concerns).

For example, a male patient I am working with entered the hospital for management of his diabetes. During his stay, in one of our conversations, he revealed that his five-year-old son had died of a brain tumor in 1979. Somehow little attention was given to this fact by the medical and nursing staffs. His disease was dealt with in isolation from his grief experience. This is not to be critical of those professions, for it is our task, and not theirs, to deal with grief. Because of the depression of pathological proportions, the psychiatric "listen team" was called in. The patient told them about our visits. He said that he preferred to deal with the pastoral care minister, since his search was for meaning, and his own resources were deeply spiritual.

The *objective data* is that his son had died, his marriage had not been going well, and his experience with Christianity during his son's illness had resulted in disappointment.

(Continued on page 45)



Few things are more troubling than hearing television preachers promoting their gift of "healing." Multitudes travel great distances to attend one of their special healing crusades. We see lines of people going to the platform with crutches and canes. The "healer" speaks to each one momentarily, then places his hands on the person and yells out, "In the name of Jesus Christ, be healed!"

Suddenly the pilgrim opens his eyes with a look of astonishment and proclaims, "I've been healed!" At this point the healer takes the newly healed believer through a series of exercises to prove the authenticity of a healing.

What troubles us is that it does not always work this way in real life. With faith and obedience, the pastor of the local church calls for the infirm to come to the altar for anointing and prayer. With care, oil is applied to the forehead of the seeker. A prayer for healing ascends to heaven. Coming to the pastor to be freed from his ailment, the believer looks up at the pastor with an expression that says, "Well?" He returns to his seat unchanged.

The problem of the unhealed person has prevented many pastors and believers from praying for healing because it is so unpredictable. It is disheartening to pray for an ill person only to see him die. The problem is compounded when preachers pass the blame along to the seeker. They insist that the failure to be healed is due to the person's lack of faith. This is the easy way out, but it is not consistent with Scripture. Though it takes the heat off the pastor, the person is left still sick and now burdened with false guilt.

Science Digest magazine had an article on faith healers.¹ I expected to read some secular explanation for healing brought about by Christian faith healers. To my surprise, they confirmed healing, but the healer on whom the article centered was neither a Christian or even religious! Olga Worrell used a form of meditation she calls "shifting into neutral" to bring about healing.

There are religious figures who claim that God heals through them and that they can perform healings just as Jesus did during His earthly ministry. They fail to tell us about

HEALING and FAITH

by John W. Dally
Burbank, Calif.



Communicator's
Sermon Contest

See page 51.

the thousands that go away from their "healing services" without healing.

Even "faith healers" confess that healing does not always occur. According to an article in *Health*, there have been no "healings" ever reported from Faith City, Oral Roberts' organization. Nor have there been any reports of the effects of prayer on healing.²

Does healing depend on the faith of the sick person? What role does healing have in faith experience? How should healing be handled in view of Scripture?

First, does healing depend on the faith of the ill person? Let us look to the Scriptures to see what role faith has in healing. In Mark 2:5, a paralytic is lowered through the roof of Peter's home. In the encounter with Jesus the man is healed. Was it the paralytic's faith that healed him? According to the passage, if anyone's faith was instrumental, it was the faith of those men who lowered him through the roof.

In Mark 5:22-23, 35-43, Jairus comes to Jesus for healing of his daughter. Along the way, Jairus is notified that his daughter has died. Jesus proceeds to his home where He brings her back to life. In a similar event, Jesus is told that His friend, Lazarus, is dying (John 11). Along the way Jesus is informed that Lazarus has died. Arriving at the family home, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. These two cases clearly show that it was not the faith of the ill person that brought about healing. Both persons were dead when the healing was initiated. In Acts 3 the paralytic was sitting at the gate called Beautiful. It was not his faith that brought about his healing. He was expecting a handout from the disciples. In each of these cases, healing was not the result of the ill person's faith. If anything, the faith of the "healer" brought about the miracle.

Healing has occurred when the faith of the ill person was involved. Although these passages do not prove that healing is by faith alone, there is an interesting element in these healings. In these cases, besides physical healing, there appears to be an additional element, a second level of healing. Greek words used in passages addressing healing give us insight.

Three words are translated "to heal" in the New Testament: *therapeuein*, *iasthai*, and *sōzein*. *Therapeuein* comes from the idea "to serve." It carries the idea of nursing someone to health. *Iasthai* means "to heal" in the physical sense, to make well. *Sōzein* has the meaning "to make whole." It is also translated "whole" and "well." There is more attention to the complete person in the use of *sōzein*, as indicated by the fact that *sōzein* means "to save," even in the spiritual as well as physical sense.

Does healing depend on the faith of the sick person?

When faith is involved, the term *sōzein* is most commonly used. In Mark 5:29, the woman with the issue of blood is healed (*iasthai*) when she touches the hem of Jesus' robe. When Jesus turns around and addresses her, He said that her faith had made her whole (*sōzein*). In Luke 17, 10 lepers call out to Jesus for mercy. He tells them to go show themselves to the priest. Along the way, they were cleansed. One leper returned to thank Jesus for the miracle of being healed (*iasthai*). Jesus says that his faith had made him whole (*sōzein*).

Yet a person could be made whole even when he was not ill. Luke tells of the sinful woman who anoints Jesus' feet. Jesus said, "Your faith has saved [*sōzein*] you; go in peace" (Luke 7:50).

It appears that whenever healing includes the faith of the ill person, a second level of healing takes place—a spiritual healing or "wholeness," as the word is elsewhere translated. This "wholeness" is not necessarily linked to healing. A person can be made whole spiritually without need of a physical healing.

Then what can we derive from these cases? First, healing does not depend on the faith of the ill per-

son. At the same time, when faith is involved, there are greater benefits afforded than only physical healing.

There is much more to scriptural accounts of healing than freedom from illness. Even though healings may not always occur, healing plays an important role in our faith experience.

Let us look at Jesus and His ministry of healing. When John the Baptist was in prison, he began to wonder if his mission had been completed. He sought proof that Jesus was the Messiah. He sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He were "the Coming One." Jesus responded with a messianic passage from Isa. 35:5 f. and 61:1:

Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor (*Matt. 11:4-5*).

Here the healings are signs. Matthew viewed healing as evidence of Jesus' Messiahship. In 8:17, he points to healings as fulfillment of the prophecy of Isa. 53:4—"He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows." Jesus' healings found in Matthew's Gospel are Kingdom signs.

In Matthew, following the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus proclaims the coming of the Kingdom, there are a series of healings. The first involves a Jew with leprosy. Leprosy was a sign of judgment to the Jew. In healing the Jew, Jesus shows that the Kingdom is present and the Jew a recipient.

The next healing is that of a Gentile, showing the openness of the Kingdom to Gentiles.

In healing Peter's mother-in-law, Jesus affirms the inclusion of women, who were considered second-class citizens in that culture. Then follows the quote from the Servant Song, Isa. 53:4, showing that Jesus' healings were fulfillment of prophecies showing Him to be the Suffering Servant who justifies many.

Jesus' healings showed the audience who listened to Matthew's account that the long-awaited kingdom of God had truly arrived in the person of Jesus. Therefore, these healings provided a basis of faith to the Early Church that the Kingdom had come.

Another element of healing is the exercise of faith. It takes faith to ask for healing. It takes faith to seek healing for others. It takes faith to recognize healings. Healing is a faith experience. We act in faith and take the results by faith. Healing provides us with a genuine faith experience.

Healings are meant to encourage us to faith—faith that God's kingdom has come through Jesus Christ and faith as part of our life experience.

How, then, should we view healing in the Scriptures? Should we view healing as a model for us today? In the later development of the New Testament, the healings in the Gospels are not reflected in the life experience of the Early Church.

The ability to heal is passed on to the apostles in the Book of Acts. In fact, healing is reported to be a common occurrence among the apostles: "Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits [to the apostles], and all of them were healed" (Acts 5:16).

Yet, the apostle Paul never narrates a healing in his letters. His only reference to healing was in his first letter to the Corinthians (A.D. 55) in which he speaks of healing as a spiritual gift (12:9). No longer was the miracle of healing available to

Besides physical healing, there appears to be a second level of healing.

all the followers of Jesus, but only to a select few. Only in Acts, written later by Luke (A.D. 70), do we find any instance of healing in Paul's ministry (e.g., 19:12).

James reflects a period after Paul.³ In his account, healing is delegated to the elders of the church. He suggests that only the leaders of the church with the aid of ritual were able to effect healing.

Continuing beyond the period of
(Continued on page 41)

Divine Healing: The Lost Estate?

by Greg Crofford

Sedalia, Mo.



We believe in the Bible doctrine of divine healing and urge our people to seek to offer the prayer of faith for the healing of the sick. Providential means and agencies when deemed necessary should not be refused.

—Article of Faith XIV,
“Divine Healing,” 1989 *Manual*,
Church of the Nazarene

Jack was a lovable three-year-old, well-adjusted and perfectly healthy. Then came the lumps. His physician father first discovered them protruding under the boy’s jaw. Two months and three specialists later, they delivered to Jack’s parents a dreaded diagnosis: Hodgkin’s disease or lymphoma.

Immediately, church members resorted to prayer. Days of fervent prayer for divine intervention climaxed with an emotional healing service for young Jack. With dozens of believers keeping a prayerful vigil, the family’s longtime pastor anointed Jack with oil in the name of the Lord.

Father, mother, and son soon returned for a checkup. Amazed, the oncologist confirmed the shrinking of the swollen lymph nodes. A month later, the swelling had completely vanished. For medical specialists, Jack’s recovery was a curious case indeed. But to his thankful parents, it was much more. It was a miracle.

Preach What You Practice

Jack’s healing is but the tip of an

iceberg. Saints across the ages testify to the power of God to deliver from physical ailments. Holiness tradition affirms their testimony through creedal statements and through the practice of anointing with oil. But if God’s messengers are to practice what they preach when it comes to divine healing, are we in danger of failing to preach what we practice?

Following a recent healing service during which I preached on anointing with oil, a visitor cornered me in the lobby. “Pastor,” she lamented, “I have been a member in our denomination for 37 years. Today was the very first time I have ever heard a sermon on divine healing.” I walked away from that conversation with a nagging question: Is her testimony an isolated incident or do holiness preachers need to rediscover a crucial part of the full counsel of God?

Squeamish over Divine Healing

Dunning’s *Grace, Faith, and Holiness*, a Wesleyan systematic theology, seemed like a natural starting point for research. Surprisingly, divine healing is never mentioned in its 671 pages. The *Beacon Dictionary of Theology* yielded a one-page entry. Apart from this, I could find nothing in my library on divine healing from a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective.

Theological misgivings show up not only through loud literary silence but also in the lyrics of popular Christian choruses. Paul Paino’s

song “He Is Able” tells of the healing ministry of Jesus, yet frames the story entirely in the past tense:

*He healed the brokenhearted,
and He set the captive free!
He made the lame to walk again,
and He caused the blind to see.*

Our Wednesday prayer meeting crowd held a pitched discussion on miracles after half the people sang “He Is Able” in the present tense. To tell of God’s working among us in the here and now is the natural desire of every believer. On the other hand, we hesitate to push a leash on the Divine and insist that God respond to our wishes every time we pull the chain of prayer.

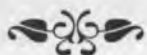
Why Are We Nervous?

The apparent dearth of preaching on divine healing can be traced directly to several issues. First, careful Christians want to avoid a magical approach to faith. Charles R. Gailey draws a critical distinction between the practice of magic versus religion. Magic attempts to manipulate the supernatural for human ends; religion submits self to the Divine, to fulfill divine purposes. Broadly speaking, this magical orientation

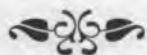


shows up in the concept of "seed-faith giving" and other angles of the so-called prosperity gospel. In relation to the miraculous, magical thinking creeps in through some interpretations of Isaiah 53 and the idea of "healing in the Atonement." By comparison, Jesus' prayer "Thy will be done" uttered in Gethsemane is a more mature stance, epitomizing Christian faith and submission.

A second explanation for the paucity of sermons on God's healing power is the problem of religious charlatans. Every profession has its quacks, so we should not be surprised when the field of Christian professionals yields its share. Hucksters peddling their fabricated brand of divine healing is nothing new. Television is ready to broadcast the latest gossip on faith healers. Bookstores carry exposés of their tricky



Saints across the ages testify to God's healing power.



methods. Because of controversy surrounding healing, many preachers prefer to ignore the issue altogether.

Occult manifestations present preachers with a third challenge. Christians have always recognized that the miraculous does not exclusively originate from God. A measure of power has been accorded to Satan. In Exodus 7, Pharaoh's sorcerers and magicians duplicated Moses' initial miracles. Later chapters reveal their inability to copy God's greater feats. Demonic elements were confronted in the Acts of the Apostles, notably Simon the Sorcerer. Paul's eschatology foretells the coming of the "lawless one," whose power includes the display of "counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). Because healing has earmarks of the miracu-

lous, a Christian may wonder whether an incident is of the Lord. Paul does not specify whether "counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders" include healing, but Rev. 13:3 hints as much when describing the healing of the beast's fatal wound.

While these three reasons caution a preacher away from addressing divine healing, a fourth reason is paramount. Healing is sometimes withheld. For every recovery of a three-year-old Jack, there seems to be the death of a two-year-old Jill. Even laying on of hands and anointing with oil fail to bring physical healing in every circumstance. In our most honest moments, we acknowledge the biblical balance: "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: a time to be born and a time to die" (Eccles. 3:1-2). The classic example of healing refused by God is Paul's experience. His thorn in the flesh remained, despite his earnest requests for God to remove it (2 Corinthians 12).

Divine Healing in the Gospels

A discussion of divine healing must address the miracles of Jesus Christ. In our time, attempts to explain away the reality of the miraculous have been put forth by Bultmann and others. Believers and unbelievers are gripped by the profound simplicity of the miracle narratives in the Gospel accounts. The pages of the first four books of the New Testament ring with authority.

A common thread runs through many of the miracle stories: Jesus solicited cooperation of the one who would be healed. John 9 recounts Jesus healing a man blind since birth. Jesus spit on the ground, made mud, then placed it on the blind man's eyes. He ordered him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. The end result is faith-inspiring: "So the man went and washed, and came home seeing" (v. 7).

Why did Jesus require the blind man to wash before he was healed? Certainly our Lord was capable of restoring his vision without this seemingly superfluous act! Mark 8 tells a similar story, except a man received his sight without first going to wash. We conclude that Jesus required a degree of cooperation from the one who would be healed. Trek-

king to the Pool of Siloam, the blind man publicly demonstrated his faith in Jesus' ability to heal. John 9:8 records the surprise of onlookers, each of whom knew the genuineness of the man's blindness. Great glory went to Jesus because the stricken man cooperated with the Lord in a public act of obedience.

Jesus demanded public faith demonstrations not only of the blind but also of the lame. Mark 2 pictures the four faithful friends of a paralytic, stubbornly digging their way through the roof of a stranger's crowded house, and lowering their helpless companion before the Lord. In response to the foursome's faith, He pronounced forgiveness of sins upon the paralytic. Jesus spelled out the condition of the man's healing: "Get up, take your mat and go home" (v. 11). Within full view of the crowd, the lame man made a public



Because of controversy surrounding healing, many preachers ignore the issue altogether.



demonstration of faith. Obediently, he followed the Lord's command and walked out of the house. The throng reacted. "This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'" (v. 12).

Anointing: A Public Act of Faith

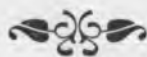
James 5 is the locus classicus for the doctrine of divine healing. As in the Gospels, the principle of cooperating with God through public obedience is evident. The sick believer is urged to call the elders of the church, a public setting. When the elders arrive, they are instructed to "pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord" (v. 14). In this way, the sick person and the elders are all cooperating with God. Anointing with oil becomes an

outward declaration of personal belief in God's ability to restore physical well-being.

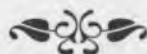
The *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene*, Article of Faith XIV, makes it clear that assistance by medical science in bringing about healing must not be refused. In light of our discussion, a visit to the doctor's office may be seen as the modern equivalent of the blind man's trip to wash in the Pool of Siloam. We must use all the tools at our disposal when it comes to cooperating with God for our divine healing. Releasing the sick into the care of competent medical professionals does not negate Christ's role as Source of all recovery.

Requirements for Divine Healing

The first requirement for divine healing is that the candidate must be in saving relationship to Jesus



When doubts have been prayerfully confronted, the time for action arrives.



Christ. James repeatedly addresses his readers as "brothers" (cf. 1:2, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 5:7; etc.). When James asks, "Is any one of you sick?" it is understood that he addresses Christians.

Calling the elders of the church (5:14) is a second requirement for divine healing. Elders must anoint with oil, offering faithful prayer. God's response is not delayed: "The Lord will raise him up" (5:15).

Finally, the candidate for divine healing must "confess [his] sins to each other . . . so that [he] may be healed" (5:16). Jesus' lesson to His disciples in the first part of John 9 is that sin is not the *sole* cause of suffering. That it may be *a* cause is suggested when Jesus pardons sin before healing in some instances (cf. Mark 2). Sin may hinder divine healing, as advised by James. The final

promise is hope-inspiring: "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).

Preaching on Divine Healing

When doubts have been prayerfully confronted, the time for action arrives. No matter what abuses have grown up around the theology and practice of divine healing, holiness preachers owe it to themselves and to their people to impart a proper understanding.

Preparing your sermon on divine healing, you will want to dig deep and wide for a better understanding. Emphasize that while God is fully capable of healing, in His wisdom He may withhold it. On the other hand, this does not negate our responsibility to be obedient to His Word in passages like James 5. A beautiful balance between human faith and divine willingness to heal is seen in Matthew 8, where Jesus heals a man with leprosy. Thorough study will uncover other biblical paradigms for divine healing.

As you study, your understanding will be sharper, but do not be afraid to be transparent with your people. Admitting where you fail to understand the mind of God clearly is not a sign of weakness, but strength.

Finally, emphasize that divine healing calls for our obedience to the Word. With clear authority, the Bible prescribes anointing with oil. Can we ignore the precedent that Jesus' own disciples set? (Mark 6:13).

The Rite of Anointing

To protect the sacredness of the anointing service, pastors should screen candidates before the ritual. At any given time, there is bound to be someone in the church with a serious ailment that has not responded to medical treatment. Pastoral prayers often become a litany of the "sick list." Why not contact those who have exhausted medical options to see whether they desire anointing with oil?

During your appointment with the candidate, review the requirements listed in James 5 for divine healing. Make sure they understand what they must do to cooperate with God in this venture.

Following your sermon, invite your prescreened candidates to come to the front of the sanctuary. They

may bring relatives to pray with them if desired. Candidates may kneel at the altar if health permits. Otherwise, encourage them to sit comfortably on a front pew.

Since James 5 requires the "elders" to gather around the sick believer, use your church board to fill this role. Following Jesus' example, exercise laying on of hands.

Before beginning your group prayer, conduct a short interview with the candidate. Publicly ask questions, such as "(Name), what is your ailment?" "Have you been to a doctor about this?" "Do you know Jesus as your Savior?" "Do you believe God is able to heal you?" By responding to these queries, the candidate's faith will be heightened. Newcomers in the congregation will better understand what is taking place.

When the interview is finished, anoint the candidate with oil. You



Are we failing to preach what we practice?



may follow the guideline of James 5:14 by saying, "(Name), I anoint you with oil in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." As you say this, inscribe a cross with oil on the candidate's forehead. Through an extemporaneous prayer, affirm God's love for the person, as well as the congregation's support and concern. Anointing should be a time of great encouragement!

Stretch Yourself

Do we practice the rite of anointing with oil as much as we should? When we anoint, are we "preaching what we practice"? Sound doctrine comes alive through sound practice *and* solid preaching. By concerted effort, we can clear away theological cobwebs from a neglected tradition. Together, let us recapture the lost estate.



Helping Congregants After a Disaster

by Jay Levinson

Jerusalem

Pan Am 103 plummeted over the unknown Scottish village of Lockerbie. Since that shocking incident, the dead have been eulogized and buried, but for the many living family members the battle to come to grips with reality still goes on. They still have not totally readjusted.

A key person caught in the psychological struggle is the local clergyman. He is expected to come up with correct answers, even under the most trying circumstances. In the immediate period after the tragedy, Pan Am assigned a psychological caseworker to each bereaved family. That professional helper has now gone, although many of the problems still remain. In many cases, only the family's pastor or priest is left.

The clergyman has a role in helping, but it goes well beyond the standard function of providing words of religious comfort to a shocked parishioner. Before he can assist his congregant, he must come to a firm and perceptive understanding of the real problems.

Sudden and unexpected death of a close relative is not an easy experience, as every clergyman knows. There are always the standard questions of "Why?" When the circumstances of death, however, are part of a major disaster, such as the air crash in Lockerbie, an entirely new situation is created.



Several weeks before the Pan Am crash, a high-intensity earthquake struck part of Soviet Armenia. As international television crews recorded in vivid detail, rescue teams from all over the world inundated the stricken area. One of the most moving sights recorded was the somber demeanor of one parent standing motionless as an extrication team retrieved the lifeless body of his small daughter. Without a visible tear or emotion, the father walked off, holding the body of his child. Had this man lost all sense of love and human compassion? No!

A true understanding of the tragic situation was that the man had become psychologically numbed by the vast scope of death and destruction he had witnessed. In technical terms, he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a formal name given to the entire gamut of *normal* reactions to mass catastrophe.

Those families who traveled to the scene of death in Lockerbie were not the only ones affected by the awesome tragedy. Modern television brought vivid pictures of blood and destruction into many households. At the same time, television did not provide viewers with the social services trained to help people cope with the scenes they were being shown in their own homes. For the general public it was difficult enough. For the family who had lost a member, the situation was catastrophic.

Not all persons affected by Lockerbie expressed themselves in stony silence. Others expressed an opposite PTSD reaction—a violent explosion, whether by incidents of physical violence or by legal actions, even against family members.

The clergyman summoned to a be-

reaved family must be acquainted with the phenomenon of PTSD after a disaster. He must realize that if a scene is unpleasant, it is perfectly normal for people to react. People must be reassured. People must realize that their reactions, whether expressed in fears, sleepless nights, or psychological numbness, are not unique to them alone. Although we have a culture where reactions are supposed to be internalized under most circumstances, those vivid reactions *are* quite normal.

For almost every ailment there is a cure. What is the cure for PTSD? Let the person talk out his feelings. The clergyman should let his parishioner talk while he must *listen* to the grief the parishioner expresses. Consoling the parishioner with pre-terminated and well-polished lines or favorite biblical verses provide the clergyman with an easy script, but this approach does not always solve the problems of catastrophic bereavement.

There are steps a clergyman can take to assist his congregants when disaster strikes their families:

1. Avoid having the family view the body. Looking at a lifeless victim can be very disturbing, particularly if there has been physical damage to the body. Save the family that agony if possible. Try to have identification done by other methods.

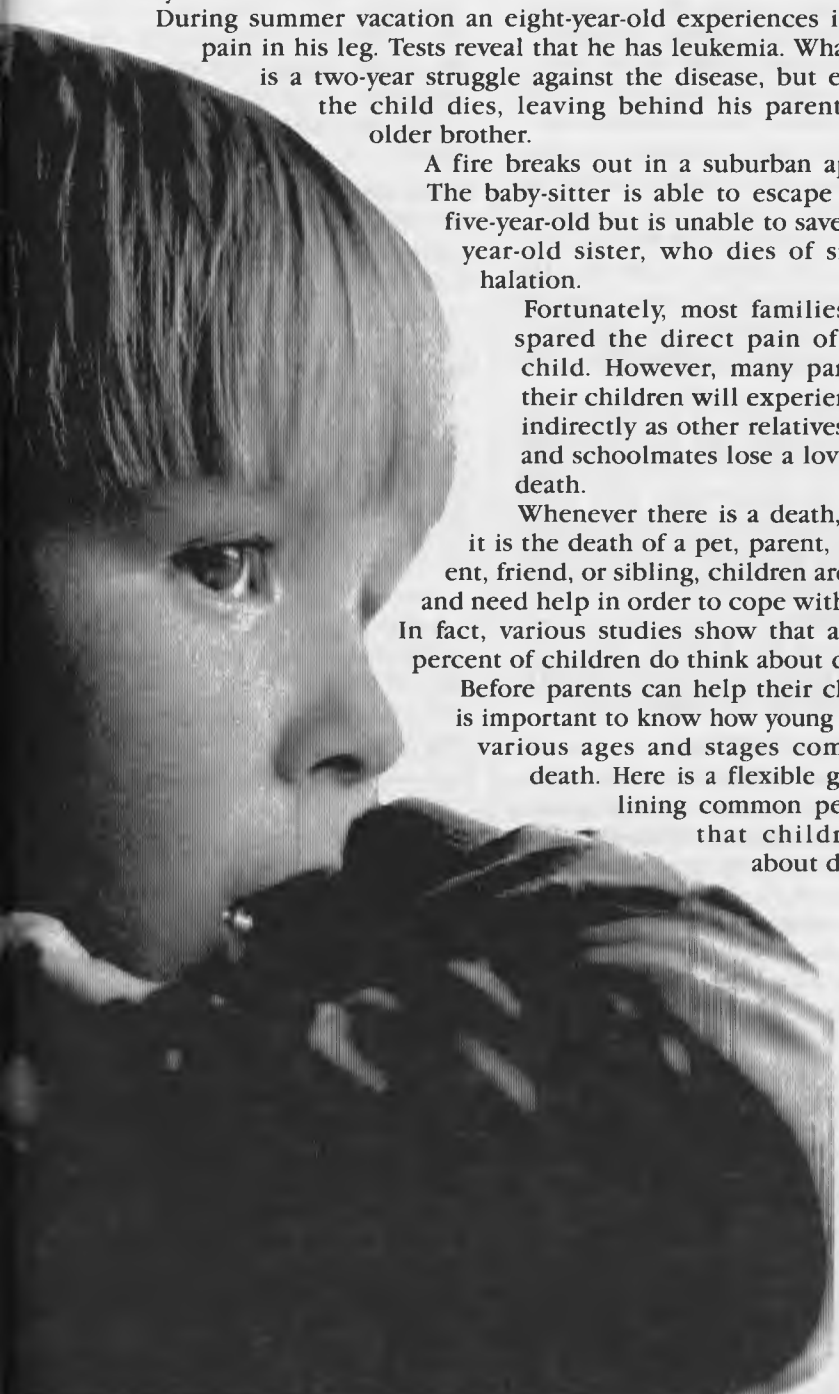
2. Help the family identify the body if there is a problem. Sit with the family and obtain a full description of the victim and his clothing. Get his dental records from his dentist and his medical charts from his physician. Determine if he ever had been fingerprinted, perhaps in conjunction with government employment; if not, a local police technician can check personal effects for

(Continued on page 25)

Helping Children Cope with the Reality of Death

by Victor M. Parachin

Elk Grove, Ill.



On the way to school one morning, two youths, aged 14 and 15, begin to cross an intersection as they have done on many previous days. This morning will be different—they are struck and killed by a hit-and-run driver.

During summer vacation an eight-year-old experiences increasing pain in his leg. Tests reveal that he has leukemia. What follows is a two-year struggle against the disease, but eventually the child dies, leaving behind his parents and an older brother.

A fire breaks out in a suburban apartment. The baby-sitter is able to escape with the five-year-old but is unable to save the two-year-old sister, who dies of smoke inhalation.

Fortunately, most families will be spared the direct pain of losing a child. However, many parents and their children will experience death indirectly as other relatives, friends, and schoolmates lose a loved one to death.

Whenever there is a death, whether it is the death of a pet, parent, grandparent, friend, or sibling, children are affected and need help in order to cope with the loss. In fact, various studies show that almost 80 percent of children do think about death.

Before parents can help their children, it is important to know how young people of various ages and stages comprehend death. Here is a flexible guide outlining common perceptions that children have about death.

Two to Six Years— Death Is Reversible

Most children in this age range live in the present tense with little understanding of future time. Also, magic and fantasy play a significant role in their thinking. Consequently, they perceive death as temporary and reversible.

For example, our family kitten was accidentally crushed when the garage door was activated. The first one to find the kitten was our four-year-old. When it was explained that the pet was in an accident and had died, our daughter innocently protested, saying: "Just throw water on her, and she will come alive."

Six to Nine Years— Death Is Frightening

Children are aware that death takes some people but not others. Still in a transitional stage, these children begin to accept the finality of death but don't understand that all will die eventually. One young mother responding to her son's questions about death received this response from him: "It will happen to Sister and Daddy, but it will not happen to you and me."

Also, children in this age often fantasize that they can escape death by running fast enough or by finding good places to hide. It is important to know that children in this age range are particularly vulnerable because, while they have some understanding of death's ramifications, their coping capacities are underdeveloped. J. William Worden, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Harvard Medical School, states that in this age range "social skills are insufficiently developed to enable them to defend themselves. This particular group should be singled out for special concern."

Nine to Twelve— Death Is Disruptive

Understanding the finality of death, children in this age range focus upon the disruptive changes forced by death. It is common to hear statements and questions such as these: "Grandpa won't be able to go fishing with me anymore." "Will we have to move out of the house because Daddy has died?" "Who is going to take care of us now?"

Teenagers— Death Is Painful

Generally, from junior high on, the concept of death is comparable

Children need help to cope with death.

to that of adults. Young people experience pain and go through grief when a loved one dies. Here is an example from a youth who was 16 when his sister died. Four years later he wrote an essay in response to an assignment that asked students to write about the best or worst experience they had. The following excerpt shows vividly the depth of pain and grief that teens feel when someone they know and love dies:

The experience I am about to write about was without a doubt the worst experience I had ever dealt with in my life. I would not wish this experience on my worst enemy. . . . I am speaking of the death of my oldest sister, Mary. I am not looking for pity because it's over with, and I have no problem talking about Mary or her death.

I was sound asleep, warm and comfortable, probably dreaming about a very pleasant experience. All of a sudden my pleasant dream was interrupted by a real-life nightmare. My mother asked me to come out to the living room. At that time I had no idea what was going on, although I did know there was something drastically wrong when I heard the ear-piercing, heart-stopping cries of agony from my younger sister. My

mother then looked me squarely in the eyes and said, "At one o'clock this morning, your sister was killed in a car accident."

When hearing this and seeing the looks of disbelief on the other members of my family, I knew that this wasn't a sick joke. I felt a growing weakness in the back of my knees, accompanied by a sharp pain in my chest. For the first 5 to 10 minutes I didn't say or do anything. My memory was carving a clear picture of the scene in my mind. Then I had a deluge of mixed emotions racing through my head.

At the time, my family and I were living at the lake. I got a distinct surge of energy. I wanted to scream obscenities to the world. Then I wanted to swim the length of the lake. I had a combination of thoughts and energies that frustrated . . . me. There was no way to funnel them into an act or words. I could go on forever, but I think I've made my point. The overpowering feelings of loss and frustration made this, without a doubt, the worst experience of my life.

It is important to be aware that these stage and age developments should not be viewed rigidly. Children will move back and forth among them, at times demonstrating profound maturity and at other times slipping into magical and fantasy thinking.

How then can families help children understand and cope with death? Here are six suggestions.

Encourage Talking

Children, like adults, need help to identify and express feelings about a loss. Unlike adults, children can develop strong feelings of guilt and self-blame for a death. One mother, widowed suddenly and left with two children aged two and four, encouraged the four-year-old to share his feelings. She writes: "To my horror I learned that my son felt his father died because he was 'naughty.' I held him in my arms and told him

that Daddy's death had nothing to do with his behavior. Daddy would never have left him if he had a choice. Daddy loved him just the way he was, and I loved him just the way he was."

The young mother went on to state: "It is excruciatingly difficult to see your child struggling with such feelings, but you must allow them to express these thoughts, or they will never be able to resolve their guilt." If a young person does not initiate a discussion, one can be stimulated by parents using invitational statements such as: "I'm sure your friend's death upset you." "How did you feel after the funeral?" "Death is very difficult." Also, if there are noticeable disorders in eating or sleeping, one can raise the question: "Are you having trouble sleeping/eating because of the death?"

Be Honest

Children are very intuitive and sensitive to body language and other nonverbal signals. They will know if words do not match emotions and physical expressions. Nancy O'Connor, Ph.D. and author of *Letting Go with Love: The Grieving Process*, states that children as well as adults want "reality and truth, sincerity and honesty. Phoniness is confusing and energy-draining."

Be Specific

Answer only those questions that the child actually asks. Volunteering unsolicited information about death can overwhelm a child. Use the deceased person's name when referring to him, and use the basic words

What sustains an adult can also help children.

like "die" and "dead" to convey the message. In his book, *How Do We Tell the Children?* New York City funeral director Dan Schaefer suggests speaking this way to a younger child whose grandfather died of old age:

A very, very sad thing happened to Grandpa. He was very, very, very old, so old that his body wore out

Communicator's Sermon Contest

See page 51.

and stopped working. Sometimes when a person is as old as Grandpa was, his body doesn't get better like ours do when it gets sick. It's not as strong as ours are. So it stops working, and the person dies, and it can't be fixed anymore. That's what happened to Grandpa. That's why everyone is so sad.

Avoid Euphemisms

In the attempt to soften the blow, adults are tempted to refer to one who has died as "sleeping," "gone away," "lost."

While adults are able to decipher such messages, children are only left confused and even frightened. If a loved one is sleeping, a child fully expects him to awaken. When the deceased does not, the child may become afraid to sleep for fear that he will not awaken either. If one who has died is "gone away" or "lost," the child will eagerly anticipate the time when the person returns or is found. Thus the reality or finality of death is further delayed.

One woman, who was nine when her aunt died, recalls listening to the eulogy where death was described as the "passing of a season." Throughout winter the little girl waited patiently and expectantly for her aunt to return in the spring. Understandably she was most upset when her aunt did not return.

Show Feelings

It is advisable and healthy for adults to express love and sadness, hope and loss, joy and pain. Adults are role models for children. If adults show their grief, children will feel free to express their feelings as well. Based upon personal experience, one mother states: "Don't be afraid to cry in front of the children. They must know that it is all right to cry. After all, we cry for those whom we loved very much. Our tears are a tribute to the depth of that love. If we do not love, we would not feel the need to cry. It may help to cry together, hold each other, but don't pressure the child to express his feelings."

Share Faith

Your belief in God can become a powerful anchor during times of loss and grief. Dan Schaefer, states that faith "is a wonderful gift, and

people who have faith often are much better able to deal with their grief and feelings of loss than those who don't." What sustains you as an adult can also support children as you share your convictions with them.

When sharing faith with children, there are two guidelines to follow. The first is simplicity tempered by love. Theological concepts can be extremely abstract and confusing, even to adults. Thus, Dr. Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D. and director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colo., states:

Adults can only share with children those concepts they truly believe. Any religious explanations about death are best described in concrete, practical terms: children have difficulty understanding abstractions. The theological correctness of the information is less important at this time than the fact the adult is communicating in a loving way.

Second, adults should avoid making God responsible for the death. For example, many well-meaning people will say to children: "God loved Daddy so much that He took him to heaven." What appears to be a religious idea to an adult is heard quite differently by a child who may receive this message: "God loves Mommy and me too. Will we be taken away like our daddy?"

In fact, rather than speaking of

God "taking" someone, it is much better and more theologically accurate to convey that God accepts and receives those who have died. Here are two examples: "Now that Daddy has died, he is with God," or, "God receives and welcomes all those who die." These statements shift the responsibility from God initiating death to His responding in love to a sad event.

Read Together

Selecting a book or booklet appropriate to the age level of the child is an exceptional way to enrich understanding for both the reader and the listener. Most public libraries carry a wide variety of materials on death and can be found in both children and adult sections.

Allow time for discussion and questions following the reading. Be careful not to read several books on the subject at one time lest the child be overwhelmed. Carefully selecting one book or booklet and reading it several times over is the better approach.

One final note should be most encouraging to all parents. It is quite rare for children to be seriously traumatized and immobilized by death. Careful parental attention to children's feelings, along with cultivating and providing "space" for children to talk, is generally enough for them to deal with death and move on.

Helping Congregants *(Continued from page 22)*

prints. Although these tasks are generally performed by police, the assistance of a clergyman is often comforting to a bereaved family.

3. Be honest. If there is a problem, tell the family. If, for example, their relative is among the missing, do not hide the truth from them. Concealing facts eventually casts doubt upon the integrity of the conceiver.

4. Listen. Listen to the bereaved family as they talk. Signs of aggression and attempts to fix blame on others can be caught early as you listen to the family sort through the tragic circumstances.

5. Provide emotional support. A clergyman should provide as much support as possible to a family that

has experienced disaster. A positive function that he can serve is to act as an intermediary and bring families together who have suffered in the same disaster. They have a common experience that binds them. In fact, victims' families often provide each other with the most critical emotional support.

6. Help is not short-term. It is insufficient to visit a family immediately after a disaster and then conclude there is no remaining problem. Many problems surface only with the passage of time as the family tries to readjust.

There are no easy solutions to explaining disaster to a stricken family. The clergyman stands by, representing the caring heart of Jesus.

The Limitations of a Holistic Therapy

Since I do not pose as an expert in psychotherapy, I approach this discussion with some trepidation. It is as a theologian that I come to you, for I believe that there are theological concerns bearing on your profession as Christian counselors that we have in common.

Let us review the obvious. A person is a body. As a body he can become ill and need the help of a medical doctor. The body includes the brain. To the extent that aberrant behavior or illness is due to a diseased or damaged brain, to that extent the disorder remains in the medical sphere.

But a person is also a soul. With varying shades of meaning, this soul may be defined as the ego, or self. As such it is the timeless identity of an individual. Alternatively it may be defined as an immortal spirit. Or, it may be defined as biological life that animates the body and in turn is animated by the body. It is that which a live body has and a dead body does not have. The Hebrew *nephesh* in the Old Testament and the Greek *psuchē* in the New carry these various possible meanings.¹

It is as a soul that one thinks, feels, loves, and acts. While to say that these are activities of the whole person is not quite precise (the big toe may have little to do with deciding to go to church), yet these functions depend on the body as well as the mind, since one needs the integrative cooperation of his vital organs to do any of these things. For we have to eat material food and breathe oxygen-laden air to create blood to supply the brain with nutrients enabling it to function as a thinking tool and to signal the hand to get out of our pocket. In many cases, very likely, twisted thinking is the product of an undernourished brain.

So far I am talking like a behaviorist, implying that all we need when something goes wrong is still

by Richard S. Taylor

*Former editor
of the "Preacher's Magazine"
Milwaukie, Oreg.*

the medical profession. For we are assuming that irregular emotions and erratic behavior are solely some kind of illness that at bottom is physiological.

Then where do you as Christian counselors come in? You are not medical practitioners.

Your profession is valid only on the assumption that the counselee who comes to you has needs that the medical doctor, as a medical doctor, cannot meet; that your "patient" is more than the biological life that animates nerves and cerebral cortex; that the physical man, including the brain, is not the whole man. In short, your profession assumes that mind is not epiphenomenal. There is a dimension to human existence that is not defined by blood and nerves and cells. It is the dimension of personal agency. Rather, it is the dimension of the person as an agent, who not only thinks but knows that he thinks; not only feels hungry but knows that he feels hungry; who is aware of other persons and of his relationship to them; who is attached to them in ways that make him happy or make him sad, that make him proud or make him ashamed. Here is a being who does not just feed and breed like cattle, but lives in a moral dimension, knowing that some behaviors are approvable and some are not approvable. He carries with him a sense of ought and ought



not. His emotional life includes feelings of love, joy, fear, depression, sorrow, nostalgia, shame, and guilt.

Now as such a being he gets himself all fouled up, just as a boy eats green apples and gives himself a stomachache. But now the complications are of a different kind, and as such are not, strictly speaking, in the medical doctor's domain. The doctor has medications for the stomachache, but has no medications for a broken heart. For the person is not really a patient, since he is not clinically ill. Taking out his appendix won't help.

Therefore as dependent as we are in this life on a healthy body, this social and moral dimension represents a higher level of life. As such it is more crucial for happiness at a truly human level, a level that transcends the animal. The happiness of a bride or of a new father or a new believer is far different from the happiness of a frisky calf gamboling in the spring sunshine. The difference is not just in degree but in kind. The emotions relate to a different world of reality; as such they are impregnated inescapably with an awesome sense of the holy.

This leads me to say that your justification as Christian counselors demands a third dimension. It demands the belief that this human being before you is also spirit. There is not only the category of the soulish, embracing mind, feeling, and will, but the category of the spiritual, which includes a capacity for God. Moreover, when awakened by the Spirit, this spirit becomes sensitized to the objective realities of angels, Satan, demons, heaven, and hell, and the subjective realities of sin, redemption, and holiness. The fact of man's spiritual nature means that the soulish functions of thinking, feeling, and willing are not only outward in orientation but upward. They are inescapably operating every moment as truly in the spiritual range of reali-

ty as in the material. Persons as spirits are unavoidably in a relationship with God, either of alienation, double-minded tension, or loving devotion.

