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Randal E. Denny (Editor)
Olivet Nazarene University

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SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 1994



THE

Preacher's MAGAZINE

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**PLANNING A
YEAR'S PREACHING**

**TIME FOR
RECOVERY**

**THE SLIPPERY
SLOPES OF
THE SUCCESS
SYNDROME**





THE Preacher's MAGAZINE

Volume 70

September/October/November 1994

Number 1

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LOVE ONE ANOTHER

During the late 1970s, the Pittsburgh Pirates won the National League baseball pennant. Veteran player Willie Stargell served as the captain and leader. Stargell rallied his team with the slogan, "We are family!"

After all the accolades, Willie Stargell still insisted that the difference was the attitude, "We are family!" They had learned to laugh together, to cry together, to work together, supporting, feeling, and living together as family.

I see the church in similar light: "We are family!" In our mobile, changing, lonely culture, having a family is extremely attractive. Often rootless people today have nothing left but the church. Let's teach our people how to be a family.

If we love one another, we are obeying God's command. Jesus repeated His orders: "This is my command: Love each other" (John 15:17). Christian love is not a manufactured feeling. Christian love is learning to treat each other the same way God treats us. It remains a matter of the will, not of emotions. Jesus insisted, "Love each other as I have loved you" (v. 12). How does Jesus love us? He forgives us; He's kind to us.

We choose to love. By a conscious act of our will, each must determine, "I will put her first. I will be kind to him. I will be patient." The more we deliberately will to love one another, the more our emotions begin to change. Worship then becomes more meaningful when we are family.

A pastor's wife asked her little son what he thought his daddy did on Sunday mornings. He thought for a moment, and then replied, "He hugs a lot of people." That boy said more than he knew. We are family.

If we love one another, we are fulfilling God's law. Paul wrote: "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has



by Randal E. Denny
Spokane, Wash.

fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8).

In Old Testament times, God gave laws to govern the land—they guided relationships to property and neighbors and worship. In the New Testament, loving one another naturally covers all the important bases of God's law.

When you love your neighbor, you do not break up his home, you do not violate his property, you do not defame his reputation. John wrote, "And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands" (2 John 6). Love does not substitute for the law, but love fulfills the law. If we love each other as family, we shall meet the law's requirements.

If we love one another, we are following God's teaching. Paul wrote, "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you" (1 Thess. 3:12). Paul added in the same letter, "For you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other" (4:9). God the Father taught us to love one another by giving His Son. Jesus taught us to love one another by giving His life. The Holy Spirit also teaches us to love one another: "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us" (Rom. 5:5).

Anyone can carry a Bible. Nearly anyone can sing a religious song. Anyone can attend religious services. So

how do we know if a person is a real Christian? Jesus said we shall have the evidence needed: "All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

What an important teaching from the Triune Godhead! We pastors must learn how to show our people to follow God's teaching. We are family!

If we love one another, we are expressing God's nature. The Bible teaches us, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). God puts His nature into us, His children: "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Pet. 1:22).

When I was three years old, my father did something that shows his heart. Dad bought a used furniture store in Wasco, Calif.—a building, furniture, and a Model T Ford truck for delivery. Poor people came into that little storefront during the "Grapes of Wrath" era. They had migrated from Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma. The poor folk arrived with nothing, having no money. I remember Dad helping them load furniture into the old truck. In four months, Dad had given it all away. He had nothing left but the Model T truck, which he promptly drove over the mountains to Pasadena College and traded it for tuition. It was my greatest inheritance!

I see the same giving, loving, caring qualities in my daughters. I never know what or who they'll drag home. They are quick to give to people in need. Being born into my father's family, they share in the same nature.

While no one can see God, they can see God's family. People are hungering to be loved today. If God's family loves one another, then the world will know how wonderful it is to know God. God will be recognized through us if we are family! Pastors, we must love our people for their benefit, and not for our advantage. We are family!

Our Help Comes from the Lord

by C. Neil Strait

District superintendent, Grand Rapids, Mich.

At the end of each year, I try to read a couple of books that I had read in previous years but which meant a great deal to me. This past year I pulled Gerald Kennedy's book *Fresh Every Morning* from the shelf and reread again the words of the great Methodist bishop. There was a passage that stood out to me, and I noticed that the other times I had read this book, I had not marked it for any reason. Among other things, it is a reminder that the years and circumstances bring different needs into our lives. But the passage that caught my attention read:

It is amazing how many of the troubles which loom so large as we look far ahead, never materialize. God is always visiting us with divine surprises and miraculously eliminating some of the obstacles in our way. If I can finish the day, tomorrow will have some fresh light which will illuminate the dark picture (Gerald Kennedy, *Fresh Every Morning* [New York: Harper and Row, 1966], 174).

Thought number one that encourages me is: "How many of the troubles which loom so large as we look far ahead, never materialize." It would probably do all of us a lot of good to keep track of our anticipated troubles for a while, if nothing else but to see how few of them ever materialize, or, if they do, are not nearly as big as we thought. "God is always visiting us with divine surprises." The pastor must take comfort from the fact that God is in the midst of the worst, trying to bring something good out of the situation.

A little girl asked her father what God was doing during the severe thunderstorm. She answered her own

question after a second's thought by saying, "Oh, I know, He is making the morning."

Pastor, be encouraged. God is in the midst of your worst troubles, creating morning and light, putting together a new day, a way out. He is the Architect of victory, not defeat. Kennedy put it like this: "If I can finish the day, tomorrow will have some fresh light which will illuminate the dark picture." And thank God it is so!

Thought number two that encourages me is that if the troubles do come, and surely some will, God is God of the darkness and the troubled times, as well as Master of light and victory. We sometimes feel that God is there just when the victory is unfolding, when the morning comes, when there is something to write home about. But the reason there is victory is because God has been at work in the defeated moments of our life. The reason there are light and rejoicing is because God was at work in the darkness, bringing beauty out of ashes. You and I, as pastors, need to know that when the lights go out in our world, in our careers, in our assignments, when it seems there is no way out, no tomorrow, no hope, that God feels what we feel, and that He will wrestle with the worst to bring us to victory. Pastor, be encouraged: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

Thought number three that encourages me comes from another statement in Gerald Kennedy's book. In an adjacent paragraph to the one I quoted, Kennedy writes, "The preacher ought to recognize that his job is to tell people where their help is" (ibid., 175). It is not the admonition to the preacher that I emphasize, though it is


certainly good. What I draw from this is that we pastors need to remind ourselves, on occasion, where our help is. Frequently the preacher will be prescribing his own cure as he proclaims hope and healing to his people.

All who have preached have experienced the occasion when the most wounded among the flock was the person in the pulpit. The shepherd's heart caused you to share comfort, hope, and encouragement with your people. Someone said that what a preacher should do, on occasion, is to return to his study, open his sermon notes, and remind himself that "that's for me too!" You and I need to know where our help is. The Psalmist reminded us, "[Our] help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth" (121:2).

Wesley Tracy, in his book *What's a Nice God like You Doing in a Place like This?* tells of the sister of Earl Wolf, who fought a long battle with cancer. Dr. Wolf made the trip from Missouri to Pennsylvania to attend her funeral. While he was there, he spent some time leafing through his sister's Bible. He found this handwritten poem tucked in its pages:

*Often on the Rock I tremble,
Faint of heart and weak of
knee,
But the steadfast Rock of Ages
Never trembles under me.*

(Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1990, 83-84.)

So, Pastor, be encouraged. Draw strength from the Lord in your troubled times, assured that He is working on your behalf. And be comforted with the fact that whatever God is doing, it is good and it will be right. Remember where your help comes from! 

Holiness and the Meaning of Maturity

In order to discuss the topic of "Holiness and the Meaning of Maturity," it is necessary to arrive at some reasonable, working definition of maturity. Let us begin by observing that maturity does not necessarily coincide with one's 21st birthday. One is then viewed as an adult and is expected to take his place in an adult world; but in actual fact some people are still very immature at 21. And 31. And 41.

Maturity is not stoicism. It is not a state of development wherein we do not cry in sorrow or say "ouch" in pain. Neither is it a fixed state, beyond the need for further growing.

Positively, maturity is that ability to relate to life in the ways we normally expect adults to relate to it. This may seem to say little, but it actually says a great deal. All of us have an intuitive idea of how adults are supposed to react and conduct themselves. When they do not, we find ourselves saying, "He [or she] hasn't grown up."

We expect adults to conduct themselves like civilized human beings in all types of public situations. Recently at a basketball game being played at Poulsbo, Wash., some youth started rolling coins on the basketball floor during the game. After the second offense, the vice-principal of the school stopped the game long enough to put all the students out. He let the adults stay and the students stay who would move over and sit with their parents. "I figured," he said, "that it was not the adults who were throwing money." Of course not—it would not be an adult thing to do.

We expect adults to take their place in society usefully, doing a job, carrying responsibility, relating to life productively. We expect adults to be able to cope with change, disappointments, failures, sorrows, with a reasonable degree of resilience and sta-



by Richard S. Taylor
Bremerton, Wash.

bility. We expect adults to view people around them and the duties of life with a decent measure of understanding and a strong sense of responsibility. These are marks of maturity.

A mature person is an anchor in the stormy seas of life. He has come to terms with life. He knows who he is and accepts both his abilities and limitations. He is not confused by the swirling influences around him. He knows his goal and keeps his eye on it. He lives by principles that are not borrowed from the crowd and that will not be surrendered to please the crowd.

Why do so many grown persons fail to measure up to this description of maturity? Perhaps we can answer that question by noting three impediments to maturity.

A first possible impediment is some form of retardation. These persons can never take their place fully as adults. To some degree they will require care and supervision all their lives.

The second impediment is a kind of upbringing that is not conducive to the acquirement of maturity. Dysfunctional families tend to produce dysfunctional, immature adults.

The third impediment, and by far the most devastating, is the carnal mind. This is what kept the Corinthian Christians from growing up. They

still thought and fought like children, with petty jealousies and foolish divisions.

The carnal mind is a roadblock to growth because by definition it is a kind of self-centeredness that causes such a preoccupation with self that the rights and feelings of self virtually fill one's whole horizon. These rights and feelings are all such a person can see. As a result he or she will remain on a juvenile, if not infantile, level and will be difficult to live with and probably work with all their lives.