Now the human situation is suddenly much more complicated. A world is opened up that the one-dimensional practitioner, or even the two-dimensional practitioner, does not understand. In its presence he stands helpless. For not only do little boys eat green apples and have stomachaches, and not only do grown people foul their relationships and develop neuroses and complexes and phobias and domestic tangles, which send them to a counselor, but they find themselves out of adjustment with God. This is the most profoundly destructive dislocation of all, so deep and radical that directly or indirectly it lies at the bottom of all other dislocations. This is the ultimate kind of human

A dimension to human existence is not defined by blood and nerves and cells.

problem. And no human counselor can do a thing about such problems, except as he is willing to be a midwife. There is no medicine that can put a soul right with God. There is no behavior modification technique that can transform a sinner into a saint. Psychiatrists and counselors can alleviate guilt feelings but cannot remove guilt. To attempt to do so is only to criminally compound the problem.

As Christians we believe that God has acted in Christ, His Son, to provide the answer for every spiritual level kind of problem. Therefore, where human disorders are caused by rebellion against God and violations of His law, there is no help except on the spiritual level and on God's terms. The need now is neither the physician nor the counselor but the preacher.

The Christian counselor is in a unique position, qualified to fulfill a unique role. He stands in the mid-

dle with triple sensitivities. Because he does not confuse the three dimensions, he is capable of distinguishing between them. He can sort out the problem that at root is physical and refer the counselee to the appropriate medical specialist. He can also sense, at the opposite pole, when sin is at the bottom of his counselee's emotional and interpersonal disruptions. When this is the case, his position as a Christian will prompt him to evangelize (in other words, turn preacher!) and direct his counseling energies toward persuading the person to repent, believe, and obey.² But he will be cautious in this case about calling the counselee a "patient" and talk about "treating" him. We treat people sick with the flu; we don't treat sinners. We point them to Calvary. And the Christian counselor will never knowingly assuage guilt feelings without first probing for real guilt and helping the counselee deal with that at the Cross.

But, because the Christian counselor is oriented to the threefold dimension of the whole person, he is in a better position than either the doctor or the preacher (unless the preacher is also a trained counselor) to understand that some problems are neither primarily physiological nor primarily spiritual, but just plain soulish. They develop and enlarge out of immaturity, ignorance, poor judgment, and temperamental quirks. Life just gets to be too much for some people, and they need help. They do not understand their children, their spouses, or themselves. Their perceptions are often cockeyed and their emotions in knots.

In many cases the "bottom line" is neither meanness nor mental illness, but fatigue. People do not cope well when fatigued. Since they are not coping well, frustrations build up, tensions mount, and sticky situations become stickier. Then things are said, tears are shed, and actions are taken that entangle the threads still more, and every day makes it harder for the skein to be untangled. This is where counseling comes in.

Such problems can merge into the physical, and they can also merge into the spiritual. The Christian counselor can render an incalculably important service if he catches

them in time to prevent the situation from deteriorating either into a full-blown illness or into outbroken sin.

Of course, if people knew how to pray through their problems and get divine insight and guidance, they could in many cases come out of "the pits" without professional help, for, after all, there is no counselor equal to the Holy Spirit. But the "if" is a big one. Unfortunately the people most apt to get into these predicaments are not generally the ones who know how to let the Spirit part their Red Seas.

Admittedly many pastors are helpful in dealing with the soulish dimension, and a few doctors are also. But the pastor's grasp of the complex psychological dynamics may not be deep enough. The physician's concern for the soulish may be superficial because too often the physician is dull to the reality of the spiritual realm and scarcely aware of the subtle but powerful interpenetration.

Finally we get back to our topic, "The Limitations of a Holistic Therapy." The holistic concept is sound in certain respects. We are always facing the whole person, and we know that his diverse dimensions of body, soul, and spirit interact on each other. There is no emotional problem that does not have its effect

Some problems are just plain "soulish."

on the body, and no physical problem that does not become a challenge to the spirit. Holism acknowledges all facets of the person in their interacting complexity. A wise counselor seeks to be aware of these facets and seeks to help the total person to the extent of his expertise and authority.

Yet the Christian counselor will ever be aware of the pitfalls of a holistic therapy. He will not be drawn into a methodology that, in effect, denies the qualitative distinctions of the three dimensions and is reductionist in anthropology. Those who see man essentially as animal only will reduce all disorders, including

social pathologies, to the illness category. I actually heard a professional speak the other day about a certain young criminal who had been undergoing "treatment," who was, in the professional's words, "in remission!"

But this reflects a monistic anthropology. According to it, the transcendental side of human life is illusory,³ but may be used in therapy on a pragmatic basis. The healing values of prayer and faith are widely acknowledged, but not their metaphysical basis. Salvation is seen solely as the cure of an illness, whether alcoholism, drug addiction, fears and guilt feelings, or even religious delusions. But it is not seen by these practitioners as a salvation from sin or eternal lostness. The rapprochement of religion and psychology is grudgingly attempted, but on humanistic terms—the religious professional will be accepted into the team as long as he leaves the supernatural in the archives.⁴

Wholeness, even in secular therapy, may be defined as a functional integration, or homeostasis, of the whole person. H. L. Parsons says, "A glance through the psychiatric literature will make it clear that this drive for integration . . . is fundamental to the human organism and is the one resource which the therapist can count on in his attempts to help render the broken individual whole again."⁵ What must be resisted by the Christian counselor is (1) the presupposition that this "whole person" is composed of earthly elements only, which can be adequately treated by humanistic means, and (2) the intimidating dogma that, in attempting to "render the broken individual whole again," the therapist must not resort to supernatural aids. Such dogmas betray an antibiblical anthropology and a philosophical positivism respecting the nature and objectives of counseling. In this view, health is the goal, not salvation; and the health sought is functional only, not spiritual.

Such secular provincialism won't do for the Christian counselor. His foundations are biblical, not Freudian; supernatural, not positivistic. In spite of some "gray" notions afloat, the biblical doctrine of man is dualistic, not monistic.⁶ In rejecting a

Platonic concept of body and spirit as antagonistic entities, we do not have to burn down the forest in order to rid ourselves of this underbrush.

Humans "are a composite unity of spirit and matter" (Koteskey).⁷ While matter seems to dominate, the domination is more apparent than real, and also is temporary, not ultimate. We are a kind of being that, in this life, functions through matter but, in the next order of existence, will function some other way. The spirit's present dependence on a healthy cerebral cortex is not the last word. It is this ultimate destiny that is man's true greatness. It is this eternal potential that invests your profession with such awesome responsibility.

Therefore we must refuse to allow a holistic therapy to become a reductionistic or unidimensional approach, in which we drift into a B. F.

Holism acknowledges all facets of the person.

Skinner type of monism and amoral determinism. Let us keep the categories distinct. Bodily, mental, emotional, moral, and spiritual disorders may often overlap, but they are not all of one piece. They require not only different handling but often different handlers. Some are primarily terrestrial and temporal, while others are either actually or potentially transcendent and carry eternal baggage.

Let us not confuse holiness with wholeness, which is health in all possible areas—the body, the mind, the emotions, the subconscious, and the spirit. Holiness is conducive to wholeness but cannot be equated with it. Conversely, sin should not be confused with infirmities, weaknesses, illness, ignorance, mistakes, poor judgment, behavioral irregularities caused by disease such as arteriosclerosis, or any other defect that is amoral per se and is the direct, unavoidable product of a nature that is not only finite but damaged by the Fall.

Holiness is rightness with God, which may exist with many ongoing infirmities. Emotional and physical problems may beset the sanctified. There are many sick saints, just as there are many comparatively well sinners.⁸

The Christian counselor's stance is that of the apostle Paul. In our Christian pilgrimage, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17-18, NASB). This is the spiritual man. But we are also Pauline respecting the natural man: "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man [natural] is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (4:16-18, NASB).

1. See John Laidlaw, *The Biblical Doctrine of Man* (Printed by Klock and Klock in the U.S.A., 1983 reprint).

2. Ronald L. Koteskey says: "In a very real sense, every Christian counselor is an evangelist who attempts to bring the counselee to Jesus Christ," in *General Psychology for Christian Counselors* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983), 68.

3. Many therapists, Koteskey points out, have "abandoned the 'God-hypothesis' in the transcendental sense." And he adds: "If there is no transcendent God, there can be no sin against him" (61).

4. H. L. Parsons says: "Psychiatry is part and parcel of the revolt against the 'medieval synthesis of supernaturalism,'" "Theology and Therapy," in *Wholeness and Holiness*, ed. H. Newton Malony (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983), 246.

5. Ibid.

6. Murray J. Harris denies "the immortality of the soul," claiming it to be a pagan notion. The person survives death, he says, not the "soul." *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 140 (reviewed by Karl B. Hoch, Jr., *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, December 1986, 497). If the person survives death, then the objection to the term "soul" is beside the point. Immortality is still affirmed. The problem here seems to be a trichotomic anthropology.

7. *General Psychology for Christian Counselors*, 26.

8. Speaking of the various meanings and theories of health, Seward Hiltner says: "In principle, the views of health with which Christianity cannot be reconciled are those which, either by secularization or imperialism, render the need for salvation irrelevant. . . . But health in any modern sense is not to be equated with salvation; it does not substitute for salvation; and it does not guarantee salvation." "Salvation's Message About Health," in *Wholeness and Holiness*, 164.

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See page 51.

How Does It Happen?

by William Goodman

Leavenworth, Kans.

In Chicago attending a special meeting, a minister related to me his heartbreak: his son is in an "acid rock" band. He asked me, "Bill, with all your counseling experience, tell me, how does it happen?"

One hundred fifty teenagers disinterested in the things of God, even though raised in a Christian home—some of them pastors' children—responded to the following questions:

"What happens when you become a Christian?"

A girl: "You can't wear miniskirts, makeup, or earrings."

A boy: "You can't smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, swear, tell dirty jokes, listen to rock music, or read *Playboy*."

(Note: They have only mentioned what Christians don't do.)

"How do Christians spend their time?"

"They don't do much!" "Go bowling Monday night while parents watch." "Go to church all day Sunday and Wednesday night." "Read a lot of the Bible and always pray at the table!"

"What motivates Christians to do those things?"

"You have to try very, very hard." "You have to pray a lot to do it." "You have to listen to Christian radio."

"Does anyone live like this?"

"Most backslide a lot, but they rededicate their lives and try again."

"Do you think that being a

Christian is the most fantastic life on earth?"

"You've got to be crazy!"

Something was missing. The teenagers had missed the good news of Jesus entirely, even though attending Spirit-filled churches and being in Spirit-filled homes.

"Where does Jesus fit into all of this?"

"He died for our sins so that we could go to heaven."

"Can you be sure you will go to heaven?"

"Only if you try real hard to please God!"

All of these teens had parents who had tried "the old life of sin." In their present lives by the grace of God, they had given up the old life. These parents didn't want their children to experience the old life as a slave to sin. The old life was addicted to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, pornography, obscenity, lies, gambling, nakedness, perversion, "The wild nightlife," swearing, cheating, infidelity, etc. What had been God's grace to the parents in the beginning—that which set them free—had now become law (don'ts) to their children. Their children see the laws and rules, and they want to go out to experience the misery and heartache of sin. Sin becomes very alluring to children of Christian parents. For the children to change, they need to meet Jesus. They need to experience God's grace.

Adults rebel against laws, even laws for their own good. Didn't the surgeon general tell us the dangers of tobacco? Mothers Against Drunk Drivers has to inform us of how le-

thal alcohol is. The federal drug czar has to restate the enslavement and misery of drugs. Psychologists announce the mental distresses of pornography, nudity, and obscenity. Medical professionals warn of homosexual involvement and AIDS. Homosexuals account for 79% of the AIDS victims, yet people insist on their rights to be involved in spite of warnings of danger. Knowing God is the basis of moral decision making. Sin is the breaking of the law of God (1 John 3:4-9). The Tobacco Institute wants our youths to develop their own values and morals. "Human Sexuality" wants to teach adolescents how to deal with pornography. Society declares that homosexuality is an alternate lifestyle, but God calls it sin, an abomination.

In *Spiritual Burnout*, Malcolm Smith relates story after story of pastors leaving their churches, leaving their families, of pastors' wives leaving their families and the church. He retells the hypocrisy in the church, how people wear church masks but are as miserable as the outright sinner. He relates the bickering, gossiping, and backbiting in the church. He tells of the failure of the church, church doctrine, and pastors who can't help themselves or their families. Whew! I knew all that! We have all exchanged stories of church failures. With the teens in the interview, we can all rehearse the "don'ts of the church!"

Jesus did not come merely to forgive us for our trespasses and sins and send us on our ways with the don'ts. He came to live within us

God Has the Last Word

by C. Neil Strait

Grand Rapids, Mich.

(John 3:15-16, 26; 5:40; 8:12; 13:34-35; 17:17). The Christian lifestyle has Christ at the heart of the believer. Everything He says is "do and you will have inner peace." He said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33, KJV).

Spiritual burnout is caused by the believer's failure to rest in and receive the continual flow of Jesus' Spirit. The life-style of a believer is supernatural (Gal. 5:22-23; Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:4). We have one function in life: To glorify God. We do this with Christ living in us. We are helpless, but Christ strengthens us as He lives in us. All that I do, I do by Christ who lives in me. I live to glorify God, to do His will, to live a righteous and holy life, and I have His inner peace.

Malcolm Smith says, "Exhaustion comes from trying to make God do our will and leaves us burned out, disillusioned, and bitter. Many feel God did not honor the currency they laid on His counter." Thus we have people who leave Christ and the church and claim: "I tried 'it' and 'it' didn't work!"

When we have the Spirit of God within us, even in the midst of the hurts we can praise Him. Our inner peace is founded upon who God is, not upon how we may feel about Him. Jesus came to deliver us from a sense of well-being based merely on outward circumstances.

We can praise God for victory, well-being, inner peace, assurance, and life—in Him. In the release of praise in the face of difficulty and confusion, we have God's deliverance. But this will never be found in the don'ts so many church youths think they are missing out on. The believer who faces life's problems with the Spirit of Christ in his heart will not burn out.

When you have a personal relationship with Jesus, there will be great joy in doing the dos of God and avoiding the don'ts.

So we must lead our youth to accept the cleansing blood of Jesus and to receive the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. They will find joy in Jesus, not in the dos and don'ts of religion. Only when they know Jesus do the rules have meaning. Above all, get them to Jesus!

I had the privilege, a few months ago, of attending homecoming at my alma mater, Olivet Nazarene University. A number of people and events were impressed upon me that were encouraging. Let me share them with you.

I was encouraged to realize, again, that failure is not the last word. I met an old college/seminary friend who had, years ago, gone through a crushing experience in his marriage. His ministry was ripped from him. It was the lowest moment of his life. His future was blurred, uninviting, scary.

Then God began putting the pieces of a ministry together for my friend. Today, he serves as pastor of one of the fastest-growing churches in America! From failure to fantastic! As I talked with him, I mentioned how beautiful it was to see how God had shepherded him through the dark hours and had given him such a great ministry. He gave God all the credit! It was encouraging to know that failure is never the last word!

I was encouraged to realize, again, that tragedy is not the last word. The university had witnessed the tragic deaths of 3 of its students in a van accident. Orpheus Choir was en route to Indianapolis to participate in the Gaither Praise Gathering when a van with 11 choir members overturned, killing 3 of its passengers. The tragedy left the campus numb, overwhelmed, grieving, and sorrowful.



But God was at work in the midst of sorrow. I saw the comforting presence of Christ bring the students together and bond them in their moment of sorrow and grief. The coronation ceremony became a moving witness to the power of grace and Christian healing. One of the victims of the crash had been elected to the queen's court. Her Christian testimony made a profound impact. The tragedy, all of a sudden, had put the value of life and death in Christian perspective. It was encouraging to know that tragedy is never the last word.

I was encouraged to realize, again, that defeat is never the last word in life. Olivet lost both its homecoming football and basketball games. I was reminded, however, that both teams will regroup and will play again. Their coaches will take their teams back to the drawing boards; they will review their defeats, but only with a purpose of winning the next game. Defeat was not the end of the journey for either team. It was encouraging to know that defeat is never the last word.

So, Pastor, be encouraged! Failure, tragedy, and defeat are never the last words for the Christian. They are occasions for God to speak to us, to nurture us, to comfort and guide us, to begin writing the chapters of hope that put life back to its task.

Perhaps you are going through a low moment, a down time, a tragedy, a defeat, a crushing experience. Do not let these be the final chapters of a ministry or a life. Wesley, at a low moment in his life, wrote, "I consulted God in His Word." God has a word for you, and it is a word of hope, a word about going forward, a word about picking up the pieces, and a word about resting in the grace of God. Whatever word it is, it is a good word and the best word for you.

Time is important to us all. Our lives are dictated by the clock and the calendar. We are slaves of both. Our culture is so geared to appointments, time schedules, and date setting that unscheduled events either go by default or upset the status quo.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of time and admonishes us to redeem it by a thoughtful use of it. However, stewardship of time does not tell us to become tense and nervous in the performance of our activities, as though our allotment of time is insufficient to accomplish them.

Success in any career depends upon a proper use of time. Each of us is given 24 golden hours daily. We are equally endowed. What we do in each 24-hour period depends on us. The investment of these hours may accrue valuable dividends, or it will be dissipated by a thoughtless expenditure.

If we are alert, there comes to us a gentle pressure from the Great Investor to guard the moments as they pass and to use discretion and discipline in all we do. Not that God is a hard taskmaster, but He is eager that we live up to our potential for His glory and our good.

As ministers of the Most High God, we are partners of privilege as "workers together with him" (2 Cor. 6:1, KJV). We should be challenged daily to share our energies in the most productive manner possible out of love for Him with whom we labor.

The minister finds himself in a unique situation concerning his use of time. Until he takes his first pastorate, his time must be accounted for to his employer, his school, or to some other agency. Suddenly he finds himself on his own. As a consequence, he may fall into the temptation to run his church with a loose hand, or he may be overwhelmed with the obligations incumbent upon his calling. If he succumbs to the former, he will be prone to let his work slide, which will be detrimental to the cause of Christ and corrosive to his own spirit. If he becomes super-sensitive concerning his task, he may become tense and frustrated because he cannot get everything done.

The psychology of the minister's use of time does strange things. When he looks at his many duties,

The Hang-up of Busyness

by Raymond C. Kratzer

Yakima, Wash.

he is likely to be overwhelmed by their multiplicity, and often little is accomplished. The need to develop two or three sermons a week, the many personal calls to be made, and the necessary administrative duties to be done, plus unexpected things that happen daily, can all overwhelm the hardest soul. When this happens, many pastors become stymied on the "hang-up of busyness."

This "hang-up" can become like a disease that saps creativity and thwarts the growth of a potentially productive leader. There is a cure! There is a solution to this dilemma! It involves the familiar formula given by Jesus: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Luke 11:9, KJV). If the Maker of this promise has called you to be His minister, He will also furnish the grace and strength to fulfill it. Our problem is to appropriate His grace and seek His guidance for ways and means to accomplish our assignment.

It has been said: "If you want to get a job done, ask a busy pastor." Why? Because he has learned the secret of productivity through a proper use of time. Often the busiest pastors accept added responsibilities without complaint, while men with much less to do beg off. Or, when such men do accept an additional task, they often neglect it because they are hung up on the snag of busyness.

As a minister grows in his years of service, he will discover many duties he had not expected. Besides the full-time work as pastor of his own flock, of necessity he must be involved in the community, on his district, and in many other areas of service. It is paramount that he set up priorities. He dares not allow a facade of busyness to inhibit the full

use of his power or acceptance of his fair share of the load in extracurricular activities.

One man was prone to say no to added responsibility and gave for his reason that he "did not feel well." On one occasion someone responded to him: "Sir, most of the work in the world is done by people who don't feel too well." If we waited until we felt like it, we would scarcely get anything done.

In any place of leadership one needs to develop a cruising speed. He must learn to increase the rate of his productivity without going to pieces. Usually an automobile is so constructed that it runs best at a certain speed. On the average this is not in the slower registers but is beyond the 50-mile-an-hour speed. When this is reached, the car appears to move effortlessly down the highway to the thrill of the driver. It would appear that if the automobile were designed perfectly with every part working with precision and without vibration, sustained high speeds would do it no damage. Likewise, the individual who has inner peace and is eager to perform to his maximum capacity may find a "cruising speed" within the will of God, enhanced by the power of the Holy Spirit, without damage being done to body, mind, or spirit.

You have watched people at work in various occupations and have observed their skill or ineptitude at their task. I was in a restaurant where several cooks and a plentiful supply of waitresses seemed to be at odds with each other. Orders

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The Preretirement Years: Financial Planning

The preretirement stage of life can cover the years from age 50 to 65. During this time of life, many parsonage families become "empty nesters" and become very aware that the years have passed quickly and that retirement is on the horizon. For far too many parsonage families, their first serious efforts at financial planning for retirement begin during these years. There is great truth in the principle that it is "never too early to begin planning your retirement finances."

Most of us are encouraged by the news that ministers generally live longer than any other professional group. However, the reality of this longevity requires us to do a more careful job of financial planning than any other group. The following questions are those most frequently asked or should be asked in the process of preretirement financial planning.

"How much money will I need in retirement?"

Most of us will need to plan on living on less money in retirement. Fortunately, many expenses also will be reduced. Needing to maintain only one automobile, reduced needs for new business attire, and fewer entertainment expenses can significantly reduce expenses.

As a general rule of thumb, a goal should be established of having a minimum of 70 to 75 percent of your preretirement salary coming in at retirement. Your calculation of preretirement income should include the rental value of the parsonage provided during your ministry.

Planning to live on less should begin 3 to 5 years prior to retirement. Finding corners that can be cut that will not reduce the quality of life can be a probable and beneficial adventure in preretirement planning.

"How can I project my retirement income?"

Generally, retirement income will

by Dr. Dean Wessels

Director

*Board of Pensions and Benefits, USA
Church of the Nazarene*

consist of the following items: your Social Security benefits; your pension benefits, including tax-sheltered annuity benefits; interest and dividend income from personal savings; and postretirement earnings. Your denominational pension board generally can assist in estimating projected benefits from your retirement plans. Many ministers find that during the "empty nest" years, they are able to contribute substantially to their tax-sheltered annuity plan, which not only reduces their taxes but also provides for the tax-deferred compounding of interest on the assets. Generally, benefits from your church's pension plans can be declared as housing allowance at retirement and substantial amounts received as tax-free benefits.

Your local Social Security office can assist you in estimating your future Social Security benefits. It is very important that you check the accuracy of your Social Security income records every three years. If no questions are asked within a three-year period, the record becomes a permanent and unchangeable part of your Social Security history. By calling a Social Security Administration number (1-800-SSA-1213), you may request a form to check your record at no cost.

You also will want to check carefully with the Social Security office to determine the amount of income you may earn prior to age 70 without jeopardizing your Social Security benefit. It is important to remember that the fair market rental value of any parsonage provided plus utilities paid counts toward the Social Security earnings test.

Some ministers are fortunate enough to have extra sources of income from their own assets. These may have come from an inheritance or from personal savings and consist of investments in stocks, bonds, real estate, and other assets. All of these need to be figured into your retirement planning schedule.

If your planning indicates a significant gap between retirement needs and income, you need to plan carefully how you are going to cope with this retirement gap. If the gap is too large, you or your spouse may need to continue working, at least on a part-time basis, beyond the time of your retirement. A minister often has opportunities to increase income at retirement by continuing to serve as a supply pastor in a smaller church or by turning other skills and hobbies into paying propositions.

"What about unforeseen emergency expenses?"

Few of us in our retirement years will not face a financial emergency. As a part of preparation, you should attempt to have from \$10,000 to \$15,000 in an interest-bearing account that is accessible to you. It should be predetermined that the purpose of these funds is for a real emergency. Small consumer loans and credit cards may be convenient sources of emergency funds, but they carry a very high cost. Your adequate emergency fund can eliminate this additional expense. The basic rule should be that this fund is to be used only as a last resort, and every effort should be made to replace the fund with monthly additions.

"What about the impact of inflation?"

Inflation is a significant problem for retirees on fixed incomes. Although Social Security has a cost-of-living factor in it, its future may be subject to some question in light of the federal deficits and future Social

Security tax increases to support the system. As a practical matter, long-term inflationary trends are very difficult to project, but their reality cannot be ignored. The practical implication is simply to put as much money aside as possible for retirement income before you retire. Few ministers have ever told me that they had "too much" retirement income.

"How can we project our living expenses in retirement?"

Planning for retirement living expenses begins with the fundamental financial planning step of establishing adequate records to determine how you are spending your current income. Only by the careful maintenance of records can you discover expenses that can be reduced in retirement. For some, the maintenance of adequate records may seem easy, but for many others, it seems to be a time-consuming and frustrating task. As frustrating as it may seem, without this basic information, which categorizes your living expenses prior to retirement, it is nearly impossible to predict your living expenses after retirement.

"What about insurance needs after retirement?"

Insurance needs change significantly with age. It is not surprising

Good stewardship demands that you protect your assets.

that surveys confirm that one of the retiree's primary concerns is having a major illness with inadequate hospitalization benefits.

It is important to understand the two levels of coverage provided through Medicare: hospitalization insurance and medical insurance. The medical insurance portion is optional, and you pay a monthly premium for it to Social Security. Medicare does not pay for everything, and the plan has undergone, and will continue to undergo, many changes.

Check with your denominational pension board to see if your denomi-

nation's health plan can continue your coverage after retirement. Many other "medi-gap" policies are available and generally are offered by mail. Care should be taken in enrolling in these plans. While some of them provide adequate coverage, many others provide very little coverage and charge a relatively high premium. Due to scare tactics, many elderly people have been talked into taking out multiple supplemental policies. These policies may effectively cancel each other out. Other policies may cover only specific illnesses, such as cancer, and others may pay only direct cash payments to the person who is hospitalized. Generally, those on limited incomes should purchase medical coverage that will provide indemnity in the event of any illness rather than protection from a specific illness.

Life insurance needs also change. The primary purpose of purchasing life insurance in its many forms is to protect your dependent survivors from the loss of income between the time of your death and the time your income would have ceased at retirement. The purpose of income protection no longer exists. If adequate cash resources are available to provide for final expenses and burial, then little if any life insurance may be needed. Careful examination should be made of whole life insurance policies that may have been taken out long before retirement. Check to see if the monthly premiums must be paid until death, or if it could be converted to a paid-up policy with no future obligations. Also check to see if dividends have been accumulating in the policy that could be withdrawn to meet retirement needs. In addition, if substantial cash values are built up in the policy, these also may be withdrawn on a tax-free basis to supplement retirement income. Continuing large insurance premiums during retirement years can be a significant drain on available finances.

Careful rethinking of your insurance needs with the assistance of a trusted insurance adviser is an im-

portant part of your retirement financial planning.

"What can we do about housing in retirement?"

The reality for most ministers is that they will live in a parsonage throughout their ministry. While the parsonage is a significant part of their income, it is left behind when they move and finally left behind when they enter retirement. You will need to plan your housing arrangements carefully in light of the amount you have been able to save and set aside for this purpose. It may

Nearly 30 percent of one's lifetime is spent after retirement.

mean renting, purchasing a mobile home, or moving into a retirement community. Some ministers have been able to purchase small homes during their years of active ministry and rented them and paid for them with rental income. Still others have had conscientious churches that have placed "retirement equity funds" into a tax-sheltered annuity account for them in order to assist with retirement housing.

Some ministers have a significant tax advantage in retirement housing in that their denominational pension plan benefits may be designated as tax-free housing allowances.

Retirement housing plans also need to involve a great deal of common sense. At retirement, it may seem appropriate to retire in the community of one's last pastorate, but hindsight may show that this was not the best idea. Living next door to married children may seem appealing if you enjoy the grandchildren, but it may also limit personal freedom. Climate may be a significant factor, but moving to a new area may be difficult if you do not make friends easily. No one can make these decisions for you, and careful planning can bring you
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Communicator's Sermon Contest

See page 51.

When the Well Runs Dry

by Charles Warnock III

Greensboro, N.C.



Saturday night has arrived, but your sermon hasn't. Last Wednesday when your secretary asked you for sermon titles, you told her, "Just leave them out of the bulletin this week." Thursday and Friday other commitments filled up your days. This morning you cut the grass, and this afternoon you watched your son, Billy, play soccer.

Now it's Saturday night, and the inevitable can't be put off any longer. Maybe I'll be sick in the morning, you think. But you know that Sunday morning will come, you're going to be well, and you have to preach at eleven o'clock, ready or not. Your problem is, you don't have anything to say.

Most preachers have lived through at least one Saturday night like this. While running out of time for sermon preparation is unnerving, more disturbing is running out of something to say altogether. Like many preachers, I've preached when I was sick, when I was tired, when I was discouraged, and when I was unhappy. But it's really hard for me to preach when I have nothing to say.

Of course, having nothing to say isn't just a preacher's problem. Writers call it writer's block—the inability to think of anything to put down on paper. Actors who draw a blank in performance call it "going up on your lines," and uninspired artists say that the "muse has left them." Preachers don't have an official label for the same phenomenon, but it's just as real. What do you do when the sermon well runs dry?

In my 21 years of pastoring, I've had my share of "dry days." Few of us have the luxury of just not preaching on those Sundays. But how do you say something when you have nothing to say? Here are some of the ways I cope when the well goes dry.

Pinpointing the Problem

When I realize that this Sunday I really don't have anything to say, I try to figure out why I feel that way. After all, it is primarily a feeling problem. I haven't lost my memory; all of my theological training still sits intact in my brain. I still know the same things I knew last Sunday when I preached what I thought was a great sermon. But unlike Jeremiah, nothing feels like a "fire . . . in my bones" (20:9).

Sometimes I know why the fire has gone out. I'm tired. The previous week has been one of those weeks—too many hospital calls, too many committee meetings, too many phone calls, and too many counseling sessions. Add family functions to those demands, and the explanation for having nothing to say is apparent—exhaustion. Rather than having to wake up bright and early on Sunday morning, I'd like to sleep in. But I can't. That's not an option for pastors. Knowing that doesn't make me any less tired, however.

Guilt is another good reason I don't have anything to say on occasion. If I haven't managed my time in textbook fashion or practiced spiritual disciplines like the desert fathers, I feel a little guilty. The guilt tapes that play in my head sound something like this: "If I can't do what I'm preaching, how can I expect others to?" We sometimes expect more of ourselves than our congregation does.

Books about preaching and the preacher often add to our unrealistic expectations and leave us susceptible to what I call the Superman syndrome—preachers really are not human but are "strange creatures from another planet with powers beyond those of mortal men."

In a sampling of the many books on preachers and preaching in my library, I found that most are written in the "ought" voice. The authors are almost unanimous in their opinion that the preacher *ought* to be a man of prayer, that sermons *ought* to be authentic, that preparation *ought* to be guided by the Holy Spirit, and that preaching *ought* to spring forth from the life of the preacher.

I really don't have a quarrel with these oughts, but what happens when a gap exists in the preacher's life between the "is" and the "ought"? While our goal in ministry is the ideal, we live in the reality of the less-than-perfect. Besides, is it always the preacher's fault when he doesn't have anything to say?

Not having something to say for one Sunday is scary enough, but what do you do when that empty feeling sets in for two weeks, a month, or longer? How do you preach then?

Again I look for causes. If you can get tired in one week of frenzied activity, several weeks in a row can wear you out. Church conflict that saps emotional energy also can sap spiritual vitality. Concerns you have for your own family—time demands, money problems, communication—all these can divert thought from sermon creativity.

Taking Action

If you can pinpoint the causes for your sermon drought, decide what can be done to cure them. Can you take an hour or an afternoon off? Is it time to pull out the jogging shoes again or finish that woodworking project you began last fall? If you don't have a hobby, is there one you've always wanted to start? Why not now? Doing something unrelated

to ministry can clear your head and give you a new perspective.

Of course, some problems aren't solved by simply diverting time and interest. You may be struggling with your own spiritual journey. Many times we feel unable to point others down the right spiritual path when we ourselves are stumbling.

Most of us have lived through at least one of those dark moments in ministry when we question our call or feel like a failure. In his book *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of the Ministry*, John Killinger reminded preachers that "our lives are always more than the sum of our present thoughts and feelings."¹ Killinger's advice to the struggling preacher is to "wait and watch, watch and wait, in hope that what once tenanted our beings and made them alive with daily joy and expectancy will one day come back."²

Then again, waiting and watching sometimes isn't enough. When you don't have anything to say from the pulpit, the encouragement of someone who understands can help. The phone rang at our home one Thursday night. Dwight Thomas, our Sunday School director, was on the line. "I have a gift certificate for an evening at Giovanni's. Susan and I would like for you and Debbie to join us." That Saturday night at dinner we didn't talk church at all. But that meal was Dwight's way of saying, "I know what you're going through."

A fellow pastor or a denominational leader may be able to provide an empathetic ear, even if they can't provide an easy answer. Sometimes just having someone to talk to is helpful.

During one particularly gloomy period in my early ministry, a pastor-friend encouraged me by saying, "Remember, God hasn't brought you out here to abandon you now." Somehow that assurance had never occurred to me. But it made sense. Had God brought me to my place of service? I believed that He had. If that was true, then He wasn't about to leave me alone. My ministry wasn't miraculously transformed by that statement, but it was marvelously strengthened. For the first time, I had a bedrock confidence that God would see me through my own spiritual desert.

Priming the Pump

No matter what reasons you pinpoint or how you deal with them, Sunday is coming again soon. You still have to find something to preach. When I'm staring down the dry well of sermon preparation, I have done five things, at various times, to prime the pump.

Take a Sunday off. I need at least one Sunday off each quarter. Vacation takes care of that in the summer when I take two in a row. But during the fall and spring, my wife and I schedule a weekend vacation for just the two of us. Debbie enjoys these times away as much as I do. Fortunately, our church members understand that we need a break and allow us to get away. I'm fresher when I return, my congregation has missed me, and I'm ready to get back in the pulpit the next Sunday.

Go back to familiar themes. When I find myself with nothing to say, I often go back to some spiritual well-springs. Familiar doctrines that I

How do you say something when you have nothing to say?

know I believe, familiar scriptures that I love to read, and familiar experiences that are a part of my spiritual journey are natural starting places for sermon preparation.

These aren't ax-grinding messages. Instead, they are positive, warm-hearted visits to my spiritual roots. For the nation of Israel, the Passover meal was an annual reminder of where they had been and of what God had done for them. Remembering your conversion or another significant spiritual experience might be your link to your spiritual heritage. There's nothing like going back home when you're homesick.

Preach through a short Bible book. Don't pick Genesis or Revelation for this particular assignment. Pick a short book, Old or New Testa-


ment, that can be a fresh source of study and learning for you. Preaching through a book gives the preacher an automatic text, outline, and topic for each of several Sunday sermons.

Jonah, Hosea, 1 John, and Galatians are some of the short books I've preached through when my sermon bucket has come up empty. I push myself to dig for new nuggets in the text, and then present those truths in ways that are fresh to me and my congregation. Usually these aren't verse-by-verse sermons, but messages that tackle chunks of text, focusing on one big idea in each sermon.

Glean ideas from the sermons of others. If you're like me, you can't preach another preacher's sermon just as he did. But you can get ideas for your own sermons from somebody else's. A fresh insight, a new illustration, a verse you've never preached before—all these can be jumping-off places from another pastor's sermon to yours. One of my favorite resources for this is *Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching*, by Fant and Pinson (Word Books).

Rework a previous sermon. What's the difference in a "used car" and a "previously owned automobile"? Usually just the label. And an "old" sermon that inspired once can do so again, if it is worked over, not just warmed over. Look for a new angle, dig for new illustrations, reword the title, and express your major headings differently.

So there you have it—five ways I look for something to say when at first glance I don't think I have anything to say. I have used all five methods before, and I'm sure that I'll call on them again.

Preparing sermons demands a delicate blend of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the preacher's best effort. With confidence in God's guidance and purposeful planning, the next time you go to the sermon well, I hope you'll find it filled to overflowing. 

1. John Killinger, *The Centrality of Preaching in the Total Task of the Ministry* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1969), 108.

2. Ibid.

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Sunday: Easter Joy

by Don M. Aycock

Lake Charles, La.



Jesus left behind
as monuments a
rugged cross, an
empty tomb, and a
living Church.

I have stood at three graves that point out much of man's grandeur and his folly. Two of the graves belonged to men who, in their time, were two of the most powerful men in the world. The first remembered Winston Churchill. His grave is a short distance from Blenheim Palace near Oxford, England. My wife and I visited the Palace and were impressed with its magnitude and elaborate decor. Based on that, I had expected that Churchill's grave would be something equally magnificent. When we found it, I was both surprised and a little disappointed. What struck me about it was the fact that it was so small and unpretentious. It looked fairly ordinary—nothing like what I expected. It rested in a small plot with just a few other graves around and looked much like the final resting-place of any other man.

I visited the grave of Harry S. Truman in Independence, Mo. Like that of Churchill's, Truman's grave is not very elaborate or large. Located on the grounds of his presidential library, it is well kept but not ornate. Again, I felt a sense of letdown when I saw it. After all, Truman, along with Churchill and Joseph Stalin, were three of the most powerful men during the end of World War II. Churchill led England during the

awful days of the German bombings. Truman served as president of the United States after the death of Franklin Roosevelt. He made the decision to use atomic weapons on Japan. Two powerful men—Truman and Churchill; two small and ordinary graves!

The third grave that so impressed me commemorated a man known for his fried chicken business. His huge monument seemed to stand guard over his tomb. A casual observer who did not know better might have mistaken him for a president or at least a governor. But a chicken entrepreneur?

The contrast between the final resting-places of the two world leaders and the businessman seems both striking and instructive. Two were content to let their actions serve as their monument. The other wanted to have something more concrete—literally. Which will actually live in the minds of others longer? Only time will tell, but I am sure that Churchill and Truman will outlast the chicken king.

Many people want to point to the final resting-place of their leader and say, "This is his monument. Isn't it magnificent?" Elvis lovers have Graceland, for example. But what do followers of Jesus have? Easter Sunday was a day of the unmarked

grave. The only things Jesus left behind as monuments were a rugged cross, an empty tomb, and a living Church.

No one who saw the Resurrection occur wrote about it. Some of Jesus' followers saw the signs of it—an empty tomb, graveclothes, an angelic vision, and later appearances by the risen Lord. No eyewitness went public when it happened, however. Despite that fact, generations of Christians have believed the reports and have endeavored to follow the living Christ. Curiously, for even the most devout Christians, the major holiday of the Church is not Easter but Christmas. Good Friday and its grisly reality plus the mystery of Easter Sunday are not as personal and inviting as Christmas. Jesus' death on a cross, His time spent in a dark tomb, and the surprise of Easter sunrise do not retain the same emotional levels as bright lights, annual carols, gift giving, and



eggnog by the fireplace. So what is Easter really?

The New Testament Witness

Easter changed everything. The account of this day in the New Testament is presented as a witness by people who were changed because of Easter. Paul gives his account of the meaning of the Resurrection. He summarizes:

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

In the rest of the chapter, Paul spells out what Jesus' resurrection means to us. The assurance of Easter gives power for living now and the promise of eternal life with Christ later. In a sense, followers of Christ gamble all on His resurrection. We stand or fall with Him. Paul wrote, "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men" (v. 19). The apostle was convinced that Easter Sunday changed everything. Because of what God did in Christ, life and eternity would never be the same.

Mark Twain tells of the night the Mississippi River cut through a narrow neck of land and changed courses. A black man went to sleep as a slave in Missouri. He awoke to discover that, because of the river's change, the land on which he stood was Illinois, and he was a free man.¹ One day changed everything for him. This is true of Easter. Because of that day's events and the meaning God attached to them, everyone who would say yes to Jesus would be different.

The Gospel accounts of the Resurrection give more details about that Resurrection event. John 20 gives a clear picture of the surprise and joy of Easter. The day did not begin with joy, however.

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." With these words C. S. Lewis opened his book about his wife's death, *A Grief Observed*. Followers of Jesus, especially Mary Magdalene, could have supplied that line. They knew personally that grief and fear are Siamese twins.

Mary came early on Sunday morning to the tomb where Jesus had been laid. John 19 indicates that Jesus' burial in the tomb of Joseph was temporary. The Jewish Passover began at sundown on our Friday, so authorities were anxious to get rid of the bodies from public view. Joseph and Nicodemus took Jesus' body and laid it in a tomb after quick preparation (vv. 38-42). Joseph sealed the tomb with a large stone. Roman authorities then placed a guard at the tomb.


Mary came to the tomb before daybreak on the first day of the

place. From her tone and the movement of the conversation, we can surmise that she did not know they were angels. They asked why she was crying. Her reply is poignant and moving: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him" (John 20:13, RSV).

Mary's dashed dreams and hopeless outlook had not yet been changed by an encounter with the One for whom Easter is remembered. She still thought that the Son of God was dead! In the 1960s a movement swept across the Western world that proclaimed confidently, "God is dead." That movement is now dead. People still look to Easter as a light-house of hope in life's storms.

God of the Breakthrough

On Easter Sunday, Jesus broke out of the seeming permanence of



Easter is a lighthouse of hope in life's storms.



week. Sunday for the Jews was like our modern Monday. Why did she go? We cannot be certain, but there are several good possible answers. Because she was personally devoted to Jesus, His death on the previous Friday had shattered her emotionally. She went back to the grave as a symbol of her love and devotion. Whatever else she might have brought with her, Mary surely brought deep feelings of grief and hopelessness. Death is never a pleasant subject, especially when it comes in such a gruesome fashion as on that Friday.

On the first Easter, Mary stalked death. Arriving at the tomb, she saw that the stone Joseph had placed at the entrance was rolled back. This was insult added to injury. Not only had Jesus' enemies killed Him, but did they also have to steal His body? Mary was sad, despairing, and confused about the whole affair.

We can understand Mary Magdalene's turmoil as she found that the tomb of Jesus was empty. Mary conversed with two angels at that

death. That breakthrough signaled what lies in store for anyone who comes to Him as a follower. It was also a sign of God's ability to break through every barrier, hindrance, and grave that stands in His way. This happens to us when we accept the Lord. It happens when God gets under the skin of even the most outward pagan.

When George Bush served as vice president of the United States, he represented America at the funeral of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The entire funeral procession was marked by its military precision. A coldness and hollowness enveloped the occasion. Since the Soviet Union is officially atheistic, no comforting prayers or spiritual hymns were sung. Only the marching soldiers, steel helmets, and Marxist rhetoric were offered. No mention of God was made. Mr. Bush stood close to the casket when Mrs. Brezhnev came for her last good-bye. Bush says, "She walked up, took one last look at her husband, and there—in the cold,

gray center of that totalitarian state—she traced the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. I was stunned. In that simple act, God had broken through the core of the communist system."²

That act stuns me, too, but I realize that no system can wall God out, and no tomb can wall God in. Evil celebrated its day on Friday—but Sunday was coming! The empty tomb symbolizes our hope that comes when we live as part of the family of God.

Results of His Sacrifice

I have a catalog of "Christian costumes" for use in church dramas. This catalog lists under the Easter heading, "Whip scars: six assorted-length scars." Also listed are "hand scars" and a "crown of thorns." All of these come complete with cement that will attach these rubber "scars" to an actor. Jesus had no make-believe welts, nor did He bleed stage makeup. What Jesus offered on the Cross was fully and essentially himself. What was raised on Easter was fully and essentially himself also.

This genuine sacrifice and Resurrection has a profound effect: we are now reconciled—brought together—with God. Paul says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Out of Jesus' brokenness came life, not only for himself that Easter but also for all who take His promise as their own.

After World War II much of Berlin stood in ruins. The Germans decided to pile the shattered bricks, twisted steel, and broken stones in one place and made a huge mountain out of it. They laid topsoil over the pile and seeded it with grass and planted trees. Today families can enjoy picnics on its glens, and in winter people sled down the slopes. They built something good over the ruins of destruction.³

Easter does that. God took the worst that men could do, and He brought something wonderful out of it. Considering this great reversal, I remember that the Bible is full of that sort of irony. Adam and Eve made a mess of things, but God protected them. Abraham wavered and Sarah laughed, but God guided them. Isaac proved to be a weak

leader, but God used him anyway. Jacob was a trickster and manipulator, but God worked out His plan through him. Moses murdered and his people murmured, but God brought good out of it.

The Bible's personnel file does not contain "supersaints" who are flawless, but genuine flesh-and-blood people with glaring faults. Through them, God works out His grand scheme. What He began in the Garden of Eden, He brought to fruition by way of an empty tomb that quietly proclaims His control.

On Easter, God said, "I forgive. Now you may forgive too." We Christians are sandwiched in between the open hand of God on one side and the closed fist of people on the other. The trick is to find ways of opening those fists and putting them into the open hand that awaits them. So we learn forgiveness and reconciliation.

Easter indicates that good things come from a crucible. Evil forces combine, attempting to exile God from His world. But out of the crucible of the Cross and the grave arises a new life and a new word. The angel at the empty tomb said, "He is not here; he has risen" (Matt. 28:6). Because that is true, people are brought together with others and with God. The eight days that changed the world began with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and ended with His exit from a stuffy tomb. Because of Jesus' triumph, we who love Him need not fear the stranglehold of doubt and death.

Peter wrote, "We have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19). That Morning Star arose from the grave and now rises in the hearts of those who love Him. The inscription in the crypt of the Allegheny Observatory at the University of Pittsburgh is instructive for us: "We have loved the stars too fondly to be fearsome of the night."

Yes, we have.

1. This story comes from Dr. Joe E. Trull, *Proclaim*, July—September 1988, 36.

2. George Bush, quoted in *Christianity Today*, October 16, 1987, 37.

3. This story is told by Roy L. Honeycutt in the *Tie*, July—August 1987, 16.

The Hang-up of Business

(Continued from page 31)

were mixed up; service was inadequate. One waitress actually turned a plate of food upside down on the counter, necessitating a reorder. They were busy but seemed to be hung up on an appearance of superactivity. On another occasion my wife and I went to a restaurant called The Skipper, where just one young man worked behind the counter. He took the orders courteously, ran the cash register, cooked the food, and served it amazingly quick without an appearance of busyness. He knew how to make every motion count. We ate delicious food, well cooked, in an atmosphere of unflustered fellowship and pleasure, and we left with a warm feeling of goodwill.

Ministers should learn the art of getting their work done with dispatch and skill. Their ingenuity can be improved by observing those who are proficient. This may mean the elimination of some useless activities and a concentration upon the most important things. The temptation to say no to a request because of the hang-up of busyness should be shunned like a plague.

We need to be spiritual frontiersmen in the greatest enterprise in the world. Building the kingdom of God through the investment of all of our energies is the most worthwhile task available. We dare not shirk our responsibilities nor dodge our opportunities behind the facade of being overworked.

The great soul prays, "Lord, make me as big as my problems."

The little soul prays, "Lord, let me off."

The giant soul asks, "Lord, give me strength sufficient for the hard day."

The small soul begs, "Lord, let me have a lighter load."

The great heart prays, "Lord, let me stand firm when the fight is the hardest."

The irresponsible soul prays, "Lord, let me escape."

Jesus said, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35, KJV).

When our family moved into a new neighborhood, we found ourselves living next door to an old man who appeared to spend most of his life on his front porch. We would see him there day after day in the warm summer weather as soon as his daughter left for work. He looked so lonely that I fell into the habit of running over to chat with him for a few minutes when I had time.

He was 84, I learned. The cynical downward curve of his mouth should have prepared me for his dismal attitude. No, he wasn't interested in going to church; it was full of hypocrites. No, he never listened to religious broadcasts; all that those fellows cared about was money; they were always begging. The Bible? Who could understand it, with all those "thees" and "thous"? A modern translation? What was the use? The Bible was full of contradictions.

It was impossible to make a dent in his armor, I thought, until I remarked one September day, as we sat watching the leaves drift to the sidewalk, "The end of the summer. Everything's dying."

He grimaced. "Do you have to put it like that?"

"Like what? Oh, you don't like the word 'death'?"

"Does anybody?"

"Not if they're not ready to meet God," I admitted. There was sarcasm in his glance. "And how does a person get ready, since you seem to know all about it?"

I said bluntly, "It's certainly time you found out, at 84." He listened while I told him about the Christ of the Cross and the empty grave.

The chink in the old man's armor was his fear of death. Because he was so frightened, he let me talk about the One who delivered those who, because of fear of death, lived all their lives as slaves to constant dread. He was much impressed as he read the

words for himself in Hebrews: "and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb. 2:15).

"That's me, all right," he said somewhat sheepishly.

He lost his fear when he found the One who said, "I am going there to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

Aha! I thought, remembering the two teenage boys and the girl in my Sunday School class who were totally indifferent to their own spiritual welfare. I was sure I'd discovered a great secret: "It's the fear of death that drives people to the Lord. I'll bear down on this from now on."

But my three problem young people yawned in my face when I stressed the danger of being cut off suddenly in life. Their attitude was that they had years to live, plenty of time to think about eternity. Death simply wasn't real to them. Death happens to their grandmothers or the old lady in the next block.

The church showed a film one night on the Rapture, the coming of Jesus for His own, depicting the fate of those left behind. That did it for Grant and Alice, and later for Ben. They saw their danger. Why, Jesus could come back that very night, finding them unprepared, not belonging to His family. It was essential to settle the question immediately. They wasted no time.

I'm learning not to appeal to all old people on the ground of the fear of death, nor to all young people on the shattering possibility of being left behind when Christ returns. It's wiser to spread the table with the heavenly food and let the banquet guests fill their own plates.

As for children, in my spiritual cafeteria that's a whole new feast day. Being without prejudices or biases, or the more sordid forms of self-interest, they respond to challenges to faith, to trust, and oh, how quickly, to the *love* of Jesus Christ.

Helen, a children's Bible club teacher, tells of Lissy, a tough little eight-year-old who wandered into her Bible club one afternoon. Stringy hair dangled from beneath her dirty, knitted cap. She smacked her gum loudly throughout prayer time, scuffled with the other kids, and asked unanswerable questions in a gruff voice during story time.

In Lissy's home the names God and Jesus were simply cusswords.

She came back, week after week. On the day the flannelgraph story

Choosing the Bait


by Marjorie Zimmerman

Gresham, Oreg.



depicted Jesus as the Shepherd who found the lost sheep and brought it home on his shoulders, Lissy surrendered to Him. She hoisted her white flag—her upraised hand—at the teacher's invitation and remained behind to talk further.

"Would you like to say something to Jesus, now that He's your Good Shepherd?" Helen asked.

Lissy's prayer, when it came, was the sweetest Helen had ever heard. "I love You, Jesus," Lissy whispered. 



Dealing with Discouragement

by Larry T. Allen

Catlettsburg, Ky.

Dealing with discouragement can be a continuing task. Discouragement is one of Satan's most effective tools.

There was a time in my ministry that I suffered from the scourge of discouragement. Though never so low as Elijah, wanting to die, I have identified with the fellow who was down. He felt so low he had to reach up to tie his shoes.

Here are some of the sources of my discouragement and some of the ways the Lord has helped.

Frustration with Finances

For a long time I was discouraged over our personal finances. It seemed I was always coming up a dollar short each week. Suddenly I had a simple revelation: the only difference between coming up a dollar short and a dollar to the good is \$2.00! So I began to make every effort to spend \$2.00 less per week. Soon our finances began to look better.

We have found that we can wish, dream, and hope for everything.



However, we just can't buy everything. We try to pay cash for purchases and avoid as much interest as possible. We have been out of debt for several years.

Faults Without Fixes

Some of my lowest times came when I faced problems and saw no solutions. Now I believe there are answers out there somewhere. If I ask enough people, someone will help me. Recently, a fellow pastor encouraged me by taking time to share his church's stewardship campaign with me. As a result, our church has begun that program. Even though it will take a while to see it turn around, we have a plan that will help us.

Facing the Foes

I learned something about foes: "You can't win 'em all!" However, I determined that if I have any foes, it's on their part, not mine. I'll endeavor to be open to them. I'll try to understand and love them. Having done all I can do to be a peacemaker, I must stand strong and tall. Promises from God's Word give me strength. For instance, in Joshua 1, God told Joshua three times to "be strong."

Fellowship Without Friendship

My wife and I have never been without fellowship, which we have

immensely enjoyed. However, when we get low, we need more than fellowship. We need friendship. Sometimes my wife and I need another couple whose friendship goes beyond the surface level, the kind of friendship in which two couples can share and pour out their hearts.

Such depth of friendship is difficult, since pastors get so busy. Sometimes we don't bond with others. And Murphy's Law goes into effect: once you get close to another couple, one couple will surely move to another church far away. My wife and I have tried to cultivate deep friendships as an aid to discouragement.

Fighting the Flesh

Spending time behind a desk and hesitating to say no at afterglows can produce an out-of-shape pastor. But, I reasoned, I can still hold my own on the basketball court or in the batting cage. I also noticed that there are very few perfect bodies. First, I had to admit that I needed to discipline my physical condition. So I lost weight, decaffeinated myself, went on medication for hypertension, and began to lift weights to tone muscles I needed to rediscover. Even slender people need to take care of their bodies lest Satan would use it to his advantage.

Fretting over Failures

Not all the goals I have set have

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GROW

A Journal of Church Growth, Evangelism and Discipleship



AMAZING WOMEN MINISTERS



Exciting Outreach At Indianapolis And Westside Church

see pages 19-24

Next Issue: More News About Women Preachers

"Your... Daughters Will Prophecy"



Some denominations argue over the right of women to preach and pastor churches. Not the Church of the Nazarene. We've never had any reluctance about the right of women to be ministers. Of course we seldom call them to pastor our churches. We give them the *right* to be pastors but not the *opportunity*!

Hopefully this will change—and soon! Women have effectively served as pastors across the years. I'm thinking of Agnes White Diffie who pastored Little Rock, Arkansas, First Church with an attendance of well over 500. For years Odessa, Texas, First Church had the largest Nazarene Sunday school in the state of Texas, and it was pastored by a wonderful woman preacher,

Pearl Keeton. I could go on. But, to borrow a phrase from the writer of Hebrews, "time would fail me" to tell of all the women who have pastored strong churches in our denomination across the years.

An increasing number of women are responding to the call to preach. They are preparing themselves for ministry in the Church of the Nazarene. Churches will be well served by these women—if they are given an opportunity to fulfill their call.

Women deserve more than the right to preach. They need the opportunity to pastor our churches.

Bill M. Sullivan

Mission of Church Growth Division

To contribute to the advancement of God's kingdom by fostering growth in the Church of the Nazarene.

To promote aggressive evangelism in all its many forms throughout the denomination.

To create an awareness throughout the church regarding the necessity for planting new churches, including the mission potential among cultural minorities.

To increase participation and effectiveness in a reproductive ministry that is engaged in Christian mission.

LADIES OF THE CLOTH LEAD NAZARENE CHURCHES

Women Ministers Shape Growing Congregations

Details of impressive ministries by these women Nazarene pastors come from personal correspondence and phone conversations. Taken together, these extraordinary stories are mostly new information for the editor and probably for most *GROW* readers. Like many Nazarene ministries, these awe-inspiring accomplishments in spite of formidable obstacles represent impressive attainments for Christ.

Therefore, for the Church Growth Division and for the *GROW* magazine staff, I say, "Straight ahead, ladies, for the salvation of souls and the glory of God."—The editor

BEGINNING PASTOR RELOCATES DECLINING CHURCH

While employed as a day-care teacher at a time when she had stopped-out from seminary studies, Sonia Jones discovered Asbury Church of the Nazarene in Jackson, Mississippi. Her first curiosity about the church started when she drove through Asbury's changing neighborhood with her day-care children on a field trip.



Pastor Sonia Jones

Initially, a "For Sale" sign in the church yard grabbed her attention. She wondered about their reasons for selling the church. To

satisfy her inquisitiveness, she attended a mid-week service early in September 1987 where she found a small, faithful group composed mostly of older members.

God's timing drew seminary student Sonia Jones to that first Wednesday visit just seventy-two hours after the pastor had resigned on the previous Sunday night. Two or three weeks later on September 27, 1987, she began serving as supply pastor and the congregation soon invited her to continue as their pastor.

To everyone's amazement, the property sold in two months after years of trying to relocate. And on December 6, 1987, the congregation moved services to the parsonage where more than twenty-five people sometimes attended.

In August, 1989, the church purchased three acres in Madison, changed their name to Madison First Church of the Nazarene—the first in Madison County since the

1950's—and began construction in November, 1989. Services started in the new building in March, 1990, and the dedication was held on April 18, 1990, with General Superintendent Jerald Johnson.

Ordained in 1989, this thirty-four-year-old unmarried pastor recalls the building efforts: "My role was unique. With no prior building background, I worked with the architect in designing the building, helped supervise construction, and actually took part in every phase I could handle. It was special to work side by side with church members on the building."

Pastor Jones shows her heart for outreach when she dreams, "We hope to see more Nazarene churches in various parts of this country in the future."

PATRICIA LITTEN TAKES FIRST PASTORATE AT AGE 47

Fillmore, California, Church of the Nazarene, organized in 1936, now led by Pastor Patricia Litten, serves a population of 11,000 in a town that boasts of one supermarket, two gas stations, no hospital, a volunteer fire department, and



Pastor Patricia Litten

twenty-four churches. Pastor Litten started her first pastorate in

LADIES OF THE CLOTH LEAD NAZARENE CHURCHES

May, 1991, at Fillmore. Litten is married to Wallace, a general engineering contractor, and is the mother of two grown children.

Fillmore, located less than an hour from the center of Los Angeles, is like a time capsule buried in progress-driven Southern California. Both the town and church seem almost oblivious to surrounding suburbia reaching hungrily in their direction.

Pastor Litten describes the possibilities: "Like the sleepy little town, the church, alive but dormant for decades, now faces the future. Our challenge is to get ready."

She continues, "We've made a start. My major goal upon coming as pastor was to inspire new hope, instill a vision, and instigate possibilities for progress. In the midst of this preparation, we see fruit as three new families and two new individuals have become regular attenders in the past few months, and male attendance

has increased from three regulars to almost half the adult congregation. We sense God's dynamic leading in concrete ways."

DISTRICT OFFICE MANAGER OPENED CLOSED CHURCH

Auburn Church dates back to 1906, the oldest Nazarene church on the Illinois District. But the church was closed.

Eleven years ago, Estella R. Jones started thinking something should be done about the sad situation. But she doubted her involvement because her office manager duties for the district superintendent kept her extremely busy. What could be done?

Having served in pastoral ministry for forty years with her deceased husband, she was pained by the closed church. And the building appeared so forlorn across the street from the post office for all to see. What could she do?

Office Manager Estella Jones shared her anguish with District Superintendent James Hunton and offered to help someone start the church again. In a few days Brother Hunton suggested,



Pastor Estella R. Jones

"Estella, why don't you reactivate the Auburn church?"

She remembers her reaction: "My only experience as pastor had been two years I filled in for my husband who had suffered a tragic heart attack; the two of us continued in those years because he hoped to be well enough to return to the active ministry. But in spite of my short experience, God had been talking to me about Auburn and I dared not refuse."

Interestingly, her formal training had come in small doses over many years. In college, when younger than twenty, she studied Greek I and II, Rational Theism, and Philosophy—heavy subjects for a late teenager. Later she completed requirements to become a director of Christian education, and she taught in the public schools for an eight-year interval. Along the way she earned a master's degree in counseling and guidance. Consequently, little additional educational work was required for graduation from the minister's course of study.

She commenced at Auburn with a massive redecorating/clean-up project assisted by three adults and two children she rounded up; zone pastors and members of their churches gave their full support.

Some of the record is now in. During the intervening years, the church has been remodeled, new furnaces and air-conditioning have been installed, new pews purchased, a new kitchen built, and 110 pieces of paneling were installed to make the basement usable. Two rooms, a bath, and a garage have been added to the parsonage. And additional property for building a fellowship hall has been purchased.

Pastor Estella Jones, who lists her age as nearing retirement, concludes her report: "We have added over 200 to our responsibility list and are amassing the troops to the fields, for they are 'white unto harvest.'" She adds an appreciation postscript to District Superintendent John Hancock, "Except for his willingness to allow me to work on Auburn Church when I am not busy doing district work, I would not be able to get everything done."

SELF-EMPLOYED HUSBAND HELPS FUND MINISTRY

Though it is a fact of ministry that pastors' wives frequently work to support their husbands' ministry, a role reversal is in place in Carthage, Texas, Church of the Nazarene on the Dallas District. This church is served by Rev. Mrs. Ruth Hickman and Horace, her husband. Because he is self-employed, they can move wherever God leads them and are able together to serve churches with small salaries.



Pastor Ruth Hickman

For three and a half years Pastor Hickman has served this church which had been closed for eight years prior to her coming. God assisted with amazing miracles to reopen the work—a church building was bought and a parsonage was

purchased across the street from the new property. Last fall Carthage Church averaged 44 in Sunday school and had more than 50 during another month.

A notable spiritual victory came last summer when the Hickmans' son was gloriously converted and delivered from a fifteen-year drug addiction. His return to the Father started with the conversion of his five-year-old girl one Sunday morning. With joy his pastor mother rejoices, "His family is all together now!"

About her experience as a woman of the cloth, Pastor Ruth Hickman, age 63, reflects: "Being a woman preacher has sometimes been difficult, but we have more acceptance now. The most recent advance for me happened last fall when the Ministerial Alliance selected me to bring the message for the community Thanksgiving service."

Pastor Hickman observes about potential growth in her church, "The days ahead look very promising."

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER INVEST FIFTY YEARS IN ONE CHURCH

Pastor Rose M. Hoffman launched her ministry in January 1974 as the second generation woman pastor from her family to serve the Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, Church of the Nazarene. This two generational service to the same congregation spans fifty years of continuous service.



Pastor Rose M. Hoffman

Likely a first for Nazarenes, this story is probably unique in all Christian organizations. Mother and daughter have served this church for its entire fifty year history. Rose learned passion for ministry and skills for ministry at her mother's knee.

This church started in 1942 when Rose Hoffman's mother dug the work out without support from the district or the general church. The Hoffman family, including four children and father/husband who worked for the Reading Railroad, assisted their housewife/mother/pastor in planting the church and constructing the building. The children even hauled stone for the foundation walls.

This uncommon record permits Pastor Rose to observe, "I literally pastor the church I grew up in."

Within a few weeks after the founder's 1973 Christmas Eve death, the congregation invited Rose to become pastor. She continues to the present, viewing the whole town as her parish. Of her ministry to townspeople Pastor Hoffman asserts, "I go whenever and wherever I am called. I do my best to be faithful to every need."

Schuylkill Haven Church, located in a small town with 69 members, occupies debt free

LADIES OF THE CLOTH LEAD NAZARENE CHURCHES

property valued at \$450,000 including a beautiful sanctuary, annex, two parsonages, and two parking lots. Hoffman summarizes the years in an emphatic sentence, "Miracles—miracles—all the way."

When queried about evangelistic vigor in the church, Pastor Hoffman explained, "We get folks started and they move on to other places. The extravagant record of what God has helped us do will only be revealed in eternity. Many churches in bigger towns and far-away cities are stronger because of the people we have won."

GRANDMOTHER MINISTER ADDS FIFTEEN NEW MEMBERS AT WILMINGTON

Pastor Sandra San Paolo, a bivocational minister, reports fifteen new members added to the Wilmington, California, Church since May, 1990. Membership



Pastor Sandra San Paolo

now totals 72. These new converts came to Christ through one-on-one or group counseling among a population deeply bruised by urban sin and big city burdens.

Wilmington, an unincorporated area within the Los Angeles Harbor area, consists of an ever-changing ethnic community riddled by street violence, drug trafficking, and gang warfare. These conditions force the church to minister in a perpetual state of transition.

Pastor Sandra San Paolo, mother of six and grandmother of four, began serving this church on February 7, 1990, along with her husband Carlo. He uses his musical talents and personal evangelism gifts to strengthen her ministry.

She testifies about her personal faith journey: "I stand amazed at the power of Christ to heal and cleanse the past; and I am awed by grace which restores beyond my fondest, greatest imagination."

Pastor San Paolo resolutely verbalizes her conviction, "Women pastors have an opportunity to be all they can be and to restore the model of women. A woman's most important right is sitting at the feet of Jesus—the most prestigious of all positions in the world."



*Suffer little children
and forbid them not, to come unto me:
for of such is the kingdom of heaven*
(MATTHEW 19:14, KJV).

NAZARENE PASTORS' CHILDREN EDUCATION PROGRAM

Photo by Bob Prescott



TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

DID YOU KNOW...

- ☐ Nazarene pastors in developing countries often receive a salary of little more than \$35.00-\$50.00 a month?
- ☐ Public education in many countries is not free and often includes expenses such as tuition, school uniforms, textbooks, and supplies?
- ☐ Many Nazarene pastors' children are in need of financial assistance in order to pay for their education expenses?

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- ☐ For \$18.00 a month, you can sponsor a Nazarene pastor's child and help send him to school.
- ☐ Your support will lift a great burden from Nazarene pastors and their families in developing world areas who desperately need this help.
- ☐ You will receive a picture and biographical profile of the child you are sponsoring, as well as the opportunity to correspond with and pray for your child.
- ☐ Your local church will receive 10% Mission Special credit.

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Kansas City, MO 64131

In Canada:
Church of the Nazarene Canada
No. 7, 3800-19th St. N.E.
Calgary, AB T2E 6V2

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by
Bill M. Sullivan

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Growth Markings & Main Points

Evanglizing over 24 million American Blacks is not an option; it is the whole church's privilege and responsibility.

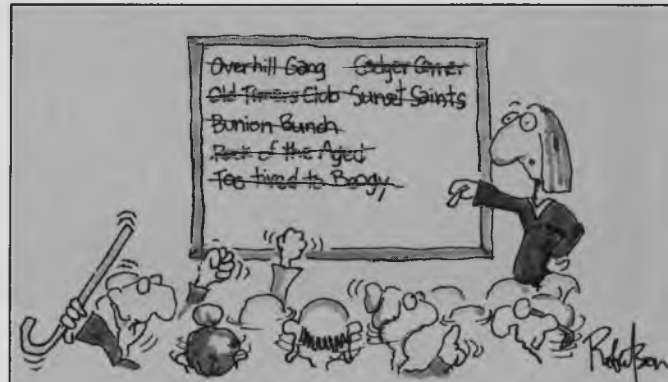
Roger Bowman

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can seriously help another without helping himself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Materialists come in every economic bracket. A poor preacher can be caught up by materialism as much as a wealthy man.

Kent Hughes



"Pastor Evelyn Gork fails to impress the newly-formed senior adult outreach group with her attempts to name the group."

Behind all successful work for the lost is an inward spiritual impulse; and behind the impulse is the Holy Spirit who reproduces Christ in us.

Roy J. L.

One reason why so many churches stay at about 90 is that is about the number of people that one person can pastor without organizing the workers, establishing the discipline of office hours, or planning programs.

David A. Wom

Expectations influence performance.

Lyle E. Sch



Now that you've prayed to receive Christ, how about considering heading up our evangelism & outreach department?

In any given group of occurrences, a small number of causes will tend to give rise to the largest proportion of results.

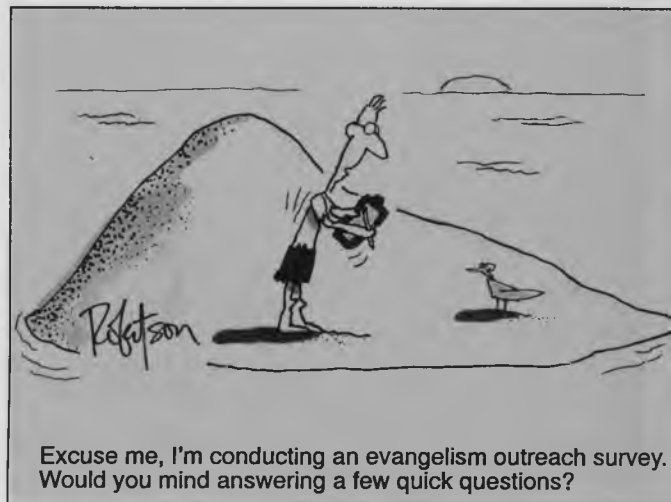
Louis A. Allen

People love the excitement of growth and the conversion of new people.

Bill M. Sullivan

Deciding to change is only half the battle. We have to know what to change to.

Leith Anderson



Excuse me, I'm conducting an evangelism outreach survey. Would you mind answering a few quick questions?

MAINE CHURCH GAINS 28 MEMBERS IN 30 MONTHS



Evangelist Doris McDowell Impacts Pastor Diane Cunningham

“My interview with this church board in April 1989 felt like a marriage made in heaven.” That’s how Pastor Diane Cunningham describes her first contact with the Nazarenes at Berwick, Maine.

At that time, Cunningham was concluding her senior year at Nazarene Theological Seminary and did not expect many opportunities for women graduates. But God used Maine District Superintendent Clarence C. Hildreth to initiate a link between this small congregation and beginning Pastor Cunningham.

Berwick Church of the Nazarene, originally organized in 1967, experienced growth at the start, but by 1984 the congregation had dwindled to only one person. Thus the church had to start again, and by 1989 it had grown back to 20. That is when Cunningham started.

The situation has changed. Morale is high, and the church hopes to relocate on a three-and-one-half-acre site which includes a building that when remodeled could seat 500. The





pastor describes church members and potential in glowing terms, "Our people have real vision for the present and for the future. I am blessed to work with incredibly talented lay people who are motivated to do just about anything for the church."

Cunningham explains possibilities for future growth, "Berwick is unique because you can go one mile and be in the country. But go over the state line a half mile from here, and you will be in the suburbs of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Fifty thousand people live within a fifteen-mile radius of Berwick even though our town's population is only 7,000."

Cunningham's call to the Christian ministry was sparked by Evangelist Doris McDowell. Cunningham dates her conversion at age five to a revival series McDowell held in her home church in Gaithersburg, Maryland. Later the evangelist served the same church as associate pastor for two years when Diana was ten.

When asked to evaluate distinctive strengths of a woman in ministry, Pastor Cunningham replied, "Way back during college I read a study of traits congregations seek in a pastor. The list included typical female qualities such as nurturing, caring, sensitivity, and

listening skills. I have found being a woman gives me exceptional openings to do pastoral care and counseling with tough issues in women's lives like abuse, abandonment, incest, and abortion. I have a thousand percent support in the local church as if they are blind to gender. Problems are more likely to come in ministerial associations, community contacts like doctors and hospitals, and denominational

relationships at district or general church levels."

Cunningham feels strongly that women will be effective when given an opening. She voiced her earnest conclusion, "When women are given an opportunity to minister, it will be amazing what they can accomplish by the grace of God."

Based on their own experience, the laity at Berwick wholeheartedly agree. ■





SHARE THE JOY

EASTER OFFERING FOR WORLD EVANGELISM

CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE • STEWARDSHIP SERVICES

HISPANIC LYDIA BARRON PASTORS NAVAJO CHURCH



God's renewed nudge into ministry for Lydia Barron started in 1986. After seven years as Western Latin American District NWMS president, Barron felt prodded to pursue a call to preach which she attempted to ignore for years.

While rejoicing for recovery from a serious illness, Barron prayed, "I'm ready to be sent wherever You need me." In response to prayer, she soon felt God wanted her in New Mexico.

But she had many questions. How could a mature woman minister in New Mexico when her husband, Raul, had a long-time position with the Rohor Corporation? What about the home where they had lived for 20 years? What about acceptance of a woman minister? And what about the cultural dissimilarity between urban California and frontier-like New Mexico.

At once unexplainable events began to happen. Within a year, husband Raul took early retirement, their house sold for cash and two-week occupancy was required, and then they purchased a recreational vehicle with the intention of finding the location of God's will for their future.

In their search over months, they traveled from California to Oregon; to Vancouver, Canada; back to Lynden, Washington; east to Denver; south to Grants, New Mexico; then to Carlsbad and Truth or Consequences; on to Pinehill, Sandmountain, and finally to Ramah. In each place doors were closed or the Barrons felt a "no" from God; they were puzzled. Then they came to Ramah.

As they drove past the Ramah Navajo Church of the Nazarene, Lydia Barron informed her husband, "This is the place." It seemed a harmless location where she would not have to preach inasmuch as the church had a pastor and Lydia could only preach in Spanish, never in English or Navajo. But God had other plans.

Soon the pastor moved, and in December 1989, the native American congregation requested Lydia to become their pastor. With God's help, she learned to preach in another language and adjusted to rural tribal culture. And last year, she added nine by profession of faith to the church's membership, a 14 percent gain.

When questioned about the future, Pastor Barron replied, "My dream is to see this church grow seven times more—not only in numbers, but in strength, spirit, and prayer."

MARY PAUL STARTS PASTORATE NEAR BOSTON



Second Generation Woman Minister Serves Church

Mary and Bruce Paul moved last summer to their first pastorate at Lynn, Massachusetts. Like thousands before them, they encountered all the customary misgivings and the gratifying satisfactions of sharing their ministry quest with this new group of people. Lynn Church of the Nazarene, located in an urban setting in greater Boston, worships in a traditional New England edifice, and the Pauls live next door in a typical white frame parsonage with their baby son.

Everything appears predictably conventional with one notable difference—Mary is the pastor and Bruce is a professional social worker.

And there are reasons for rejoicing. Church members say she is an exceptional pastor, and District Superintendent Neale O. McLain praises her sensitivities to needs and commitments to ministry. The church has already grown both numerically and spiritually—starting with 27, nearly 50 attended one Sunday. And a shift in the atmosphere has taken the church from focus on survival to service to each other and the community.



Rev. Mary Paul's call to the ministry was kindled most through the local and district lay ministry of her mother, Ann Rearick, now an ordained elder. Visiting women missionaries quietly influenced Mary, too, as did participation in a district children's missionary essay contest when she wrote about her longing to serve people. Her theme concluded with the testimony, "I have that kind of call," and she won a velvet painting as a prize.

The call ripened during her student years at Eastern Nazarene College when Mary and Bruce, even before their marriage, had long talks dreaming what it would mean to work together in a church. Then following college and before seminary, she served one year as an intern at the Lambs Church of the Nazarene near Times Square in New York City. In the fund-raising process for that undertaking, Mary preached in several churches and heard the inner voice say, "This is what I want you to do."

Years later, she sharpened skills for ministry at Quincy Bethel Church of the Nazarene as a staff member.

Regarding her wholehearted acceptance in the pastorate at Lynn, Rev. Paul reports, "This group of people have been wonderful. I think

the possibility of the church closing opened thinking to new styles of leadership and to a pastor who looks

A shift in the atmosphere has taken the church from focus on survival to service

different. Another important reality is also at work—some of our congregation cherish fond memories of

women ministers from other generations. One lady told me her husband came to Christ through the ministry of a woman evangelist. Another's grandmother planted churches in Maine. Then history helps because our mother church at Malden was planted more than one hundred years ago by a woman minister."

Pastor Paul, when asked to summarize her reactions to her present assignment, replied, "I am thankful for an opportunity to serve a congregation who is open to me and even celebrate my call to ministry. Each time I visit or preach, I am grateful for this gift of ministry the church has given me." ■



MOTHER ANN REARICK AND DAUGHTER MARY PAUL SHARE IDEAS ABOUT MINISTRY.

Taxed Out?



Why pay more taxes when you could owe less? Here are five appropriate and effective ways for a minister to minimize tax obligations:

1. The local church employer may provide **reimbursement for all business and professional expenses** under a "qualified" reimbursement plan so that the ministerial employee need not be taxed on money spent for church or professional expenses.
2. The church may provide a **tax-free housing allowance**. Ministers who are buying or renting their home may use the allowance to pay housing related expenses. Those living in a parsonage may be eligible to use the allowance for furnishings, linens, etc.
3. Deferred compensation in the form of **contributions to the minister's Nazarene Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA)** account is not reported as income. This money is left to accrue tax-free interest for the minister's retirement income. Withdrawals can be designated as housing allowance.
4. The local church may provide **medical coverage** through the Nazarene Health and Hospitalization Program on participating districts. By self-insuring the deductible and coinsurance through a qualified medical reimbursement account, the church can reduce the amount of taxed income necessary to provide this coverage.
5. **Group term life insurance** is another employee benefit which the church may provide tax-free to the minister when premiums are paid according to IRS guidelines.



For information on any of these ideas, write

Board of Pensions and Benefits USA
6401 The Paseo
Kansas City, MO 64131-1284

Continuing Lay Training Denominational Study

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Many Christians are reluctant to witness.

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The Bible

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An essential resource for pastors and laity. Each chapter is followed with relevant questions for discussion. A study guide is available.

"I Can Help Women Find God"

SUNDAY SCHOOL WOMAN SERVES AS NEBRASKA CORRECTIONAL CHAPLAIN

GOD'S PROVIDENCE TAKES SYBIL HARRIS FROM GUYANA TO NEBRASKA

Years ago missionaries to Guyana and other Latin American areas came to know a young believer named Sybil Harris. Through their influence, she received ministerial training at the Caribbean Nazarene Theological College in Santa Cruz, Trinidad. After three years of college, she returned to her native Guyana to be a Christian worker where she helped with various ministries and survived on a small salary amounting to about \$8.50 per month. Part of those years she lived with missionaries, but she was always immersed in supportive ministry. Much of the time she visited in the villagers' homes and conducted Sunday school classes under the houses

built on stilt-like pillars because of recurring flood conditions. In one of those Sunday schools at a village called Rosignol, she taught a young East Indian girl who would greatly influence Sybil's future.

For years Harris envisioned herself serving God in the United States. Today she ministers as chaplain at the Nebraska Center for Women located in York, Nebraska.

In 1970, Sybil Harris immigrated to the United States where she was employed for a short time as a domestic in New York City. Then on a visit to old missionary friends, Rev. and Mrs. William Shipman, then pastors in York, Nebraska, the Lord opened her heart to work with troubled children at the Epworth Village; in a short time she became the first black woman to serve on that staff. While working at Epworth, Sybil met Lucille Splinter, assistant superintendent of the women's center. Splinter later introduced her to Donna Borgan, the new superintendent at the center.

When more security guards were needed at the prison facility, Sybil Harris was offered a job as a correctional matron.

But this could not have taken place without the girl at Rosignol. Here's the story: When Sybil decided to try to come to the United States, she went to the U.S. Embassy to take her place in the long line of people seeking entrance to everything the United States represented. It was common for crowds to stand in line for days only to be turned down because they lacked specific documents.

Sybil took her chances like everyone else. But while standing in line, the little girl from the Rosignol Sunday school class, now grown and employed as secretary to the Ambassador, spotted Sybil in the line and recognized her happy laughter. The secretary took Sybil to meet the Ambassador who concluded she was a worthy immigrant; he ordered the necessary papers issued.

God had ministry at Nebraska Women's Center in His plans for Sybil. And her ministry started as a correctional officer in 1977, grew into an officially recognized ministry assignment in 1988, and continues today. Though she started as a prison ma-

tron, she soon became salt and light to the prison like Jesus described in the Sermon on the Mount. Because of her positive spiritual influence through voluntary ministry in the prison, she was invited to be chaplain.

Chaplain Harris' ministry at the Nebraska Center for Women includes chaplain's functions such as teaching Bible studies, leading worship services, and counseling prisoners on a one-on-one basis. Ordained in 1990, Harris calls herself "a full-time part-time chaplain," which means she is paid part time as a prison matron and part time as a religious counselor. Since the facility is only four miles from her home, she keeps herself on call twenty-four hours per day. Whenever a chaplain is needed, she is called. The Nebraska Center for Women, with a population of 150 prisoners, is the only state women's facility in Nebraska. Hence Nazarene Sybil Harris provides spiritual impact for most women who commit crimes in her state.

Summarizing her ministerial journey, Chaplain Harris declared, "The most meaningful part of my work is on a one-to-one basis where I can help women find God and help them know there is hope. I tell them God can help them get back to a normal life."

Sybil Harris' amazing ministry demonstrates that fulfillment in God's will always starts with faithfulness. For Sybil, the will of God took her from tropical ministry among impoverished people in Guyana, to training in Trinidad, back home to Guyana, then to New York, and now to Nebraska. There are many happy surprises along the holy way.

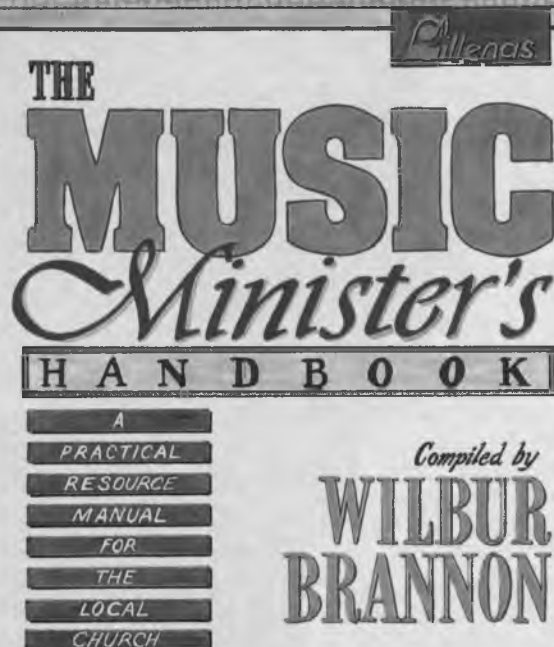


NEW!

Resources from Pastoral Ministries

Wilbur Brannon has synthesized the work of Mike Cork, Bill Green, and Barry Swanson—outstanding Ministers of Music—in an exceptional resource for churches of all sizes. "Perspectives" define the purpose of music ministry and give 10 functions of church music. A focus on the unchurched is discussed. Concepts of "worship" are explored from a biblical viewpoint with workable ideas.

An entire section is devoted to "administration" of the music ministry. "Special Events" are covered with detailed suggestions; e.g., concert series, musical productions, and outreach musicals. The two final sections are "Practical Helps" and "Resources." A book you will refer to often because of the valuable information it contains. **GMMB-639 \$17.95**



A manual that offers three prayer retreat models with directions and work sheets. Formats and suggested schedules are included. Guide questions for meditation and discussion help to bring your ministry into perspective and the mission of your church into focus.

Follow-up steps are offered to include the decision makers and the entire church to develop a new vision for renewal and effective evangelism.

GMS-202 \$14.95

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**INDIANAPOLIS
WESTSIDE
CHURCH REACHES
OUT TO PLANT
NEW WORKS**

WESTSIDE INDIANAPOLIS CHURCH STARTS NEW CHURCH

Avon Community Church Organizes With 87 Members

At press time Avon Community Church of the Nazarene, after being in existence for fourteen Sundays, averaged 151 in worship and 103 in Sunday school. Near Indianapolis, this baby church, half grown by some standards, was organized at the altars of Westside Church on July 21, 1991—the sponsoring congregation's 75th birthday.



When the membership charter closed on October 27, 1991, the new church had received 87 members—47 were new Nazarenes.