However, it is possible for the carnal mind to take not a babyish turn but a stoical turn. This person prides himself on his ability to hurt without crying, accept life as it comes, and roll with the punches. Such a person will manifest some of the traits of maturity, but in the end he will fall far short of the tender, compassionate maturity that marks a true saint of God, who knows he is dependent on God's grace and has learned to draw on that grace for all of his needs.

But whether the carnal mind takes a babyish turn or a stoical turn, it will be the Christian's worst enemy in achieving the kind of maturity that makes him truly Christlike.

Naturally, no Christian is totally carnally minded, as is the unregenerate, for he also has the mind of Christ in him, at least in embryonic degree. But the carnal mind is an affliction that we brought into the world with us and that is not completely eradicated when we are born again. As long as we are beset by any degree of carnal-mindedness, our spiritual growth, and hence our maturing, will be radically hindered.

That degree of carnal-mindedness that still afflicts Christians will be that disposition that tends toward a "me first" approach to life. "Pity parties" will be easy. So also will be a tenden-

cy toward self-willfulness, even toward God, and a tendency toward resentments and bitterness when life seems to go sour.

Now we come to the fundamental topic: the relation of holiness to maturity. By holiness is meant entire sanctification, not just a generic kind of goodness that all churches espouse.

Traditionally Wesleyans have made a sharp distinction between holiness and maturity. We have said that holiness may be entered into in a crisis, but maturity is the acquirement of a lifetime. In the last century this virtually became the standard position, as represented by J. A. Wood's book, *Purity and Maturity*, published in 1899.

This position was strongly reaffirmed by J. B. Chapman: "There is no state of grace beyond a pure heart filled with the Holy Spirit. But from such a heart flow forth the passive and the active phases of Christian life as water flows forth from a spring. Holiness is purity—not maturity" (A. F. Harper, ed., *Holiness Teaching Today*, vol. 6 of *Great Holiness Classics* [Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1987], 70).

**Maturity
does not
necessarily
coincide with
one's 21st
birthday.**

Problems arise when we are reminded that John Wesley often ascribed maturity to entirely sanctified people; in fact, he wrote as if the second blessing brought one at once into spiritual maturity. Let us see how he expresses the matter:

In his sermon on "Christian Perfection," Wesley distinguishes between the perfection of babes in Christ and that of young men and fathers, basing his analogy on 1 John 2:12 ff. He says, "It is only of those who *are strong* in the Lord . . . that it can be affirmed they are in such a sense perfect, as . . .

to be freed from evil thoughts and evil tempers." He is referring here to those sanctified wholly. Clearly he expects from them evidences of maturity sharply distinguishable from babes in Christ (*Works*, 6:16).

Can the two positions be reconciled? I believe they can. In fact, I suspect Wesley himself would be the first to say so. One level of maturity is experienced at once when being sanctified wholly; another level of maturity can only be acquired by sanctified living.

Let us first see in what sense the second blessing makes an immediate difference in being mature.

For one thing, the chief impediment to maturity, the carnal mind, is removed. People who are saved from their preoccupation with themselves and from their hostilities toward others will be released for growth.

But what can be said positively?

First, heart holiness will straighten out a person's priorities. He knows what is important and now has both the disposition and the ability in the Holy Spirit to live according to his priorities. God is put first, people second, and things third, including money. This means that a wholly sanctified person is no longer captivated by worldly values—not even sports. He may enjoy these things as long as they do not interfere with more important things. He is not addicted to them. He is no longer a materialist and no longer driven by ambition to get ahead of others and scramble to the top. This is a giant mark of maturity.

Second, entire sanctification will stabilize people. They will no longer be on a roller coaster, drifting with their moods, changing with the wind, up and down spiritually, too hot to handle one week and too cold to handle the next, in the church and out of it, drifting from one fad to another. They have found a resting-place in Jesus. Their hunger and restless quest for they know not what has been satisfied in Jesus. This also is a mark of maturity.

Third, entire sanctification will give a new spirit of humility and with it a new capacity to learn from our experiences. Pride prevents learning. Pride prevents adjusting to others. Holiness enables us to obey Phil. 2:3-4: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition

or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Carnality prevents this; holiness enables it. This is a major mark of maturity.

**A mature
person is an
anchor in
the stormy
seas of life.**

Fourth, holiness gives the ability to hold steady in the storms of life. A sanctified person may not always show the most ideal emotional reactions, but he will be kept in check by the Spirit and will no longer be habitually kicking the traces when things go wrong. Instead, he will pray because he wants, not his will, but God's will. His primary passion in life is not to vindicate himself but to glorify God. He will pray, "Lord, what is Your will in this matter—in this marital problem, or church problem, or business problem? My goal is not to rule but to serve. My desire is not to please men but to please You. My purpose is not to come out on top but to glorify Your name. So hold me steady. May I do nothing that will bring shame and dishonor to Your name or hinder Your work." This is the way a sanctified person will pray. If he doesn't pray this way, he needs another dip. And this is the very quintessence of maturity.

Fifth, holiness will give to one's life a new outward thrust and others awareness. We are no longer preoccupied with self but now learning to be increasingly burdened by the needs around us, the plight of the lost, the challenge of world missions, the cry of hurting people. Upon a real experience of entire sanctification, we find ourselves looking for places to serve rather than continuing in the habit of waiting to be served. This certainly is a mark of maturity.

If holiness goes this far in making

us mature, what kind of maturity is yet to be achieved?

At four points, at least, even sanctified Christians need to go on maturing: in knowledge, judgment, skills, and in self-discipline.

The carnal mind is the Christian's worst enemy.

At this point we need to lay down the axiom that maturity is the result of sanctifying grace plus maturation. Maturation is the natural development that occurs simply through the process of living. No amount of maturation without grace will reach the goal. On the other hand, no work of grace at an altar of prayer will "hop-skip" past the maturation process.

Take the problem of skills. While the traits of maturity I have been describing are wrought into the inner disposition by the Holy Spirit, and while the sanctified Christian consciously commits himself to them, he may still be limited in his skill in implementing these qualities in the concrete situation. This may be true because chronologically he is still immature. A teenager will think like a teenager. A person in his 20s won't think with that maturity of perspective that he will probably have in his 40s.

His disability may also be due to lack of knowledge. From lack of knowledge will flow poor judgment. We are told by Peter to supply our faith with virtue—or zeal—and our zeal with knowledge (2 Pet. 1:5). Paul urges upon us the importance of having a love that increases more and more in knowledge and in judgment (Phil. 1:9). Without knowledge and judgment, we will do immature things. Other things being equal, a Christian who has served God for 30 years will have better judgment than one who is newly sanctified wholly. He will have better judgment because he has acquired a fuller understanding of people, of the Bible, and of life. The simple faith of an immature

though sanctified Christian can be the faith of naïveté, even presumption, without the understanding and knowledge that life brings. A mature person is less likely to be taken in by charlatans.

Another area where greater maturity is needed is in acquiring a personality that matches what God has done in our nature. Holiness will not teach good manners, though it will give the impulse to good manners. Holiness will not instantly bring about balance in the temperament. It will not automatically cure a hasty person of his hastiness in his manner of speaking and spontaneous reactions. But it will make a learner out of him and give him the impulse to want to become the best person he can be for Jesus' sake.

One level of maturity comes at once when being sanctified wholly; another level of maturity is only acquired by sanctified living.

This means that he will be teachable in the field of ethics. Mature Christians perceive the fine print in the ethical contract. By the Spirit's illumination, there will be clear discernment between the good, better, and best; between the rationalizations of a slippery conscience and the rock-ribbed firmness of a good conscience; between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law; between merely rules and the principles behind the rules, plus the growing ability to apply principles to ethical situations not even covered by the printed rules. A mature person is able to look at a shadowy practice or situation and say unequivocally, "This is not right."

Now let us return to an earlier ob-

servation, that one impediment to becoming mature is inadequate training as a child and youth. Christian parents should become thoroughly aware that if they conduct a disorderly household, if they tend to be self-indulgent and undisciplined in eating, sleeping, haranguing, and spending, they are putting on the shoulders of their children a terrible handicap in their later efforts as Christians to properly grow up. The lifestyle of their home becomes their own lifestyle. The habits of slovenliness, disorder, and perhaps loud talking are just that, *habits*, which they carry into life with them. In such a case, even the cleansing of their hearts from the carnal mind will not automatically rid them of these habits. As a result, becoming truly mature will be more difficult than it normally should be. What entire sanctification will do is to enthrone the Holy Spirit so that He can gradually point out the facet of their undisciplined living and prod them to do better. He will not only prod them to do better but also give them a vision of what He expects of them. In addition, He will infuse into them the courage and strength to resolutely go about the task of becoming disciplined persons. Furthermore, heart holiness will purify their motives in this effort. They will desire to become disciplined, not for show, but for Jesus' sake, that they might better serve and glorify Him.

Maturation is the natural development that occurs simply through the process of living.

Christ will save us as we are. Then, by His Spirit, He will sanctify us as we are. But He will not leave us as we are. He will be forever pushing us toward spiritual adulthood. May we daily pray, "Push on, blessed Spirit; push on!"

The Word in Worship

I believe more strongly today than ever that God has spoken to us through the Holy Scriptures. The Bible gives us everything we need to know for salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). God has revealed in the Word the way a person may be "thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). God has promised blessing for the person whose "delight is in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 1:1-2).

The centrality of Scripture to the Christian faith must be evident in a worship service. Unfortunately, I have been in services where not one verse of Scripture was read. Senior pastors have directed me to condense a worship plan by eliminating Scripture readings. When I protested, I was told that the sermon was biblically based and had enough Scripture for the service. How sad. I wonder if this attitude concerning God's Word results in anesthetized congregations who do not experience the presence of God. Paul wrote that "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17).

One way we hear the Word comes through song. Paul encouraged the Colossians to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly . . . as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (3:16). The praise and worship movement in the last two decades has produced a number of Scripture songs. As we sing these songs, we need to point out to our congregations that we do not repeat the words of mere men, but we sing the Word of God. (See 1 Thess. 2:13.)

Another means of hearing the Word in worship occurs by linking the reading of Scripture with the singing of a song. I've found this practice to be spiritually rewarding. I appreciate seeing that the songs we sing in worship have roots in the Word of God.



by Keith Schwanz

Freelance writer, Milwaukie, Oreg.

Whether a scriptural passage introduces a hymn or a song precedes the reading of God's Word, the connection between Scripture and song enhances the worship experience. While I have sought many ways to make this link as a worship leader, I'll describe two.

Our Scripture reading one Sunday came from Rev. 7:9-17, where John envisioned people from every nation and angels around the throne of God. Verse 12 records the words that the angels sang: "Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever." This verse sounded similar to a Scripture song that we sang. I decided to ask the congregation to sing the familiar chorus as an interlude during the Scripture reading. One of the pastors in our church began reading the passage. As he read verse 10, the organist began playing softly. The choir started singing softly as the reader began verse 12. The reader paused after reading verse 12, the choir increased the volume, and I invited the congregation to join us. This allowed the congregation to participate in the Scripture reading through song. I believe that not only did we sing with our minds, but our emotions were touched as well. The encounter with God's Word was intensified. After singing the chorus through twice, the reader continued reading the Scrip-

ture passage. I've done the same thing with a reading of Luke 2, using the choir to sing a musical setting of verse 14, "Glory to God in the highest."

Another Sunday we were singing "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." Stanza 2 of this hymn states, "Here I raise my Ebenezer." As I planned the service, I visualized members of the congregation wondering, What in the world is an Ebenezer? And why is he showing it off? Not wanting the congregation to miss the author's point, I asked the organist to continue playing softly as I paraphrased 1 Sam. 7:2-14 between stanzas 1 and 2. Before we sang stanza 2, the congregation knew that the second phrase of the stanza defined "Ebenezer." Sometimes I've used another pastor to read a brief Scripture passage as commentary in the middle of a hymn.

If you start with a Scripture passage and need to find a hymn to link with it, use the Scripture index in a hymnal or chorus book. Sometimes a topical index or hymn concordance will help. If you start with a hymn and need to find a Scripture passage to join with it, use references printed with the hymn, a topical Bible, or a chain-reference or cross-reference Bible. Lillenas Publishing Company has published *Resources for Worship Planning* (PAMB-671, \$19.95), a companion to the recently released *Sing to the Lord* hymnal. Among other features, this book includes a Scripture reference for the hymns. One index appears in biblical order, and another is in alphabetical order by hymn title.

The Psalmist wrote, "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long" (119:97). Music in worship gives a wonderful opportunity to ponder the Word. Whether Scripture is heard in a song or linked with a song, we need to generously shine its light in our worship services. ✠

Biblical Preaching as Story

Martin Luther King, Jr., with the usual genius of black preaching, led the black people toward their Promised Land with a story. The biblical story of Moses and the Exodus became the story of King and Black America. Moving and powerful oratory left people asking not, "What does it mean?" but "Where do we begin?" Whether or not one likes the content, King's preaching as story moved people.

Billy Graham's preaching reflects a different view of the Bible. Clutching a black Bible in his hand, incessantly he intones, "The Bible says . . . !" Graham views the Bible as a set of propositions—absolutes to be declared, believed, and obeyed. A severely adulterated form of Graham's propositional approach appears in fundamentalism: "God said it; I believe it; that settles it." A cursory glance at 2 Thess. 2:1-12 with its "man of lawlessness" and a "restraining" (RSV), neither of which we can readily identify, betrays the simplicity of such an approach. We know what God said, but what do we believe?

The Bible as Story

Any thoughtful preacher must ask, "If Scriptures are really a set of propositions, why are they given to us largely in the form of stories?" Indeed, the Bible is a story, a story of God that must be told. Reducing the Bible to propositions robs it of the story and tempts the preacher to give rational arguments instead of simply telling the story. A believer comes to faith by experiencing that story as one's own story. Events for which there is witness in Scripture are events that are also reenacted by God in contemporary life.

The Bible *has* a story; the Bible *is* a story and *contains* many stories. Seen as story, the Bible is no longer thought



by Jerry W. McCant

*Professor,
Point Loma Nazarene College,
San Diego*

of as a box of jewels with static value. Rather, the Bible is a paradigm of how God thinks and acts in and through and across several cultures and centuries out of which the Bible emerges. To use a different metaphor, the Bible is far more than a giant Bread Box of Promises from which we draw for daily use. In its writing, it encompasses some 1,000 to 1,500 years of struggle with the questions of faith expressed in various idioms spanning five ancient cultures: Bronze, Iron, Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman eras.

Story is so significant. The Bible is a story that contains collections of stories. Genesis itself is a collection of etiological stories. These stories tell of origins: creation, sin, language, Israel, patriarchs, covenant, and the sojourn into Egypt. Exodus is the story of Egyptian bondage, Moses, the Exodus, emancipation of a people, and Sinai with the Law. Leviticus is the story of the cult with its sacrificial system. Numbers is the story of Israel's wandering in the wilderness/desert.

Three speeches of Moses in Deuteronomy are a retelling of the story and preparing for a new story yet to unfold in Canaan. Judges is a series of stories about 12 judges, told with the cycle of apostasy, oppression, repen-

tance, and deliverance. Historical documents tell stories of the monarchy—the united and divided kingdoms, kings, prophets, wars, and God's activity in the life of Israel. Prophets also have their stories (cf. Jonah and Hosea).

Gospels in the New Testament tell Jesus stories. Within the Jesus stories of four evangelists, there are stories of healing miracles, nature miracles, the dead being raised, exorcisms, preaching, and teaching. There are stories of the call of disciples; stories of Jesus' suffering, trial, crucifixion; stories of an empty tomb and of appearances of the resurrected Jesus. Nearly one-third of the teaching of Jesus is in story form: parables. All of these stories and the Jesus story itself must be placed within the whole story of God related to us in the Bible.

Acts is an exciting story of the power of the Holy Spirit in the newly emerging Christian Church. Jesus ascends, a new disciple is chosen to replace Judas, the Holy Spirit descends, and the Church continues the work that Jesus began. There are stories of the Church and stories of individuals. Heroes shine: James, Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy. Peter's story is dominant in chapters 1–12, then Paul's story takes precedence in chapters 13–28. Every city where Paul takes the gospel has its own unique story. We read stories of Paul's missionary journeys. There are stories of Paul planting churches, encountering difficulties, and being imprisoned.

All of the letters—Pauline and Catholic—have their stories. That is why we ask: Who wrote this letter? To whom was it written? When was it written? What was the occasion of the letter? Each letter has its own story, and their stories are set in the context of the whole biblical story. To

preach from a text without knowing the story will severely impoverish any sermon.

Yes, the Revelation of Jesus Christ is story too. While the author never quotes a single text from the Hebrew Bible, he makes more than 400 allusions to it. Whether one opts for a preterist or futurist interpretation, one must deal with the story. The story is the revelation of the victorious Christ. Not only does John have a final, apocalyptic story, but also he places the Revelation within the context of the bigger story. Revelation is the story of what the author perceives to be the final chapter of the story of God in Jesus Christ. In the context of the whole Torah-Christ story, Genesis begins with creation and Revelation ends with the new creation.

Everyone loves a story! Children from 3 to 93 enjoy stories. Israel has survived impossible odds, in both ancient and modern times, by telling the story. Religious education consisted mainly of fathers telling stories to their children. A pile of stones would remind the father to tell his children a story. Moses' farewell speeches in Deuteronomy are recitations of the story. Peter's Pentecost Day sermon (Acts 2), Stephen's defense (Acts 7), and Paul's first recorded sermon (Acts 13) all tell the story. Whatever else is said and done, the story must be told.



We know what
God said, but
what do we
believe?



The Preacher and Story

Biblical preaching is telling the story. Forget the fancy propositions and retell the old, old biblical story. Hebrew prophets are always picking up on the story. For example, Hosea speaks for God and says: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of

Egypt I called my son" (11:1). Hosea's story reflects the story of God's relationship with Israel for many years. Whatever they have to say, the prophets tell the story.

To preach the story requires the preacher to know the story. Preaching is trivialized when it is ripped from its story context and reduced either to propositions or moralisms. Preaching as story is hard work and requires disciplined labor. Perspiration comes first and then the inspiration in preaching as story. Once the work is done and the sermon is crafted with precision, the preacher will be both inspired and inspiring. Tired, boring sermons are sinful; they are the result of the preacher's failure to know God's story. Anemic preaching is the result of the preacher failing to be immersed in the biblical story.

Mastery of the story is the first step to biblical preaching. Each passage must be preached in the context of the whole. No passage stands on its own; every text must be understood as a segment of the whole story of God in Scripture. Every sermon can become an exciting story. Evangelicals could learn much from our more liturgical siblings who follow closely the Christian calendar. Every year the lectionary helps the church to tell the story again. As ministers we simply cannot afford to not know this grand and glorious story.

Every text should be placed within its context in the story. Allow me to illustrate. Peter (1 Pet. 1:16) quotes Lev. 11:45, and the preacher may easily jump to "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (KJV). A closer look at Lev. 11:45 gives us a larger context: "I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (RSV). Now the text has a wider context in the Exodus, and the Exodus has its wider context in the covenant God made with Israel through Abraham.

Now we can begin to understand that the text does not invite a moralistic sermon on how to be holy—all the dos and don'ts of holiness standards. Indeed, in its context, the text is no longer an imperative but a promise. It is not that Israel or the Church must strive to be holy. Holiness is based on a relationship with God, and our holiness is always a reflection of the holiness of God. Holiness is relational, and

a relationship is not a moral achievement. It is the result of one's relationship to a holy God. No moral exhortation is needed, just the simple proclamation of the story.



Reducing the
Bible to
propositions
tempts the
preacher to
give rational
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of simply telling
the story.



Our problem is that we preachers want to jump from the text to a relevant contemporary application of the text. Too often we entirely miss the story. Paul knows the story, so that he can say the law is good, holy, and eternal, but he questions some of its moral stipulations. We forget that Paul carried on a live dialogue with the story, and he invites a similar dialogue with his letters. To do what Paul did, Christian preachers see Paul's gospel as good and holy and eternal but some of his ethical advice as having little to do with our lives. Biblical stories are realistic; they have not been idealized. There are no paragons of virtue in the biblical story.