Avon Community Church was inaugurated as an intentional outreach ministry of Westside Church. For several years Avon Pastor Doug Litsey served on Westside Church's ministerial staff, and in more recent times he was involved as a lay leader, teaching one of the largest adult Sunday school classes. People involved in this outreach adventure quickly inform you that their trust in Doug and Judy Litsey helped them decide to be Avon Church planting pioneers.

Under Pastor J. K. Warrick, the Westside Church prayed and planned to plant Avon Church for several years. The mother church reports attendance and finances have gained back to the same level or above where they were when the beginning church was started.

Now Pastor Warrick and the Westside congregation are considering planting another church in about two years; they are praying about another nearby community.

The new church meets in Pine Hill Elementary School, built in 1989. This impressive near-new school provides the church with high visibility, location recognition, and spacious facilities. The Avon community, a fast-growing area west of Indianapolis, has many new residential areas, good

schools, and a community-wide desire to incorporate as a city in the near future.

The appealing aim of this church is very clearly expressed in their literature: "To bring glory to God, to share His love with one another and with the world."

GROW congratulates Westside Church and Avon Community Church.





HISTORIC NAZARENE PROPERTY HOUSES SHEPHERD COMMUNITY

Indianapolis Congregation
Wed To Compassion Ministry



God is at work in remarkable ways on East Washington Street in Indianapolis. Community, a big word in this ministry, is bigger at its heart. In Jesus' name and with deliberate attention, Shepherd Community

supplies a sense of worth and belonging to the poor, homeless, and despairing of their neighborhood. The riveting story starts with decisive biblical devotion to worship, evangelism, discipleship, and compassion based on Acts 2 and 4.



The property, former home of Indianapolis First Church, a place where church musician Haldor Lillenas once pastored, has been in



Shepherd Community—An Urban Ministry of the Church of the Nazarene.

Cooperation Among Churches

Indianapolis District has supported the work from the 1986 beginning and made it possible for Shepherd Community to purchase an adjacent 12,000-square-foot building in 1988. Remodeling of this recent addition of space was made possible by the Builders Association of Greater Indianapolis and the Lilly Foundation. Indianapolis Westside Church paid the director's salary for the first year and continues generous annual support.

Nazarene churches in the city and across the district give money, send volunteers, and donate food, clothing and love. And the Day Center for the homeless is a cooperative project with the Salvation Army.

Balanced Ministry

With such pressing social needs it might be easy to neglect spiritual needs. This work, at its heart, has a fully organized Nazarene church

with a Sunday attendance of more than 100. The staff, led by Pastor John Hay, Jr., are all members of the Church of the Nazarene, having graduated from our church colleges and seminary.

Unlike a rescue mission, Shepherd Community works to provide a supportive community of faith to help people work through difficult situations. The mind-boggling list of ministries includes crisis counseling, nutritional food, clothing, on-site medical evaluations, showers, laundry facilities, monthly community dinners, justice intervention, employment education and referral, recovery and support groups, plus three church services per week on the traditional Nazarene schedule of Sundays and mid-week.

The promise of Jesus is being fulfilled at Shepherd Community when He said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40, NIV).



our denominational family since its original construction. After First Church, the building housed Central Church and is now the home of



SHEPHERD COMMUNITY



A VOLUNTEER'S SURPRISE

by Ruth Hall



What an eye-opener! I had no first-hand experience with people who are homeless, hungry, and have no one to care for them.

I first learned about Shepherd Community two years ago. One Sunday morning, my challenge came when Pastor Jack Bimber appealed for volunteers to work at Shepherd Community in Indianapolis. As our minister spoke, my heart burned within me and I

turned to my husband and said, "I want to do that."

Since I come from Spiceland, Indiana, population 800 and no urban problems, this was a life-changing event for me. The week after our pastor's call to practical compassion, I joined a group from our church to take training at Shepherd Community, and we volunteered to begin the following Monday. Several have helped nearly every week since then.

Later in April 1990, Spiceland Church of the Nazarene fixed and served our first community dinner at Shepherd; 27 church members served 150 needy people. What a blessing! It is difficult to explain how the situation affected us.

Our congregation, in the weeks following the dinner, decided to purchase food for us to take to Shepherd each week. During Sunday school the offering plates are passed and everyone gives. Then I buy the groceries on Friday we will serve on Monday.

Between Friday and Monday, three dedicated women—Edna Mae Green, Mary Smith, and Katherine Kissick—help me cook the meal. Early Monday morning we four load the car and drive 50 miles to Indianapolis. We stay most of the day to serve food, get acquainted with the homeless, and share our faith.

The Lord prospers this ministry. Even Spiceland neighbors with no connection with our church bring food and clothing to my house. And the church fills a basket each week for the Shepherd pantry.

The results amaze me. This venture has enriched my life, and compassionate ministry has made us a giving church. And our joy expands even more when we remember the needy are being pointed to Jesus.

Church Size Strategies

0 TO 99—SMALL CHURCH INSTITUTE

100 TO 249—INTERMEDIATE CHURCH INITIATIVE

250 AND UP—K-CHURCH PROJECT

**THERE IS A SPECIAL CHURCH GROWTH STRATEGY
FOR EACH SIZE CATEGORY:**



The Small Church Institute
for churches of 0-99



The Intermediate Church Initiative
for churches of
100 to 249



The K-Church Project
for churches of
250 and up

**NOTE: Categories are based on church membership in 1991.
Church Growth Division, Director Bill M. Sullivan**

VISION '91

VISION '91

Entering the decade with a vision

UNITED STATES
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ON EVANGELISM

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COMPOSER ▶ STEVE ADAMS INSPIRES EVANGELISM CONFERENCE WITH MUSIC.

Entering the decade with

◀ CHURCH GROWTH DIVISION DIRECTOR BILL M. SULLIVAN PRESENTS LARGE CHURCH MANAGEMENT SCHOOL GRADUATES TO GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT WILLIAM J. PRINCE.

SIXTY-FIVE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENTS ALONG WITH LAUREL MATSON, ED NASH, GENE FULLER, AND ROY FULLER SHARE DETAILS OF CHURCH SIZE GROWTH STRATEGIES AND THE LAUNCHING OF THE SMALL CHURCH INSTITUTE. ▼



THE OCTOBER UNITED STATES QUADRENNIAL CONFERENCE ON EVANGELISM



the harvest in view . . .

SCHOOL OF ►
LARGE CHURCH
MANAGEMENT
PARTICIPANTS ON
THEIR WAY TO
VISIT
PRESTONWOOD
BAPTIST CHURCH,
A MEGA CHURCH
IN DALLAS.

GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT RAYMOND W.
HURN RECEIVES OFFICIAL WELCOME FROM
FORT WORTH CITY COUNCIL. ▼

CHURCH GROWTH
DIVISION DIRECTOR
BILL M. SULLIVAN
AWARDS 62
CERTIFICATES TO K
CHURCH GRADUATES. ▼





DISTRICT	GOAL	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	DISTRICT	GOAL	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Akron	513	2	0	16	New England	725	3	5	0
Alabama North	466	3	0	20	New Mexico	312	15	16	10
Alabama South	275	NR	0	16	New York	761	0	NR	26
Alaska	200	9	0	4	North Arkansas	320	5	23	11
Anaheim	650	24	1	17	North Carolina	500	12	6	58
Arizona	700	66	NR	14	North Central Ohio	546	5	0	40
Canada Atlantic	100	NR	NR	0	North Florida	500	33	0	4
Canada Central	218	0	0	0	Northeast Oklahoma	533	57	29	2
Canada Pacific	103	0	4	0	Northeastern Indiana	600	27	18	71
Canada Quebec	200	NR	NR	0	Northern California	600	4	2	35
Canada West	400	2	4	2	Northern Michigan	128	2	6	1
Central California	500	24	4	NR	Northwest	555	7	46	34
Central Florida	1,000	105	37	174	Northwest Indiana	433	27	0	0
Central Latin American	114	6	0	NR	Northwest Oklahoma	558	2	52	8
Central Ohio	912	11	11	53	Northwestern Illinois	610	4	3	0
Chicago Central	700	0	0	0	Northwestern Ohio	450	0	0	0
Colorado	700	46	63	46	Oregon Pacific	902	6	8	8
Dakota	200	0	9	5	Philadelphia	600	0	0	1
Dallas	525	25	16	6	Pittsburgh	380	6	27	7
East Tennessee	329	10	4	9	Rocky Mountain	195	2	0	7
Eastern Kentucky	308	0	0	7	Sacramento	600	20	46	13
Eastern Michigan	750	0	0	0	San Antonio	471	16	0	6
Florida Space Coast	400	7	3	8	South Arkansas	264	0	0	1
Georgia	500	0	3	0	South Carolina	587	37	55	54
Hawaii Pacific	157	0	4	0	Southeast Oklahoma	300	11	2	9
Houston	400	11	30	33	Southern California	441	13	0	3
Illinois	600	15	5	12	Southern Florida	1,100	41	4	47
Indianapolis	400	8	9	10	Southwest Indian	56	NR	0	NR
Intermountain	471	0	0	0	Southwest Indiana	600	9	26	0
Iowa	311	0	12	5	Southwest Latin American	80	0	0	0
Joplin	462	7	20	4	Southwest Oklahoma	601	0	2	33
Kansas	473	0	0	0	Southwestern Ohio	644	38	49	14
Kansas City	633	55	37	19	Tennessee	602	12	22	15
Kentucky	500	13	15	25	Upstate New York	500	11	0	2
Los Angeles	1,406	33	12	37	Virginia	325	11	12	5
Louisiana	300	13	19	8	Washington	497	4	30	11
Maine	112	0	0	NR	Washington Pacific	700	16	140	95
Michigan	450	3	24	3	West Texas	825	26	78	54
Minnesota	165	2	4	0	West Virginia North	605	14	17	2
Mississippi	308	2	23	17	West Virginia South	315	7	27	3
Missouri	477	21	32	2	Western Latin American	172	0	13	0
Navajo Nation	100	NR	NR	NR	Wisconsin	329	5	0	1
Nebraska	300	1	11	0					
TOTALS FOR U.S.A./CANADA						39,610	1,032	1,180	1,263

REGIONS

Africa	11,580	NR	NR	NR
Asia-Pacific	5,500	NR	6,136	NR
Caribbean	14,904	77	304	298
Eurasia	3,540	NR	NR	NR
Mexico and Central America	6,500	NR	NR	NR
South America	10,000	NR	NR	NR
TOTALS FOR WORLD REGIONS	52,024	77	6,440	298

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▽ Retired Elders in Evangelism
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*An adequate budget for evangelism at the beginning of each church year is imperative for each congregation.
A revival savings account is useful in building toward adequate support for the evangelist.*

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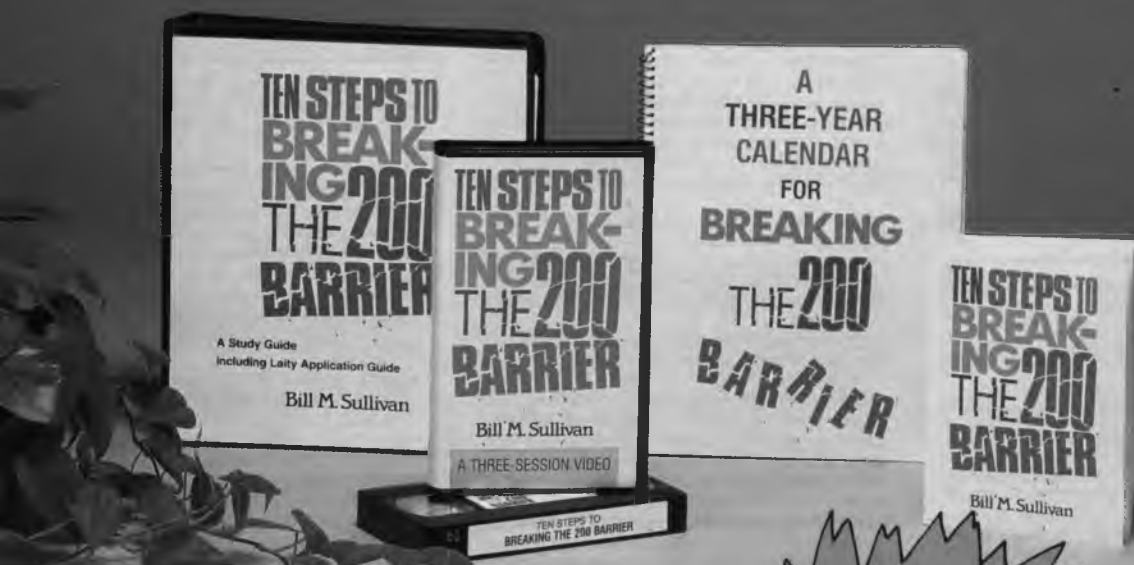
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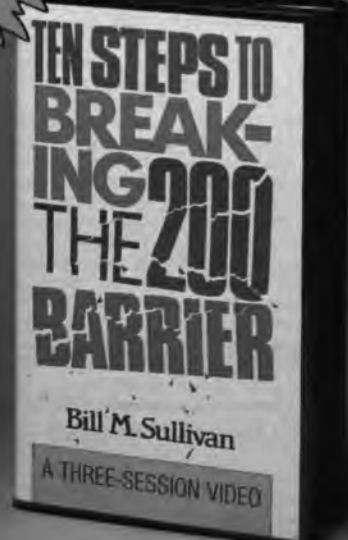
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"DAUGHTER—IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, CHANGE IT. YOUR FATHER IS RICH."

Give Up the Anger and Get to Work

by Janet Smith Williams

When the Church of the Nazarene was very young, in 1924 Louise Robinson, later to become the wife of General Superintendent J. B. Chapman, embarked on her missionary service in Africa. Soon after arriving, she was assigned the unbelievable task of housing girls who ran away from betrothals into which they had been forced or sold. Thirty-two girls soon lived in one small room. The building could not be enlarged or improved because the mission had no funds, no building materials, and no security. The heartbreaking situation looked hopeless to the beginning missionary.

With understandable frustration, young Louise wrote to Dr. George Sharp, her supervisor, "This whole setup is impossible. I just do not like it at all."

Dr. Sharp shortly replied, "Daughter of the King, if you don't like it, change it. Your Father is rich."

That correspondence sounds extremely dissimilar from the words on a plaque someone gave me, "Whatever women do, they must do twice as well as men. Fortunately, that's not difficult." Though some may argue the statement contains a kernel of truth, the conclusion is wrong.

For our purpose, the issue regarding women ministers is not gender rights or competition, but the call of God. You see, almost everyone would agree that the acceptance of women in ministry is often difficult, sometimes prejudicial. But in keeping with Nazarene biblical beliefs, no one volunteers to be a career preacher. Nazarenes insist God calls whom He wills.

Consequently, the called woman preacher does not impulsively

decide the ministry is to be her occupation. This call is the doing of God. He does the calling and the church is charged with responsibility to recognize and nurture that call. Women go into ministry because God calls them.

Hearing such a sacred summons, devout individuals regardless of gender respond with an unshakable conviction that they must obey. And for 2,000 years of Christian history, the called minister has accepted the ramifications, obstacles, and blessings of



Give Up the Anger and Get to Work

that call. Called women must have a comparable assurance if they are to survive the tests and disapproval with poise and piety. Their inner certitude of God's call puts the issue beyond debate, apology, or prejudice.

Legacy

The advocacy for women ministers has been a part of the holiness movement's heritage beginning with John Wesley. Convincing authority may be found in the work of the Spirit, Scripture, religious experience, and inspiring history. And the accomplishments of many clergywomen help verify the validity of their calling.

Competent And Credible

Though the rudimentary purpose of a call to ministry is to do something vital for God, it can never be accomplished without a sincere sense of mission. But to fully realize this calling, the woman preacher must be competent and credible. Skill must be demonstrated in preaching, evangelizing, and pastoring.

Like all Christian workers, the clergywoman ultimately finds acceptance in productive leadership and wholehearted involvement in people's lives rather than in angry arguments about women's rights or in vocal accusations of male counterparts. The woman minister serves best when her ministry is done in

proficient ways that are pleasing to her Lord and life-changing to people.

This requires that the woman of God factually assess her gifts and graces and accurately identify her strengths and weaknesses. Then she can exercise her abilities to their greatest potential in the Kingdom of Christ. Abilities are given by God to produce results.

Like all Christian workers, the clergywoman ultimately finds acceptance in productive leadership and wholehearted involvement in people's lives.

The woman minister pulls down barriers when she uses her creativity, faith, and nurturing skills to build a strong ministry and a growing church. That is precisely what missionary Louise Robinson did to change her situation in Africa and to set herself on a lifelong pilgrimage of being a change maker for the glory of God.

Tackle Hard Assignments

Many situations seem impossible to either men or women. But true change makers revitalize and even relish tough tasks.

For years I have watched Nazarene Bible College graduates, both male and female, go to their first pastorates. Those initial assignments often appeared to be bleak—someone called them "mankillers." No one argued against the need for these beginners to have better places to start. Better places simply were not available to them or else they were not called to more promising situations.

But faith, fasting, and tenacity sometimes generate achievements that surprise the members in those churches, astound the faculty, and please the district superintendents. They re-awaken churches using a variety of methods and lots of creativity. God blesses all work done in His name.

Similar situations are sometimes open to women. No one claims those opportunities are ideal or golden, but a ministry setting exists where people need a pastor.

This demanding kind of Kingdom work when done for love and with efficiency does more than make a reputation, even though a good record usually gets out on us. The challenge means more than great gain. Rather, it means meeting needs and enriching lives. It takes the Good News to human sinfulness and assists the Spirit of God to mend lives, forgive sins, and heal brokenness.

What needs to be done can be done. And we can do it with God's help.

Agnes Diffie represents an incredible ministry model. Though she started in a small struggling church, in her prime she pastored Little Rock, Arkansas, First

Church. Knowledgeable peers said she was known well enough to have been elected governor of her state had she chosen to run. Her vision to heal the broken hearted and preach to real needs prompted her and the church to own and operate radio station KARK. In addition to her regular duties of preaching, pastoring, and hospital visitation, Pastor Diffie spoke on the radio five to seven times each week. She acquired an exceptional library and testified to having read every book in it. Diligence to study and passion for the lost made her a respected preacher and honored pastor.

Make Opportunities

If no vacancy or opening is offered, why not make one? I heard Emma Irick, veteran pastor and evangelist, say about the early days of Nazarene church planting, "We went to towns where they did not want us and stayed until they could not get along without us." That might be an impressive Magna Carta for ministry.

Our early women Nazarene preachers did not wait for opportunities, but driven by zeal for souls and righteousness, they set out to change conditions as they found them. They were effective pastors and evangelists, not because they lacked opposition, but because their hearts flamed with godly ambition to apply the gospel to life. They looked beyond every challenge because they felt their chief objective was to bring people to Christ. In an ultimate sense, no one can keep another from telling what they know about Christ.

Mainstream Involvement

To be accepted, women must not isolate themselves from the church's mainstream. Instead, we must make ourselves visible and put our energy into programs of the church on the district and denominational level as well as the local church.

**If we allow
difficulties and
discrimination to
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insurmountable
mountains.**

Look Beyond Difficulties

If we allow difficulties and discrimination to control us, they become insurmountable mountains. Then we cannot see the work to be done or the victories to be accomplished. Why not recognize the reality that there may always be difficulties and then determine we will work in spite of them.

Then our energy will not be dissipated by controversy regardless of how we feel about it. Then our God-given capabilities and competencies can be used to create a positive outlook about ourselves and our work.

Give Up The Anger And Get To Work

GROW Editor Neil B. Wiseman suggested these words as the title for this article. For several years we worked together on the faculty

of Nazarene Bible College, and he has a way of nudging his colleagues to think about the heart of an issue. I admit I have been jittery about the proposed title, but editors have the last word on these things.

Though the statement may be too strong, the message is vital and discerning. No one, male or female, has time enough, however long his life may be, to argue about prejudices pointed at them and nurse anger about inequity.

Consider The Facts

God calls, He keeps the records, and He has the final word. And in the Father's wisdom, He invited us into His holy service. His trust warrants unconditional devotion. And His mandate obliges us to spend our energies to build His church.

Women ministers stand at the front line as the church and world approach the 21st century. If they will, clergywomen can generate new Kingdom vitality by doing their work well in the name of the Lord. Nothing can stop us, except ourselves.

"Daughter of the King—if you don't like it, change it. Your Father is rich."

The Writer

Janet Smith Williams, now a Nazarene evangelist, enjoys a productive ministry that has included service as co-pastor with her husband, Roger; college teacher at Nazarene Bible College, Southern Nazarene University; and public school teacher. She served as a teen-age evangelist and was ordained by Dr. J. B. Chapman after having completed the home course of study before she went to Eastern Nazarene College. She holds degrees from Eastern Nazarene College, Nazarene Theological Seminary, and Denver Baptist Seminary. Janet's extensive research on Nazarene women ministers adds authenticity to this article.

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VIVIAN PRESSLEY SERVED FORTY YEARS IN ONE CHURCH



Pastor Pressley Led Family Ministerial Trio Team

by Nina Beegle with Wilbur W. Brannon

It all started forty-six years ago in 1946 when a teenager walked into a small Nazarene church in Rock Hill, South Carolina, and inquired, "I've come here to see who Vivian Hinson is. For three weeks, my dad has been walking the floor and praying for someone named Vivian Hinson, and I had to see who she is."

The young man was Paul Kelly, and the floor-walking, praying father was Rev. Arthur E. Kelly, the South Carolina District Superintendent. His perplexing dilemma was a young woman named Vivian Hinson, zone NYPS president

and the Sunday school superintendent in the West Main Church. Since God had called Vivian to preach the gospel, Kelly asked her to fill the pulpit at Rock Hill West Main Church and be the interim pastor "until they could call a pastor." Now Kelly thought the church might call her to be pastor, and like many district superintendents in those days, he was not anxious to have a woman pastor on his district.



A FAMILY MINISTERIAL TRIO: Rev. Marion Pressley, associate pastor and Vivian's husband; Rev. Vivian Pressley, senior pastor from 1946-1986; and Vermelle Hinson, NWMS president and Vivian's sister.

In their search for a new pastor, the church considered several men including one all the way from New York. But when District Superintendent Kelly met with

VIVIAN PRESSLEY

the church board to finalize their pastoral choice, he came out of the meeting and said, "Miss Vivian, you are the pastor of this church."

Forty years later Miss Vivian, who had become Mrs. Pressley, was still pastoring Rock Hill West Main Church of the Nazarene in South Carolina.

The 40-year marriage is a fascinating story, too. After Vivian and Marion married, he trained for the ministry at Trevecca Nazarene College while she stayed to continue pastoring the church. When he returned to Rock Hill, he became a part of the ministerial staff.

Unique Pastoral Journey

Mrs. Pressley reminisced about her pastoral pilgrimage: "I was a charter member of the West Main Church. Though I had been saved a little while earlier when I was 19, I walked into Rock Hill First Church of the Nazarene from an unchurched home and felt immediately that they were my people. They have been my family, my people, ever since."

About her conversion, Pastor Pressley said, "I suffered for three weeks under the delusion that I was going to die. At the end of three weeks I sought the Lord by praying, 'Lord, don't let me die.' I didn't know how to pray, but the lady kneeling next to me said, 'Just tell the Lord you want to be saved.' And the Lord gloriously saved me that night." The change was profound.

A few months later, at a revival meeting, Rev. R. T. McElveen preached on Abraham's sacrifice. Vivian said, "I knew nothing about theology, but I knew I had to give the Lord me—myself. There I also laid the unknown bundle on the altar. My call to the ministry was in it."



ROCK HILL WEST MAIN CHURCH AT WORSHIP: Rev. Pressley served as pastor for forty years until 1986.

"I knew I was called. Nothing was ever more certain. And I never told the Lord I *would not* preach; I always told Him I *could not*."

**"I knew nothing
about theology, but I
knew I had to give
the Lord
me—myself."**

Feelings Of Inadequacies

It was not because she was a woman, and women preachers were almost unheard of in that day, but that she felt inadequate. It was a matter of fearful inadequacy—that surely the Lord could not use her. But Evangelist Maurice

Finger preached one evening on the text, "And Jonah paid the fare thereof and went down."

Rev. Pressley continued her account of the faithfulness of God, "The Lord said, 'Vivian, you settle your call to preach tonight, or else.' It was that vivid. I said, 'Lord, I'll do whatever you want me to do. I'll preach.' The very next Sunday I preached at the Chester Church of the Nazarene. I had a place to preach every Sunday after that until I retired 40 years later."

Vivian completed the ministerial course of study, was licensed and ordained. Two other women would later be ordained on the South Carolina District—Connie Swisher (nee Kelly) and Nina Gunter.

Pastor Pressley never allowed herself to be intimidated by those who thought women were out of place in the ministry or inferior. "Oh, I had some discouragements, but I did not let them deter me. When people said women were



PASTOR VIVIAN PRESSLEY AND HER SISTER VERMELLE HINSON DOING THEIR ANNUAL CANNING: Miss Hinson has been NWMS president since 1941 and has a 47-year perfect Sunday school attendance record.

not supposed to preach, I just said, 'The Lord called me, and I will obey and preach His word.'

"However, I never really felt that I was not being treated with respect or equality or with fairness.

When critical remarks were made, I just smiled and kept getting the job done. I often quoted the prophecy made on the day of Pentecost, 'Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy'; and I had the promise the Lord gave me in the early days of my ministry, which He also gave to Joshua, 'As I was with Moses, so shall I be with you. I will never fail thee nor forsake thee.' To this day He never has."

Testimonies About Effective Ministry

Jack Brazzell, who grew up under Rev. Pressley's preaching, says, "She proved herself in the community. She had to. The church faced a lot of ridicule for having a woman pastor. There were denominations who were very much against it, and she was active in the ministerial associa-

tion. She eventually proved herself worthy of her calling and gained the respect of her fellow pastors. And she was eventually elected to most district boards."

Chris Beard, now a math teacher in Rock Hill, was three years old when his parents were converted under Rev. Pressley's ministry. He says, "We knew she was a wonderful, tremendous pastor, and when my friends in the community made comments about our lady preacher, I just said, 'Don't pass judgment until you hear her.' She has established herself with a high level of credibility through the years."

Another evidence of the church's effectiveness is its growth record. From an attendance of about 50, West Main Church had grown to a peak attendance of 800 on its 25th anniversary, with an average attendance of 250-275.

Integrity And Recognition

Recently, West Main Church celebrated its 50th anniversary in the fifth year of Rev. William Ulmet's tenure as pastor. He reports, "I had instant credibility in this community because of Rev.



REV. WILLIAM ULMET, PRESENT PASTOR OF ROCKHILL WEST MAIN CHURCH.



PASTOR VIVIAN PRESSLEY IN THE CHURCH WHERE SHE ACHIEVED WHAT IS PROBABLY THE LONGEST PASTORAL TENURE BY A WOMAN PASTOR.

VIVIAN PRESSLEY

**"I never told the Lord
I would not preach; I
always told Him I
could not."**

Pressley's strong influence. This includes Marion, her husband, who worked along beside her in every phase of the work. But her longevity in the ministry here is partly the result of impeccable character, faithfulness to her calling, and her commitment to holy living."

When asked about the success at Rock Hill, Vivian Pressley will tell you, "When we get to heaven and are given recognition for our accomplishments, I will have to step aside. The Lord will first call my husband and my sister Vermelle. They were my best supporters. Marion served as associate. I did most of the preaching and calling, but he did those things, too. And Vermelle has always had a vital interest in missions—she still corresponds with 100 missionaries. The three of us worked together as a team.

"I never tried to be anything but a woman, in or out of the pulpit. Marion and I made decisions together. We shared as families do. I love to cook. I made my own clothes, painted, and hung wallpaper.

When we built the church, I helped with everything but the brick work; now I wish I could say I laid at least one brick."

To women called to preach today, Rev. Pressley recommends, "Always remember you are a woman and people will respect you as a woman. If I were starting out again today, I would just believe God to open the door and I would enter the door wherever it was and however humble. God opens the way, regardless of what others say, if you really are eager to fulfill His call."

Vivian Pressley closed the interview with a testimony: "I faced double jeopardy with the stigma against women preachers and an impediment of speech; but when the Lord sanctified me wholly, He took the speech difficulty away—well, He left enough to keep me

**"I had a place to
preach every Sunday
after that until I
retired 40 years later."**

reminded of what He had done. And in place of my shyness, He gave me holy boldness so that I am not afraid anywhere under any circumstances."

The Writers

Wilbur W. Brannon, veteran pastor and evangelist, is director of pastoral ministries in the Church Growth Division.

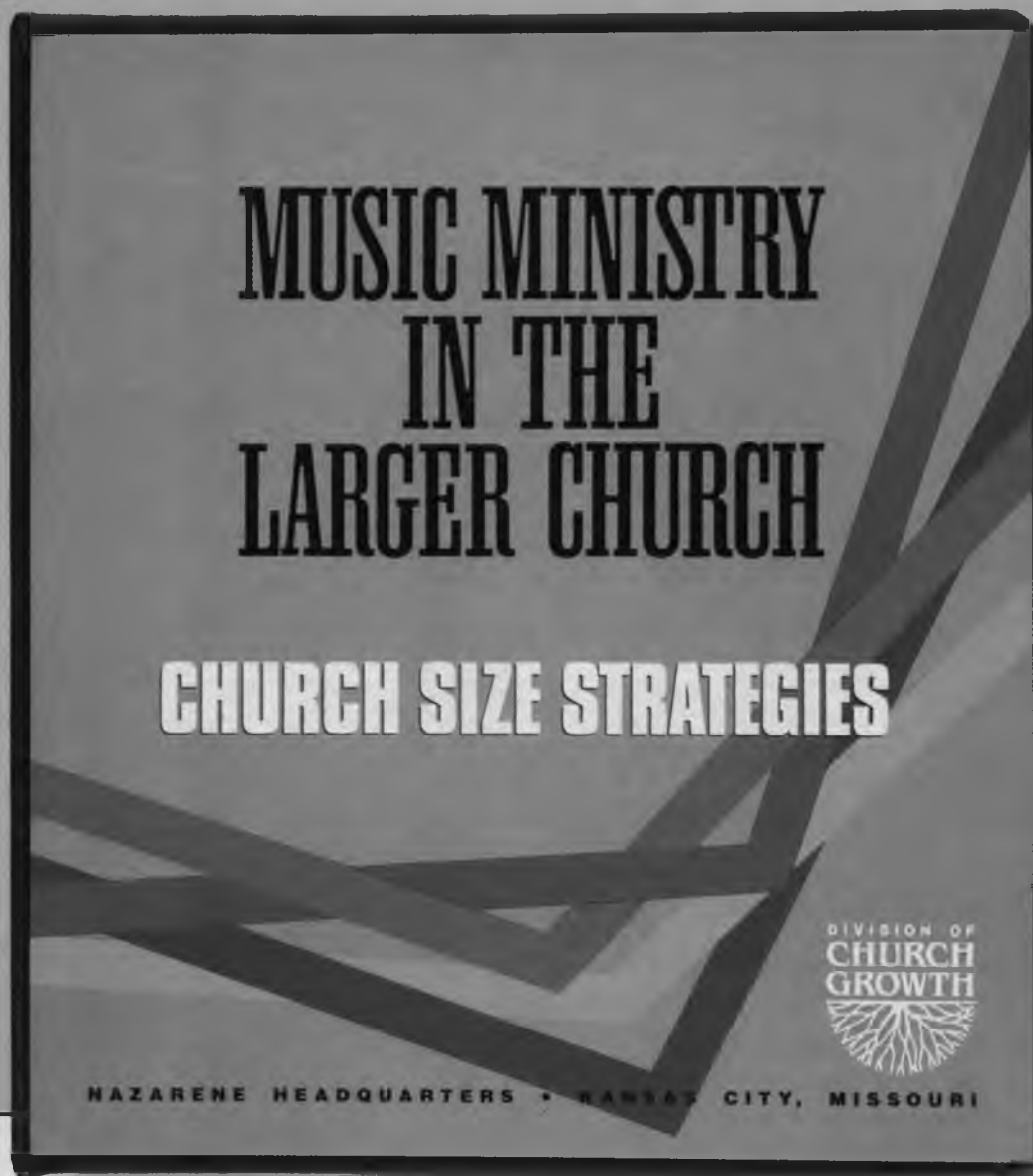
Nina Beegle, free-lance writer and editor, is a pastor's wife who lives at Canon City, Colorado.



PASTOR VIVIAN PRESSLEY GREETES WILBUR W. BRANNON TO 50TH ANNIVERSARY AT ROCKHILL WEST MAIN CHURCH.

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God's clergy couple teams are not static. Just when I think I have it all worked out, something in our relationship or situation changes. My husband grows in another way—or heaven forbid, I seem to hear the Lord speaking to me about another area of ministry. In seasons of our lives, our marriages and ministries, God weaves the pattern of His will—using varied colored threads of our circumstances. As Erlene Pearson explains in her article entitled *Focus on Spouses*, God gives us "a fluid relationship between two unique, growing, communicating confidants who work toward the same goal."

Hard Work

Teamwork in any area of life takes hard work, practice, and diligence because it becomes "second nature." All teaming takes perseverance in commitment, communication, and community.

Benefits Of Teaming

District Superintendent Neil Strait suggests four benefits: "1) the privilege of being together in serving; 2) the benefit of dialogue and brain-storming; 3) the benefits a church receives from seeing a couple involved in ministry together; 4) the opportunities of shared ministry so the couple can encourage and support each other—some of my best lessons from the Lord have come through my wife, Ina."

Among the most significant benefits of a team is that ideas and dreams are pooled and the couple comes out

with a much better plan than if they were doing it all alone.

When asked to give advice for ministry couples, Strait replied, "Pray together and for each other. Share a common dream of ministry and service. Build a good marriage. Be excited about ministry. Encourage each other. Do not be afraid to seek help. Do not feel that failure is ever the last word. Draw strength from your dreams. Be learners. Build a deep trust in God."

Family Strength A Team

In my childhood home we quickly learned that it took all five of us—three children and two parents—to maintain the team spirit, but any one of us could destroy it. Teaming in ministry became a priority to us as we actively participated in the consequences of Papa's call to be a pastor. The five of us developed into a strong unit—each aware of his/her roles with accompanying privileges and responsibilities—within the team.

Oh, I saw the comedies and the tragedies, the backstage skirmishes, but I literally never got over the awe of watching God miraculously change sinners into saints.

I am not sure exactly how she did it, but Mother managed to connect in our minds and hearts that we were somehow more than spectators—that each and all of us shared playing parts in these real-life dramas.

Single-Mindedness Is The Goal

Recently I discussed teaming in ministry with Dr. Audrey Williamson, widow of the late General Superintendent G. B. Williamson. Now well into her nineties, dear

Audrey observed, "It endangers team spirit when you become obsessed with your own goal. It is not the husband's work; it is not the wife's work—it is *our* work. The goal is single-mindedness."

Mrs. Williamson went back to her girlhood farm days to illustrate what occurred with a perfectly matched pair of horses: "Each seemed to sense what constituted half of the load. One did not plunge ahead and the other did not pull back. They pulled the load together in harmony. My father worked a team that did not work well with any other horses. They were meant to be together. They were more effective because they were together."

The Bottom Line

Think of the bottom line for couples who team in ministry. We are both targets and recipients. We are targets of criticism from our publics, pressures from our materialistic society, and satanic assaults from the enemy of our souls.

On the other hand, we are recipients of love from many of those we try to serve. We are recipients of opportunities for creativity from the same materialistic society. We are recipients of abundant grace from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ himself. We are still on a pilgrimage. God has provided more than enough strength for us to finish the journey—not alone, but together—not as underachievers, but as overcomers "through the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony."

About the Writer

Dr. Phyllis H. Perkins, director of public relations and recruitment at Nazarene Bible College, Colorado Springs, also teaches missions, serves on the Nazarene Book Committee, and holds assignments on various missions and national parachurch organizations. Earlier in her ministry she served as a Nazarene missionary in Japan and general director of NWMS.

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A BRIEF THEOLOGY OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY



Four Reasons Women Should Teach, Preach, and Minister

by
Rebecca Laird

No wise person begins building a strong house by trying to hang windows before the foundation and framing are completed. Yet that is often the approach taken when forming a so called biblical view of women in ministry. Many people quickly parrot the phrase, "Women should keep silent in the churches" (I Cor. 14:33), or others like the idea and declare that God never intended for women to preach, teach, or lead the church.

But these New Testament verses should be seen as windows that give us glimpses into what was happening inside the walls of the early church; they reveal the struggles these churches faced in living and worshipping together. These verses serve most of all to remind us that our struggles to live harmoniously as sisters and brothers in Christ is nothing new.

Yet the verses that seem upon first glance to disallow women the right to ministry fail to deal with four foundational truths upon which the Christian faith is built.

Equality in Creation

Let us begin at the beginning.

The first two chapters of Genesis recount two descriptions of how God created the world and humankind. The first account indisputably says that after God created the heavens and the earth, light and dark, plants and animals, He created both man and woman in the divine image.

Both women and men are made to be like God. There is no hierarchy in this creation story. In the first story in Genesis, man and woman are created much like twins

are born. Together male and female share the honor of being God's children. And to these offspring God gives the responsibility for caring for every other living thing in creation. This story ends with the reminder that God declares that both man and woman are very good. God does not declare that one is better or more suited to lead. That idea is our own and not God's.

The second chapter of Genesis tells the story of creation in a different sequence. God made the earth, then made man from the earth and breathed life into him. Then God made the plants and animals. Then God decided that man needed a "helper" and created the first woman.

Over the centuries many have tried to use this story as evidence that women are subordinate to men because woman was created *from* and chronologically *after* man. To logically follow this argument, men must be subordinate to dirt because that is what they were formed *from* and *after*.

This story was never intended to set up a universal model that substantiates the absolute leadership of men. To focus on the fact that man preceded the woman in creation by a short time is to enter into a squabble between twins that because one was born four minutes before the other, he always gets to go first, make every decision, and take the lead in everything for all time. No family can exist under that kind of tyranny; we were never meant to.

Being first born was important as a Jewish means of determining the right of inheritance, but that is not the gospel way of determining inheritance. All who are born through Christ are joint heirs, equal inheritors of God's love and God's mission.

The other tidbit of this second creation story that is used as

"proof" that women cannot provide leadership in the church is taken from the designation that women were made to be man's "helper." Some think this means that woman's role is to enable man to fulfill *his* work in the world and *his* ministry in the church. Somehow this idea has been wrongly interpreted to mean that women are to be fulfilled by enabling men to succeed by doing all of the private,

aptitude and calling than of gender.

Equality in Redemption

Back at creation both Adam and Eve disobeyed God and sinned. And neither male nor female has a plausible case for innocence. But even though we all know deep inside that we have sinned, we often fool ourselves into feeling better by



What the creation accounts teach is that women and men were created equally good with shared responsibilities.



domestic, and clerical work for men. But the word "helper" that is used here could be better understood if translated as "counterpart" or "partner." Indeed this very word is used when referring to God as the "helper" of Israel. Israel needed God's strength, guidance, and leadership skills. Together, side by side, in life and in ministry, men and women are one flesh, the whole of humanity.

Finally, what the creation accounts teach is that women and men were created equally good with shared responsibilities and the task of helping one another care for every living thing. If this is the teaching of creation, then women share with men the divine nature and responsibility for the church. Women are men's counterparts and peers in ministry. The one who does the decision-making and preaching is more a matter of

thinking someone else is more to blame.

Now those same people that like to say that Adam was created first are quick to point out that Eve sinned first and somehow that makes women more prone to sin. It should be noted, however, that using this logic has its traps. In Genesis 2, God tells the man not to eat of the tree of knowledge. This all happens before the woman was even created. If anyone should have known better, it was Adam. God gave him a direct, unequivocal command; Eve only heard it secondhand.

The real truth of sin is that both man and woman disobeyed. Genesis tells us that Adam was with Eve when she took and ate of the forbidden fruit. He was standing right there and did likewise. Imagine, if you will, that two people walk into a grocery store and

THEOLOGY OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY



both steal a piece of fruit; is the one whose hand grabbed it first more guilty of theft than the other?

Men and women both stand guilty of sin. That is the truth—the bad news.

The equally true good news is that Christ came to redeem us all and to set the world aright. Christ came to restore a right relationship between God and humanity. Christ also came to restore a right relationship between human beings, Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female.

One of the marks of sin is our disunity, our categorizing, our

domination over one another. (Some want to justify women's subordination by citing Genesis 3:16 after the Fall when God says to the woman, "and he shall rule over you." But remember, this is after the Fall, after sin. God is outlining the consequences of sin, not the divine intention.)

For centuries groups of people have been jockeying for position at the expense of others. Whites have subordinated people of color. Men have used physical strength to put women "in their places." That is and always will be sin.

When Paul wrote the profound credo of freedom and equality found in Galatians 3:28, he declared that redemption in Christ made change possible for the human heart and human society. Full redemption is both personal and social.

Paul, for most of his adult life, had been a zealous Jew.

Good Jewish men faithfully recited the traditional morning prayer which gave thanks to God that "thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave or a woman."

Paul, the man who became the great missionary and apostle, spent most of his life as a privileged, educated, haughty, religious man who accepted as fact the social realities of his day. He assumed that Jews were superior to Greeks, free citizens were more worthy than slaves, and men were unquestionably better than women. But Christ seared his world view with the truth on the road to Damascus. His whole world view changed. He then knew a deeper truth—he was no better, no less than his sisters and his brothers in faith.