The Sermon and Story

When the sermon becomes story, at least four stories must converge.¹ First, the Bible has its own story. The Torah story includes stories of creation, election and covenant, exodus, Sinai, wilderness wanderings, conquest, monarchy, divided kingdoms, exile, and restoration. Be forewarned that knowing this story includes a mastery of some historical informa-

tion. Without the historical context, the story is so easily lost. Christians have a Torah-Christ story, which continues with the birth of Jesus; His ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing; His passion, trial, death, burial, and resurrection; the emergence of the Church; the expansion of the Christian mission; and a final apocalyptic vision in Revelation.

New Testament authors are anxious to show that the Jesus story is a fulfillment of Scripture, the Torah story. All of the New Testament authors know the Torah story. They write the new Christian Scriptures from a full contextual awareness of that story. Christian ministers who want to be solidly biblical simply must master the Torah-Christ story. The Church recognized the importance of knowing the story when it gave us the Apostles' Creed, simply a summary of the Torah-Christ story.

Preaching is at its best when it tells the story. To tell a story well, one must first know that story very well. Knowing that story does involve historical-critical exegesis, but exegesis is not possible until one really understands the story. We cannot tell the story convincingly until we know it well enough to claim it as our own. Then, the dynamic of the story is transparent.



Nearly one-third
of the teaching
of Jesus came
in story form.



Second, there is the preacher's story. No, I am not calling for a return to seeing the preacher's status as a kind of divine, godlike human being. It does mean, despite our past understanding, that a preacher should not be afraid of the personal pronoun "I." The pulpit is not a private confessional booth for the preacher; neither is it a place for public navel-gazing. The preacher must tell his story, be convincing and persuasive. Lean toward

the people, and the people will lean back to you. The story the preacher offers is a gift; don't be afraid to say "we" and "us." Be sincere; God ministers through personality. Integrity demands that the preacher share and struggle with the hearers. Congruence between the preacher's story and life is a must.

Phillips Brooks wanted to get rid of all "undue solemnity" that turned the person into a preacher. Especially we need to be rid of the "preacher's tone." P. T. Forsyth once said that the cure for boredom in the pulpit is not brilliance but reality. The preacher must be a real person standing before the congregation. There must be a transparency that allows the congregation to see the minister as a credible witness to the biblical story.



To preach from a
text without
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impoverish any
sermon.



Third, there is the listener's story. As the sermon-story is prepared, step into the world of your listeners. On any Sunday, the preacher will see a boy jilted by a lover, a chippy girl who has fallen in love, a pregnant woman who does not want to be pregnant, parents whose daughter just had an abortion, a person experiencing a nasty divorce, a molested child, parents who have been hurt by a child, a parent of a runaway child, a lonely senior adult, a father who has been fired, a person who has just heard the traumatizing words "terminal cancer."

The gospel is for the hurting, alienated, joyous, busy, engaged people of the world. Preachers may be obsessed with limits and the failures of sin. Constitutionally, we preachers are condi-

tioned to snoop around in people's lives until we spot their weaknesses, hypocrisy, and sin. Then, we are ready to preach. What is personal is often quite general. In describing his relationship of sharing himself with his patients, Carl Rogers said: "I have found to my astonishment that the feelings which have seemed to me most private are most personal . . . when clearly expressed resonate deeply with their own experience."² People are concerned about family, career, standard of living, recreation, dental bills, and the kind of car we drive. Perhaps the prophetic voice should be punctuated more with the question mark than the exclamation point.



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Fourth, the church has a story. After all, the Bible belongs to the church, not to theologians and biblical scholars! From the institutional point of view, preachers' sermons are expected to reflect the institutional doctrines and concerns. They are expected to preach the church's doctrines and support administrative decisions and ethical pronouncements of the denomination. Denominations have colleges and seminaries; they hire professors to help keep the church on track.

The church has the right to expect ministers to remain sensitive to its doctrines and understanding of Scripture. But preachers also have a right to expect the church to have integrity. When it does not, should not a prophetic voice call the church back

to its biblical heritage? The church ordains and gives its ministers credentials to administer the sacraments and preach the Word. Thus, it has the right to expect its own story to be told.

Preparing the Story

It is time to talk about crafting and presenting the story. A story has structure, and it is important that we know and use that structure. First, one's story has an introduction: place, character, time, mood, and pace. Tell who, when, and where with just a hint of the outcome (conclusion). As soon as possible get the congregation's attention; arouse emotions of suspense, compassion, love, and hate. Get the story (sermon) off the ground and moving. Set the scene by introducing the hero and antagonist. Plant at least a seed of trouble. **Do not promise more than you can deliver!**

Second, the story has a body—the story itself. Develop the “what” of the story. Hold the congregation's attention with action and suspense in your narration. Relate the series of incidents, revealing the project and the difficulty. A touch of humor is helpful. Weave the truths of the story into the fabric of the story throughout; they should not be tacked on. Include hazards to be overcome and choices to be made.



Anemic preaching results when the preacher fails to be immersed in the biblical story.



Third, bring the story to a climax. Deliberately reach the highest point of interest and suspense in the story. Make it impossible for the hearers to avoid making choices. Show the turn of the plot. Explain the mystery or reveal the kernel of truth that you most want the congregation to grasp, but do not determine what the application of the story must be for individuals.

Fourth, conclude the story. Account for all the major characters in the story. Tie up all loose ends; do not leave anything hanging. Fulfill all promises made in the introduction. If possible, reiterate the truth but resist every temptation to moralize. Preaching is for declaring the gospel, not for moralizing. One no more explains a story than one explains a joke. Each hearer must be given freedom to make one's own application. Do not narrow the application by making it for the congregation.



Integrity demands that the preacher share and struggle with the hearers.



Presenting the Story

Now you are ready to present your story. You are in the pulpit, and you are ready to present your sermon-story. Pause, place one foot slightly ahead of the other, and appear to be relaxed. Present the story to the congregation as a gift. Speak clearly but slowly; hurried speech is usually blurred. Use short, simple sentences with correct grammar. Speak loudly enough to be heard, but do not yell. Use a pleasing voice and vary your inflection; avoid a monotone voice, and especially avoid the “preacher's tone.” Your natural conversational voice is really a great asset!

Use varied facial expressions; be dramatic; and use appropriate, but varied, gestures. Lean toward the congregation; they will lean back to receive this beautiful gift you are offering them. You know this story better than anyone present. So, tell the story with confidence. Tell the story (sermon) in your own words. When you are finished—**Stop!**

Conclusion

Elie Wiesel, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust and a Nobel prize winner, knows the value of the story. In fact, he tells a rather provocative story:


When the great Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov saw misfortune threatening the Jew, it was his custom to go into a certain part of the forest to meditate. There he would light a fire, say a special prayer, and the miracle would be accomplished and the misfortune averted. Later,



Weave the truths of the story into the fabric of the story.



when his disciple, the celebrated Magid of Mezritch, had occasion, for the same reason, to intercede with heaven, he would go to the same place in the forest and say, “Master of the Universe, Listen! I do not know how to light the fire, but I am still able to say the prayer.” And again the miracle would be accomplished. Still later, Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sasov, in order to save his people once more, would go into the forest and say, “I do not know how to light the fire, I do not know how to say the prayer, but I know the place, and this must be sufficient.” It was sufficient, and the miracle was accomplished. Then it fell to Rabbi Israel of Rizhyn to overcome misfortune. Sitting in his armchair, his head in his hands, he spoke to God: “I am unable to light the fire, and I do not know the prayer; cannot even find the place in the forest. All I can do is tell the story and this must be sufficient.”³

Guess what? The miracle came. The story was sufficient! 

1. The four categories for this discussion have been borrowed from Edmund A. Steimle, Morris J. Niedenthal, and Charles L. Rice, *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). The content is my own, but I owe the idea of four converging stories to these authors and their book.

2. Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 26.

3. Elie Wiesel, *The Gates of the Forest* (New York: Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 82-83.

Planning a Year's Preaching

There's nothing worse than coming into your study on a Monday morning—or on Tuesday morning if you take Monday off—and not knowing what you're going to preach the following Sunday. For me there was always a vague sense of panic. Not knowing meant I would waste half a day, maybe more, looking for a text. More time would be lost in writing an initial outline. By the time I had a sermon firmly in hand, it was sometimes Wednesday or Thursday, even Friday if unexpected demands got in the way of study time. Don't they always? To make matters worse, in my tradition there were always two sermons to prepare each Sunday. The pressure, for me at least, was almost unbearable.

It didn't take me long in the ministry to realize I couldn't live like that. I couldn't handle the pressure. Sometimes I disliked the end result of the stressful process immensely. Sermons prepared at the last moment and delivered in a state of emotional exhaustion were not what I had in mind for a spiritually hungry congregation who deserved my best.

In no time at all, I realized that my problem began on Monday mornings. Since I didn't know what I was going to do next, Monday was a demanding day that cried out for answers: "What text will you use? What title will you give the secretary for the Sunday bulletin? What kind of outline will you develop?"

The solution to my problem was obvious: I had to eliminate that Monday morning uncertainty. There had to be a way to come into the office on Monday and get right to work without all the searching, all the anxiety, and all the delay.

There was an answer, and though I didn't develop it all at once, it has now been in place and taking the pressure off of ministry for more than 15 years. Since I began using *The Sermon Builder*, sermon preparation has



by Bill O'Connor

Evangelist,
Church of the Nazarene,
Newberg, Oreg.

been a joy. Coming into the office on Mondays has been nearly painless. Who wouldn't like to sleep in after a busy Sunday?

The first step in easing my weekly burden of sermon preparation was to create three topically divided notebooks into which I began to put every sermon idea I came across. The three notebooks are three-ring binders, each three inches thick. Each notebook is divided into several sections with the kind of tabbed dividers that can be purchased at any stationery store. The tabs on the dividers are labeled with the topics on which I feel it is important to preach each year. The topics will vary from one preacher to the next. But any system ought to include God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church, Christian living, faith, stewardship, missions, love, outreach and witness, family life, social issues, Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, other special days, and more.