Once Paul knew the truth, he proclaimed it. He preached Christ to be the great equalizer, which He is.

Paul also tried to live it, but he, like us, found it difficult.

Paul lived in a world where the kingdom of God had been revealed but was not yet a reality. We live in the same kind of world.

Paul lived in the tension between what he knew to be true and what he found to be the present reality of the church.

When the church at Corinth was fraught with divisions and factions, he adjudicated the fracas. Lots of outlandish things happen in the church, then and now.

In the church at Corinth, someone was sexually immoral and people were squabbling about what should be done. Paul was forced to make several judgment calls (I Cor. 7). Women who became believers had unbelieving husbands; what were their marital responsibilities now that their lives had changed? Slaves who now knew themselves to be free in Christ agitated for social freedom. Women were speaking in church and outsiders considered that scandalous. Paul was called in to restore peace.

He basically told people to accept their previous stations in life so that the fabric of the church would not be ripped apart.

He told women to cover their heads according to custom when they prophesied. But he never told women to stop prophesying in public. Disorder reigned in the Corinthian church and in its worship. People spoke in tongues. People with a prophesy stood up and talked over each other. Women who had questions about what was going on asked their husbands, who in a traditional setting would have been seated across the room. Paul told women to be silent in church and save their questions for home. It seems there was no order in their worship.

When Paul silenced the women, his words were meant to keep the church from disorderly conduct. Paul's words were never meant to

be taken out of this context and made into a universal principle to keep women out of public ministry. These words were and are pastoral wisdom given from an elder when called upon to try to settle disputes in a local church.

In this chaotic situation, Paul pleaded for unity and order. He made this proclamation for the common good of a local church during a very troubled time.

When reading Paul's epistles, it is helpful to recall his great themes, and his great concerns reach well beyond what he found in the Corinthian church. Paul cared most about freedom and equality in Christ, justification by faith, and unity in the body of believers. Paul proclaimed us to be joint heirs with Jesus. And joint heirs bear the equally heavy burden of sin and can equally claim full redemption and freedom in Christ.

Equality in Call

Jesus changed everything for His followers when He walked into their lives and called, "Come and follow me." Jesus called the twelve apostles and they left everything to follow Him.

Jesus changed everything for His women followers, too. And there were many.

Women in Jesus' day were not allowed to study the Scriptures or be instructed in the faith. Women were hidden behind veils and mostly secluded in their homes. Rabbis or church leaders did not publicly speak to women, not even to their wives or daughters. Women did not speak in public.

But Jesus changed everything.

Jesus bade Mary of Bethany to come out of the kitchen and sit at His feet with the other disciples as He taught them.

Jesus had many women followers who left their homes and

traveled with Him and the twelve disciples. Luke 8 tells us that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna went from city to village with Him.

Jesus talked to women in public. He talked to the woman with the hemorrhage and healed her. In doing so Jesus broke the law. For a religious leader to touch a bleeding woman was slanderous. But Jesus was not afraid of proclaiming the good news of full liberation and freedom to women.

Jesus talked to the Samaritan

and Joanna went to the tomb to anoint His body.

But when the three women arrived at the tomb, Jesus' body was gone. Disappeared.

An angel appeared to the women and they ran to tell the disciples. But the disciples did not believe the women. Their stories sounded like "nonsense" to them.

The gospel of John also recounts the resurrection, and in this record only Mary Magdalene stays at the tomb. The other disciples went



Jesus placed a high priority on touching, talking to, and calling those who were excluded from positions of leadership and power in the society of His day.



woman at the well. A Jew would not speak to a Samaritan and a man would not speak to a woman, but Jesus did, and He spoke to her in front of everyone.

It was no accident that Jesus affirmed women. Jesus placed a high priority on touching, talking to, and calling those who were excluded from positions of leadership and power in the society of His day. Jesus came to proclaim a new way for Jew and Greek, men and women, slave and free, to live together.

Equality in Example

In the gospel of Luke, the story is recorded that on the third day after the crucifixion of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James,

away in despair and disbelief.

Mary wept when she saw Jesus' body was gone. Angels appeared to ask her why she was crying. When she turned from them, there stood Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Go to my brothers and tell them I am returning to my Father, your Father, to my God and your God."

Jesus, himself, gave the command and the privilege of testifying to the resurrection to a woman because she remained faithful.

Jesus still calls women to tell the story of resurrection, the story of freedom, the story of His God and their God.

Jesus calls women to preach, teach, and minister.

THEOLOGY OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Equality in Empowerment

On the day of Pentecost, Acts 2 tells of the faith-changing events when the believers in Jerusalem and many international visitors were "all together in one place." The Holy Spirit was poured out that day on all flesh, not just male flesh, not just Jewish flesh. People from many nations, races, and languages were given the power to proclaim the truth of their experience.

When Peter stood to address this diverse and noisy crowd, he reminded them and he reminds us of the Old Testament promise, "In the last days, God says, 'I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. . . . Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out of my Spirit in those days'" (Acts 2:16-18).

Peter clearly announces the truth—the Spirit is available to empower all people to prophesy, to preach. Everyone on whom the Spirit is poured is free to prophesy, to speak up about what God has done.

Some contemporary Christians like to qualify the freedom given women to prophesy by making a distinction between prophesying and preaching. They concede that women might be free to speak up when so moved, but women still should not preach or lead. Why

not? Women did in the early church.

Women can be found everywhere between the lines of the New Testament. In Romans 16 Phoebe the deacon is mentioned. (Many Bible translations designate Phoebe as a helper or deaconess and call the men deacons. However, the same word is used in original texts for all "deacons." Phoebe and the male deacons held the same position in the early church.)

In the same chapter Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus' sister, and Olympas are listed as workers in the Lord. Euodia and Syntyche worked side by side with Paul, and be assured

they were not just pouring tea (Phil. 4:2). Priscilla earned the title as Paul's "co-worker in Christ." Romans also records that she and her husband "risked their lives" for Paul and had a church in their home. In Acts 21 the four unmarried daughters of Philip are described as prophets. There are many others. These were Spirit-filled women who preached, taught, prophesied, and risked their lives for the cause of Christ.


The Christian church was born on Pentecost, the day when the Spirit was poured out. Those that believed and began to spread the word were from many nations, many races, and both genders.

The equality of empowerment is one of the characteristics of the truly Spirit-filled church.


Conclusions

The house of God's truth about women in ministry stands on four bedrock truths: equality in creation, equality in redemption, equality in call, and equality in empowerment.


A theology of women in ministry must be built on this foundation. Women are free and qualified to preach, teach, and minister because God has created woman in the divine image and declared that she is good. God has provided a way to fully redeem women and all of fallen humanity. Jesus has called all who witness to the resurrection in their lives to proclaim the amazing news of new life to others. And the Holy Spirit has been poured out to empower all flesh, including women's flesh.



*Women can be found everywhere
between the lines of the
New Testament.*



The house that God has built has its doors thrown wide open to all who would enter in. Women have always come to the house of God willingly to serve. But women are free to preach and teach. Women can also minister and lead.

God's house is a house where women and men are called to work together and learn to honor each other as God's good creation. 

The Writer

Rebecca Laird is a freelance editor and writer who specializes in spirituality and social justice. She is a columnist for the *Herald of Holiness* and a staff writer of the *San Francisco Peninsula Parent Newsmagazine*. A graduate of Pacific School of Religion and Northwest Nazarene College, Ms. Laird is a licensed minister in the Church of the Nazarene. Along with her husband, Michael Christensen, and daughter, Rachel, she makes her home in San Francisco.

Recommended Resources for Discipling Growing Christians

An excellent study in Christian growth for new disciples looking to deepen their walk with Christ. These materials can be used for individual reading, new member classes, or small-group study. The study guide is in workbook format to increase student involvement. The Pastor's Resource Manual comes complete with teaching masters, which can be reproduced for overhead transparencies or handouts.



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GMU-1100	Text Book w/Study Guide	\$13.95
GM083-411-4143	Pastor's Manual	\$9.95

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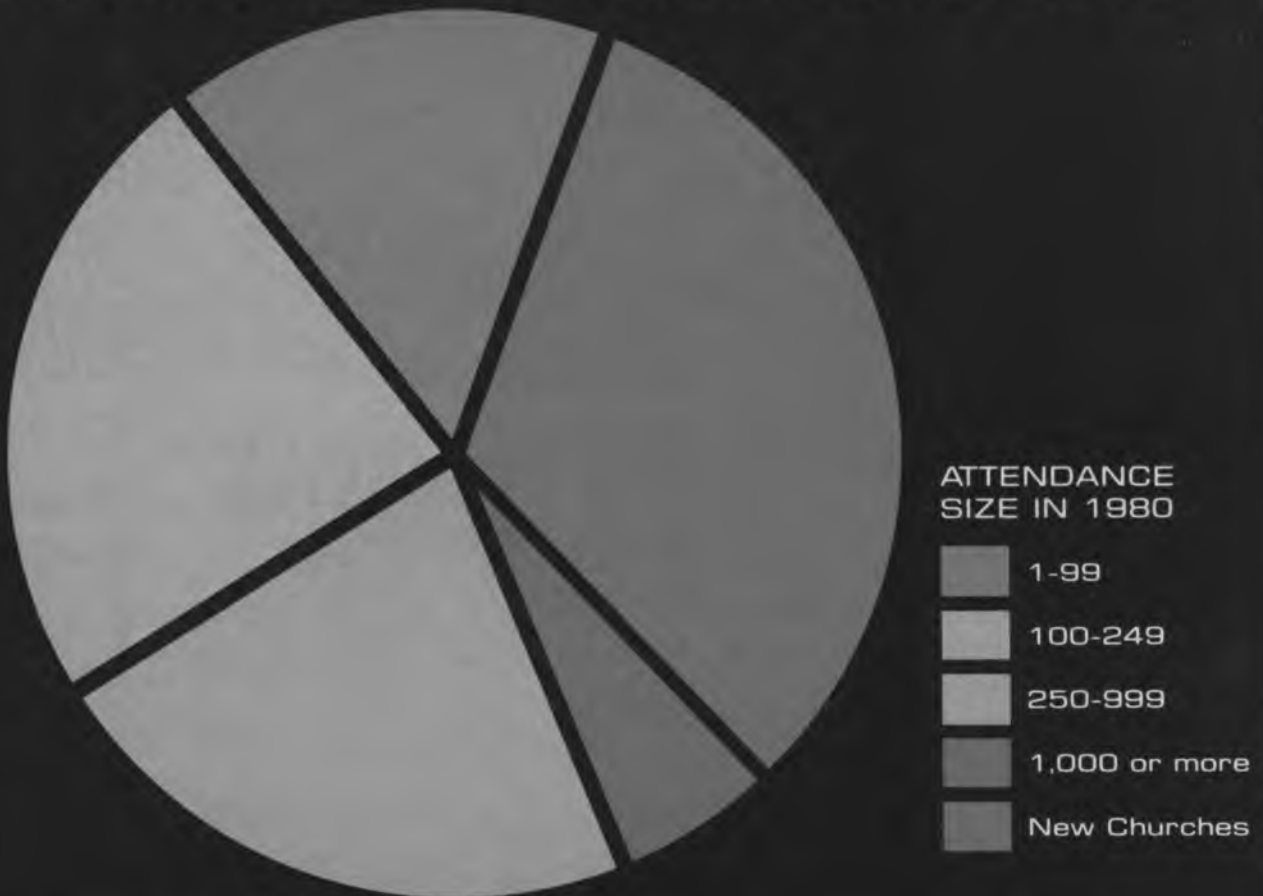
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Churches that ran 1,000 or more in 1980 gained 5,000 more members during the decade.

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RESEARCH AND TRENDS



HOLY SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE

Church growth scholars all stress the importance of following the Spirit's guidance in making plans . . . but it is important to know what factors especially lend themselves to good growth in Nazarene churches. Recent study concentrated on growth experience from the 1980s.

GOOD GROWTH AMONG NEWEST AND OLDEST CHURCHES

One-third of Nazarene membership gains in the United States were in newly started churches during the 1980s . . . 25,000 of the 80,000 gained. That's an average of over 40 members for every church planted during the decade.

A 13,000 gain came from churches at least 60 years old. That's an average of 24 new members per church for older churches. Those that were under 20 years old averaged 15 members per church.

The middle years . . . churches 20 to 59 years old . . . produced a 30,000 gain. With so many of our churches in that age group, that was an average of about 9 members per church over the decade.

POPULATION GROWTH REMAINS A KEY

Best growth for U.S. Nazarenes in the 1980s was in growing counties . . . confirms earlier studies. When new people arrive, they are open to the gospel message.

**POPULATION
GROWTH
REMAINS A KEY**
(continued)

Average growth rate of U.S.A. was 10% in the 1980s. Churches in our fastest-growing counties (15% or more for the decade) produced 23 members per church. Churches in "average" counties produced about 10 to 15 members per church.

But even churches in counties that lost population had an average gain of 3 for the decade . . . good news, since nearly one-third of our churches were in non-growth counties last decade.

**NON-ANGLO
CONGREGATIONS
PRODUCE
GROWTH**

Nearly one-fifth of the decade's growth was in non-Anglo congregations. American Blacks, Haitians, Koreans, and Spanish were strongest . . . each produced many new churches during the 1980s and reported good gains in existing churches.

Smaller groups grew well, too . . . Arabs, Armenians, Cambodians, Chinese, Samoans, and Vietnamese all show promise . . . but Nazarene work among these people groups is still limited.

The overwhelming preponderance of Anglo congregations . . . still 90% of American Nazarene churches . . . means that multicultural work must be supplemented by strong Anglo growth . . . as it was in the 1980s.

RESEARCH AND TRENDS



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NATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER TRAINING CONFERENCE LOCATIONS AND DATES ANNOUNCED

For the first time, the Church of the Nazarene is planning Sunday School Teacher Training Conferences on a national level. The Board of General Superintendents has approved 16 area conferences, beginning August 1992 and continuing through spring of 1993, in order to celebrate the final year of the denomination's quadrennial emphasis, "That the World May Know—Teach."

Below you will find the location and date for each conference. The number in parentheses is the total number of Sunday School teachers who will be invited to attend. The districts listed below the location are those closest for the conference. The numbers in parentheses following each district name are the number of Sunday School teachers and officers reported to the District Assembly last year.

The purpose of these conferences will be to place Sunday School teaching, once again, in a prominent position in the local church. The sessions, which begin on a Thursday night and conclude Saturday noon, will provide inspiration and information, but most importantly, practical "how to" assistance to teachers of each age-group. We hope that the more than 62,500 Sunday School teachers and officers in the Church of the Nazarene will attend these conferences.

FALL 1992

SEATTLE (4,060)
August 20-22, 1992
Alaska (245)
Canada Pacific (185)
Northwest (1,005)
Oregon Pacific (1,452)
Washington Pacific (1,173)

KANSAS CITY (5,871)
August 27-29, 1992
Dakota (358)
Iowa (964)
Joplin (820)
Kansas (1,016)
Kansas City (1,201)
Minnesota (323)
Missouri (839)
Nebraska (350)

DETROIT (2,954)
September 3-5, 1992
Canada Central (332)
Canada Quebec (71)

Eastern Michigan (1,188)
Michigan (1,103)
Northern Michigan (260)

CHICAGO (3,239)
September 24-26, 1992
Chicago Central (896)
Illinois (1,130)
Northwestern Illinois (861)
Wisconsin (352)

PHILADELPHIA (4,837)
October 1-3, 1992
Canada Atlantic (192)
Maine (453)
New England (826)
New York (713)
Philadelphia (985)
Upstate New York (675)
Washington (993)

CINCINNATI (4,479)
October 8-10, 1992
Central Ohio (1,402)

East Kentucky (825)
Southwestern Ohio (1,431)
West Virginia South (821)

PITTSBURGH (4,743)
October 22-24, 1992
Akron (1,062)
North Central Ohio (991)
Northwestern Ohio (930)
West Virginia North (840)

DENVER (4,510)
October 29-31, 1992
Arizona (841)
Canada West (505)
Colorado (1,154)
Intermountain (954)
Navajo Nation (87)
New Mexico (457)
Rocky Mountain (352)
Southwest Indian (86)
Southwestern Latin American (74)

WINTER 1993

INDIANAPOLIS (4,194)
January 7-9, 1993
Indianapolis (1,027)
Northeastern Indiana (1,267)
Northwest Indiana (776)
Southwest Indiana (1,124)

RALEIGH (3,487)
January 14-16, 1993
Georgia (1,115)
North Carolina (706)
South Carolina (811)
Virginia (855)

SAN FRANCISCO (2,541)
January 21-23, 1993
Central California (737)
Northern California (859)
Sacramento (945)

NASHVILLE (4,218)
January 28-30, 1993
Alabama North (606)
Alabama South (457)
East Tennessee (706)
Kentucky (850)
Mississippi (412)
Tennessee (1,187)

ANAHEIM (3,762)
February 11-13, 1993
Anaheim (1,231)
Hawaii (191)
Los Angeles (1,282)
Southern California (761)
Western Latin American (297)

OKLAHOMA CITY (3,505)
February 25-27, 1993
North Arkansas (615)
Northeast Oklahoma (581)

Northwest Oklahoma (773)
South Arkansas (460)
Southeast Oklahoma (494)
Southwest Oklahoma (582)

DALLAS (3,605)
March 11-13, 1993
Central Latin American (159)
Dallas (846)
Houston (634)
Louisiana (383)
San Antonio (570)
West Texas (1,013)

ORLANDO (2,333)
March 25-27, 1993
Central Florida (838)
North Florida (566)
Southern Florida (813)
Florida Space Coast (116)

All pastors, Sunday School superintendents, teachers, and officers are encouraged to begin planning now to attend the conference nearest them. In the next two to three months, a mailing will be sent from the Sunday School Ministries Division in Kansas City to each church and Sunday School teacher. This mailing will include more detailed information on the 16 conferences.

The National Sunday School Teacher Training Conferences will be events that could revive the Sunday School once again across our nation. Together, we can make it happen!



ROOTED IN CHRIST

— Personal Growth Helps for Leaders —

by C.S. Cowles

Through The Storms

WEEK ONE

THE STORMY DEEP

"The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep" (Gen. 1:2).

From the watery deep of primeval chaos to the cataclysmic upheaval of the battle of Armageddon, the Bible is a book of storms. Even paradise could not escape upheaval. Man's disobedience upset the equilibrium of the universe, disrupted the balance of nature, and unleashed sin and death upon all men. From Cain who killed his brother Abel in a rage of anger to the beast who will rise up in the end time and wage war against One

who sits on the throne, the history of mankind is written in blood. Even Jesus, the Prince of Peace, could not escape conflict. From His first sermon in Nazareth where the citizens tried to hurl Him over the city's precipice to His violent death on Calvary, Jesus' life was lived at the vortex of a tornado. "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you," counsels Peter, "as though some strange thing were happening to you" (I Peter 4:12).

The good news is that storms are neither the first nor the last word in the Bible. Before the primeval chaos of the watery deep, God is (Gen. 1:1). Beyond the final judgment, God is (Rev. 21 & 22). And between the beginning and the end, God is!

A painting caught my eye titled "Peace." It portrayed, not a pastoral scene of tranquility, but a turbulent waterfall thundering over a precipice. My attention, however, was drawn to a tiny, stunted tree somehow clinging to a crack in the

perpendicular rock wall. Cradled in a crook of the branches, just a few feet from the raging torrent, was a small bird cuddling her chicks, fast asleep. Anchored to the rock she had no fear. "In the world you will have tribulation," warns Jesus, "but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

WEEK TWO

DARK WATERS OF DEATH

"... and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters" (Gen. 1:1-2).

I did not get off to a good start in my relationship to the water. Deciding that at seven years of age it was time I learned to swim, my aunt took me out to the middle of a river and threw me in. I sank like a rock, gulping great quantities of water,

some of which went down my windpipe. I was seized by a raw naked terror known only to those who have choked while under water. After what seemed like an eternity of utter panic, I felt her strong hands reaching down, grabbing my thrashing body by an arm and leg. I surfaced sputtering, coughing, and screaming hysterically.

The Psalmist must have had a similar frightening experience, for he cries out, "May the flood of water not overflow me, and may the deep not swallow me up" (69:15). Frequently, in the Scriptures, waters signify the realm of death. In Genesis the primeval watery deep was a place where no life existed, "void and nothingness" (1:2). The great flood of Noah's generation was a revisitation of the watery chaos of death. The exodus event centers in the miracle-story of God who parted the waters for His people—waters in which the armies of Pharaoh were subsequently destroyed. Jonah would have perished in the watery depths if God had not prepared a great fish to deliver him. Jesus' death is described by Paul as a "descent into the deep" (Rom. 10:7). In Revelation the sea will give up the dead which is in it (20:13).

Here is the good news. "He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus." The spirit of God continues to brood over the surface of our stormy deep, calling for creation out of chaos, light out of darkness, and life out of death in order that we might "walk in the newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

WEEK THREE

CREATION OUT OF CHAOS

"And God said, 'Let there be . . . ' and there was . . ." (Gen. 1:3).

In his book *Chaos*, James Gleick describes one of the most exotic new branches of science. It is simply called "chaotics." Scientists have long known that large areas of the observable universe, from the movement of nuclear particles in the atom to the motion of interstellar galaxies, do not always conform to the "cause and effect" laws of Newtonian physics. There is a great deal of randomness in our world beyond predictable boundaries: the formation and movement of clouds, the flicker of a flame in a fireplace, the flow of water molecules in a stream—turbulence which the Bible calls the "watery deep" (Gen. 1:2).

Scientists who are studying chaos have made at least three profound discoveries: first, there is order and design to be discovered even in the midst of the most chaotic phenomenon; second, chaos is always set within certain fixed boundaries; and third, the presence of chaos allows for change and fresh configurations to emerge.

In the beginning God created out of "void and nothingness," but He did not abolish chaos. The Spirit of God "brooded over the surface of the deep" but did not remove the "watery deep." God said, "Let there be light," but darkness remained (Gen. 1:3-4).

Why? Chaos breaks up the autocracy of determinism and allows for

full human freedom to emerge. Darkness keeps us from being overwhelmed by the omnipotence of the light and thus gives us space to make genuine moral decisions. Only then are we able to enter into a true fellowship with God our Creator and Redeemer. Storms and upheavals neither frustrate God's purposes, nor are they necessarily destructive to our spiritual life. From chaos God created the heavens and the earth. Over chaos God reigns. Out of the "watery deep" of death God raised up Jesus. What God once did He continues to do.

WEEK FOUR

STORMS ARE GOOD FOR THE SOUL

"And there arose a fierce gale of wind . . ." (Mark 4:35-41).

It was the sixth day of a backpacking trip in the California High Sierras. My boys and I set up camp beside Silver Lake, under a stand of gnarled old sequoias, in a rocky high sub-alpine bowl at over 11,000 feet. After an invigorating swim, we fixed an early dinner and watched a storm roll toward us over a distant ridge across a deep canyon. As the ominous clouds boiled ever closer we began to count the seconds between lightning flashes and the clap of thunder—14 seconds, 10 seconds. At six seconds we scrambled to put up our flimsy plastic tub tents. Then it was four seconds, three, two, one. By then the sun had set and thick darkness enveloped us. Fiery, jagged tongues of lightning crashed around us. Ear-splitting thunder claps reverberated back and forth among the rock-face cliffs that surrounded us on three sides.

Sheets of rain engulfed us. The ground trembled under the impact of lightning bolts. My heart raced and my skin crawled. Never have I felt so exposed and so utterly helpless. Nature's fierce power was unleashed in full fury. And there was no place to hide. I confess that my boys and I prayed with a desperation borne of sheer panic. I can empathize fully with the disciples who cried out in the midst of their storm, "Jesus, do you not care that we are perishing?"

Periodic storms are good for the soul. They strip us of self-assurance. They underscore how weak and vulnerable we really are. They shake loose "those things which can be shaken," as the author of Hebrews reminds us, "in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain" (Heb. 12:27). Storms teach us the truth of that great hymn, "On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is shifting sand."

WEEK FIVE

STORMY HEIGHTS

Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still' (Mark 4:39).

The University of Wyoming's expedition, of which my son was a participant, was hit by a ferocious storm at 17,500 feet on the flank of North America's highest peak, Mt. McKinley (Denali). For six days winds blew in excess of 100 mph. The wind chill dropped the temperature to minus 100 degrees. During the storm, one of the climb-ventured to scramble up the foot ice-barricade they built to hold their tents. He wanted to take a look down the mountain. He was

caught by a sudden gust of wind which knocked him off his feet and put him on a nearly horizontal plane while he hung onto his ice-axe for dear life.

A corresponding storm of anxiety gathered force in our hearts as we wondered why the expedition hadn't returned on their scheduled date. Growing impatient, I phoned Mt. McKinley National Park headquarters. They urged me to call the ranger on duty at Wonder Lake Ranger Station located at the base of the mountain. I began to call early the next morning. No answer. We called every half hour or so throughout the day. Still no answer. Finally, at about 10:00 p.m. we gave up and went off to bed with troubled hearts.

At 1:30 a.m. the phone rang. As I stumbled down the stairs to answer it, I wondered, "Who's had a heart attack? Who's been in an accident?" Rarely is it good news at that hour of the night. With sweaty palms and wildly beating heart, I picked up the receiver to hear: "Hi Dad, this is Dean! I made it, all the way to the top!" Instantly the storm-clouds broke. The sun began to shine. The birds started to sing. Peace came in like a flood.

I can understand why when Jesus spoke "Peace, be still" on storm-tossed Galilee that the incredulous disciples exclaimed, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:41).

WEEK SIX

THE CHURCH'S MISSION

"He [Jesus] made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him" (Mark 6:45).

"Oh, I love to get together with God's wonderful people" must have been the song the disciples were singing, following that great worship celebration where Jesus fed 5,000 men plus women and children. The Church is not called, however, to live out its life in splendid isolation but in the midst of this turbulent world's life. The Greek word for "made His disciples get into the boat" is a strong one. It means "to compel, to force." This is the only time this word is ever used of Jesus.

The disciples were reluctant to launch out into the deep and get on with the mission of the Church. They knew what it was like out there. After all, they wrested a meager and difficult living from those treacherous waters. It was tough going; they were "straining at the oars." The old coal miner's song says it so well:

Sixteen tons and what do you get?

Another day older and deeper in debt.

St. Peter, don't you call me, 'cause I can't go,

I owe my soul to the company store.

They also understood that this present age is permeated by spiritual darkness ("the fourth watch of the night") and that it is no friend of grace. Yet it is this dark, dangerous, and turbulent world that Jesus came to save and to which the Church must go with the gospel.

The good news is that Jesus does not abandon His Church. When the winds are the fiercest and the hour darkest, He always comes. His promise is, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20).

ROOTED IN CHRIST

WEEK SEVEN

THE PROMISE OF JESUS' PRESENCE

"And seeing them straining at the oars . . . He came to them, walking on the sea" (Mark 6:48).

Dean, our oldest son and now a missionary in Kenya, just sent me a copy of a letter he wrote to his little sister, now in college. He was responding to her announcement that she was engaged to be married next summer. After a mix of kidding, light banter, and some off-handed advice—older brother talk—he concluded, "Now, if you're serious about next August 8, we need to know. We had planned to stay here in Kenya through September. In this case, however, *I would stop the world to be at your wedding!*"

By coming to His own, in their darkest hour, Jesus was saying, "*I would stop the world to be by your side!*" And He did! "And He got into the boat with them, and the wind stopped; and they were greatly astonished" (v. 51). A great host have found it to be true that we never have to walk alone. The Psalmist immortalized this great assurance when he wrote:

Even though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of
death,

I will fear no evil; for **Thou art
with me;**

Thy rod and Thy staff, they
comfort me. . .

Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days
of my life,

And I will dwell in the house
of the Lord forever
(Psalm 23, KJV).

WEEK EIGHT

JESUS IS LORD OF THE STORMS

"He [Jesus] said to them, 'Take courage; it is I (literally in the Greek, 'I AM'), do not be afraid'" (Mark 6:45-51).

Who is this Jesus who comes walking on the waters? He is the great I AM who spun the galaxies into space, who framed the worlds, who—with the Father—fashioned man out of the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life. He is the great I AM who revealed Himself to Moses in a bush that burned but was not consumed, who parted the Red Sea, who was a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night leading God's people into the land of promise.

Who is this Jesus who strides triumphant over the watery deep of this world's chaotic existence? He is the great I AM who caused the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the lame to leap, and the dead to rise. He is the great I AM: the Bread who feeds us, the Water who refreshes us, the Vine who nourishes us, the Good Shepherd who protects us, the Way who leads us, the Truth who guides us, and the Life who raises us up to live with Him forevermore.

Who is this Jesus who descended into the abyss of the waters of death but who rose triumphant on the third day? He is the Strong Angel

who "placed His right foot on the sea and His left on the land" (Rev. 10:2). He is the One who "must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (I Cor. 15:25-26). Sure enough, in St. John's final vision, he sees "a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, *and there is no more sea*" (Rev. 21:1).

So let the winds blow. Let the seas rage. Let the storms roar. Jesus is Lord of the storms. And when He comes, there is victory. There is encouragement. There is peace.

WEEK NINE

OVERWHELMING CONQUERORS

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:31-39).

The year was 1960. A federal judge ordered the desegregation of New Orleans' schools. The whole city erupted in fear and anger. Crowds gathered at the Frantz Elementary School. Agitation increased as time for the main event neared. The front door opened. Out stepped one little black girl. First grader Ruby Bridges was flanked by federal marshals. The people started in. They called her horrible names. They screamed at her. They cursed her. They brandished their fists. They said she was going to die. And they were going to kill her. No one else came out of the school, not one other student.

Dr. Robert Coles, Harvard child psychiatrist, witnessed that event. He was amazed and puzzled by Ruby's composure as she walked the volcanic gauntlet. He visited her

parents, many times. Poor and illiterate, they were so proud of their Ruby who was going to be the first to get an education. He asked her how she could remain so calm in the midst of all those people who, morning and night, hurled such abuse upon her. She responded, "I pray for them."

"You do?"

"Oh yes. I have a list and I pray for them every night."

"Why do you pray for them?" Coles pressed.

"Because Jesus told me to. He told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us." Then he learned that the minister of their Baptist church prayed for those people. Publicly. Every Sunday.

And so the weak and fragile Ruby Bridges of our country kept right on praying and forgiving until the raging passions of racial hatred were calmed, until the screaming curses were stilled, until that dark ugly era in our national history passed away, until 30 years later it seems almost like ancient history. "More than conquerors . . ."

WEEK TEN

TRIED IN THE FIRE

"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Dr. Kent Hill tells about pastor Nikolai Boiko, recently released from a Siberian labor camp. Boiko had been raised in a family of non-believers, drafted into the Soviet Army, captured by the Nazis and taken to Buchenwald. On a work detail in Berlin he heard, for the first time, the Lord's Prayer through another prisoner. Eventually he

became a believer and began to pray. He was liberated from a German camp only to be branded as a traitor—along with all the other captured Russian soldiers—and sentenced to another long term at hard labor, only this time in Siberia. Nevertheless, through contacts with the prison network of other believers, his faith grew strong.

Upon his release in 1953, he was baptized and began to preach. He was arrested again in 1968 after his church refused to register with the authorities. Four terms and twenty years later, he was allowed to return from eastern Siberia and was reunited with his wife and his Odessa Baptist congregation. Pastors and Christians traveled to southern Ukraine for the long-awaited reunion. The service lasted for hours. There were numerous sermons and testimonies and spirited singing. Pastor Boiko testified to the faithfulness of God throughout all those long years of deprivation and loneliness. The theme of their worship celebration was Christ's words, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

Neither the gates of hell nor the iron curtain of Communism can prevail against the Nikolai Boiko's of this world—as recent history has so dramatically demonstrated—whose trust and confidence is placed in the One who has "overcome the world."

WEEK ELEVEN

CELEBRATING IN THE MIDST OF STORMS

"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal . . . which comes upon you . . . but keep on rejoicing" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

John Muir, America's most influential naturalist, to whom we owe our national park system more than to anyone else, revelled in storms. Spying fierce thunderstorm clouds boiling toward him while hiking in the Oregon Cascades, he quickly climbed the tallest Douglas fir he could find. From the vantage point of its uppermost branches, he had a ring-side seat of the sky's pyrotechnic display. Every nerve came alive as he watched the dark heavens split by the jagged lightning bolts and felt the force of the trailing thunder.

Then came the first blush of moving air, a whisper causing the needles to whistle and the tree top to sway gently. With a rapid crescendo, the winds picked up force, whipping the top of that tree back and forth. Lashed now by stinging rain and gale-force gusts, accompanied by lightning bolts crashing all around, Muir was treated to the wildest ride he had ever known. Back and forth, up and down, round and round he rode, while his stomach raced to catch up. Fear that the fir would break in half, hurling him to an uncertain fate, only accented his delight. "There is nothing on earth so calculated to enliven the nerves, energize the soul, and purify the spirit," commented Muir, "like that of attacking—not fleeing—a great mountain storm and riding it for all it's worth."

Well, why not? If storms are inevitable, if they sharpen our spiritual sensitivity, if they toughen our moral fiber, if they cause us to lean harder upon our God, and most importantly, if Jesus is Lord of the storms, then why not enjoy the ride? "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance" (James 1:2-3).

WEEK TWELVE

DARKNESS DESCENDS

Crucify Him! . . . Crucify Him!"
Mark 15:13-14).

All of the raging passions and volatile emotions which, throughout His short ministry, had shaken Jesus like a leaf in a hurricane, came to their fierce and violent apex during His last hours. Gethsemane's secret agony and desperate solitude was shattered by the temple guard and a raucous mob, led by Judas. When something on the order of an eruption of primeval chaos occurred. Jesus was roughly arrested and ignominiously dragged off to face a midnight kangaroo trial. His disciples panicked and fled into the darkness. Peter wilted under pressure, leaving the Master to walk the last mile of His traumatic life all alone.

Then everybody went crazy. Caiaphas, in a rage, ripped his garments. Pilate, in agitation, washed his hands. The well-coached mob scooped up handfuls of dirt, threw them into the air as they cried out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Jesus was slapped, spat upon, mocked, logged, humiliated, and finally crucified. And still they hunted Him down, like a wounded animal, to taunt Him as he hung helpless. The earth trembled under the fury of the storm that was crushing His life out. The sun hid its face from the wretched spectacle. Rocks split. Bodies of saints arose and appeared to many. The massive temple veil ripped from top to bottom.

Through it all, Jesus carried himself with the regal bearing and royal dignity of a king. He, alone, was in control. So much so that not even all the gathered "principalities and powers of darkness in heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12) could finally snuff out His life. "No man takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of myself" (John 10:18). With a simple child's bedtime prayer on His lips, "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit," Jesus surrendered His life for our sakes (John 10:17-18). In death as in life, Jesus is Lord of the storms.

WEEK THIRTEEN

A NEW DAY DAWNS

"He is not here, for He has risen"
(Matt. 28:6).

It's Friday:

Jesus is nailed to a cross, blood pouring from His body.
. . . but Sunday's Coming.

It's Friday:

Mary's crying her eyes out 'cause her baby Jesus is dead.
. . . but Sunday's Coming.

It's Friday:

The disciples are on the run, like sheep without a shepherd.
. . . but Sunday's Coming.

It's Friday:

Pilate's strutting around 'cause he thinks he's got all the power and the victory.
. . . but Sunday's Coming.

It's Friday:

Satan's doing a little jig saying,
"I control the whole world."
. . . but Sunday's Coming.

It's Friday:

The earth shakes. The rocks split. And tombs open. The centurion screams in fear, "Truly He was the Son of God!"
. . . Sunday's Coming.

It's Sunday:

The angel, like dazzling lightning, rolls the stone away, exclaiming, "He is not here! He is risen!"

It's Sunday! It's Sunday!

It's Sunday!

(Dr. Tony Campollo)

The Writer

Dr. C. S. Cowles, a professor at Northwest Nazarene College, Nampa, Idaho, is a gifted writer and speaker. This is his eighth edition of the "Rooted In Christ" series.



YOU ARE BEING WATCHED!



You, as pastor, play a pivotal role in mission education within your local church. Just as children model their parents' behavior, a church congregation will often hold in esteem the very things its pastor considers important. Significant research indicates that a congregation takes on a pastor's perspective after three years.

Some of the **misconceptions** concerning mission education are:

- **It's boring**—It doesn't have to be. Offer advice to your local NWMS president to add pizzazz to the monthly meetings. Help break out of the "hymn-prayer-lecture-prayer" rut.
- **Missionary speakers will do**—Missionaries on deputation provide a wealth of important information, but it is usually focused on their particular field. Also, the average church only hears a "real, live" missionary approximately

once or twice a year, and some churches go a whole year without having a missionary speaker.

- **Missionary offering emphases are enough**—Relying on information regarding mission offerings **only** gives the impression that missions equals money **only**.

To receive a well-rounded education on world evangelization, the local church is encouraged to regularly utilize the age-appropriate mission education resources. These provide your church with biblical, theological, and practical applications of the Great Commission in an exciting manner so your church may participate responsibly in the mission of God.

Pastor, your church needs your help. Let your congregation know the importance of mission education. Your members are watching you for leadership.

GROW

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"May it not be said that too little
came too late for the cities
because we were so occupied
with steaming jungles of
afro-Asia that we forgot the
teeming asphalt jungles of
metro-America."

Ken Davis

LOVE ENERGIZES CHURCH GROWTH

Love and Profit, James A. Autry's 1991 fascinating management book, uses 213 pages to convince corporate trend-setters that business thrives when employees know their company loves them. This cutting-edge theory claims esteemed subordinates accomplish their jobs more effectively, enjoy going to work, and even increase productivity among fellow workers. Apparently affirming employees is new to the corporate world, at least some of it.

Yet Christian love has formed the foundation for winning the world for Christ for 2,000 years and is the happy practice of healthy churches now.

But are we making the most of it?

Love for God we know. Love for sinners we know. Love for new converts we know. But love among believers needs attention.

We have a few problems with creating loving relationships in some places.

Has honor among brothers and sisters in Christ leaked out of our fellowship? Has troubling distrust taken its place? Can the church settle for indignant pulpit accusations about laziness and apathy? Will we accept toxic suspicion between lay leaders and church members?

Must we stomach adversarial relationships between clergy and laymen, pastors and pastors, new converts and seasoned veterans, evangelists and pastors, or traditionalists and innovators? Can we live in a love-starved fellowship and still call it the body of Christ? And should we?

Several spin-offs from Autry's book might be applied to the church.

Loving service offers personal spiritual growth — For too long, we have considered work for God an obligation. It is a privilege. In a twisted way of seeing things, a little chore done for God seems like something He should appreciate when in reality we owe Him our total existence.

Why not redesign ministry assignments so Christian service is viewed as a love gift to Jesus, so it is fun like giving one's sweetheart a dozen red roses or satisfying delight like buying a bicycle for an adoring child.

The more we stir devotion into our adventures for Christ, the more effective our service becomes and the richer our life grows.

Churches need a chief caring officer — Every church needs someone to lead expressions about how the church cherishes individuals. Ideally, it should be done by every member of the leadership team; it must be intentional, visible, and continuous to have optimum effect.

People are the church's most precious resource because

they are the reason Christ came. They are also valuable because they attract other people and they furnish financial work, and facilities. Every person in every church needs to be valued—even bizarre, off-the-wall folks.

Love in many churches is hindered by the order of things. Put affirmation first and evaluation second. Start with caring, and institutional preservation will likely follow. Love now and improve afterward.

It is a universal human weakness that everyone waits for someone to love them while at the same moment others hold back waiting for their love. The result is a loveless merry-go-round. Try making the first move.

Leaders lead by loving — Because Christian love is so compelling, leaders can transform their church environment by sharing love. Love's potent vocabulary is wonderfully simple: "Thanks," "Please," "I appreciate your efforts," "You always do your service for Christ so well," "I'm glad you came."

Loveless churches can be rapidly rejuvenated by three to five leaders committed to changing a harsh atmosphere into a loving one. Start next time you go to church, and you will be surprised how the climate will change by the end of the meeting.

Love energizes the church like the sun warms the earth, grows the flowers, melts the snow, and wakes up the morning. No other place in the community offers everyone love.

Lovingly share God's dream for your church — Shared in love, the Father's dream for your church attracts others. Deep in our

depths, the way of love prods us to abandon our self-centered, self-aggrandizement, bulldozing kind of ambition.

Surprising achievement flourishes in a climate of love and many will stand at your side to celebrate the dream's attainment. They are the same loving people who will help you gain the next milepost in your journey toward the Kingdom together.

I am coming to believe productivity flows from a leader's investment of love in a cause rather than from his brilliant oversight, captivating charm, or competent skill. In God's methodology, genuine Kingdom achievement starts when the leader authentically loves those he leads. This sounds like those New Testament words, "Love one another deeply from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

Think of the potential. Love for God, love for believers, love for new converts, love for neighbor, and love for family all make life immeasurably rich for everyone, especially the lover.

Lead your church to triple its love and see how it produces both quality and quantity growth.

— NEIL B. WISEMAN
Editor, GROW



News of City's Churches

Tomorrow's Programs at Houses of Worship

1st Nazarene Owes Growth To Efforts of Woman Pastor

The First Church of the Nazarene has become one of the outstanding churches in the denomination under the leadership of the Rev. Agnes White Diffie. She will terminate 16 years in the pastoral field.