Once the notebooks were ready, the development of a steady supply of sermon outlines began. At first I took a few hours each week for the specific purpose of adding outlines to the notebooks. I searched the Bible for texts and noted every good idea I came across in the time I set aside for daily reading. Later I simply took the time to write out a simple outline whenever I had an idea pop into my

consciousness with the thought, That would make a great sermon.

If you have an idea that would make a great sermon, why not be sure it has the opportunity to do just that? Put every idea on a full sheet of plain white bond paper. Use both sides if necessary. Create a simple outline when the idea first enters your head. Put those ideas into a manila folder. Then, once each week, file them in your notebooks by topic. It won't be long until you have three notebooks or more bulging with potential sermons.

Once you've done this, you will have a great start. I thought I had really accomplished something when those notebooks started to bulge. I had, but it wasn't nearly enough. I now had a wealth of possible outlines to choose from on Monday mornings, but the choice still had to be made. It was still time-consuming. The uncertainty about what I would do the following Sunday still lingered.

The next step was to begin planning my pulpit work in advance. At first I worked two or three months in advance; I just wasn't comfortable planning any farther ahead. Somehow, I thought, the Holy Spirit might be left out of the process if I thought any farther into the future. I soon learned, however, that the Holy Spirit isn't limited by time when it comes to sermon planning. Frequently someone would say, "Pastor, how did you know that I needed to hear those words today?" I didn't know, but the Holy Spirit did. He often knew months in advance, even before the problem that created the need.

Now I know that the Holy Spirit can be trusted to lead me to the right thoughts and outlines a year or more in advance. He has done it time after time. Almost every Sunday for the past several years, someone has said, "Pastor, that was just what I needed today." The Holy Spirit knows what will be needed when I place the ser-

mon on my preaching schedule. He knows when each person will be present in the worship service and exactly what they will need at that specific moment. I couldn't do any better if I planned the sermon on my way to the pulpit on the Sunday morning that I preach it.

Once I learned to trust the Spirit to be faithful to people's needs in advance, I began to schedule an annual sermon planning retreat. It has been my habit to get away somewhere for two or three days if I can. At other times, I have simply curtailed my schedule and spent the time in my office with instructions to secretary and staff that I was unavailable for three days.

Planning a year in advance is easy when your *Sermon Builder* notebooks are stuffed with ideas. It's simply a process of sitting down with the notebooks and choosing the sermons that you like the best in each topic area. Pay no attention to how many you choose at first. Simply pull out the ones you like. Get yourself a good stack of them.

Once you have a large selection of possible choices before you, begin to pray. Ask God to guide you as you sift and select. Ask Him to show you which sermons will be needed most, and when.

The Holy Spirit isn't limited by time when it comes to sermon planning.

As you pray, peruse your stack of potential sermons. When one strikes you as especially strong or fitting, set it aside. I've found that I often choose several sermons that fit a single theme. Perhaps they can be grouped into a series. It isn't long until there are piles of sermons all over the desk-top or wherever I'm working.

When I had reached this point in my journey, I developed another component of the *Sermon Builder* sys-

tem, a fourth large notebook, which contains my preaching plan for the year. This notebook is also divided into sections, but this time the sections are tabbed for the 12 months of the year. I also have a special tab up front for the annual plan itself. Once you have this notebook before you, it's time to start creating the plan.

The first thing I do is create a calendar of the 52 Sundays of the year. I use a single sheet of white bond paper for each month, put the name of the month at the top of the sheet, and add the dates of each Sunday down the left side. Then, because my tradition calls for two sermons each week, I add an A.M. and P.M. after each date. Now I have 104 empty slots waiting to be filled with a sermon or other activity.

With my calendar in hand, I write in any special events that have been scheduled for the year ahead. I include dates for the annual Easter and Christmas musicals, children's Christmas program, and other services where a sermon isn't required. If any concerts or special guest speakers have been scheduled, I also include these at the appropriate spot on the calendar.

As you follow the same process, start to fill your empty Sundays with special sermons for seasons and occasions. Write the titles you choose in the appropriate slot on your calendar. Fill in your Easter and Christmas sermons, or at least plan the dates when those sermons will be preached. Then move on to the other special sermons you may want to preach: Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day, Reformation and Pentecost Sundays—whatever fits your habit and tradition. I've usually done a stewardship series at the beginning of each year, so I pencil that in for four Sunday mornings in January.

My next move is to sort through my stack of potential sermons again and choose those that have come together into possible series. Then I look for large blocks of open Sunday mornings or evenings into which these groups of sermons will fit. As a date is set for each sermon, I write that date in the upper right corner of the outline and place it in the master notebook behind the tab for the proper month. I also note on the outline, just beneath the date, whether

the sermon will be preached in the morning or evening.

Once I have all the special day sermons and series messages in place, I go back through the sermon pile again and fill in open dates with individual sermons. All the while I continue to pray and ask for the Spirit's guidance as the notebook is filled.

Sermons prepared at the last moment and delivered in a state of emotional exhaustion were not what I had in mind for a spiritually hungry congregation.

Sunday by Sunday, page by page, date by date, the master calendar fills up. Sometimes it seems that one sermon will work better in conjunction with another; I shift things around. Sometimes I find a sermon that leaps out at me and says, "Include me in the schedule." If need be, I remove something else to make a place for it. At the end of two or three days, I've pretty much filled the schedule and feel good about what I've done.

Not every date ends up being filled. I intentionally leave a few Sunday evening slots open for those unexpected opportunities that come along to schedule a music group or a special speaker. It's always helpful also to have an open date or two for those times when a sermon that begs to be preached comes to mind.

Once the master notebook is filled with sermons, I file the annual calendar behind the special first tab and return to my usual pastoral routine. Now, when I come into the office on Monday mornings, I never have to ask what I'll be doing the following Sun-

day. I pull out the master notebook, turn to the appropriate month, pull out the two outlines for the following Sunday, and go to work.

At the least I have saved myself the time it would take to find a text and prepare an initial outline. That could be a matter of moments or a matter of days. Whichever it is, it adds up to a lot of time saved over the course of a year. Even more important is the anxiety saved and the confidence gained by knowing what I'm going to do next.

I don't talk much to people about the planning process. I just do it. It seems whenever I mention it that there's always someone who thinks it's more spiritual to struggle with a sermon into the wee hours of Sunday morning. Such persons must think that an exhausted preacher must rely more heavily upon the anointing of the Spirit. Personally, I used to find myself too tired to sense the anointing.

I have also learned never to argue with people who wonder out loud whether God can work through a sermon that was planned months in advance. I'll never convince them anyway. I hold on to the affirmations I receive from people leaving the sanctuary on Sunday. Time after time the Holy Spirit has proven himself faithful. He was there when the sermon was scheduled. He is there when the sermon is preached. In both cases, His presence makes the difference.

Since I began using the *Sermon Builder* more than 15 years ago, I have found Monday mornings a delight. I actually like to go into the office. The only anxiety I feel is the anxiety to get started on a process that I sincerely enjoy. Sermon preparation has become something to which I look forward.

Thanks to the system I've developed, I can usually have a morning sermon ready by Wednesday afternoon and an evening sermon finished by sometime on Thursday. Everything else gets done too. If the unexpected does arise, there's time for it. I don't have to feel that interruptions are robbing me of rapidly disappearing minutes. I've got a few to spare. When Sunday comes, I preach with freedom. I also preach with genuine anticipation. After all, the next morning is Monday, and I get to start all over again. ✠

A List of Possible Topics for Your Sermon Builder Notebooks

Abundant Life
Assurance
Atonement
Attitudes
Backsliding
Baptism
Blood of Christ
Christmas
Church, The
Cleansing
Comfort
Commitment
Consecration
Contentment
Cross, The
Death
Discipleship
Easter
Endurance
Eternal Life
Evangelism
Failure
Faith
Faithfulness
Family, The
Fear
Fellowship
Forgiveness
Friendship
Fruit of Spirit
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Getting a Grip on Guilt

It had been one of those days. A day filled with too many obligations, too little time, and far too little energy to meet the demands.

But the day had not yet ended. Tired and frazzled, Emily scurried around her kitchen, hoping that the results of her hasty labor could be disguised as supper and satisfy the needs of her family.

At that point, Emily's four-year-old son strolled into the kitchen, totally oblivious to the pressures and frustrations of the day. In a voice that would melt a granite monument, he sweetly asked, "Mommy, will you play with me?"

Emily explained that she could not stop what she was doing and play. "Maybe we can play after supper," she added. However, already a sense of guilt had begun to swell within her.

Then, with a voice of utter dejection, her son replied, "If I were a mommy, I'd come play."

With that subtle nudge, Emily plunged over the edge into the depths and despair of guilt.



by Deanna Harrison

*Freelance writer,
Early, Tex.*

Guilt is the master manipulator. It's also one of the most underrated sources of motivation in our society today. Guilt has a way of pointing its accusing finger in our faces and whispering, "You've messed up again," when in reality we've done nothing wrong.

The problem with guilt is that at times it is justified, while on other occasions it has no foundation whatsoever. Justified guilt comes as the result of God's convicting Spirit as He illuminates sin in our lives. When that

occurs, we have no alternative but to confess the sin to God and gratefully receive His forgiveness.

Justified guilt is not always negative. In fact, it can be profitable. It opens our eyes to the sin within us and motivates us toward repentance and forgiveness. Justified guilt leads us to become more like Christ.

Unjustified guilt, on the other hand, constantly eats away at the life of a believer, stealing joy and sapping the strength that should be a part of abundant life in Christ. Unjustified guilt is that guilt that we place upon ourselves when we feel we have failed, even though we stand uncondemned before God.

Emily did not stop cooking supper to play with her child, in order to meet the needs of her entire family. Yet she felt guilty, even though she had not committed a hideous sin. Men whose paychecks do not keep up with the cost of living often feel guilty for not giving their families all that they want or need. Many women feel guilty if they work outside of the home. Other women stay at home and feel guilty because they don't live up to the unrealistic standards of "Super Mom."

Feelings of guilt can be found in the routine experiences of everyday life. They occur when someone gets sick ("I should have worn a coat instead of a sweater"), when the dog runs away ("I should have been more careful about closing the gate"), and when there's too much left to do at the end of the day ("I should have worked harder").

Feelings of guilt can also be found in the day-to-day life of a minister's wife. Do any of these situations sound familiar?

"If only I had been a better counselor, maybe Mrs. X wouldn't have left her husband."

"If only I had contacted more prospects, maybe we would have met our enrollment goal in Sunday School."

"If only I had visited Mrs. Crabtree



five times instead of three, maybe she wouldn't have felt neglected."

"If only I were a better mother, maybe my children wouldn't be known as *those preacher's kids*."

"If only I had remembered the visitors' names, maybe they wouldn't have felt unwelcome."

"If only I had not stayed home with my sick child, we would not have missed our High Attendance Day goal by one person."

"If only I had prayed more, maybe this wouldn't have happened."

"If only I had studied my Bible more, maybe that wouldn't have happened."

Opportunities for guilt exist all around us, and many times the feelings of guilt are unjustified. They can wreak havoc in almost every area of our lives. Unjustified guilt can devastate believers because it violates at least four New Testament principles.

"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (2 Cor. 3:17).

Believers who carry around the emotional baggage of unjustified guilt live in a state of bondage rather than freedom. Such was the case with Julie.

One day I met Julie for lunch at a popular restaurant. After waiting in line for over 10 minutes, we discovered that there were no available high chairs for our toddlers. We knew better than to attempt a meal with active toddlers in our laps and immediately decided to find another place to eat.

As we made our way through the crowd, Julie's five-year-old son began screaming, "Where are we going? I haven't eaten. What's going on? Why are we leaving?" By the time we got out of the restaurant, he had worked himself into a full-blown temper tantrum. I felt sorry for Julie as she struggled to manhandle a diaper bag, a toddler, and a screaming five-year-old. I felt even sorrier for her when I saw how she dealt with her son.

I had expected to witness some form of discipline, but instead I heard Julie apologize to her five-year-old. "I'm sorry, sweetheart. Mommy should have explained to you what we were doing," she said. Without a second thought, Julie accepted full blame and responsibility for her son's outrageous behavior.

As I began to closely observe Julie's relationships, I began to understand

why her life was void of joy and satisfaction. She believed that everyone's problems were her fault. Feelings of guilt were chained around her spirit like shackles on a convicted criminal. It was impossible for Julie to fully enjoy her freedom in Christ because she was weighted down by unjustified guilt.

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14).

The apostle Paul serves as a perfect example of someone who was not in the grips of guilt. He put his past behind him and looked to the future. Believers who are in the grips of unjustified guilt, however, are bound to their past. They are incapable of "forgetting what is behind" because their guilt is a constant reminder of the things they want to forget.

Several years ago my husband was called to the psychiatric ward of the hospital, where he learned that one of our parishioners had attempted suicide. As Scott ministered to the young woman, he discovered that she was a victim of child abuse. Now, years later, she still felt guilty, even though she was not to blame. Unjustified guilt prevented the young woman from putting her past behind her.

"Fix your thoughts on Jesus" (Heb. 3:1).

One of the reasons that unjustified guilt is so detrimental is that it keeps our thoughts turned inward. We become obsessed with *our* mistakes, *our* inadequacies, *our* weaknesses. We fail to focus our thoughts on Jesus and *His* victory, *His* sufficiency, *His* strength.

Bill and Diane had been at their new church for only six months when they realized that things weren't going to work out. Soon they were interviewing with numerous search committees, preparing to move once again. At first, they felt guilty for uprooting their children when the toys were barely unpacked.

Fortunately, Bill and Diane recognized that their feelings of guilt were unfounded. They focused their energies on determining God's leadership for their ministry rather than berating themselves for what they perceived as serious mistakes. Now, several years

later, they enjoy an exciting ministry in a loving, supportive church. And their children are doing fine.

"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).

One of the main reasons that unjustified guilt inflicts damage on Christians is that it cannot be forgiven. For example, a woman feels guilty over a particular situation, so she prays for forgiveness. Yet she still feels guilty. Why? Because unjustified guilt is not rooted in sin, which can be forgiven.

Dr. James Dobson views this type of guilt as a tool used by Satan to create spiritual discouragement. "By seeming to ally himself with the voice of the Holy Spirit, Satan uses the conscience to accuse, torment and berate his victims."*

So what's the answer? Are we to ignore all feelings of guilt? Of course not. But neither should we assume that all feelings of guilt are due to unconfessed sin in our lives. We must get a grip on guilt before it gets a grip on us and undermines our spiritual effectiveness.

The first step to getting a grip on guilt is to determine the source. Who is involved? What has happened to produce the feelings of guilt?

Once the source has been established, examine the situation. Is it one for which God would hold a believer responsible? What were the motives behind the actions? Was the guilt-producing act brought about by willful disobedience to God? Are there any clear biblical teachings on the matter?

When God is the Source of guilt, when He confronts a believer with a specific sin, then the twofold act of confession and repentance is the only option. Nothing else can remove the nagging feelings of justified guilt.

If, however, unjustified guilt has been overshadowing your life, get a grip on it. Realize that God has not been ignoring your request for forgiveness. He simply has not been condemning you for something that was not a sin. Realize, too, that God does not hold you personally responsible for every difficult situation within your world. Be faithful in the areas He has given you, and trust Him to take care of the rest. †

*James Dobson, *Emotions: Can You Trust Them?* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1980), 23.

Holding Hands

by David Trembley

Freelance writer, Milwaukee

I spent a lot of time last week holding the hands of people who were angry, sad, or scared. It reminded me of one of the common complaints of clergy: "I got ordained in order to do real ministry; then I discovered that most of the time I am holding the hands of little old ladies and listening to them complain."

But the hands I held last week were not all female. Only two of them belonged to a person over 60. Indeed, four of those hands belonged to young people—a 13-year-old who was incredibly nervous in her first private conversation with her pastor, and a 17-year-old who was in so much pain that, at least in the beginning, it didn't very much matter to her whose hand she held, as long as there was someone who cared.

Two other hands belong to a 24-year-old at whose wedding I officiated about a year ago. She and her hus-

band moved away, had a baby, but did not keep all the promises we had talked about in their sessions of premarital counseling. Some of those neglected chickens have come home to roost. So she called, hoping that we could pick up where we had left off.

We always do, of course. There is no other possibility except that we start again—at exactly the same point at which we stopped.

The male hands I held belong to an incest survivor who has himself some experience of molesting children. Those hands wanted to commit suicide once upon a time. Now, in no small measure as a result of being held, they no longer want to kill. Neither are those hands any longer instruments of abuse for little children.

Reflecting on this past week of hand-holding, what strikes me most forcefully is the distinction between holding hands and "real ministry."

More and more, I wonder what clergy mean when they use that phrase. True, hand-holding is not the same as doing social-justice ministry. True, too, holding hands is seldom the appropriate conclusion. Sometimes holding hands is even a means of avoiding the other, harder ministry that needs to be done, such as confronting the ones who want to be comforted with the painful truth that they are partially responsible for creating the sadness, anger, or fear that they experience now.

So what? Is not ambiguity the very hallmark of the conditions of human existence? Is it not true that every behavior is capable of being undertaken for reasons more or less good?

The familiar clergy complaint is sometimes amplified with words like these: "Holding their hands didn't do any good; they didn't change."

Indeed! Is our responsibility to change them or to love them? Is there any lasting change that is not based upon experiences of having been genuinely loved? In fact, when we complain that change has not occurred, do we not thereby confess our misunderstanding and misappropriation of our role? Our call from God is to faithfulness—body, emotion, mind, and volition—and then to be at peace with leaving the results up to Him.

There are abundant opportunities for real ministry in this coming week. I'll not accept them all nor even see them all. Some I will not see because I'm unwilling or fearful to do what that opportunity implies. Some of those occasions for ministry that I will miss shall be very simple things: a little food for a hungry stomach, a cheerful word for someone who is down, the willingness to hold a needy hand.

The kingdom of God has not yet come in power, I know. The handout of food needs to become justice where the hungry are empowered to earn their daily bread. Cheerful words get confused with the vacuity of "Have a nice day!" Held hands can quickly degenerate into paternalism or worse, I know. But in a world in which fragmentation appears to be the order of the day, sometimes the one thing people really need the most is someone to listen to them and hold their hands.



Ministering to People with Hidden Hurts

Clergy spend a lot of energy ministering to people who are hospitalized, or in nursing homes, and under the care of a physician. This kind of pastoral outreach addresses spiritual, emotional, and physical needs that are visible and regarded as top priority in the life of the church.

There are other members of the Body of Christ with needs that are just as great, but they suffer in silence. On the surface these folks seem to be doing fine. They do not consider themselves to be ill, so in their minds they have no need of a physician. Yet, beneath the surface are fears and insecurities that erode their spirituality and perpetuate a pattern of quiet desperation.

Who are some of the people who live with hidden hurts? What kind of burdens do they bear? They are family members, significant others, and friends who watch and wait, hope and pray, while a loved one is in pain. These silent sufferers witness tragedy. Whether the tragedy occurs within the context of their personal lives or at work makes no difference. A person becomes vulnerable whenever his or her environment is fractured.

People with hidden hurts watch the world of someone they love turn upside down. Their response is a feeling of powerlessness. It is difficult to muster resources when one waits in a critical care lounge, at the bedside, in front of the telephone, or home alone. Long-term caregivers, or relatives of someone with mental illness or an addiction, often experience quiet desperation. So do family members of persons with AIDS. All try to retain a semblance of normalcy by sticking to a regular, daily routine such as going to work or school, or just keeping busy. Yet they find it difficult to concentrate on tasks at hand. These folks



by George R. Robie

Hospital chaplain, Lincoln, Nebr.

are the secondary victims of illness and disease, trauma and tragedy. As such they are afraid of becoming the center of attention. They tend to think it inappropriate to mention their problems, which seem minor to them when someone they love is in the midst of a crisis. The seemingly minor problems, with their accompanying stress, are like volcanoes ready to erupt and cause havoc in the form of stress-related illness.



Clergy can prepare to enter the world of hidden hurts by utilizing some of the approaches listed below.