Mrs. Diffie will be honored by members of the church at open house Monday evening at the YMCA. She will maintain residence in Little Rock after a vacation in California.

The church membership has grown from 297 to 1,163, and contributions to foreign missions have been increased from \$400 to \$5,583.

The Sunday school is one of the largest in the denomination. The Young People's Society has four active departments. The church has an average of three revival meetings a year. A gospel team holds services in penal institutions and hospitals every Sunday.

The indebtedness on the church building, erected in 1928, has been largely paid, and a \$60,000 indebtedness on furnishings has been liquidated. An educational building has been bought and paid for.

Mrs. Diffie said the indebtedness was paid eight years ahead of schedule through prayer, fasting and tithing, which she believes is God's plan for financing the church.

Daily and weekly broadcasts have carried the message of the church throughout the state and into other states. Mrs. Diffie has conducted funeral services for many people who were not members of her congregation.

Twenty-six young men and women have been influenced by her preaching to enter the ministry. Fourteen are serving in full-time pastorates, one is in the evangelistic field, one is going to Africa as a missionary, two are studying at the Nazarene Seminary, and four are attending Bethany-Peniel College.

Mrs. Diffie is a native of Greenbrier. She began to preach at the age of 16 while living in Pine Bluff.



THE REV. AGNES W. DIFFIE.

She was active as an evangelist in her early ministry.

She has been pastor of churches in Durant, Okla., and Amity, Ark. She studied in the Nazarene College, Durant, and in Peniel University.

Mrs. Diffie is a member of the Ministerial Alliance of Greater Little Rock. She has been a member of the advisory board of the Arkansas district, Church of the Nazarene, the board of regents of Bethany-Peniel College and the joint board of Rest Cottage, Pilot Point, Tex.

She was associate pastor of the First Church for two years before becoming the pastor.

Her husband, Roy Diffie, has aided in the visitation work of the church.

been reached. Not every sermon turned out the way I had planned. Not all the converts I prayed with stayed in the church. Sometimes I have fretted over failures. God has shown me that I have seen some good things happen, some victories won, and some progress made in the churches I have served.

Also, there is a wise forgetfulness of those things that would discourage us in our spiritual journey.

Finding Fulfillment

Two things that can contribute to discouragement are the amount of nickels and noses we count every Sunday. I serve in a healing ministry in my present pastorate. God has helped in a wonderful way. However, the tally of nickels and noses has not looked so good. If I depend solely upon the numbers for my sense of worth, I would be devastated. But, my sense of fulfillment has come from the belief that I'm doing the best job as pastor that I've ever done. God will reveal to you a source of fulfillment in His work!

Frightened About the Future

It has been said that men in their 20s should know where they want to go, men in their 30s need to be getting there, and men in their 40s must arrive there. We all dream about the future—and rightly so. Most of us have some degree of concern, apprehension, and fear when we think of the future. The unknown future can discourage us. Three things have helped me regarding the future. First, I have always tried to maintain a spirit of hope. I believe things can and will get better. Second, I keep in mind that heaven is to be gained. My future? Heaven! Third, I hand it all over to God.

Martin Luther had been warned that if he continued his course of action, many of his supporters would leave him. He was asked, "Then where will you be?"

He replied, "Then, as now, in the hands of God."

It has helped me to know I'm in God's hands.

Satan tries to discourage in order to defeat us. Whatever your cause of discouragement, take courage in our Heavenly Father! "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Healing and Faith

(Continued from page 18)

the New Testament, it is of interest to note that the church changed its practice of anointing and prayer. The rite, called unction, was changed to extreme unction and was moved to the point of death with an emphasis on forgiveness of sins, not healing. This could have been in response to the real-life experience of the church. Therefore, since the physical aspect of the ritual was not occurring, the spiritual aspect was sought.

In Matthew, faith brings healing, but in John, healing produces faith. In John's Gospel, Jesus said, "Unless you . . . see miraculous signs and wonders, . . . you will never believe" (4:48). Later He says, "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves" (14:11). To John, miracles were intended to produce belief, the opposite emphasis of Matthew. In either case, healings were to produce faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

First, faith is involved in healing. Even though faith cannot be required of the ill person or the "healer," faith must enter into any request for healing. Either faith initiates healing or healing initiates faith. Second, healings are a part of

our faith experience. They produce faith in the presence of God's kingdom. In addition, miracles of healing help us exercise faith, making it part of our life experience. Finally, we should view all healings in the Scriptures theologically. We should look for the lesson being taught. We need to see the connections between narratives and healings. We must see the connection between events and miracles. In doing so, we shall see the rich proclamation of God's messages to us.

The subject of healing is part of our faith experience. Whether healing occurs after prayer or anointing is not as important as exercising our faith in seeking healing. Therefore, our success in healing experiences should not be judged by the frequency of healings, but the exercise of our faith in seeking the touch of wholeness.

1. Izaeri Koromvokis, "Faith Healers in the Laboratory," *Science Digest*, May 1982, 92f.

2. B. J. Hurwood, "Healing and Believing," *Health*, June 1984, 15-21.

3. There are two time periods assigned to the writing of James, mid to late 40s (before Paul) or A.D. 125 (after Paul). If we take the early date, it places the establishment of ritualized prayer and anointing before the writing of the Gospels. This does not reflect the scene shown by Luke in Acts; therefore it would be less likely. If the latter date is taken, it would reflect a developed church with elders and rituals. This would indicate that healings were not as common as in the period reflected in the Gospels.



CHON DAY

Helping the Small Church Break the 50 Barrier

by William E. Stewart

Moncton, N.B.

There are a lot of small churches. In fact there are far more small churches than large churches. It is estimated that 28% of all churches in North America have less than 50 in average attendance. In holiness circles the percentage is even higher. The Church of the Nazarene estimates that 38% of its churches average less than 50 in Sunday morning attendance.

Most small churches sincerely desire to grow. They really do want to win people and fold them into the kingdom of God. Most pastors presently serve small churches, and they, too, are anxious to see their churches grow. It is not commonly recognized, however, that there are some special factors involved in the growth of a small church that are not present in the growth of a larger church. Often church growth principles have concentrated on the larger churches and what has caused them to grow.

The principles and dynamics that generate growth and make a church large are, no doubt, very real and very vital. The small church and the small church pastor, however, are sometimes left feeling that "it doesn't apply here. It can't work for us." Yet, small churches do want to grow.

Are there special factors that a small church needs to take into consideration if it is to grow? Is there a mind-set peculiar to the small church that must change if it is to

grow? What positive factors must be introduced into the life and thinking of the small church to allow growth to occur?

Some factors are peculiar to the small church that, when understood and utilized, can help it grow. Small churches can grow. Most of them should grow.

To most people, any church with an average Sunday morning attendance under 100 is considered a small church. In this article I am talking about the many churches under 50 in Sunday morning attendance. These are special churches. They think and operate in special ways. They need to see themselves as they are and know what they need to change into, if they are to grow. What special things do these churches need to understand about themselves if they are to grow?

Do You Think like a Tadpole or a Fish?

In a pond, small fish must think differently than tadpoles. In what ways do fish think differently than tadpoles? Small fish seem to be miniatures of the large fish. They have the same shape and characteristics as big fish. They swim and operate like big fish. The only apparent difference is in their size. Thus, small fish must think that if they look after themselves and allow nature to unfold as it should, then they will grow and grow until they become large fish. When small fish grow, not much else changes except the size.

A foundational principle for growth in the small church is that it starts to think like a tadpole and not like a fish. Many small churches view themselves as small fish in a large pond. Small churches must not think like small fish. They must not assume that they are just small versions of large churches, and if they

just keep doing what they do, acting the way they act, planning the way they plan, organizing the way they organize, leading the way they are leading, and programming the way they are programming, they will grow and grow until they become a bigger church. It is wrong for a small church to think that all the basic characteristics, functions, and structure of the church are much the same and that the only difference between a small and a large church is size. Large churches are not big versions of small churches. They are different creatures altogether. If a small church is to take the matter of growth seriously, it must stop thinking like a small fish and start thinking like a tadpole.

Every tadpole knows that if it is to grow, then it will not just grow to be a bigger and bigger tadpole. A tadpole that is going to grow will change into a frog. A metamorphosis will take place. It will grow legs. Its tail will disappear. It will hop on land and breathe in air. A tadpole that grows up will become a different creature altogether from what it started out as.

Every small church that wants to grow will have to start thinking of itself as a tadpole and not a fish. If it is going to grow, it will grow into something very different from what it is now. A metamorphosis will have to take place. The spirit and dynamics of large churches are quite different from those of small churches. They operate quite differently, live differently, organize differently, and lead differently. They thrive on different things. They live in a different atmosphere. If a small church is to grow, it must accept the sometimes unpleasant process of becoming something different.

The willingness of a small church to be a tadpole rather than a small



fish is probably the most vital and fundamental decision that church can make as far as its growth potential is concerned. The church that is ready to drop off some of its small church characteristics as a tadpole drops off its tail and embrace some of the characteristics of a larger church is placing itself in a mind-set that will allow growth to occur. Willingness to go through this metamorphosis calls for courage and daring. Not all small churches are willing. Many, when they understand what is necessary and what is called for, will rise to the challenge.

Many churches under 50 develop characteristics peculiar to that size church. Some of those characteristics may, at first, seem to be very beautiful and desirable. The small church may indeed cherish them as a tadpole cherishes its beautiful long tail or its shapely round head. Desirable though these things may be, the small church must make the difficult and courageous decision that these things will have to change if it is to grow. What are some of the common characteristics of a small church under 50 that will need to change if it is to break the 50 barrier and rise to a larger ministry? Let me mention three tadpole characteristics that will have to change if the small church is to grow to be a frog.

Ingrown Fellowship: Too Much of a Good Thing

One of the beautiful, most precious characteristics of a small church is its intimate, close-knit fellowship. Because the numbers of people are small, you can very readily get to know everyone and become involved with them and they with you. When people say, "I love a small church," usually it is this sense of belonging that they cherish most. The atmosphere of many small churches is one of warm, accepting care. Everybody knows everybody. You are missed when absent. People know when you are sick. You are comfortable and accepted with this small, caring group of people. They know your name and can identify your children. This knowledge and involvement with everyone is absent in a larger church. Yet, here is a danger. This warm fellowship, so vital to the life and dynamic of a small church, can get to be too much of a good thing.

Fellowship can become undisciplined and selfish. The enjoyment of fellowship can so dominate a group that it becomes unbalanced. It begins to neglect other aspects of the life and ministry of a church. This precious fellowship can get to be so close-knit and so intimate that other people find it hard to be included.

Church growth has a name for this overblown, undisciplined, and excessive fellowship; they call it "Koinonitis." It is unbalanced fellowship. Peter Wagner, in his book *Your Church Can Grow*, says, "The congregation has become almost like an extended family. They have grown to know and love each other so much that they would feel extremely uncomfortable if an outsider were to penetrate the inner circle." "Koinonitis" is a church disease that can grip and afflict any church, but small churches are particularly susceptible to it. While people of the

◆ The small church pastor sometimes feels, "It doesn't apply here." ◆

church may be quite unconscious of this affliction, it is still very effective in keeping new people out. Very quickly, strangers become aware that they are not part of the inner group and so feel unwelcome. New people threaten the balance of the fellowship. Visitors demand attention normally given to church friends. Outsiders require adjustments that disturb the flow of our pleasant interaction with familiar people. New people place obligations on us to modify some of our social habits. In the small church where fellowship is so important, there may be an unwillingness to make adjustments. Outsiders soon know this and go elsewhere. We have formed our circle of friends, and others find it hard to break into this circle. They soon move on to find a place where they will be accepted and find friends.

People in small churches do not see themselves as being unfriendly. Indeed, they may view themselves as very friendly. They are sure that their warm fellowship is a great strength of their church. However, the warm friendship felt and enjoyed by those in the inner circle is not expressed to those outside the circle.

The small church must never lose sight of the fact that one of the primary reasons people come to church is their need for friendship. This is the very thing a small church excels in. People need to be accepted into a warm, loving friendship, and most small churches can offer this. In our lonely and abrasive society, friendships form a great part of the church's ministry. People in our impersonal and technological age sense a strong, urgent need for the very fellowship the small church is experiencing. People hungrily look for warm acceptance and loving care. They will go where they can find it. The small church is well equipped to share its fellowship with others. It can fold outsiders into its group. The church that does will soon find a demand for its ministry. But they may have to be like a tadpole and accept changes to the present structure of their fellowship. Their present fellowship structure may be so tight and closed that outsiders cannot get in. The old fellowship may have to open its ranks so that new people can be included. If not, then sadly and tragically, lonely people will go elsewhere, and the God-ordained ministry of the church is lost.

Are You Going to Be a Brick or a Building?

Lyle Schaller characterizes the under-40 church as a "one-cell church." It is a single fellowship group. It has been estimated that the number of people that can form a single primary fellowship group and be able to maintain the intimacy and closeness is about 35 to 40 people. For all of the good intentions and deep spirituality exhibited in many small churches, they find that the kind of spirit and fellowship that they enjoy cannot be extended be-

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See page 51.

yond 40 people. Once the group exceeds this number, intimacy of the fellowship begins to dilute. The closeness begins to weaken.

The reason so many churches stay small and their growth levels off before they reach 50 is that they have successfully achieved a good, one-cell, primary group fellowship. Since this cherished group cannot function effectively with more than 50 people, there is a natural tendency for the group to stop growing. They enjoy what they are. They would be threatened if too many new people joined the group. Naturally, when the fellowship group is formed and members established, it increasingly resists being broken up and resents its cherished fellowship being stretched beyond a comfortable number. In this small primary group church, the whole church belongs to the one group, and the group is viewed as the whole church.

Larger churches also have good strong fellowship cells within the church, but there are a number of them. Large churches provide people with small, intimate fellowship groups, but everyone is not expected to go to all of them. Nor do they all know what is going on in all of the other cells.

If the small church is to grow, it must not be content to view itself as a single brick. It must see itself as part of a building, made up of many bricks. If you think like a brick, then you think in terms of being self-contained. You are complete and

building, you think in terms of many bricks. Each brick is vital and essential; each brick fills its intended role but is only one among many. Buildings are made up of many bricks, not just one brick. It is not that large churches do not have close fellowship groups; they do. The large congregation, however, like a building, is made up of many of these fellowship groups and not just one. These small groups could be a choir, an active Sunday School class, a youth group, home Bible study cells, etc. If a small church thinks like a brick, then once its one basic fellowship group is formed, it is likely to stop growing. If it thinks like a building, then it thanks God for the fellowship cell it already has, but it realizes that other cells must be formed if a building is to be built.

One of the most basic decisions for growth that a small church can make is to allow for and encourage other fellowship groups to be formed. To be content with strengthening and nurturing only one group limits growth to the size that one cell group can reach—about 40 people. If a church insists on one-cell life, it will never break the 50 barrier. To break the 50 barrier, you need to plan for, and form, new cells. You need to give them freedom and allow leadership to emerge. A small church thinks in terms of one cell; a larger church thinks in terms of many cells, but they are all part of one building. It is absolutely essential that any small church wishing to grow will start planning for and encouraging new cells.

Family Hobby or Public Institution?

Another characteristic of the small, under-50 church that inhibits its growth is that it begins to think, Nobody ever comes but us. Since it is just us, we don't need to bother so much. Within the circle of your familiar church family, you can act and talk and take liberties and assume postures that you would not dream of doing in public or in less-familiar company. At home you can take your shoes off, stretch out on the couch, and tell everybody to keep quiet because you want to watch your favorite television program. You would not dream of talking like that to important dignitaries

or acting like that in a public office or school. But at home, with your own folks, it is acceptable.

There is a danger for the small church to start thinking like a family and not like a public institution. Since they cater only to the faithful few, they get careless and sloppy. They operate in ways they would be ashamed of if they were operating in

Large churches are not big versions of small churches.

a public institution. Growing churches, however, are not run like family hobbies. They are run like public institutions. There is a sensitivity that they are presenting the gospel to the public, and they must do it well. There is an awareness that they are giving public witness to the holiness way of life, and so they wish to excel in it.

In the family hobby church, people are *much more aware of regulars who are absent than visitors who are present*. Growing public institution churches *make new people and visitors the most important people in the church*. In family hobby churches visitors are not part of the family and are not expected to join. So they feel like nonfamily members at a family gathering. This lack of sensitivity in the family hobby church tends to create a growing carelessness: "Any old thing goes because it is only for us, and we all understand. We don't need to plan or organize things well because we will all pitch in when we get there." The care and effort put into planning, performance, and decorum of the public services is often determined by whether we think we are a family hobby church or a public institution.

Sensitivity to the presence of the public in a church is characteristically different in the small church than in the large church. This sensitivity can often be judged by the level of service we offer from washrooms to nurseries. When a church thinks, plans, and operates as a fam-


What must change for a small church to grow?

sufficient within yourself. You have all you need for a good brick existence. A one-cell church is a brick, a single, good, strong, fellowship group. But bricks, while strong and well shaped, will never get any bigger or become part of something more grand unless they start to think in terms of being part of a building.

When you start to think like a

ily hobby church, and some members of the public visit, they soon understand that this church is not for them. They are not being considered in its planning or its operation. Since few people want to go where they are not wanted, they don't come back. The family hobby church needs to think like a tadpole. If it is to seriously address the matter of winning people and folding them into the church, then change is called for.

Conclusion

One of the basic laws for church growth is that a church must want to grow and be willing to pay the price for growth. In many of the smaller of the small churches, the price that must be paid for growth is not more commitment, or more prayer, or more devotion, or harder work. All these are usually very evident in small churches. The cost of growth in a small church is the cost of effecting a change of thinking and operation and habit. It is the devotion of being willing to sacrifice our comfortable habits in order to accommodate the presence of new people. It is the commitment of making the effort to share the joys of our fellowship with others. It is the price of the extra effort called for in a quality gospel presentation to the public. It is being willing to become a tadpole—to assume that change is necessary, to undertake the sometimes painful process of metamorphosis. But, in terms of people being won to Jesus and folded into the kingdom of God, any cost to us is well worth it. 

Goals of Pastoral Care

(Continued from page 16)

From his successes and failures in life, he had concluded that there is nothing that matters more in life than to be at peace with the Lord.

The *subjective data* is that he is feeling helpless and hopeless. Things look black to him, and he is faced with many relational problems, which at this time he needs to block out.


The *pastoral concern* I have, and that he shares, is the sense of hopelessness, the alienation from his wife, and primarily the grief through which he needs to work.

The *pastoral response* is, first of all, to be present on a regular basis and to allow him to experience me as one who empathizes, who makes a commitment to the relationship established with him, and who has a sense of hope for this man. My hope is real in that I believe he has the resources, if supported through his grieving, to deal appropriately with his problems and to gain a holy perspective in his life, thus discovering meaning once again in his faith.

The goal that he and I have set for our visits is to work through the grief of his son's death. Other concerns may touch on this, but this is our primary contractual agreement. If, in six weeks or so, he makes progress in this area through the support I am able to give him, I will gradually withdraw my support until he is independent again. He and I will know what it is that I can pro-

vide and what it is that he bears responsibility for in the pastoral relationship.

Objectives of Pastoral Care

The objectives related to pastoral goals come to my consciousness as pithy clichés: *care, not cure* in dealing with the patient; *being versus doing* as an emphasis on uniqueness; *content versus feelings* as the reminder of the level on which we need to relate; *minister of pastoral care, not friend* as a way of objectivity and effectiveness in meeting the patient's needs. Assuming we know who we are and what we are about, the setting of pastoral goals for patient care comes as second nature. If, on the other hand, we play doctor, nurse, social worker, psychiatrist, or friend, we are more likely to sell out to other goals and deny our patients the uniqueness of pastoral care. The goals of pastoral care include dealing with such things as guilt, alienation, despair, isolation, loneliness, hopelessness, and death. What we have to offer is hope in the face of despair, solitude in the face of loneliness, presence in the face of isolation, reconciliation in the face of alienation, life in the face of death. We may touch on the same symptoms of disease as do other professionals, but how we approach the patient and what we set as goals for the patient are different because they deal with theological, spiritual, and religious needs. 

Preretirement: Financial Planning (Continued from page 33)

greater peace of mind in making this important decision.

"What about our wills?"


An updated will is always an important part of a minister's financial plan, whether it is before or after retirement. Rethinking your will at retirement is important because conditions change. There are many unhappy stories of ministers and their spouses who did not think about changing an obsolete will or ignored making a will at all. Good stewardship demands that you protect your assets and make certain that your resources are left as you desire.

Be sure to check that the executor

of your estate can be recognized as an executor in the state in which you retire. Make sure that the language empowers the executor to determine what should be done if it is not covered specifically in the will. The executor should have the power to pay all claims of the estate. Your spouse and your executor should know where your will is kept. Copies of the will should be given to your executor and to your attorney. Any changes in your will should be made by your attorney to make sure they will be legally recognized.

Proper financial planning for retirement may seem like a major task—and it is. But then, nearly 30

percent of one's lifetime is spent after retirement, and doesn't 30 percent of your life deserve adequate planning?

By answering these questions, you can plan for and anticipate a meaningful period of life after your active years of ministry. Planning comes right down to you as an individual. No one will do the planning for you. You must do it yourself. Planning is a process that should be ongoing. You and your spouse should review your plan frequently to determine how well you are meeting your plan's objectives and to revise those objectives in light of your real-life situation. 

Is Your Church Open for Business?

by Ray Bowman

*Church Facilities Consultant
McCall, Idaho*

with Eddy Hall

*Free-lance Writer and Editor
Goessel, Kans.*

Jerry awoke Monday morning with suicide on his mind. He'd been thinking about it for two months. Today he was going to *do* something about it.

He dressed quickly and, leaving the house unlocked, jumped into his car. He'd already picked out the spot—the 10-foot concrete wall at the end of Eighth Street. "People will think it's an accident," he told himself. "Brake failure," they'll say.

Six minutes later he turned onto Eighth Street. Four blocks ahead loomed the wall. Tires squealed and the engine roared as he flattened the pedal to the floor. Twenty-five miles an hour . . . 30 . . . 40 . . . 45 . . . just two blocks to go.

Then something caught the corner of Jerry's eye. His foot came up, eased over on the brake. Only slowly did it dawn on Jerry that what he had seen, what had prompted him to lift his foot from the pedal, was a glimpse of the neighborhood church on Ninth Street where his wife and girls had attended before they left him.

A minute later he turned off the engine in front of the church building. Aloud, Jerry said, "I don't know if this'll do any good, but I guess it's worth a try. If it doesn't help, well, that wall's not going anywhere."

Jerry tried the front door of the building. It was locked. He walked around to the side. Locked there too. Another door at the back of the

building didn't look worth trying. Because of the car in the parking lot and the light on inside, Jerry tried once more. He rattled several windows. No response. "Well, whaddaya know!" He pounded a window with his fist. "Not open for business."

As he walked back toward the front of the building, he noticed the church sign. "I suppose I could at least call the pastor." But when he got to the sign, there was no phone number. Where the pastor's name belonged, he found only the shadow left by the now-removed plastic letters of some former pastor's name. With an oath Jerry kicked the sign.

Back in his car he turned the key, shifted into reverse, and backed into the road. As he pulled away from the church, his car was headed for Eighth Street.

While this story is fictional, the situation it illustrates is not. It's not uncommon for someone seeking the church's ministry at a time other than the church's regular worship services to find it "not open for business."

For example, a church in the Northeast asked me to help them develop a facilities plan. To reach the church secretary's office, I had to enter the front door, pass through the auditorium, climb stairs, go through a balcony and, finally, open the door into the bell tower. The other offices were equally hidden. The pastor's office was in the far cor-

ner of the sanctuary off the platform. The youth pastor's office was in a windowless room off a dimly lit basement hallway. None of the offices were identified.

The front door was kept locked even during office hours. When someone pushed the door buzzer, if the secretary was in—which was less than half the time and not on any particular schedule—she would come down from the bell tower and open the door. Otherwise, a person seeking help might never get in, even if the pastors were there.

Not being open for business doesn't necessarily mean, then, that no one is staffing the church office. It may mean that the door is locked during office hours. Or that the church office entrance is not clearly marked. Or that no emergency telephone number is posted.

Fortunately, more and more churches today are consciously working at being "open for business" seven days a week. How "open for business" is your church? These 20 questions can help you find out.

AN "OPEN FOR BUSINESS" INVENTORY

1. Do you have an outdoor sign directing people to the church office? Yes No
2. Is the door leading to the office always unlocked during office hours? Yes No

3. Once a person enters the building, is it obvious how to find the offices? Yes No
4. Is the hallway leading to the office well-lighted? Yes No
5. Is your church office open regular hours? Yes No
6. Are your office hours posted? Yes No
7. Is the pastor normally available specific hours during the week? Yes No
8. Do you have a comfortable waiting area for visitors to your church office? Yes No
9. Does the person who answers your phone and receives your visitors, whether paid or volunteer, make each caller and visitor feel like an important person, not an interruption? Yes No
10. Has the person who answers your phone and receives visitors, whether paid or volunteer, been trained to make referrals in crisis, for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs? Yes No
11. a. Does your church have a yellow pages listing? Yes No
b. If so, does it include a map that shows where the church building is? Yes No
c. Does it list your office hours? Yes No
12. Are the pastors names on the church sign? Yes No
13. Is a 24-hour emergency telephone number listed? Yes No
14. Does the church phone have an answering service or answering machine that gives after-hours callers a number for emergencies? Yes No
15. Do those who cannot attend Sunday services because of work have an opportunity to attend a worship service at an alternate time? Yes No
16. Do you offer more than one kind of worship to minister to different segments of your community? Yes No
17. Do you have small groups intentionally structured to incorporate new people? Yes No
18. Do you run a weekly ad in the church section of your local newspaper? Yes No
19. Do you place small but significant advertising in other sections of your local newspaper that tell about specialized ministries of your church (for example, a divorce support group)? Or do you advertise on TV or on radio stations other than Christian stations? Yes No
20. Are the foyers of your building designed so that people outside can see people inside and thus see when you are "open for business"? Yes No

Now count your "yes" responses. Include "yes" responses to 11b and 11c as bonus points. If your church's score is . . .

- 16-20 Your "OPEN" sign is shining bright!
- 11-15 You're usually open but have room to improve.
- 6-10 Anyone determined enough can probably find you—eventually.
- 0-5 Your church may be your town's best-kept secret.

The inventory measures how open for business your church is in three situations.

- Questions 1 through 10 reflect how available you are to *a person* not well-acquainted with your church *who comes to the office seeking help*.

- Questions 9 through 14 indicate how well-prepared you are to respond to *someone trying to reach you by telephone*, particularly in a crisis.

- Questions 15 through 20 suggest how much effort your church is making beyond the usual worship services to reach out to *people who might attend public meetings*.

Notice where most of your "yes" and "no" answers fall. To which of these three groups are you most available? Which are you least pre-

pared to serve? Which "no" responses point to ways your church could become more open for business?

Because they wanted to correct problems like these, the church in the Northeast asked me to suggest alternatives. After studying their needs, I suggested several changes, not only in use of facilities but also in design. Making a church facility more open for business almost always involves design changes to make the church's ministries, and especially the church office, more accessible to the public.

This particular church converted the parsonage next door to the church building into an administrative center with offices for the secretary and pastors. They installed a handicap ramp, put up a church office sign, posted office hours, and hired a full-time secretary/receptionist.

A few months later the secretary told me, "I'm amazed at how many people both from within and outside the congregation come through this door, people who never came by before. They come to get counseling, to request information, to share needs. I'm thrilled to get to serve all these people."

What made the difference? They were open for business.

Imagine that on a business trip, eager to reach your motel, you drive straight through till 9 P.M. You check into your room, then walk to the restaurant next door for your overdue dinner. The parking lot holds a single car, and the dining room is dark. As you reach the door, the manager is leaving. "Can I help you?" he asks.

"I'm hungry," you say. "I've come to eat."

"Oh, I'm sorry," he says. "We're only open Sundays and Wednesday evenings. Come back then, and I'll be glad to feed you."

The church, of course, must feed people not only during two or three publicized time slots each week, but anytime they're hungry. When your church is accessible to hungry people seven days a week, 24 hours a day—then you're open for business.



This article is adapted from Ray Bowman with Eddy Hall, *When Not to Build: An Architect's Unconventional Wisdom for the Growing Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992).

Communicator's Sermon Contest

See page 51.

FROM GRAVE TO GLORY: RESURRECTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

by Murray J. Harris
Zondervan

PA031-051-9918, \$19.95

This book for the serious student of the Resurrection is a scholarly study of nearly every issue that may be raised about the resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection body of Christ, of believers, and even the future "life" of a nonbeliever.

In his introduction, Harris says, "What more exciting topic is there in Christian theology than the resurrection of Christ and its many consequences? Reflection on this lofty theme—or rather this exalted Person—thrills the mind and elevates the spirit. It broadens our spiritual horizons, prompts our devotion to God, and strengthens our motivation for Christian living." His zestful treatment confirms his concept!

The author answers questions like: In what sense is the resurrection body "spiritual"? What are its other characteristics? Will the bodily resurrection of believers be precisely the same as the resurrection of Jesus? Is the glorified Jesus still "in the flesh"? The answers that Dr. Harris gives are biblical answers given without resorting to speculation beyond what the Bible has to say.

In part one, Harris treats the "Resurrection Before Christ." He includes ancient writings and concepts as well as Old and New Testament information. Four chapters cover the resurrection of Jesus, and nine chapters show what the Bible has to say about "Resurrection After Christ."

The book frequently lists the Greek text for the biblical passages being considered but always with English definitions for those unfamiliar with Greek. The inclusion of a scripture index makes the book very helpful for the pastor/teacher or layman interested in deep study.

It is unfortunate that a book of this depth was written primarily to refute accusations of unorthodoxy in Dr. Harris's belief system. The accusations had been made by Dr. Norman Geisler of Liberty University Graduate School of Religion. The author is a member of the Evangelical Free Church of America and professor of New Testament exegesis

and theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Regardless of the reason for writing, this book is a welcome addition to any library. It is in paperback and is 463 pages plus the index.

—Raymond Lane

THE COMING GREAT AWAKENING

by David L. McKenna

InterVarsity Press

PA083-081-7352

131 pages, soft cover, \$8.95

Asbury Seminary's president, David L. McKenna, having a keen awareness of campus life and the potential of America's youth, writes a book that stimulates one's hope for a spiritual revival in America. He boldly runs the risk of missing the projection for a great awakening, since he feels in his heart that events and time are ripe for another end-of-the-century stirring in the spirits of God's people. He supports his rationale on the basis of what history has taught us about great awakenings and the presence of a mood for a new upswing in moral and spiritual values.

Believing that students are a microcosm of American churches and culture, McKenna states succinctly that students will help lead the awakening. Affirming that students face all the moral and cultural struggles that face society and mature in their faith, McKenna thinks they are best suited for a mighty religious awakening.

The chapters read like a great worship event happening as one turns the pages. From the prologue to a student to the epilogue of a student, the author gives one an exciting account of how America has experienced awakenings and a scenario of those yet to come. He includes such issues within the dynamic of an awakening as personal repentance, cell groups, prayer, spiritual leadership, and strategy for continuance.

The reader is provided an opportunity to celebrate the possibility for renewal as it unfolds gently in this optimistic projection for revival in our day. A realization that crucial reform of the church and culture is within the framework of this generation comes as good news. This timely book can become a key instrument in making us aware that an awakening is reachable this decade!

—Monty Neal

TRULY OURSELVES, TRULY THE SPIRIT'S

(Reflections on Life in the Spirit)

by Laurence W. Wood

Zondervan

PA031-075-0512

Paper, \$9.95

Dr. Wood's book *Truly Ourselves, Truly the Spirit's* was shared by myself and 11 Mid-America Bible College students as a springboard for discussion in a sanctification and holiness class. The 12 chapters cover all the bases of the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life, from the "Waiting for the Holy Spirit" to the concluding "Receiving the Holy Spirit." Professor Wood brings one into focus with many aspects of the Holy Spirit's work. His writings provide interesting life experiences and grapple with the many questions and problems one faces daily in pursuit of holiness in Christ.

The author's approach is scholarly with an interesting style that makes abstract concepts come alive with simplicity. Filled with notations from songs by Charles Wesley and others, this book vibrates with tremendous challenge to seek the ministry of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of living. He maintains a strong Christ-centered emphasis and a claim that only as one follows biblical principles spelled out in the Word can one ever expect to live a Spirit-filled and joyful life. For any person seeking a balanced view of the Holy Spirit and His work in the church and in individual living, this inspired book is top-shelf material!

—Monty Neal

REVELATION

(Holy Living in an Unholy World)

by M. Robert Mulholland, Jr.

Zondervan

PA031-051-7400, 1990

336 pages, hardback, \$21.95

Another book on Revelation? Yes, and one that gives the reader a chance to see the interpretation from both textual and spiritual meaning. A serious effort is given by Dr. Mulholland, professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, to decode the historical, symbolical, and linguistic work in Revelation so as to get the meaning for today's reader. The introduction, "How to Interpret Visions," provides

the reader with a good background for reading the text and its commentary.

Dr. Mulholland allows the reader an opportunity to walk carefully through the writings of the Book of Revelation with enough interpretative material so that each section can be taken step by step. He does an excellent job assimilating the content in an easily digestible manner. He skillfully presents the biblical context in such a manner that hard things are made easy and the Bible speaks for itself.

By obtaining foundational source materials from the Early Church fathers and historical data, the author presents the commentary with a reasoned, documented authority. He incorporates both academic and spiritual aspects of salvation history that makes this commentary extraspecial. His concern for all readers and his guarded work for clarity makes this the best book about Revelation that I have read in this decade. The cost of this book will soon be forgotten when the reader dives deep into the heart of this great work.

**EXEGETICAL GUIDE TO THE
GREEK NEW TESTAMENT**
(Colossians and Philemon)

by Murray J. Harris
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
PA080-280-375X, 1991
Paperback, \$21.95

This ambitious new series seeks to bring together classroom, study, and pulpit by providing the student or pastor with the information needed to understand and expound the Greek text of the New Testament. In doing so, it closes the gap between grammatical/morphological analysis and translation/exegesis.

This inaugural volume on Colossians and Philemon provides the following for each of these two biblical books: a brief introduction (on authorship, date, occasion, and purpose); an analytical outline of the letter; a list of recommended commentaries; exegetical notes; a translation; an expanded paraphrase; a comprehensive exegetical outline of the whole book; and a glossary of grammatical and rhetorical terms.

Harris's exegetical notes, of course, make up the heart and bulk of this work. For each paragraph in Colossians and Philemon they provide the Greek text; a structural and

grammatical analysis treating textual variants, vocabulary, and disputed points of exegesis (providing, in effect, an index to standard reference works); a translation and expanded paraphrase; a list of exegetical and biblical-theological topics for further study; and homiletical suggestions designed to help the pastor move from the Greek text to preaching.

A unique combination of serious exegetical work and homiletical intent, this book leads the reader into an in-depth understanding of the New Testament Greek text by guiding him through the processes of thorough exegesis flowing into sermon construction. As such, it will occupy a special place among literature on the New Testament.

MURRAY J. HARRIS is professor of New Testament exegesis and theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill. He is the author of *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament* and has contributed articles to the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* and the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. He will be writing all of the volumes in the *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament*.

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

Revised Edition

by Donald Guthrie

*Tyndale New Testament
Commentaries*

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
PA080-280-4829, 1991
Paperback, \$7.95

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Donald Guthrie has adjusted the text of his commentary on the Pastoral Epistles, first published in 1957, to conform to that of the *New International Version* of the Bible, making minor changes in the interest of greater clarity and including references to more recent commentators.

DONALD GUTHRIE, a noted biblical scholar, was formerly vice president of London Bible College. He is the author of many commentaries and a contributor to several standard Bible reference works.

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Dr. Dennis Kinlaw's message, "The Purpose of God's Call."

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The Baby Boomers' "Our Father"

Smerdley's all fired up these days. He's "going after the baby boomers." He keeps referring to some stuff he's reading about the behavior of amphibians in hot water and seems to see some transferable learning to be gotten from it. And he's all "het up" too because he and the conference super went, at conference expense, to observe some exploding mega-church in the latest "Whereit'sat" for said amphibian-analogs. They got to see that transferable learning in *action*.

So, Smerdley's favorite word these days is "attractive." A church must be attractive to the baby boomers. The music must be attractive, the preaching must be attractive, the "atmosphere" must be attractive, and all of the etceteras must be attractive.

I asked what "attractive" meant, and the response was surprisingly straightforward, for Smerdley. "It means that the baby boomers can feel that it meets their need without having to do a lot of translation."

"Translation?" said I.

"Yes. Translation," Smerdley replied. "The baby boomers simply don't know Churchese or Christianese, even less Evangelicalese, and absolutely no Wesleyanese. So we need to put everything into baby boomer lingo first thing out of the box. Without that, we won't be attractive. And if we're not attractive, they won't come. And if they don't come, they'll never find the self-fulfillment that the Good News can bring them."

I let the business of "self-fulfillment" go on by, thinking that maybe I had missed the place in the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, where that comes up. But I was not unhappy when our mutual friend, perhaps a bit too skeptically, raised a less serious but more interesting question about attractiveness.

"How about prayer?" he said, with

a bit too much edge in his expression.

"Prayer too!" said Smerd. "Indeed so. Maybe especially so. We must pray in language that folks readily understand. That 'thee and thou,' 'art and wert,' 'canst and wouldst' stuff has to go. And we must use care in concepts as well."

"How about the Lord's Prayer, then?" said Sir Skeptical, still a bit tight in the throat. "I understand that some of its expressions put moderns off, and others don't mean much to them—beginning at the very beginning, 'Our Father.'"

"Really?" said Smerdley, who was now about half wary and half cagey. "What's the problem with 'Our Father'?"

"Not my problem," said Sir Skeptical Stick-in-the-mud. "Your problem, given your principle of attractiveness. Surely you want to be consistent enough to say that since the image of Father is such an unappealing one in our culture, we need to begin the prayer some other way. And even 'our' has its limitations, given your principle, since baby boomers really don't want to speak for anyone but themselves, and they don't want anyone speaking for them. So, by your principle, the prayer has to begin either with 'my' or with some conventional statement that no one in our culture takes seriously, like the 'Dear Sir or Madam' of a letter to no one in particular."

Of course, Smerdley being Smerdley, he was not without retort. Whether heat or light, it made no difference to him. He was not about to let some conservative holder-back of the True, Good, and Numerically Wonderful (True and Good BECAUSE Numerically Wonderful) have the last word. So, he said, with great assurance, "We're not under obligation to pray the Lord's Prayer publicly."

"True, absolutely true," said Sir

SSIM. "But it is our Lord's own answer to the disciples' question about how to pray. However, let's pass that by and simply ask if you would do any public praying with a bunch of boomers about."

"Of course," said Smerdley.

"And what do you say? How do you usually begin one of those prayers?"

"I must admit, I'm something of a creature of habit," said Smerdley. "I begin 'Dear Lord' or, when the occasion is a bit more solemn, an 'Almighty God' is better."

"And what kinds of images do you believe the boomers have of lords—and 'dear' lords at that?" Sir SSIM asked. "I should think the best they could do would look like something out of Robin Hood, a sort of celestial Richard the Lion-Hearted. And as for 'Almighty God,' it seems to me that you have violated your principle of attractiveness or understandability almost completely. The baby boomer is taught from binky to bachelor's degree that all is relative, that 'Almighty' is a fictitious quality, and that any pretensions to it must be fought tooth and nail—the *only* 'Almighty' the boomer is allowed to admit is the almightiness of his own right to demand that all be kept relative. And as for the word 'God'—"

Smerdley cut him off. There is, after all, no tyranny like that of being asked to be consistent—especially when inconsistency can still count its results in the jillions. But Smerdley is nothing if not sincere. The amphibian-in-hot-water principle does present evidence of truthfulness. He would work on the pastoral prayer. But, he admitted, he did find it very difficult, for he felt that about all he could say, attractively, understandably, consistently with his principle, was, "To Whom (or What) it may concern . . ."

And all the people said, "Yeah, man!"

A Communicator's Sermon Contest

The *Preacher's Magazine* announces a written sermon contest. The judges will evaluate on the basis of communication and application of biblical truth.

Written sermon manuscripts are to be double-spaced. Scripture references must all designate reference and version. Quoted material must include footnotes and permission letters from publishers of songs or poems.

Among the judges will be a well-known pastor, a district superintendent, and a professor of preaching.

Nazarene Publishing House is sponsoring the awards for first and second place:

1st prize receives \$400 U.S. Gift Certificate

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The gift certificates are available only through the Nazarene Publishing House; however, winners may order items from most other publishers.

The top three sermons selected by the judges will be printed in the *Preacher's Magazine*.

All manuscripts must be postmarked before June 1, 1992. Winning sermons will be awarded and published in the March/April/May 1993 issue of the *Preacher's Magazine*.

Please send submissions to:

Communicator's Sermon Contest

10814 E. Broadway

Spokane, WA 99206



WORSHIP

& PREACHING

HELPS

March/April/May 1992

Prepared by B. W. Hambrick



B. W. Hambrick

INTRODUCTION

Love is the beginning, middle, and end of all we do as Christians. Henry Drummond said,

The test of religion, the final test of religion, is not righteousness, but love. I say the final test of religion at that great Day is not righteousness, but love; not what I have done, not what I have believed, not what I have achieved, but how I have discharged the common charities of life.

Yet, we seem so confused about love. Every person seems to have his own idea about love and judges others by that standard. Is there a standard of love? Can we capture a vision of love that will establish again the fact that "they'll know we are Christians by our love"?

If we caught a glimpse of God's love, our love and lives would be different. Even our churches, families, and marriages would take on depth and splendor as they reflect God's love. What would happen if God's love would penetrate the highest and the lowest, the richest or the most vile of relationships? Can God's love still transform?

Our goal must be to fully comprehend what Jesus meant when He said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). Therefore, this series is about God's love, but it is also about you and me and what we have done with the love we have received. Therefore, as I prepared, planned, and preached this series of sermons, it was not just for others, it was for me!

Two books guided my study and my devotional life during my personal study of "The Love of God." The first book was Henry Drummond's classic little book, *The Greatest Thing in the World*. The second was *Testaments of Love*, written by Leon Morris. Morris draws biblical truth out into comprehensible realities to be seen, admired, examined, appropriated, and established as personal spiritual principles. Drummond assumes a fair understanding of love. He inspires us to freely and generously apply love and to take love where it belongs—into the streets, market-places, and secret places of our lives.

It would be a good idea for preparing to preach a series on love to study Morris' book. His study of love in the Bible will bring you, the reader, to a greater appreciation of love, its meaning, its application, and its power wherever found in Scripture. He reveals his own depth of feeling in concluding his study of love. He writes:

Our survey of the Bible's teaching about love has brought our one great overriding theme—namely, that the love of God is a love for the completely undeserving. Using a variety of words and images, the many authors of the Bible emphasize this truth. God does not love men because he finds them wonderfully attractive. His love is not limited to the beautiful, the good, the pious, the prayerful, or the kind. In fact, nothing in men can account for God's love; he loves because it is his nature to love. John expresses this overwhelming idea by saying simply, "God is love." Is there any better way of putting it?¹

Presenting the Sermon Series

The selection and arrangement of messages for this series was coordinated with Rev. Kenneth Higginbotham, our minister of music, and Rev. R. E. Snodgrass, our associate minister. This coordination allowed the choir to prepare for the presentation of the musical *This Is Love*, by R. W. Stringfield, and arranged for choir by Dick Bolks (published by Lillenas Publishing Co., Kansas City), and for Sunday morning worship at the same time. At the end of the series, the choir presented the musical on a Sunday evening. It was a great time of celebrating the love of God! Rev. Higginbotham suggests that if the musical arrangements are too difficult, then use another arrangement, but by all means have a celebration of the love of God!

Rev. R. E. Snodgrass and I worked together over the 14 weeks of the series. I preached 12 of the sermons, and he prepared and preached 2, that is, "Love That Does Not Let Go" and "Love Renews Us."

The theme for all the messages is that found in Isa. 54:10: "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you." It was the intent of each participant in the services throughout the 14 weeks to convey the unconditional love of God that draws sinful man and transforms him into a forgiven child of God.

May God bless your endeavor as you declare His great love!

1. Leon Morris, *Testaments of Love* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), 271.

LOVE'S FULL PLAN

by B. W. Hambrick

Isaiah 55; text 54:10

March 1, 1992

INTRO:

There is no need to tell our generation that love is the "greatest thing in the world." Christian and non-Christian alike, we take that for granted. We write about it, talk about it; preach about it; we praise it and appraise it; we emblazon the word on T-shirts and protest banners. We see ourselves a loving people, and it distresses us when others don't love as they should. Since the importance of love is so obvious, why doesn't everyone love as we? (*Morris, 1981*).

We all agree that love is important, yet we are somewhat surprised that there are many unloving people. Attitudes run the spectrum. Some find intolerable the puritanical types who contend for upright living in a way that denies others the right to live promiscuously. The conventionally moral person is seen as less than human. Even the promiscuous do not escape. They usually insist that they're truly loving, only to meet the criticism that they are mistaking lust for love and confusing their personal pleasure with concern for the well-being of others, an integral part of real love. Even Christians are not guiltless. We utter the word more often than we give thought to what it means.

How do we harmonize the assurance that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16) with the assertion that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29)? Actually, most of us never think of such problems. In the end, our idea of love is indistinguishable from that of the world around us.

The entire Bible is a book about the God who loves. He loves those He has made. His every action is an effort to reach out to them and their needs (*Morris, Testament of Love, 133*).

Although we more easily recognize our concepts of love and God's love for us from a New Testament perspective, I have chosen to deal with the subject of love from the prophet Isaiah. Out of his anguished spirit over the sins of his generation, Isaiah was able to see God's Revelation of love that was to come centuries later in the person of Jesus Christ.

I. God's Love Is Summarized by Isaiah

The summary statement of God's love is Isa. 54:10:

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the Lord, who has compassion on you.

A. God's love is an unfailing love. His love is freely given, even when there is no response or sense of obligation.

1. God's love is given to saints and sinners.

2. God's love is not drawn from Him by the virtues of an individual or of a group.

3. God's love comes not because of who we are or what we do, but because He is a loving God. His love is based on what He is rather than what we are.

B. God's love is unshakable.

1. "[God's] love is patient, [His] love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. [God's] love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. [God's] love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

2. "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken" (Isa. 54:10).

II. God's Love Is Winsome (vv. 1-5)

A. God knows our need and invites everyone: "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters" (Isa. 55:1).

B. God offers His love without cost to the needy: "You who have no money, come, buy and eat! . . . Why spend money . . . on what does not satisfy?" (vv. 1-2).

C. God's love provides eternal life: "Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you" (v. 3).

III. God's Love Is Beyond Description

Isaiah proclaims, "The Holy One of Israel . . . has endowed you with splendor" (v. 5).

A. That "God is love" is an incomprehensible fact, yet a true contradiction of terms. This contradiction is recorded: "[Herein, KJV] This is love," wrote John, "not that we loved God" (we will never understand what love means if we start with human response), "but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice [to be the propitiation, KJV] for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

ILLUS. One verse of the song "The Love of God" says:

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill,
And ev'ry man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry,
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

The story of this verse was told in W. Shelburne Browne's book, *Lovest Thou Me?* It was written upon the walls of a cell in an asylum. How did it get there? One can only speculate. There is no question that the writer had astounding clarity of understanding of God as the words were written!

In a devotional book Dr. E. Stanley Jones wrote concerning the stanza, "It would exhaust man's capacity to describe it [God's love]. True. For any method used to describe the love of God would be an inadequate method. Reality is that the Word of love became the Word. And no matter how vivid the rhetoric may be, it is

futile, for it can't be done by any method. You cannot describe this love—you have to see it—see it in action.”¹

CONCLUSION:

Even as we begin with this glimpse of the majesty of God's great love, we are overwhelmed by His self-giving, unconditional love poured out upon us. Unworthy and unable to repay or adequately respond to God's love, we simply can only love Him who first loved us and gave himself for us.

1. E. Stanley Jones, *The Word Became Flesh* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), 38.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"
Hymn	"Redeemed" (2 verses)
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"The Love of God"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"Oh, How He Loves You and Me"
Pastoral Prayer	
Scripture	Isaiah 55
Special Song	"More than Wonderful"
Message	"LOVE'S FULL PLAN"
Closing Hymn	"The Love of God"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	

Pastoral Prayer

Focus on God's majesty and His personal care for each of us His children.

Creative Worship Ideas

Offertory Idea

"Let us join in giving our tithe and offerings as a reflection of love to our God."

Scripture Reading

I use longer passages of Scripture, more than 15 verses, very frequently. After all, the Word of God brings us together for worship. Long passages of Scripture become a focus in the service. At times I will ask a layman a week ahead to be ready to lead in worship through a meaningful reading of the passage.

At other times I will have them read it responsively.

Benedictory Prayer

The sentence, "Whoever you are and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!" is incorporated into my benedictory prayer every Sunday morning. For the first few months, I received questions about it, humorous remarks, and chides. Then for the next several months no comments at all. Then after about a year, meaningful responses began to come. Hardly a week goes by that someone doesn't say, "It's like you say in your prayer . . . Jesus is Lord." Through my repetition, this concept has moved into the heart of everyday living.



"THERE'S STANDING ROOM ONLY IN THE CHURCH!
THE COLLECTION PLATE IS OVERFLOWING AND
EVERYONE'S SINGING ON KEY. PINCH ME!
I MUST BE DREAMING!"

LOVE GIVES PURPOSE

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 43:1-13

March 8, 1992

INTRO:

I love old cemeteries. I enjoy visiting them, exploring the names and histories, the epitaphs that reveal so much about people, lives, times, and attitudes of another day.

The epitaph of Grace Llewellen Smith of San Antonio has no birth date, no date of death, just these words:

Sleeps, but rests not.

Loved, but loved not.

Tried to please, but pleased not.

Died as she lived, alone.

—Max Lucado, *Six Hours One Friday* (Portland, Oreg.: Multnomah, 1989), 36.

What futility! What kind of life Grace Llewellen Smith must have had! There must have been pain, lots of pain in a life like that. What went wrong? Why was her life so futile, so empty, so tiring, so lonely?

Restless nights, activity-filled day; hands extended to others, but never reciprocated.

"Tried to please, but pleased not." I can feel the hurt and disappointments in those words. Doing the best she could, but it was never good enough. "How many times do I have to tell you?" "You'll never amount to anything." "Why can't you do anything right?" Painful words easily spoken, but daggers to the self-esteem of a child, teenager, or a hurting spouse.

Tragically, Grace Llewellen Smith really neither lived alone nor died alone. How many Grace Llewellen Smiths are there? I don't know, but I do know I have worked with many of them—broken, rejected, hurt, defeated, and dejected. Max Lucado says she is the homeless in Atlanta, the happy-hour hopper in Los Angeles, a bag lady in Miami, the preacher in Nashville, any person who doubts whether the world needs him, any person who is convinced that no one really cares.

If you are like Grace Llewellen Smith, hold on, for I have good news for you.

The Scripture begins by telling you who you are and where you have come from!

I. The Love You Feel This Day Comes from Your Creator

"He who created you . . . he who formed you" (v. 1). Perhaps Isaiah had been sleeping on a philosopher's stone—a rock under your sleeping bag that won't let you sleep—and he was lying awake, thinking about his own value. We don't have to look far in Scripture to see that he was not alone.

A. As David thought about God's love, he caught a glimpse of what His creative power meant to him and to us. He wrote:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are

wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (*Ps. 139:13-18, 23-24*).

B. As we look at God, we discover who He is, what He has done, and how we fit into His plan. Our reactions to grasping these powerful truths are penitence, praise, and adoration.

C. God is never finished with His creation. He is creatively at work today.

D. In our self-incriminating ways, we often forget what Mother Teresa expressed:

In our efforts to listen to "God's words" to us, we often neglect what might be called his "first word" to us. This is the gift of ourselves to ourselves: our existence, our nature, our personal history, our uniqueness, our identity. All that we have, and indeed our every existence, is one of the unique and never-to-be-repeated ways God has chosen to express himself in space and time. Each of us, because we are made in God's image and likeness, is yet another promise that he has made to the universe that he will continue to love it and care for it (*Mother Teresa, Leadership, Fall 1989, 137*).

II. The Lord Speaks in a Loving Voice of Assurance (v. 1)

A. "Fear not" (v. 1).

1. Have you ever been afraid, really afraid? Have you ever felt the death grip of fear that would not let you go? It is a horrifying experience!

2. The most powerful traps Satan offered are sin, guilt, and death. Fear held men in a death grip, but faith touches the redemptive grace of Jesus. Isaiah recorded God's words, "Fear not . . . I have redeemed you."

3. God is never finally defeated. God is never at His last resort, without some way to assist us in our crisis.

B. "I have redeemed you" (v. 1).

1. Our redemption, and theirs, was a part of God's plan from the beginning.

2. In an ever-present tense, the words of God through Isaiah declare this message of hope and expectation!

C. "I have summoned you by name; you are mine" (v. 1).

1. God's call is not a general invitation. He is specific. His summons is given to individuals.

2. As Jesus ministered, He demonstrated God's personal care as He abandoned crowds to meet the needs of individuals.

III. You Can Feel God's Loving Hand of Protection (vv. 2-13)

A. *You can know God's love in life's uncertain circumstances.*

1. "When you pass through the waters" refers to the Red Sea and the Jordan River, through which the children of Israel passed on dry ground.

2. "When you walk through the fire."

ILLUS. A man from Logan, W.Va., was rescued from a fire as a child. He was badly burned and required months to heal. He has now become a fire fighter and volunteers to go into unbelievable places to rescue others from burning flames.

B. *Against your enemies God says, "I will . . . bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth" (vv. 4-6).*

IV. Why Does God Give Care, Protection, and Intervention?

A. *Because you are precious and honored in God's sight (v. 4).*

B. *Because God loves you (v. 4).* This is a mystery of mysteries.

C. *Because God has invested in us: "Whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made" (v. 7).*

D. *Because of the integrity of God's name: "Every-one who is called by my name" (v. 7).*

V. God Promises to Use Us

"I am doing a new thing! . . . I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland . . . to give drink to my people, my chosen, the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise" (vv. 19-21).

"For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants" (44:3).

CONCLUSION:

Celebrate God's loving involvement with you today. He knows who you are. He is aware of your needs. He is using you to His glory this very minute.

Benjamin Franklin knew God's loving involvement in his life. He wrote his own epitaph:

The body of
Benjamin Franklin, printer,
(Like the cover of an old book,
Its contents worn out,
And stript of its lettering and gilding)
Lies here, food for worms!
Yet the work itself shall not be lost,
For it will, as he believed, appear once more,
In a new and more beautiful edition,
Corrected and amended
By its Author!

—C. R. Swindoll, *Old Testament Characters* (Fullerton, Calif.: Insight for Living, 1986), 47.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Arise, My Soul, Arise"
Hymn	"He's a Wonderful Savior to Me"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"This Love Is Mine"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Song	"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"You Gave Me Love"
Message	"LOVE GIVES PURPOSE"
Closing Hymn	"Ho, Everyone That Is Thirsty"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer Idea

Focus prayer on the personal presence of God, His intervention in the lives of those who serve Him, and His personal call that gives life eternal value.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

Giving is a celebration of praise for His blessing upon our lives. We come to return the tithe and give our offerings.

Open Altar Versus Prayer Time

The concept of "open altar" became a problem when the same people would come again and again. For a time no mention was made of open altar. Now that we have reinstituted it, the minister of music makes an appeal for those who have special prayer requests, needs, or concerns to unite together around the altar for special prayer. The results have been wonderful!

Closing Prayer/Benediction

"Lord, remind us that whoever we are, and wherever we go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to us of good or ill, we should remember that God's love goes with us and that Jesus is Lord!"

LOVE'S CALL

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 6:1-10

March 15, 1992

INTRO:

Have you ever had an event that precipitated significant change in your life? Can you think of some events that are so embedded in your mind that you know where you were and what you were doing at the time they occurred? Americans remember where they were, what they were doing, and who told them about the death of President John F. Kennedy. For those who had not "discovered the world" in the early 1960s, what about the *Challenger* explosion? Marker events like these often precipitate change!

The death of Uzziah was that kind of event for Isaiah and the nation of Israel. During the time of Uzziah, Israel had known prosperity and prestige like none they had known since the time of Solomon. Uzziah had ascended the throne of Israel when he was 16 years old. Faithfully he followed the footsteps of his father and had lived in the fear of God. Blessed financially, socially, and militarily, he was good to his men, and he had quite an army, 307,500 men!

The Scripture records some sad words:

But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense. . . . While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord's temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. . . . King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died (2 *Chron.* 26:16, 19, 21).

In that year the significant event marked the greatest occasion of his life, Isaiah was in the Temple. Through direct intervention of God and through the power of His love for Isaiah and his people, God gave Isaiah his most significant life-changing experience.

I. Isaiah Had a Glorious Vision of God and His Love (vv. 1-4)

A. *"I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple"* (v. 1).

1. Seeing the Lord enthroned was an awesome sight! Can you imagine it? Seeing God seated on His throne would be a life-changing experience for anyone!

2. Jesus himself said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt. 5:8). What does that reveal about Isaiah, who was privileged to see God? Doesn't it tell us about his motives, his attitudes, and his obedience?

3. We, too, must be able to see God "high and exalted" if we would be significantly changed by His glorious power. Otherwise, Bible stories are only stories, stories about a man named Jesus, people who lived good lives, and miracles done a long time ago. When Jesus is "high and exalted" in our hearts, we are awestruck and

can never be the same. Only then can we understand the words of the heavenly beings who sang,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory" (v. 3).

B. *Jesus spoke of our need to lift Him up for all the world to see and know, when He said:*

The Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (*John* 3:14-16).

II. Isaiah Made a Revealing Confession (v. 5)

A. *"Woe to me! . . . I am ruined!"*

1. What a graphic description of Isaiah's feelings. Isaiah was definitely aware of his failure, his inability, and how destitute he was compared to God's majesty!

ILLUS. Job, who had defended himself and his relationship with God, confessed: My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes (42:5-6)

B. *"I am a man of unclean lips," as Scripture reminds us over and over.* What comes out of the mouth is a reflection of what is in the heart!

C. *God help us.*

1. By revelation, God shows us His power and control.

2. By self-discovery, we become aware of our inability to do much for ourselves or for others.

3. By self-abhorrence, we feel guilt or shame, our emotional reaction to inadequacy.

4. By self-abandonment, we can look beyond ourselves to others or to God

III. Isaiah Experienced an Astounding Transformation

"Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand . . . he touched my mouth and said, 'See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for'" (vv. 6-7).

A. *The seraph represents the work of the Holy Spirit, who has taken our brokenness and applied the substitutionary work of Christ to our hurting and unclean lives.*

B. *The transformation is twofold:*

1. We have forgiveness: "This has touched your lips; . . . your sin is completely atoned for and forgiven" (Amp.). God divinely intervenes for sin. In the Atonement, the blood of the Lamb covers sin, even as the coal of fire covered the mouth of Isaiah.

2. We have purity: "iniquity" (KJV) or "guilt is tak-

en away." Not only is sin covered, but the cause of sinning is cleansed. The iniquity—lack of equity in the nature—toward God and man is taken away. You are renewed in your mind and morally straightened.

C. When sin is forgiven, and the heart is made pure, we are then empowered to begin our service for God.

IV. Isaiah Heard and Responded to God's Call (vv. 8-10)

A. With his heart made pure, Isaiah could now hear God's voice: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

1. This was not a voice of command! It was a voice of revelation, of drawing, and of challenge toward loving involvement in the continued work of God.

a. God wanted Isaiah to celebrate what he had seen and received with the nation of Israel.

b. God wants us to serve Him through the big and little things we do. Even a "cup of water" given in Christ's name He will bless and use to His glory (Mark 9:41).

2. God does not build His army with a forced draft. He uses a volunteer army that has seen Him for who He is, has felt His transforming power, and who is anxious to share the Good News.

B. Isaiah's response was definite: "Here am I. Send me!"

1. Not only did Isaiah respond to God's call, but also his response indicates that he knew the importance of what he was about to do for God.

2. Isaiah's response was commitment: "Send me!" That's total availability! Isaiah withheld nothing. He was unlike those who came to Jesus: one had to care for his father, another had to plow his field, and another had to care for his wife. Isaiah made no excuses. He was ready to serve!

3. It is time for us to respond to God's voice: "I'll go where You want me to go."

CONCLUSION:

When God has gloriously changed us, we will become involved with His kingdom's work. We will find a place of service. No one will have to recruit us!

God has a place for you to serve.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Holy, Holy, Holy"
Hymn	"I Am Resolved"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"My Savior's Love"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"O Glorious Love"
Message	"LOVE'S CALL"
Closing Hymn	"Stand Up for Jesus"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

This prayer should focus on the many needs, the diversity of circumstances, but the sufficiency of Christ as the congregation puts into practice "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus."

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

Love moves us to action. As the apostle Paul said, "Just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Cor. 8:7).

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



R. GREEN

LOVE'S FINAL TEST

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 38:9-20

March 22, 1992

INTRO:

"Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover" (38:1). "You are going to die"—those are difficult words to hear whatever your age, state of success, attitudes, or physical condition.

Hezekiah was 38 years old, king of Israel, and had no children when Isaiah was instructed by God to go to him and give him this poignant message. Hezekiah was deathly ill with a huge boil obviously poisoning his system. God's prognosis was "death"!

I. Hezekiah Confronts His Own Death

A. Putting his house in order, Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed. His reflection (vv. 10-20) tells us what took place in the few minutes that he turned his back to others and faced God.

1. Hezekiah questioned the decision based on what he saw in the present. "In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years?" (v. 10).

2. He faced death emotionally, using analogies to deal with his own feelings of what death means:

a. He faced the question of death's finality: "I will not again see the Lord . . . no longer will I look on mankind, or be with those who now dwell in this world" (v. 11).

b. He faced his own helplessness: "Like a shepherd's tent my house has been pulled down" (v. 12).

c. He faced the reality of separation: "Like a weaver I have rolled up my life, and he has cut me off from the loom; day and night you made an end of me" (v. 12).

d. He faced the exhaustion of all his resources: "I waited patiently till dawn, but like a lion he broke all my bones" (v. 13).

3. He bargained with God: "I cried like a swift or thrush, I moaned like a mourning dove. My eyes grew weak as I looked to the heavens" (v. 14).

4. He resigned himself to accept the outcome whatever it would be: "I am troubled; O Lord, come to my aid! But what can I say? He has spoken to me, and he himself has done this" (vv. 14-15).

5. He found fulfillment: He recognized that he had done all he could do: "I must go softly" (Amp.). God was in charge: "Lord, by such things men live." Finally he was "restored . . . to health" (v. 16).

II. Hezekiah Received a Reprieve from His Death Sentence

A. God heard his prayer! "Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the Lord came to him" (2 Kings 20:4).

B. God healed Hezekiah. "Go back and tell Hezekiah,

the leader of my people, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord'" (v. 5).

C. Isaiah used a medical treatment to accomplish God's miracle: "Prepare a poultice of figs" (v. 7).

1. They prepared the poultice and Hezekiah recovered.

2. Prayer is important. God is able, but He uses what He chooses to accomplish His purposes.

3. We believe medical means should never be rejected but used as given to accomplish God's miracle.

4. A sign in a French surgical school says, "We bind them up; God heals."

D. Even as he was improving, Hezekiah asked for a "sign" that he would "go up to the temple . . . on the third day" (v. 8).

1. This was not necessarily a sign of weakness on Hezekiah's part. It was a long way from his fevered suffering to the Temple—in only three days!

2. God granted Hezekiah's sign. The shadow from the sundial did not go forward as it should but went back, contrary to the natural scheme of time (v. 11).

III. Hezekiah's Greatest Trial Was Success!

A. How do you handle the tragedies, successes, miracles, and changes in your life?

1. When either tragedies, great successes, or miraculous blessings come, we are most vulnerable.

2. Unfortunately, the enemy of our souls knows this better than we do!

B. God's apparent reprieve became Hezekiah's downfall (Isa. 39:1-2).

1. Merodach-Baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, heard of the illness of Hezekiah and sent an envoy bearing gifts and greetings from the king (v. 1).

2. In his excitement, King Hezekiah "received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, . . . and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them" (v. 2).

3. When Isaiah heard what had taken place, he immediately confronted Hezekiah, reminding him, "The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your fathers have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord" (v. 6).

C. Hezekiah's false presumption was that since God had delivered him once from death's door, God would do anything to care for him.

1. Isaiah's warning continued, "Some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon" (v. 7).

2. Hezekiah gave a twisted reply: "The word of the Lord you have spoken is good [?] . . . There will be peace and security in my lifetime" (v. 8).

3. Hezekiah was saying literally, "This is wonderful! God is going to judge, but it will be after my lifetime! Let my children pay the price! I don't mind if they suffer; it's all right with me."

D. That is the tragic philosophy from which this generation operates.

1. We have already spent the tax revenues for at least another generation, but no one seems to care or to be able to take a stand strong enough to do anything about it.

2. Couples divorce, saying, "We'll be happy. Never mind that it will destroy our children's sense of belonging and security for the rest of their lives."

3. Husbands and wives have extramarital affairs. Heterosexuals and homosexuals bring home all kinds of sexual diseases, including AIDS, to unsuspecting spouses and children.

4. For the most sick, selfish gratification of all, parents sexually abuse their children with no sense of understanding of the tremendous destruction being brought upon their children.

5. Teens and young adults continue to use drugs and alcohol for pleasure without regard for the destruction that their actions bring to families, friends, and society.

E. Hezekiah was right. When God's wrath began to come on him, he was able to see a change in his lifetime. However, it did not spare the generation that was to come.

"Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the Lord's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the Lord's wrath did not come upon them during the days of Hezekiah" (2 Chron. 32:25-26).

CONCLUSION:

God loves us! However, we should not presume upon His love. He holds us accountable for sin. Sin brings destruction. We may escape sin's immediate consequences,

but destruction will come. So guard your hearts, in the good times and in the bad, realizing there is no time when Satan is not on a "seek-and-destroy mission." What a terrible price when even our children pay for our sin!

ILLUS. Satan attacks homes as children move into their teen years. If there is any point at which families tend to drop out of church, it is at this time. Separation, divorce, or reconciliation may follow, but by this time, the children are grown and gone from home. Since about 67% of all Christians are won to God when they are teens, most of the children from these homes are lost forever! God help us!

We need God's forgiveness and God's restoration of our homes and lives today!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Praise Him! Praise Him!"
Hymn	"Jesus Loves Even Me"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"This Love Is Mine/Such Love"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"My Wonderful Lord"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	
Message	"LOVE'S FINAL TEST"
Closing Hymn	"There Is Power in the Blood"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

Make this a prayer of celebration! Jesus has changed us, our attitudes, our actions, and our desires. He deserves our praise!

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap" (Luke 6:38).

Music

In an effort to make the great hymns of the church be more than "old songs we sing," I consistently quote hymns, gospel songs, or choruses in my messages to make them come alive as words with real meaning and application.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



Pontius' Puddle



LOVE THAT DOES NOT LET GO

by R. E. Snodgrass

Isaiah 50
March 29, 1992

INTRO:

The people of Israel had accused God of forsaking them and having "divorced" their mother, Zion. Now before Isaiah and God, they are pointing their fingers and blaming Him for their sin.

An overview of the passage shows (vv. 1-3) a rebuke to the exiles for perceiving themselves entirely rejected by their God and refusing to rise to the occasion when God sends news of their coming deliverance. An account of the servant of the Lord is given (vv. 4-9). Exhortations to the weak believers contain encouragement and warning (vv. 10-11).

I. God Questions Backsliders

A. *"Where is your mother's certificate of divorce . . . ?" (v. 1).*

1. The people of Moses' day had encouraged their leader to allow them to divorce their present wives and write them certificates of divorce. "If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house" (Deut. 24:1).

2. Jesus faced this question by stating that it was not God's plan, but permission was given because of the hardness of the people's hearts. He said, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning" (Matt. 19:8).

3. By Isaiah's day, many husbands were writing a bill of divorce for any small repugnance they felt for their wives.

4. The people of Israel were now asking God, "Why have You divorced or forsaken the people of Israel who You had promised to treat as a wife?"

5. God responded, "Where is your certificate of divorce?" God had not divorced the people of Israel; they had abandoned Him.

B. *God continued, "To which of my creditors did I sell you?" (v. 1).*

1. The father in debt had a right under the law to sell his children to his creditors until he could pay the bill (Exod. 21:7; 2 Kings 4:1; Neh. 5:5, 8).

2. The people of Israel had accused God of "selling" them into captivity by the Babylonians.

3. God responded: "To which of my creditors did I sell you?" To whom does God owe anything? God has no creditors; He has only debtors.

C. *God, who is clearly in charge of all things, challenged the accusations of the people.*

II. God Answers a Rebellious People (vv. 1 ff.)

A. *"Because of your sins you were sold; because of your transgressions your mother was sent away" (v. 1).*

B. *"Was my arm too short to ransom you? Do I lack the strength to rescue you?" (v. 2).*

1. Our own answers to these questions show how we feel about God and how much we trust Him.

2. Does God have a short arm? Do we think ourselves out of the reach of His help? God wants to know from you, "Is that how you feel about Me? Do you feel I am too far away to reach you either in your everyday life or in your time of trouble?"

3. Does God lack strength?

ILLUS. As a boy of eight years, I worked with my dad, who was a carpenter. Part of our work was pouring concrete walls. With wood, we formed a wall eight inches wide and used struts to hold the forms apart until they could be filled with concrete. These walls were over 10 feet high. Sometimes someone would drop a tool into the form. Dad would lower me down into the form and then lift me up with his right arm. I trusted him, or I would not have gone into the form at his request. I knew his right arm was strong enough.

4. Do you know that God's arm is strong enough to lift you from your sins and out of the difficulties of life?

III. What Is the Response of the Backslider?

A. *Two areas that deal with sinners are addressed in 50:10:*

1. "Who among you fears the Lord . . . ?" (v. 10). A sinner is one without reverential fear, which can be defined as a dread of displeasing God. Sinners or backsliders have willfully chosen to treat God as if He were weak, far away, and unconcerned with their situations.

2. Those who walk in darkness have no light: "Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God" (v. 10).

a. "But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness" (Prov. 4:19).

b. "When . . . your eyes . . . are bad, your body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34).

c. "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

B. *What is a backslider to understand? (vv. 10-11).*

1. To come to Jesus, he must fear the Lord and obey His servant.

a. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,

and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

b. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. 111:10).

2. To be a Christian, he must walk in the light.

a. Jesus is light. "In him was life, and that life was the light of men" (John 1:4). "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world" (v. 9).

b. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

CONCLUSION:

If you are a sinner (one who practices doing what he knows God does not approve of), there is help and forgiveness for you today. If you are a backslider (one who has once known the forgiveness of God but who has turned again to his own way), Jesus calls you to come back home today.

ILLUS. Roman emperor Charlemagne was a famous king. Legend has it that he asked to be entombed sitting upright on his throne. He asked that his crown be placed on his head and his scepter in his hand. He requested that his royal cape be draped around his shoulders and an open book be placed in his lap.

That was A.D. 814. Nearly 200 years later, Emperor Othello determined to see if the burial request had been carried out. He allegedly sent a team of men to open the tomb and make a report. They found the body just as Charlemagne had requested. However, the crown was tilted, the mantle moth-eaten, the body disfigured. Open on the skeletal thighs was the book Charlemagne

had requested, the Bible. One bony finger pointed to Matt. 16:26: "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?"

Each one must answer that.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"O for a Thousand Tongues"
Hymn	"Grace Greater than Our Sin"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"God's Great Grace"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"O Come, All Ye Faithful"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"Bring Back the Glory"
Message	"LOVE THAT DOES NOT LET GO"
Closing Hymn	"Just as I Am"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

In today's prayer use a Scripture base for praise like Psalm 23. Declare God's powerful love and leadership for our lives and our church around the world.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

We give thanks today because "he first loved us" (1 John 4:19), and loving does not let us go.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



PRAISE, OUR RESPONSE TO LOVE

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 26:1-15, 19-21

April 5, 1992

INTRO:

As Christians, we come today to celebrate. We are not here to celebrate a crucifixion, but a resurrection! We do not bow before a crucifix, for Jesus is not on the Cross. He has risen! Because He has defeated death and the grave, we rejoice at the promise of eternity.

Isaiah pictures the feeling of God's people as they glory in the strength of "the city of God." It is a strength, not of material bulwarks, but of salvation, with its attendant peace and blessedness. Here, too, the prophet declares a faith that is mightier than death. "Death" is not the final word for the heroes of the faith. That word is "resurrection."

I. The Song of Two Cities (vv. 1-6) Is an Allegory of True and False Salvation

A. *There is the city of our defense (vv. 1-4).*

1. We have a strong city.

a. Its bulwarks are salvation (v. 1). Its walls and fortifications are not dead stone but dynamic, inexhaustible salvation.

b. Its gates are open to the loyal, righteous nation who keeps faith and fidelity (v. 2).

c. The Lord is the Rock of Ages, the Rock eternal.

2. It is a city of personal peace (v. 3).

a. The Lord himself guards with constant peace. When the inmost nature is free from all equivocation, then a perfect peace (*shalom*) abides.

b. The inhabitants of the city enjoy perfect peace by trusting in the Lord in a troubled world.

c. The city of salvation is eternal (v. 4).

B. Contrasted to this is the self-righteous, proud, and lofty city (vv. 5-6).

1. "He humbles those who dwell on high, he lays the lofty city low; he levels it to the ground and casts it down to the dust" (v. 5). Salvation is always false when it is proud and seeks selfish gain. God saves us to reach and serve others, not for what we can get or gain. The many benefits of true salvation are a by-product of living in the city of salvation, not a result of our efforts or for our aggrandizement.

2. Amazingly, God uses the oppressed and the poor to accomplish His task. Those who were once abused and oppressed now trample the false city!

II. The Song of the Soul's Desire Is a Meditation on the Ways of the Righteous and the Wicked (vv. 7-10)

A. *Isaiah describes the path of the righteous.*

1. The path is level: "You make the way of the righteous smooth" (v. 7).

a. Like blockers on a football team, God runs interference for us. While we may be cheered for our spiri-

tual successes like a quarterback, we know God gets all the credit.

ILLUS. Corrie ten Boom was once asked how she handled all the compliments she received. Her answer reveals her understanding of her relationship to God. She said, "I see them like flowers. I smell them all day long. When evening comes, I give them all to Him." After all, God is the One who deserves them.

2. When we walk in the ways (laws) of the Lord, His name and His will are the desire of our hearts. When we truly love someone, we will do things we would not otherwise be able to envision ourselves doing for that beloved one.

3. As spiritual people, night and day we long to see the Lord's leadership that directs our lives and teaches people of the world about His righteousness.

B. *Isaiah describes the path of the wicked.*

1. "The wicked . . . do not learn" (v. 10). Even though God's people pray, fast, and reach out, and although God is constantly showing His majesty and power, men and women do not all seek Him. God has given everyone a free will. They can, and often do, choose to go on in their sins and disregard the majesty of the Lord.

2. "Your hand is lifted high, but they do not see it" (v. 11). We would like to know how to cure this spiritual blindness.

3. Though it makes no sense to us Christians, people often choose to remain in their sins.

III. Praise God for the Mighty Blessing of the Lord (vv. 12-15)

A. *Give praise for what God has done.*

1. "You establish peace for us" (v. 12).

a. Peace is the missing ingredient in the sinner because nothing satisfies.

b. The Christian knows peace! "Not as the world giveth" (John 14:27, KJV), but deep, quiet, and blessed peace in our hearts.

2. "All that we have accomplished you have done for us" (v. 12). God is active in the Christian. He works in and through the believer until he can truly say, "All that I have accomplished, You have done for me!" There's no room for personal pride!

3. "Other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone do we honor" (v. 13).

a. Only the truly repentant is willing to admit sinful obedience to "other lords" as the error of his way. But what praise it is to God when we can say, "I've been there, but I choose Jesus!"

b. "They are now dead" (v. 14). God brings victory over whatever ruled and controlled us. All lesser

gods will die. If materialism, sensualism, pride, greed, etc., all these will pass away!

c. All lesser gods must die if we are to enjoy the Lord's peace. Since they cannot satisfy, since they will soon die, since they conflict with God's will for us, they must be destroyed by God's power working in us to completely deliver us from their strong hold.

d. The victory has already been won for us. "You punished them and brought them to ruin; you wiped out all memory of them" (v. 14).

IV. There Is the Certainty of Eternal Life (vv. 19-21)

From verse 14 it seems clear that Isaiah had little understanding of eternal life. Yet, as his faith soars, he declares:

Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. . . . The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer (vv. 19, 21).

A. *Isaiah's hope pierces the confines of death!* He is convinced, having reviewed the power and majesty of God, that this salvation is for all eternity!

B. *Isaiah's vision of eternal salvation is harmonious without expectations.*

1. The dead will live again.
2. There will be a bodily resurrection.
3. The resurrection will be accompanied with the shout of victory.
4. The grave is only the temporary dwelling place of the dead.
5. Resurrection will be a time of revelation, since "the earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer" (v. 21). What horror for the sinner! What victory for the saint!

CONCLUSION:

God, through His glorious love for us, has penetrated our indifference, canceled the power of sin, and set us on the road to glorious victory leading to eternal salvation! "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor. 15:55).

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Praise Ye the Lord, the Almighty"
Hymn	"Love Lifted Me"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"It's Just like His Great Love"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"Oh, How He Loves You and Me"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"My Tribute"
Message	"PRAISE, OUR RESPONSE TO LOVE"
Closing Hymn	"I Will Praise Him"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

For the opening of the prayer, invite two or three spiritual leaders to come to the microphone and give a two-sentence prayer for the needs of the church from their service perspective, that is, youth leader would pray for the youth, etc. Conclude the prayer with the words of "Jesus Loves Me."

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

No single act we do more clearly reflects our attitude toward God than how freely we give.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



LOVE'S COMPLETE CARE

by B. W. Hambrick

Isaiah 53; John 19:17-30

April 12, 1992

INTRO:

Max Lucado, in his book *No Wonder They Call Him Savior*, writes of the beauty and grandeur of God's dramatic display of love on the Cross:

Nearing the climax of the story, God motivated by love and directed by divinity, surprised everyone. He became a man. In an untouchable mystery, He disguised himself as a carpenter and lived in a dusty Judean village. Determined to prove His love for His creation, He walked incognito through His own world. His calloused hands touched wounds and His compassionate tongue touched hearts. He became one of us.

But as beautiful as this act of incarnation was, it was not the zenith. Like a master painter God reserved His masterpiece until the end. All the earlier acts of love had been leading to this one. The angels hushed and the heavens paused to witness the finale. God unveils the canvas on which the ultimate act of creative compassion is revealed.

God on the Cross.

The creator being sacrificed for the creation. God convincing man once for all that forgiveness still follows failure.

—Max Lucado, *No Wonder They Call Him Savior* (Portland, Ore: Multnomah Press, 1986), 57-58.

I. Death Was Jesus' Constant Companion

"Born to die" has been a phrase used to speak of the violent and rebellious of our generation and others. The phrase describes Jesus, who lived in the shadow of the Cross. By the time He was two, an assassination attempt by Herod sent His family to Egypt. Learning to read from the Old Testament, He no doubt learned the prophecies of His death, and at 33, when most men were beginning their careers, His ended.

A. Jesus came to die.

1. The purpose of Jesus' death is recorded in the obituary of Isa. 53:3-7.

2. Jesus was a baby born to die.

B. Of how much of His destiny was Jesus aware?

1. Following the incident in which Peter acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah, He began to prepare His disciples for His suffering and His death.

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to His disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer . . . be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to You!' Jesus . . . said . . . 'Get behind me, Satan!'" (Matt. 16:21-23).

2. Jesus spoke of His death on the Cross several times: Matt. 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:1-2; and 26:10-12.

C. In the Upper Room Jesus showed His compassion for His disciples.

As Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples in the Upper Room, Satan was waiting to enter into Judas (John 13:27). The brow of Jesus was knitted; His eyes, intense. A hush fell over the room as He spoke: "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me" (v. 21).

The group of men winced. Then Jesus added His indicting words to Peter: "I tell you the truth, . . . before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times" (Matt. 26:34).

The disciples were stunned! Their Leader was about to be betrayed—and denied—with the betrayal and denial coming from within the ranks of those closest to Him. No wonder they were deeply troubled.

Jesus' words of comfort flow:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going (*John 14:1-3*).

Matthew tells us that the Upper Room discourse was closed with a hymn. After the hymn, they went to the Mount of Olives to pray and to await the betrayal (26:30).

After the hymn, Jesus spoke again. This time His words were comprehensive: "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered'" (v. 31).

Peter verbalizes his undying loyalty: "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will" (v. 33). "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (v. 35). All the others echoed Peter's resolve. But Jesus' words would stand. The Shepherd would be struck down; the sheep would be scattered.

II. Jesus Moves Toward the Cross

A. Jesus led His disciples to the little garden spot known as Gethsemane to pray. He would have the others sit and wait while He took Peter, James, and John with Him. Jesus stood on the dark precipice overlooking the valley of death. For the world to have light, He would have to suffer the darkness of death:

Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will" (vv. 38-39).

The vigilante mob arrived (v. 47). The kiss of Judas sealed the betrayal (vv. 48-49). The Shepherd was taken captive (vv. 50-55), and the sheep were scattered (v. 56).

B. The trials of Jesus were a terrible miscarriage of justice. There were a total of six trials that sleepless night: The first three were conducted by Jewish authorities and concerned religious questions. The final three concerned civil questions and were conducted by Roman authorities.

The Jewish trials were as follows: (1) Annas, father-in-law of Caiaphas the high priest, examined Jesus (John 18:12-24); (2) Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin quickly condemned Him, found Him guilty of blasphemy, then mocked and beat Him (Matt. 26:57-68); (3) the Sanhedrin "sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death" (Luke 22:66-71).

The Roman trials were as follows: (1) Pilate, governor of Judea, found Jesus innocent, but passed the buck to Herod because Jesus was from Galilee (Luke 23:4-7); (2) Herod found no guilt in Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate's court (vv. 14-15); and finally (3) Pilate again declared Jesus innocent (v. 14). Facing a riot, Pilate succumbed to the pressure of the crowd, washed his hands from the guilt of shedding innocent blood, and gave Jesus over to be crucified (Matt. 27:24-26).