First, remember that people are members of families. When one member hurts, the family hurts. Pastors visiting the sick need to understand that the individual is part of a larger network known as a family system. A family system resembles a mobile; the parts are separate but interconnected. The action of one part affects the others. What happens to one individual is experienced in one form or another by the others.

Think about what happens to a mobile when one part is damaged or removed. Symmetry is lost, and the mobile becomes unbalanced. So it is with families. When one member is ill or hospitalized, interaction and connectedness are disrupted. This shift in the pattern of regular, established daily activity places a lot of pressure on other members of the family.

Consider the example of Sam. Seriously injured in a motor vehicle accident, Sam had to be hospitalized. An inquiry into his family system disclosed that his wife, Evelyn, doesn't drive and lives in a rural community 15 miles from the hospital. In addition, she has two part-time jobs and depends on Sam to get her from one work site to the other. Sam pays the bills once a week, an activity that Evelyn has no interest in and has not learned to do. Furthermore, Sam's employment has minimal sick benefits, so he and Evelyn face a reduction in income for several months. Also,

Evelyn is without transportation for such essentials as grocery shopping and laundry.

Even though Sam and Evelyn are members of a church and have friends, Evelyn wishes to keep the difficulties and problems caused by Sam's accident to herself. She doesn't want to bother anyone. *It is fitting and proper to identify Evelyn as a person with hidden hurts. In this case, she is the unidentified patient.* Her pain and frustration are equally important and need to be addressed with the same vigor as Sam's.

Second, the pastor should make sure that visits to the family home are made in tandem with visits to the hospital or nursing home. Such visits serve as a valuable resource at times of nonmedical emergencies. Home visitation in time of crisis helps the family realize that someone is willing to meet them on their own ground in the midst of their anguish. Doing so also enables clergy to understand the family in depth and to see how members are handling the crisis.

One of the goals, therefore, is to acquire an appreciation for the family as a system. The apostle Paul's concept of the Church as the Body of Christ is helpful in this regard. Paul states, "For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body" (1 Cor. 12:14-16, RSV). Just as the human body feels pain when one part of it is injured, so it is with the family.

During the initial visit, family members may have a tendency to spend a lot of time talking about the person who is ill or having problems. This posture reflects their heartfelt need and is appropriate. It also may be a safety measure on their part; for by doing so, they don't have to focus on how or what they are feeling. Remember, families consist of more than individuals and their feelings. Families consist of relationships. Because some relationships are conflict-ridden, do not expect all family members to express the same kinds of feelings and reactions to the problem at hand. Make sure to be open and

understanding about whatever comes your way. Keep in mind that you are dealing with the tip of the iceberg.

Third, begin the pastoral visit with active listening. By active listening, I mean let everyone tell his or her story in whatever time it takes. As a pastoral caregiver, you are there to do more than listen. After everyone in the family has said what he or she wants to say, be assertive and take a further step. Gently help the family change its focus. Start to talk about what is going on between family members now that one of them is absent, or now that a problem has surfaced. Make sure to ask what roles were filled by the person who is ill or experiencing the problem. How is the family compensating in the face of loss or change? Who is the worrier? Who is the problem solver? What difficulties are present during this time of illness and upheaval? To what satisfaction are they being resolved? These important issues need to be discussed whether the person's absence is short-term, long-term, or permanent.

Make sure your pastoral approach is balanced. Talk about what is good and positive. Also, make sure to identify those aspects of family life that aren't working as well as they used to now that one of the members is experiencing a crisis. Remember the example of the mobile!

Fourth, it is important to remember that families consist of a series of interlocking triangles that provide stability for the family system. The pastor needs to be aware that some of the stress can be reduced by involving a third member of the family—hence the triangle—to help cope with the demands of daily living. In situations where there are no relatives, or children live out of town, a church member, volunteer, or close friend can be the third person. Tasks assumed by the third person can range from providing transportation, help with letter writing, assistance with shopping, meal preparation, and home maintenance, to assuming the role of friend and confidant.

Fifth, the pastor will benefit from understanding that intimacy is best maintained in an environment that respects privacy. In a healthy family, wives will have secrets from husbands and vice versa. Children will have secrets from parents and vice

versa. In a time of crisis, matters involving intimacy, guilt, and the desire for forgiveness come to the surface. Often they appear in the form of a request whispered in haste as the pastor prepares to leave. Yet, for every person who requests to see you in private, there will be others who are afraid to ask the "May I see you alone?" question. Clergy can pave the way for greater comfort in this area by discussing the relationship between intimacy and privacy. Doing so is a permission-giving opportunity. It acknowledges that some family members may need to talk about certain matters in a confidential setting. Let the family know that you will be available for one-on-one counseling. Give your card to everyone present, or leave your telephone number in a visible place in the home where everyone has access to it.

Sixth, the pastor will appreciate that, within a family, every crisis generates its own set of adjustments. Individuals will adjust, and the family will adjust. They may not adjust the way you would want or in ways that are always healthy, but adjustments will happen. Making positive adjustments is possible by calling upon the resources of faith, knowledge, and skills that families hold in reserve.

However, some families respond to crisis by resisting change. This is their way of saying, "We want to go back to the old way of doing things." At that moment, the minister has a golden opportunity to enter their pain by asking them to share what the old way was like. Then, after the story has been told, ask them to tell you what they think the new way will be like. Encourage them to describe how they coped with difficulties in the past. Find out what worked then, and explore with them what might work now and in the future. Let them know that the choice to go back, move forward, or stay put is theirs. Be sure to underscore that the choice doesn't have to be made immediately. It is all right for a family to wander in the desert and question where they are going and what they are going to do. Whatever decisions are made, let them know they will not be alone. You will be there for them. The church will be there for them, as will the One who promises to be with us always, even to the close of the age. †

Time for Recovery

Soapsuds flew in every direction. My alcoholic stepfather was home. As a senior in high school, I watched him jerk a plate from the dishes I was rinsing in the kitchen sink. He slammed that plate into the soapy wash water and then scooped food onto the suds-covered plate. This former rear admiral in the navy then commanded, "Now eat that. And next time make sure the dishes are rinsed." Like a whipped pup who had no choice, I ate—suds and all. To this day, my wife wonders why I rinse the dishes three or four times before drying them.

That same year, my brother and I had taken dates to a community event when my stepfather called, instructing us to return home immediately. We had no legitimate explanation for our dates, except to say our stepfather expected us home. We were embarrassed, but our dates were driven home. When my brother and I arrived home, our heads were physically cracked together by my stepfather. We were never told why.

Much as we may want to ignore



by Dan E. Ferguson
Pastor, Cimarron, Kans.

similar traumatic experiences, they have a tendency to haunt us in ministry. Traumatic experiences with parents or stepparents eventually affect our relationships with others, including parishioners. While John Bradshaw's current statement that 96% of the families of the world are dysfunctional, lacking healthy relationships, may be debatable, similar traumatic experiences of those in the ministry are probably more prominent than we want to admit.

Recently, a friend of mine shared the feeling that it was very difficult to

seek counseling for an embittered relationship with his parents because his religious training taught him not to consider helping himself, but others only. Similar to most brought up in church, I have felt the same struggle.

After all, we have heard the words of Jesus: "If any man would come after me, let him *deny himself* and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24, RSV, italics mine). But when a lawyer, a Pharisee, asked Jesus which commandment was the greatest, He responded with two: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37, 39, RSV). We are to love God and neighbor, but the underlying assumption is that we love ourselves too.

We can find a multitude of other reasons to put off working on our own recovery. On both a conscious and unconscious level, we resist the pain that always accompanies growth. And so many tasks of ministry appear to be urgent; they should have been done yesterday.

Obviously, it can't be helped when many funerals crop up on our schedules. But to be effective in ministry, we must schedule time for recovery and stick with it. A turning point for my ministry came when I heard Steve Harper say, "I can be just as happy leaving five things to do on my desk at night as two." When our schedules can easily be controlled by many outside variables, it becomes necessary to say no to nonessentials in order to say yes to preparing ourselves for ministry.

Jesus probably never went through recovery, since He was crucified before reaching 35 to 40 years, the age when most people discover a need for it. But a number of Jesus' responses to His parents come off abruptly, almost to the point of rudeness. In the Temple at 12 years of age, Jesus asked His parents, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49, RSV).



When Jesus' mother told Him the wine was gone at the wedding feast, He asked, "Woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come" (John 2:4, RSV). When the crowd informed Jesus that His mother and brothers were waiting to speak to Him, He responded, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" (Matt. 12:48, RSV). He then pointed to the disciples, saying that whoever does the will of His Father in heaven is His brother and sister and mother.

After examining the context of each passage and being lenient toward Jesus in our interpretation, His abruptness is still striking. Though Jesus was completely focused upon doing the will of His Heavenly Father, it is possible that Jesus may have later found a need to accept recovery from the strings of His earthly parents.

Though besieged by constant requests for healings, feedings, exorcisms, and other miracles, Jesus reveals a wonderful rhythm between giving out in ministry and seeking solitude and retreat from it. When the crowds came to Jesus for preaching and healing, His priorities sometimes called for withdrawing: "Great multitudes gathered to hear and to be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed" (Luke 5:15-16, RSV). In another instance, after dismissing the crowds, Jesus "went up on the mountain by himself to pray" (Matt. 14:23, RSV). Our ministry calls us to a similar rhythm.

Other factors affect our outlook toward parents. From an economic standpoint, the generation who struggled through the depression of the "Dirty '30s" in the United States seems

to have more esteem for parents than the post-World War II baby boomers who have been given much more materially. Another factor is that of birth bonding. Those who were born during the postwar era when newborn babies were kept from parents in the hospital for nearly a week have more anger toward parents, stemming from that initial alienation of physical skin contact. In contrast, those who were born in the days of frequent births in the home or recent Lamaze or birth bonding classes seem to have less anger to work through. Naturally, when anyone becomes a parent, it's much easier to empathize with what Mom and Dad endured. But simply being a parent does not necessarily provide us with full recovery either.

Traumatic experiences with parents or stepparents eventually affect our relationships with others, including parishioners.