III. The Crucifixion Followed a Sleepless Night of Indignities

A. False witnesses, slandering, beatings, thorns placed on the King of Kings' head, a robe and scepter of mock royalty, more scourging, more mocking. By 9 A.M. His hands and feet were nailed to a rough-cut cross that was lifted up and dropped with a dull thud into Golgotha's brow. From noon to three, darkness fell over the earth—truly the darkest hours of human history. John records the final minutes of this tragic event:

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit (*John 19:28-30*).

B. Jesus takes a drink, as if to clear His parched throat so that His clarion call could be heard by all: "It is finished."

C. It may have seemed like the darkest moment in history, but these words pierced through the darkness with the brilliance of sunlight! These words refer not

only to His suffering but also to His task—to save people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

D. It was a cry of victory, a cry of accomplishment, and a cry of relief. Jesus would exchange His thorns for a crown, His nakedness for a robe, His disgrace for glory, and His wounds for worship.

CONCLUSION:

The message of the Cross focuses on the triumphant act of Jesus, whose blood alone is adequate to cover our sin.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Fairest Lord Jesus"
Hymn	"My Wonderful Lord"
Fellowship	
Scripture Reading	Isaiah 53
Choir Special	"Love Divine"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"O to Be like Thee"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"There Is a Savior"
Message	"LOVE'S COMPLETE CARE"
Closing Hymn	"Jesus Paid It All"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

The prayer for this morning should be one that reflects our desire to be like Jesus. Mention specific needs like attitudes, actions, dealing with our hurts, and failures. Personalize it to the needs of the congregation.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

May our joy in giving today be like that of the Macedonians, who "urgently pleaded . . . for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints" (2 Cor 8:4).

Palm Sunday

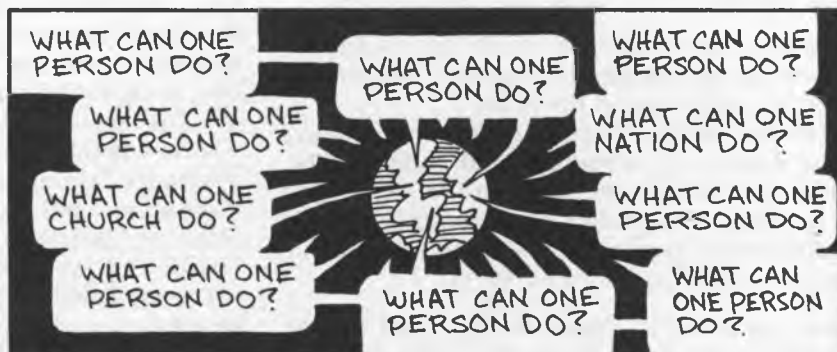
On Palm Sunday, the children enjoy waving palm branches and marching during the service. Their march would be a great complement to the singing of "My Wonderful Lord."

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



Pontius' Puddle



LOVE BRINGS JUSTICE

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 59:9-21

April 19, 1992

INTRO:

Today the effects of sin are labeled as social injustices. They are seen everywhere: homelessness, alcoholism, drug addiction, abuses, drunk driving, starvation, cruelty, diseases, and more. The situations of our world today seem overwhelming: women are attacked on our streets; lives are taken unnecessarily at the hands of a drunken driver; AIDS victims willfully, maliciously, and viciously infect others; greed controls financial marketplaces; and the list is endless.

Is there no justice? What is to become of society? If God loves mankind so much, why doesn't He intervene? We can certainly identify with the words:

Justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. . . . We look for justice, but find none; for deliverance, but it is far away (*vv. 9, 11*).

I. Love Sees the Big Picture

A. God realistically sees man's sinful condition, one with which Isaiah and we can identify. God sees what we already know.

1. "Our offenses are many in your sight, and our sins testify against us" (*v. 12*).

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear (*vv. 1-2*).

God knows us well. He sees our failures and sins as they testify against us to separate us from His presence.

2. "Our offenses are ever with us, and we acknowledge our iniquities: rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God, fomenting oppression and revolt, uttering lies our hearts have conceived" (*vv. 12-13*).

B. While we try to rise above sin, God understands the need of our hearts and recognizes the helplessness of our situation.

1. Everything man tries fails: "So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance" (*v. 14*).

2. Everything we believe in will not work: "Truth is nowhere to be found" (*v. 15*).

3. We become the object of scorn: "Whoever shuns evil becomes a prey" (*v. 15*).

C. God accurately assesses the problem. "The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice" (*v. 15*).

1. "He saw that there was no one" (*v. 16*). We function better and have strength when we don't have to stand alone. God still seeks us:

"The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to

strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (*2 Chron. 16:9*).

2. "He was appalled that there was no one to intervene" (*v. 16*). Through God's direction, the law, self-will, and human effort, they had established the priesthood, officials to settle disputes, judges, prophets, and even a king. But as God spoke through Isaiah, there was no one to intercede for the people!

II. God's Love Established His Own Justice System

It is based upon what Jesus has done for us on the Cross:

A. "His own arm worked salvation for him" (v. 16).

1. "He put on the garments of vengeance" (*v. 17*). This was the scarlet robe for mockery (*Matt. 27:28*), as He was brought to man's judgment: "Crucify him!"

2. He "wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak" (*v. 17*). His zeal caused Him to give His life that we may receive salvation. Jesus determined that He must go to Jerusalem (*Luke 9:51*).

B. "His own righteousness sustained him" (v. 16). Jesus cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (*Matt. 27:46*).

1. "He put on righteousness as his breastplate" (*v. 17*), but it did not stop the spear jabbed into His side.

2. "The helmet of salvation on his head" (*v. 17*). Jesus had nothing more than a crown of thorns.

ILLUS. In the book *Six Hours One Friday*, Max Lucado tells the haunting memory Franciszek Gajowniczek has of Maximilian Kolbe. Kolbe truly exemplified the gentleness of Christ in the German camp of Auschwitz. He was actually known as the "Saint of Auschwitz."

After a prisoner had escaped the guards, following their normal custom they vowed to randomly select 10 from the roll book who were to be sent to a cell where they would starve to death. The 10th name the commandant called was that of Gajowniczek. Gajowniczek began to cry aloud, "My wife and my children!"

The officers raised their rifles as movement occurs among the prisoners. It is Kolbe. They shout for him to stop or be shot. "I want to talk to the commander." Kolbe stops a few feet from the commandant and says, "Herr Kommandant, I wish to make a request, please. I want to die in the place of this prisoner," as he pointed at Gajowniczek. "I have no wife or children. Besides, I am old and not good for anything. He's in better condition."

The request was granted, and the Saint of Auschwitz outlived the other nine. He didn't die of starvation, but of phenol injected into his heart by the camp doctor on August 14, 1941.

Gajowniczek survived the Holocaust and returned to

his own hometown. Every year he goes back to Auschwitz on August 14 to say thank you to the man who died in his place. In his own backyard there is a plaque he carved with his own hands. It is a tribute to Maximilian Kolbe—the man who died so that he could live.

C. The result of Jesus' action is that men have come to revere His name. "Men will fear the name of the Lord" (v. 19).

1. According to what men have done, so will he repay (v. 18):

- a. "Wrath to his enemies"
- b. "Retribution to his foes"
- c. Each will receive his just due.

2. "Men will fear the name of the Lord . . . they will revere his glory" (v. 19). The Lord will protect His name. Ezekiel said:

Therefore say to the house of Israel, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes" (Ezek. 36:22-23).

3. "He will come like a pent-up flood that the breath of the Lord drives along" (v. 19).

III. All Will See the Majesty of Christ

A. *He will come to the holy place—"Zion" (v. 20).*

B. *He will come to those who repent of their sins (v. 20).*

C. *He will establish His covenant with them forever! (v. 21).*

"My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever," says the Lord (v. 21).

CONCLUSION:

God understands you and your need today. He offers you salvation through His mercy, love, and sacrifice. Receive Him now. Enjoy His blessings forever!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Arise, My Soul, Arise"
Hymn	"Under the Atoning Blood"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"There Is a Fountain/Amazing Grace"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"Jesus, Lord to Me"
Message	"LOVE BRINGS JUSTICE"
Closing Hymn	
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

Lift to the Lord the local needs, praise, and adoration. Close the prayer by having the congregation join in the Lord's Prayer.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

"All this abundance . . . it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you" (1 Chron. 29:16). We give today because of the abundance of God's gifts to us!

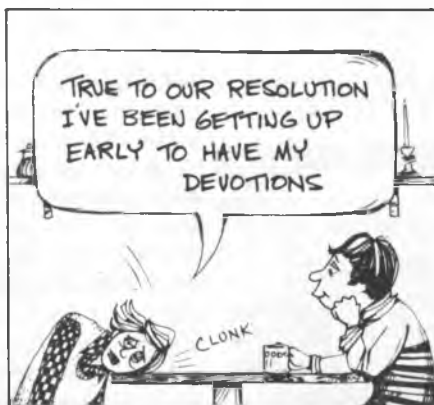
Invitation

Many people only attend church on Easter and Christmas. Therefore, this service is planned for an invitation at the close of the Easter Sunday message. It is a tragedy that many of those who say, "I have never seen an invitation given in my church," are also those who attend on special days when we think it unfitting to invite them to accept Christ as their personal Savior.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"

BEYOND BELIEF



SALVATION BY GOD'S LOVE

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 1:10-20
April 26, 1992

INTRO:

Imagine the scene. It is one of the great Hebrew festivals. The Temple courts are filled with the jostling, clamorous crowd. The air is filled with the sound of the lowing cattle, the bleating of sheep. It is thick with the smoke of burnt offerings, heavy with the scent of incense. Worshipers assume the postures of prayer. They have the appearance of piety. They show scrupulous attention to liturgical detail. It is a spectacle to move one to admiration of a devout people who spare no pains to make this worship magnificent in its fervor and in its setting.

Isaiah seems to agree that it was, indeed, a spectacle. But he sees the judgment that is in the eyes of God as He views this hollow mockery. His message is that no splendor of worship can compensate for the complete disregard of His moral demands in social relationship. He sees, in the ostentation of the service and the assumed piety of the people, sheer hypocrisy; for this congregation, so vocal in praise, so fervent in response, is made up of people whose hands are bloodstained, whose eyes are hot with lust and greed, whose fortunes are built on crimes, and whose hearts have hardened against justice. They had shut their ears against the tears of little children and brokenhearted women. Against this, cries Isaiah, the anger of God is kindled. To use the hearty language of the street, God is fed up with this meaningless display of hypocrites aping piety.

To that crowd of misguided, hypocritical people, Isaiah speaks.

I. Isaiah Describes Man's Despicable Condition (vv. 10-15)

A. Isaiah sees the condition as deplorable. Isaiah likened the rulers to the rulers of Sodom and the people to those of Gomorrah.

1. Sodom and Gomorrah were offensive names to Isaiah's hearers.

2. Isaiah was pressing home his point of their offensiveness toward God.

B. Isaiah implied that there is an abundance of sacrifice beyond the divine requirements.

1. God was nauseated by their attitudes and actions.

2. Their worship was a ritual divorced from penitence—actions that God hates.

3. They offered their sacrifices as if God needed to be fed by them. God clearly sets the record straight:

I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, which are ever before me. I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains,

and the creatures of the field are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Do I eat flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me (Ps. 50:8-15).

C. Their worship was empty.

1. They had become guilty of seeking to worship God as though approaching an idol. He responded as He was treated, as an idol. An idol could not open its eyes, so He would not open His eyes. The idol could not hear, so He would not hear their multiplied prayers.

2. In closing His eyes and ears, God was rejecting the worship even as He prepared to bring judgment upon the worshipers.

3. The prophet points out to the nation that God is far more concerned with right relations between people than with scrupulous regard for public demonstrations of worship.

D. Isaiah dreams a vivid picture of the violent contrast between what men do in church and what they are in daily life. God forced them to look at their own miserable conditions.

II. God Gives Responsibility to Every Man (vv. 16-17)

A. God holds all people accountable. Not until the lost one is found in his unhappiness, shame, and need, can he be taken home again, forgiven.

ILLUS. Recently I had a call at 2:30 A.M. on a Sunday morning. The voice on the other end of the line was of a young man who attends the church from time to time, especially when he needs something or is in trouble. He said, "Pastor, can you talk to me? I'm lonely."

"Is there something wrong?" I questioned.

"No, I'm just lonely and wondered if you would talk to me."

Calling him by name, I said, "You've been drinking again. You're lonely, and it's the middle of the night, but I can't help you. If your need was spiritual, or physical, or if you were sober, we might be able to talk about some important things. However, you've asked me to do something I can't do on a Saturday night, when I know that I must be at my best for the people who will be in church tomorrow. Sorry."

As God's representative, we, too, must hold people accountable. If a person is ready to change, we can help him. Beyond that need, I find that I am limited!

1. Isaiah instructs them to take action, not as a display for others but for themselves! "Stop doing wrong!"

2. Isaiah's rapid-fire style in these two verses under-

scores the authority and urgency of God's commands to His people. However, sinful man has a tough time accepting the truth.

A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord (*Prov. 19:3*).

B. If public action is to be taken, it is for social reasons like justice and defense of the fatherless. What Isaiah says of them can be said of our service today.

C. Isaiah helps Israel see that the only worship worthy of God, the only worship He seeks from men, is the praise of lives that in justice, righteousness, unselfishness, and purity reveal His character and will. This cannot be done through worship alone, through preaching alone, or by any institutional method, but only through lives that reflect His Spirit and do His will.

D. God honors man by giving him a part to play in his own salvation. Love wins its victory through penitence and forgiveness finding its completion in obedience.

III. God Provides for Salvation (vv. 18-20)

A. Salvation is reasonable. The word used here means to state opposing cases as in a courtroom trial.

B. Salvation is transforming. "Like scarlet . . . as snow" and "red as crimson . . . like wool" (v. 18).

C. Salvation is conditional. "If you are willing and obedient" (v. 19). The assurance of mercy must always be preceded by a penitent's cry for mercy. Forgiveness is the divine possibility. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

D. Salvation is consequential. "But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword" (v. 20). God calls each of us to show our repentance in obedience to

His will. Rejection and rebellion lead to an end: you write your own death sentence.

CONCLUSION:

By His love, God guides us in spite of our rebellious nature until He has safely guided us into the experience of full salvation. Do you know the Lord's forgiveness today?

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Rejoice, the Lord Is King"
Hymn	"Love Lifted Me"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"Oh, What Love"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"O to Be like Thee"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"Only Jesus/Calvary Love"
Message	"SALVATION BY GOD'S LOVE"
Closing Hymn	"My Wonderful Lord"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

Begin prayer by quoting or reading Ps. 84:1-4. Conclude the prayer with the needs of the local, general, and international situations of the week. Close with praise for God's great love.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

Quote the chorus of "Oh, What Love," and invite the congregation to share their love through their tithes and their love gifts to God.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"

LOVE'S HOLY STANDARD

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 28:16-26

May 3, 1992

INTRO:

The Tacoma Narrows Bridge was constructed years ago. It was considered an engineering wonder. Its success was such that an insurance company made it their corporate symbol. However, a powerful wind began to blow through the narrows. The bridge began to sway and finally fell into the water below. Why? The bridge was too rigid. There was no room for give-and-take in its design. Under the constant pressure of the wind, it could only fall.

The failure of the bridge is much like the contrast between law and love. Law sets a standard, an all-encompassing standard. All actions will be uniform. All participants will know the bottom line and have equal opportunity to keep the law! On the other hand, love has as its objective the needs of the person. Uniformity is replaced by compassion. Equal opportunity is replaced by equal access. The emphasis shifts from keeping a standard to maintaining a relationship.

This is a difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament view of righteousness. This difference makes the words of Isaiah an exciting new revelation from God. He introduces us to a love relationship with Jesus: I. A Precious Cornerstone; II. A Righteous Plumb Line; and III. A Full Exposure of Our Need.

I. Jesus Is a Precious Cornerstone (v. 16)

This verse refers to Jesus Christ. He is presented here and elsewhere as:

A. Jesus is a tested stone: "We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:15). He identifies with us.

B. Jesus is a precious cornerstone.

1. Paul says, "Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20).

2. Peter quotes the following passage, separating those who view Jesus as "precious" from those who reject Him, declaring that

as you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also . . . are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:4-5).

It is the value that we assign Him that determines His work through us to make us His holy people.

C. Jesus is the sure Foundation.

1. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you" (Ps. 89:14).

2. "He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure" (Isa. 33:6).

II. Jesus Is a Righteous Plumb Line (v. 17)

God promised, "I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line" (v. 17).

A. Israel viewed righteousness: "If we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness" (Deut. 6:25).

1. Righteousness was based on the law and their ability to keep it.

2. They strove to keep this righteousness based on law: "I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my conscience will not reproach me as long as I live" (Job 27:5-6).

3. A few in the Old Testament were able to break out beyond this limited view of righteousness. Most people lived in bondage to the law and its ability to give righteousness until Jesus came. According to Jesus, this righteousness was inadequate to bring salvation: "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).

B. The standard of righteousness introduced by Jesus and maintained in the New Testament is a righteousness based on a right relationship to the person of Jesus Christ. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33).

1. Paul says, "For in the gospel [Good News] a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Rom. 1:17). "A righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify" (3:21).

2. The failure of the past standard versus the present is found in Gal. 2:21: "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

C. As a result of giving himself as a fulfillment of the law and the plumb line of righteousness, the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount take on exciting new revelation and meaning. His words do not give a new list of regulations, but a description of our rich, full, and miraculously satisfying relationship with Jesus Christ himself, in attitude (Matt. 5:3-12), in relationship to the needs of the world around us (vv. 13-16), in relationship to the law of God (vv. 17-42), in service (5:43—6:18), in our reward (6:19-24), and in simply being and doing (6:25—7:27).

D. As the embodiment of Love, Jesus' love inevitably leads to obedience. Obedience is evidence of love. As John said, "In him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him" (1 John 2:5, KJV).

III. Jesus Brings a Full Exposure of Our Need (vv. 17-26)

The remaining verses of the passage express the many ways in which our self-righteousness, legal codes, and keeping of the law are exposed.

A. *Isaiah gives a warning.* Notice the power of these phrases from verses 17-18, 20:

Hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie (v. 17).

Water will overflow your hiding place (v. 17).

Your covenant . . . will be annulled (v. 18).

Your agreement with the grave will not stand (v. 18).

When the overwhelming scourge sweeps by, you will be beaten down by it (v. 18).

The bed is too short to stretch out on, the blanket too narrow to wrap around you (v. 20).

B. *Isaiah encouraged Israel in the common language of the day as he describes faith with great simplicity:*

Now stop your mocking. . . . Listen and hear my voice. . . . God instructs him and teaches him the right way (vv. 22-23, 26).

1. A farmer does not plow continually (v. 24).

2. When the farmer has leveled the surface, he plants his seed (v. 25).

3. When the seed is planted, the farmer awaits the harvest.

C. *When we have received Jesus, we receive His leadership and wait for Him to bring His results!*

CONCLUSION:

It is time to celebrate a rich, powerful, and glorious relationship with Jesus that truly changes our lives!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude

Hymn

Hymn

Fellowship

Choir Special

"God of Our Fathers/When I Survey/The Love of God"

Tithe and Offerings

Prayer Chorus

Pastoral Prayer

Scripture Reading

Special Song

Message

Closing Hymn

Closing Prayer/ Benediction

Organ Postlude

"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"

"Sound the Battle Cry"

"He Is Lord"

Isa. 28:1-26

"Because of Who You Are"

"LOVE'S HOLY STANDARD"

"Lead On, O King Eternal"

Pastoral Prayer

Pray for the saints who have faithfully gone before. Express praise for those who give themselves today in service around the world and for those whom God will call to be leaders in His Church of tomorrow.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

In the offering today, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:7-8).

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



LOVE INCARNATE

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 9:2-7

May 10, 1992

INTRO:

Military occupation is a terrible thing! It is tragic at every point of history when one people have controlled another. The Germans occupied Mons, Belgium, for four and one-half years prior to the night of November 11, 1918. Throughout that night, the darkness had been shot through with the lurid flash of gunfire. The staccato chatter of machine guns echoed through deserted streets. But at dawn, the last German outpost withdrew. From barred and shuttered homes, the people streamed out into the streets. Down the street sped the cry, "Hang out your flags." The sun rose on Mons, a city of banners, and illuminated the joy of those who for four and a half years had dwelt in darkness. They walked free!

Isaiah saw in his vision the future of a great deliverance. The enemy has gone, the captains and kings have departed. Gone was the threat of slavery, the agents and instruments of destruction, bloodstained tunics, broken swords, and the boots that trampled roughshod over a shaking land. The people were in the fire. The smoke of their burning proclaims the blessed peace that had fallen on the delivered people.

The King was coming! He was to come as a child, but with "healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2, KJV). "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. . . . For to us a child is born, to us a son is given" (vv. 2, 6).

I. Here Is Perfect Humanity: "To Us a Child Is Born"

A. God had promised a sign to identify the righteous One when He appeared on the stage of human history (7:14).

B. God promised the sign to identify the appearance of the Son of God among men: "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son" (7:14, KJV).

1. Jesus was born of a virgin.
2. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

C. The result was a holy child—perfect humanity. Man could have been perfect had sin not entered the human race in the Garden of Eden. Yet, Jesus was infinitely more than perfect humanity.

II. Here Is Undiminished Deity: "To Us a Son Is Given"

A. Jesus experienced physical birth.

B. Jesus existed before His physical birth.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times" (Mic. 5:2).

Jesus himself declared His preexistence: "Before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58).

C. Jesus was undiminished Deity, the eternal Son of God given to redeem man from the Fall.

Jesus spoke creation into existence, shaped humanity from the dust of the earth, and breathed into us His breath of life.

III. Here Is Inherent Royalty

A. "And the government shall be upon his shoulder" (v. 6, KJV) is a poetic way of saying, "He's going to rule."

"Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: / 'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep; / The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, / With peace on earth, goodwill to men'" (Longfellow).

B. The Lord's promise to rule will not be fully satisfied until Jesus carries the responsibility of all government in the 1,000-year reign of peace.

IV. Here Is Unique Identity

"And his name shall be called" (v. 6, KJV). The angelic messenger to Joseph instructed, "Name him Jesus (meaning 'Savior') for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21, TLB).

A. Here is faultless discernability: "And he will be called Wonderful Counselor" (v. 6).

1. The name "Wonderful Counselor" should not suggest the imagery of a clergyman, lawyer, psychologist, or other professional in an office conferring counsel on a searching inquirer. Rather, it speaks of one of the Lord's characteristics while governing during the Kingdom age.

2. The prophet wrote, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. . . . He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears" (11:2-3).

3. Because the Lord is omniscient, He will intuitively know right from wrong.

B. Here is absolute authority: "He will be called . . . Mighty God." In the Old Testament, there were times that the best intentions turned sour and the people's rebellion often frustrated the plans of God.

As "Mighty God," He has absolute authority. He is not limited by time, space, or need!

C. Here is endless longevity: "He will be called . . . Everlasting Father."

1. On occasion, a good king ascended to the throne of Israel, like David, Solomon, Hezekiah, and Josiah. But these good kings died. Inevitably government would ebb and flow, as governors came and went.

2. Since Jesus and the Father are eternally one,

Jesus will not die. There is no ebb or flow of His mercy or of His benefits. He is the "Everlasting Father."

3. Jesus remains the same yesterday, today, and forever! (See Heb. 13:8.)

D. Here is enduring tranquillity: "He will be called . . . Prince of Peace."

1. Peace comes in two dimensions: vertical relationship is between God and man; horizontal relationship is between man and man. The latter builds on the former. Jesus came to reconcile both.

ILLUS. Occasionally we receive a package carrying the message: "One of two." It is the shipper's way of saying, "You have not received everything. Another package is to follow."

When the second package comes, it is usually marked, "Two of two." That means, "You got it all. There is no more to come."

One day God sent a package to earth—a very special gift. It was Deity wrapped in the package of humanity. Jesus was "Immanuel"—"God with us" (Isa. 7:14, margin; Matt. 1:23). But His glory was veiled within His flesh. He came to taste death for every man. God's package, however, contained the message, "One of two." For as wonderful as the First Advent was, God has promised a Second Advent—another package. When it arrives, it will carry this thought: "Two of two." It will signify, "You've got it all. There's no more to come. Nothing can be added."

The coming of Jesus as a Babe in a manger is the first package. The second is yet to come, for Jesus will return again. The next time, He will be wrapped in glory to rule and reign with perfect wisdom and omnipotent power.

Although the second package has not yet arrived, its coming is certain, a matter of divine timing. However, God has been pleased to give some previews of coming attractions, revealing what it will be like when the second package arrives. Hear the inspired penman:

The government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (*Isa. 9:6*).

2. The great Day of the Lord shall come in fullness:

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (*Isa. 11:6-9, KJV*).

CONCLUSION:

Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, He is the Sar Shalom—the Prince of Peace. While people talk of peace, Jesus comes in love to each of us, making peace a reality. There is coming a day when His peace will be lived out by all men, when "every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall con-

fess" (Phil. 2:9-11, TLB). His peace is for whosoever will!

ILLUS. Evangelist Don Lohr told the story from English history of the wealthy baron named Fitzgerald who had only one son. The son went off to war, where he died. Fitzgerald never got over the loss of his son, his only heir. As his wealth increased, Fitzgerald continued to invest in paintings by the masters. At his death, his will called for all his paintings to be sold. Because of the quality of the art in his holdings, a message was sent to collectors and museums. A great crowd gathered for what was to be an auction.

When the day of the auction came and the large crowd was assembled, the attorney read from the will of Fitzgerald. It instructed that the first painting to be sold was the painting "of my beloved son." The painting was of poor quality from an insignificant painter. The only bidder was the old servant who had known the boy and had loved him. For a small sum of money he bought it for its sentimental value and the memories that it held.

The attorney again read from the will, "Whoever buys my son gets it all. The auction is over."

That's the way it is with Jesus. Whoever chooses Him gets all that God has—His only Son, loved of the Father, a gift to broken people.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"Rejoice, the Lord Is King"
Hymn	"How Great Thou Art"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"Reaching"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"His Name Is Life"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"Shepherd Boy"
Message	"LOVE INCARNATE"
Closing Hymn	"Follow On"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

Read or quote Rom. 11:33-36. Praise God for His care for His people, His mercy on the sinner, and His grace that reaches us all. Make the prayer time a special declaration of His greatness.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

Prayer for the offering is linked to the choir special "Reaching," God's reaching and ours.

Incarnation Message

A message on the Incarnation and the important role Mary fulfilled in giving Christ birth and in His life and ministry is not an accident! There is no greater model of surrender for the greater will of God in all Christianity than that of Mary and Jesus' incarnation.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"

LOVE RENEWS US

by R. E. Snodgrass

Isa. 41:17-29

May 17, 1992

INTRO:

John had partied all night. When he looked in his wallet and realized what the night before had cost him, he knew something had to change. He, his wife, three-month-old baby, and three-year-old child were having a tough enough time living on military pay. When his mind flashed back to the night before, going out with his buddies drinking and his money spent, he knew it wasn't worth it. In that moment, away from home at a six-week military school, he committed his life to God. His life has been different since then.

On the third Sunday after his conversion, he stood before the entire congregation and gave his testimony of how God wonderfully had cared for him, protected him through the years, and now had brought him back to the "faith of his childhood." His mother reports that he sounds like he's been a Christian for years! That's a changed life!

God's people were in Babylonian exile. They felt alone, rejected, and lost. They felt their God had betrayed and abandoned them. But God hadn't moved; they had! Yet, they felt the loss: "The poor and needy search for water, but there is none; their tongues are parched with thirst. But I the Lord will answer them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them" (v. 17).

I. God Deals Mercifully with His People (vv. 17-20)

A. *The thirsty receive abundant water (v. 18).*

1. The Bible instructs us that the wilderness through which we travel is being unaware of God's presence.

2. God is always with us, whether we are in the land of exile or at peace in our hometown.

3. If God resides in our own hearts, we can be joyful anywhere.

B. *God promises days of refreshing.* To the traveling Israelite, happiness was determined by the abundance of streams among the barren hills and the highland plains. The sight of an oasis with trees and watered lands gave assurance that God still cared (vv. 18-19). In the Orient, water equals relief from suffering and deliverance from death—with gladness, salvation, and life itself.

C. *God still has days of refreshing for us.*

1. "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (Acts 2:17).

II. God Challenges Their Idols (vv. 21-24)

A. *Instead of Satan and his idols challenging God, God himself steps out and places a challenge to them (vv. 21-22).*

1. Do idols have insight into the future?

2. Can they predict coming events?

3. If the idols can do this, they are God's equals and can be trusted to predict the future. Then God says, "Let them show themselves."

B. *The idols were challenged to do simply anything.*

1. Do something good for your people.

2. Do something bad toward your enemies.

3. Do anything to prove you have any power.

C. *God declares idols to be nothing (v. 24).*

1. Listen to the wise man of old: "Of what value is an idol, since a man has carved it? Or an image that teaches lies? For he who makes it trusts in his own creation; he makes idols that cannot speak" (Hab. 2:18).

2. Today's idols are the same as idols of old. They are the images of man's own making—success, power, things, control—anything that occupies man's interest so that it pushes God out of His supreme place in man's affection and service.

III. God Summarizes the Evidence (vv. 25-29)

A. *God raised up Cyrus the king to come from the north and the east.* It was thought that Cyrus may have come to believe in God. Perhaps as a believer, he had allowed the building of the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:2).

B. *Nebuchadnezzar became God's tool to punish His own rebellious people (2 Chron. 36:15-21).*

1. Let this be a lesson to people of our day. If we forget God, God will use another people to be a thorn in our side or even to defeat us.

2. Which idol foretold that would happen? (v. 26). The answer is none.

C. *God announces that He is the first to tell the message of victory.*

1. All others only counterfeited God's message. His foreknowledge made him "the first" or the divine (v. 27).

2. The idols are nothing, pathetically lacking in strength to aid their worshipers (vv. 28-29).

D. *God alone is worthy of our confidence, trust, and regard as the true God, Protector, and Guide.* In times of deepest distress, God can raise a deliverer like Cyrus. In His own way and time, God will rescue His people from all their calamities.

CONCLUSION:

Are you depending on the wrong things for meaning and purpose? Are you away from the God who loves you and gave himself for you? Christian, do you sometimes feel alone? empty? barren? God wants you to know today

that He is able and willing to run a river of joy through your spirit.

Are there times of defeat and discouragement? God wants you to be renewed and refreshed. Take new courage in who He is and what He can do.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"How Firm a Foundation"
Hymn	"Grace Greater than Our Sin"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"He Giveth More Grace"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"Oh, How He Loves You and Me"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"Touch Your People Once Again"
Message	"LOVE RENEWS US"
Closing Hymn	"Softly and Tenderly"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

Invite three young Christians to pray sentence prayers. As pastor, thank God for changing lives today.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

God said, "When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God" (Deut. 8:10). As we give, it reflects our praise to the Lord.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



"In spite of all you said, Pastor, I *still* believe there is a God"

PERFECT LOVE ON THE HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 35:1-10
May 24, 1992

INTRO:

How do you describe life? "Rough." "Wonderful." "Dreadful." "Blessed." "Trying." Life has been described by poets, priests, writers, and many others in as many ways as there are ideas! For all of us, life is most often seen in its contrasts.

This kind of contrast marks Isaiah 35. In chapter 34, he has reviewed the judgment against the nations. (Read verses 2-3, 5, and 8.) What a terrible picture of God! He renders judgment for disobedience. One can hardly help but ask, "Is this the way it is with everyone?" "Are there none righteous?" "Will anyone escape God's judgment?"

After these questions, Isaiah 35 bursts forth on the horizon.

I. Isaiah Sees the Vision of Hope and Help (vv. 1-4)

A. The hope is that the desert will be transformed (vv. 1-2). Isaiah's vision sees the people who had been taken off to Babylon making their way back across the dry desert place. What a difference! They no longer are leaving Israel but are returning to the Promised Land. Their vision is quite different! As they return, God's promise to them is renewed, and the desert blossoms with hope and anticipation of His great leadership.

B. The help they need is promised (vv. 3-4).

1. "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way" (v. 3).

2. "Say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, . . . he will come to save you'" (v. 4).

II. Isaiah Sees Acts of Divine Intervention (vv. 5-7)

In the language of the desert, the writer describes the marvelous change that takes place when God intervenes.

A. Obvious miracles are from God.

1. "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped" (v. 5). These are miracles!

2. When a person comes to Jesus, his eyes are opened to see what God can do. His ears are unstopped to hear the marvelous Word of God be applied to his own life.

B. There is a delightful response: "the lame leap like a deer, and the . . . tongue shout for joy" (v. 6).

1. Isaiah uses the desert animals to describe the absolute delight felt in every changed heart!

2. Those who have experienced the glorious transformation of Jesus Christ know the absolute joy of knowing that the chains of sin are broken and that they are free!

III. When Forgiveness of Sin Has Come, God's Perfect Love Is Opened to Us on the Highway of Holiness! (v. 8)

A. "And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness" (v. 8).

1. References to holiness in the Old Testament are almost exclusively references toward God. However, in the New Testament they usually refer to our spiritual relationship with God. For example,

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Cor. 7:1).

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

2. This highway is absolutely and completely fulfilled in the New Testament promise of a holy life.

B. "The unclean will not journey on it" (v. 8).

1. The Psalmist David describes those who qualify to walk this way of the holy.

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow man, who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken (Psalm 15).

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God his Savior (Ps. 24:3-5).

C. "It will be for those who walk in that Way" (v. 8).

1. It is a walk in the holy light of Jesus:

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

2. Because of this purification, we find ourselves "putting off" the things of the earthly nature.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil

desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Col. 3:5-10).

3. It means "putting on" the things of God.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity (Col. 3:12-14).

ILLUS. There are many products that bear the R with a circle around it. This symbol is used to indicate that the trademark is an officially registered trademark and cannot be used by anyone other than its owner. The registered trademark of holiness people is the mark of perfect love, which binds us together in perfect unity.

IV. Joy and Gladness Are Our Constant Companions Along the Highway of Holiness (v. 10)

"They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (v. 10).

Holy people are a singing people. Joy is the spiritual marker of their lives.

A favorite song describes the joy you feel in your heart for the holy life you are privileged to live—"And Can It Be?"

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.
Thine eyes diffused a quick'ning ray.
I woke; the dungeon flamed with light.
My chains fell off; my heart was free.
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

*Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

CONCLUSION:

The words of the song "Cleanse Me" are a fitting conclusion.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"I Want to Be like Jesus"
Hymn	"The Cleansing Wave"
Fellowship	
Choir Special	"And Can It Be?"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"Spirit of the Living God"
Pastoral Prayer	
Scripture Reading	Isaiah 35
Special Song	"Enter In"
Message	"PERFECT LOVE ON THE HIGHWAY OF HOLINESS"
Closing Hymn	"I Surrender All"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

Pray for the special spiritual needs of your people. Make your prayer one of hope for a God who can change our direction and put us upon His "Highway of Holiness."

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

The apostle Paul taught us that "on the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income" (1 Cor. 16:2). We give today that portion of our income, as God's Word has said.

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



"You know, there's something to be said for being weak-willed and unable to resist temptation."

LOVE'S FINAL REWARD

by B. W. Hambrick

Isa. 66:1, 22

May 31, 1992

INTRO:

As I drove toward our community the other day, I looked up and saw a hot-air balloon. It was high in the air. From my perspective, I thought, This balloon is one of the highest I've ever seen. However, when I got nearly home, I realized that it was not that high at all. In fact, it was floating along much closer than many of the balloons I've seen.

What made the difference? Perspective! At a distance of three to four miles it was hard to see how close to the ground the balloon really was. But the closer I got, the more accurately I could see the true location of the balloon.

That's often how we view heaven. For many of us, heaven is a distant reality that looks far removed and hard to grasp. However, when a friend or a member of our family dies or approaches death, then heaven becomes very important to us. We realize that neither death nor eternity are very far away.

What about heaven? What do we know about it?

I. Heaven Is a Real Place

ILLUS. The Russian cosmonauts circling the earth radioed back, "If there is a God and there is a heaven, then why can't we see them?"

They represent many persons who have not seen and cannot believe.

A. When John sat on the isle of Patmos, he was able to see heaven. He recorded what he saw in Revelation 21. Read select verses: 1-4, 10-11, 15-21, 23, and 25-27.

B. Even in the Old Testament, Ezekiel saw the activity of heaven. "The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God" (Ezek. 1:1).

C. John wrote of the promise that we will go to heaven:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (*John 14:1-3*).

II. Heaven Is Where Death Gives Way to Final Victory

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the

perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (*1 Cor. 15:50-56*).

III. How Do We Get to Heaven?

A. The disciples didn't understand about heaven either. Thomas asked, "'Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?' Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (*John 14:5-6*).

B. Where is God the Father? "Look down from heaven and see from your lofty throne, holy and glorious" (*Isa. 63:15*). God is on His throne in heaven!

C. Jesus is our transport to heaven, where we will spend eternity in His glorious presence.

IV. Heaven Is Not Only a Place Nor Only Our Release from Death's Power but a Place Where We Shall Live and Be like Jesus

A. "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (*1 John 3:2*).

ILLUS. The phone rang at 3:17 A.M. the morning of December 11, 1985, as I was sleeping deeply. Rallying my senses, I answered to hear a strange voice say, "Hello, I am the nurse attending Woody. He wants to talk to you. Do you mind?"

"No," I assured her.

Half screaming, he said, "Tell them I'm alive, Pastor, tell them I'm alive! I know you will tell them the truth; tell them I'm alive."

After reassuring him that I would, I went back to sleep. Within hours, Woody Sigmon died. It was easy for me to preach his funeral. I used his own words to begin his service. He had accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior in his home over a year earlier. He had come to church as a 71-year-old man, suffering from cancer. He had been baptized on July 29, 1984. He had often expressed his trust in his heavenly home, when the awful pain of cancer would almost take his breath. He would regain his composure and would say, "I'd rather die than live like this."

To which I'd usually say, "Heaven is a brighter hope because of your pain, isn't it, Woody?"

"Sure is, Pastor, sure is," he would reply.

CONCLUSION:

Heaven is our eternal hope today. For some people it is distant and far removed. For others it's very near. The reality of pain, your own or that of someone close to you, has made heaven very much a reality! Heaven is ours to claim through Jesus Christ our Lord!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Organ Prelude	
Hymn	"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"
Hymn	"And Can It Be?"
Communion	
Choir Special	"He the Pearly Gates Will Open"
Tithe and Offerings	
Prayer Chorus	"I Love Him"
Pastoral Prayer	
Special Song	"Find Us Faithful"
Message	"LOVE'S FINAL REWARD"
Closing Hymn	"There's a Great Day Coming"
Closing Prayer/Benediction	
Organ Postlude	

Pastoral Prayer

Lead your people to prayer. Allow your example to set the tone for humility and hunger for God's outpouring on the spiritual needs of the church.

Creative Worship Ideas

Tithe and Offerings

"'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it'" (Mai. 3:10).

Communion

Communion should be a great celebration. Place the Communion elements on tables at the front of each aisle. As the congregation joyfully sings, have each person march by the Communion table and receive his elements "self-service style." When all are served and back in their seats, remain standing and take Communion, using an abbreviated version of the ritual. Pray a prayer of glorious celebration for the hope of heaven that Communion has brought. Close the Communion service with a repeat of verse 1 of "And Can It Be?"

Benediction

"Whoever you are, and wherever you go in God's wide world, and whatever happens to you of good or ill, Jesus is Lord!"



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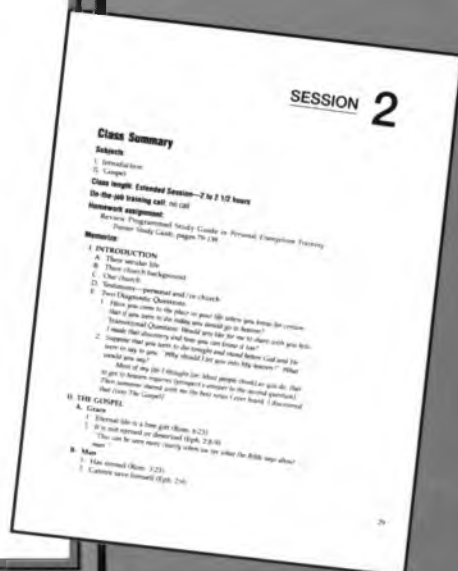
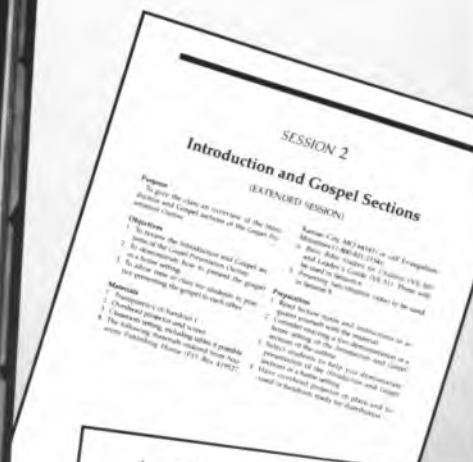
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