Like many others, I tended to deny my own need for recovery. In God's

mysterious ways, I was led to different avenues that revealed my need. After keeping a journal of my dreams, I observed a pattern pointing to my own struggle with issues of authority. I decided to check out a videotape from the library: *Emotional Healing: A Video Guide for Adult Children of Alcoholics and Abusive Families*, by Dr. Terry Hunt. The major issues raised by the tape, such as self-esteem, intimacy, trust, anger, and authority, were so relevant to my struggle that I felt a need for individual therapy. Without actually looking for one, I found a counselor who had participated in an Adult Children of Alcoholics small group, and he directed me to a different ACOA group.

"Self-esteem will always be an issue for you; it will never go away." My counselor was speaking from his experience as an ACOA. I'm grateful he was that blunt, for I can never feel I have arrived in this area. The ACOA group was very supportive. Usually numbering three to five, the group was small enough that each one was an active listener and participant. This ACOA small-group session was a great experience and did more than anything else to help build self-esteem. The result has been healthier relationships with family and parishioners.

This was such a positive experience that I want to encourage others in the ministry to take time for recovery. Looking back, the steps into the process were not by my own doing but through God's guidance. The commitment to continue working toward greater self-esteem is a long-term one. For all in ministry, it can result in healthier relationships and better preparation for pastoral care. ✠

Beyond Belief



Beating Burnout— Tools for Inner Healing

by Victor M. Parachin

Ordained minister and counselor,
Virginia Beach, Va.

Feeling the stresses and strains of life, a young Midwestern lawyer entered these words in his journal: "I am now the most miserable man living. If what I feel were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on earth. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. To remain as I am is impossible; I must die or be better, it appears to me."

Those words were written in 1841 by Abraham Lincoln. Because of his emotional state, Lincoln's family and friends thought it wise to keep knives, razors, and other sharp objects out of his reach. In addition, they had someone stay with him through the nights, fearing that, if left alone, he would take his life. Of course, Lincoln survived that dark time in his life and went on to become one of the country's greatest presidents.

Life is stressful. The mere act of being alive means facing some tough tests. Sooner or later everyone confronts professional and personal crisis, hardship, failure, pain, and tragedy. Nevertheless, it is possible to beat burnout. Here are some powerful and effective tools for inner healing.

Get Support

Strong, steady support from a trusted friend or counselor is invaluable during times of high stress. As the stresses mount, it is wise to seek counsel from a pastor, spiritual leader, or good friend.

In her book *You Don't Have to Suffer*, psychotherapist Judy Tatelbaum says: "We benefit when we can talk intimately, clear up feelings and reactions, be understood or have a witness to our experience, and be encouraged to move forward."

Get Some Rest

Anxiety and stress can wear you down quickly when you're fatigued and exhausted. The antidote is to cut back on your pace and schedule some times of rest. This was a technique used frequently by Jesus. Several passages in the Gospels show Jesus leaving His activity and friends behind in order to be alone. There He rested and spent time in prayer.

In the Bible, we learn how Jesus would take time for himself and slow down the pace of His life. "The news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (Luke 5:15-16).

One woman, Judy, 44, is the nurse-manager of a psychiatric ward at a large hospital. "I work with the most severely disturbed patients and manage a large staff of nurses and aides," she says.

"My work is extremely hectic and emotionally exhausting. I find the best way for me to avoid burnout is to back off and get extra rest periodically. There are times on my days off when I will sleep up to 14 hours. On other occasions, I've gone on a weekend retreat from Friday evening until Sunday night. I always find myself renewed when I've had time just to rest and relax."

Saturate Yourself with Scripture

Minister Norman Vincent Peale often recommends this to people who are feeling burned out. In his book *How to Cope with Ten of Life's Toughest Problems*, he says the Scriptures "are full of comfort, strength, and understanding."

However, Dr. Peale says that simply reading one or two random verses is not sufficient. "I think it has to be a massive dose. A verse or two or a



chapter or two isn't enough. It's like those antibiotics that doctors prescribe, doubling the quantity in the first dose so that the healing agent can get into the bloodstream quickly and fight the infection. That's what the Bible is: spiritual medicine."

Many people find it helpful to read and reread the Psalms when facing life's crises. Others find it helpful to repeat and reflect on comforting passages of Scripture such as:

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him" (Ps. 91:14-15).

"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze" (Isa. 43:1-2).

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

Avoid Catastrophizing

When facing a crisis, people can inadvertently make it worse by catastrophic thinking. Minister-psychologist Dr. Alan Loy McGinnis, author of *The Power of Optimism*, says, "You can make yourself miserable by repeating to yourself statements such

as, 'I'll never get out of this mess. I can't stand all this stress. This has to be the worst day of my life.'"



The mere act of being alive means facing some tough tests.



To negate the impact of "catastrophizing," Dr. McGinnis suggests people yell to themselves, "Stop!" and make an immediate modification. "For instance, we can say to ourselves: 'Now wait a minute; is it really true that I'll never get out of this mess? No, of course not. That was an overreaction. I do have a big problem here, and there's a lot of pressure, but I'll eventually get it solved. And can I stand this any longer? Sure, for a while at least, if I have to. Is this 'the worst day of my life'? Hardly.'"

Continue to Take Risks

During times of stress and setback, some people give up and quit. This means burnout wins. However, people who beat burnout and emerge victorious are those who continue to take personal and professional risks. Comedienne Carol Burnett is a good

example. When asked which of her many accomplishments bring her the most satisfaction, she answers: "Having survived."

Behind her statement is the fact that she was raised on welfare by her grandmother. "Luckily I was ignorant that there were any odds against my doing anything," she explains. "I didn't know I couldn't get out of being poor when I was a kid. Who would have thought I could be in show business? Nobody but me. I think it's important to take risks, to risk defeat. And to find out you can live through one or two or three, or many defeats."

Never Think Defeat

Winston Churchill eloquently said: "Success is never final. Failure is never fatal. It's courage that counts." In order not to suffer from major discouragement in the face of personal crisis or tragedy, do not give in to the temptation to think you are defeated.

It was this approach that helped Joan Lunden, cohost of the "Good Morning, America" show. She was 13 when her physician father was killed in a private plane crash. "Until then I'd had a pretty comfortable life," Lunden recalls. "But all of a sudden the bottom dropped out, and my security was gone. With two kids, my mother really had to struggle. That's when I first decided I would always rely on my own strength and be in control of my own life."

In addition to these tools for inner healing and renewal, try asking yourself what other steps can you take to help restore your bruised psyche. Make a list of activities that will bring you pleasure, joy, and delight. That way you will develop a customized roster of personal solutions for burnout.



Pontius' Puddle



Living with Loss and Learning to Be Positive

by William Goodman

*Director, The Salvation Army,
Divisional Correctional Services,
Leavenworth, Kans.*

Last summer, my sister, a solid Christian and a caregiver, lost her 24-year-old daughter on a highway in Cleveland to a drunk driver. What can you say to a caregiver experiencing the deep depression of loss? Words are difficult to find! So, you go back to the basics of loss.

In the beginning, we lose the comfort of the womb. Growing up, we lose our pacifier and being picked up and cuddled. We lose favorite teachers, pets, friends that move away; and, when we move, we lose the old, familiar neighborhood. In time, we lose grandparents by death. Then we may lose parents by divorce or death. We lose aunts and uncles, even brothers and sisters.

In our early adult years, we lose our innocence and naïveté. By middle age, we lose our dreams. We lose our youthful figures and agility. In the latter years, we lose eyesight, hearing, teeth, and coordination. With aging, we lose position and even respect.

Losses continue throughout life as we feel the loss of family, friends, status, work, health, and even life itself. The final loss comes as we anticipate our own physical death. Involved in all of this is our loss of security. Before our own final event, we face the possibility of losing everyone and everything we have loved and cherished.

To darken our bright illusions about security, immortality, fame, success, and material wealth comes the facts of illness, death of children, divorce, rape, scandal, bankruptcy, and natural catastrophe. Then we plunge into dealing with what no longer exists, what is missing now, or what will never be. Reality smacks us. How painful it becomes to find out how alone we really are.

When loss is experienced, we grieve. We realize how vulnerable and helpless we are as mortals made of

dust. Life exists a breath or heartbeat away from the end of all things. When we lose, we must assess what we have lost and hope to discover internal richness never known or appreciated before. In acknowledging how vulnerable and weak we are, we seek strength.

In loss, there is pain. For years I taught every form of spiritual positivism and built on the joys of spirituality. Then, I lost my professional employment, my wife of 24 years divorced me, I lost all my furniture, and my church rejected my service because of the divorce. I thought I was as low in depression from loss as I could go—when things got worse. I borrowed a friend's truck to move some things, and a lady ran a red light and wrecked the truck. Then my father died. A few months later my

mother died. Could any other loss happen? Unfortunately, yes. I lost the confidence of a close friend who faulted me for allowing my divorce. In a fight, my son was knifed in the stomach. Dare I ask, could anything else go wrong? Right! The government said I owed them an additional \$200.

Through it all, I had to dig deep into my soul to deal with the loss, pain, and grief. Others did not like to see my pain or even hear about it. They interpreted my loss and grief as signs of failure. Others feared that if they got too close to the pain and grief, it might become their own.

So you may lose and grieve alone. You discover that you must dig deep to discover how you can go on and transform your thinking to be positive. You must learn how to major on



positive things that are left and look for the joy of life.

To transform loss and grief, we must realize our resources.

Any time loss is experienced, vulnerability and helplessness increase. How we adapt to loss and grief is critical to determining how we adapt to life thereafter, whether we drift aimlessly, fall into our cups of self-pity, or find our way into joy. To make the transformation, we must admit our weaknesses instead of denying them. To transform loss and grief, we must realize our resources.

First, we must discover how awful the loss is. How many ways does the loss affect us? Especially, we must admit that what was is no longer possible. Loss and reality are painful. Admitting our loss and letting go will conserve our energy. It's painful to say: "Now I'm an orphan," "I loved and lost," "We are bankrupt," "Our child is gone." However, awareness of loss helps us to go on with the joy of life. We rediscover our motivations; we must go on rather than give up.

As a young pastor, I went into a hospital waiting room to tell Art and Betty that their 10-year-old son had died in the emergency room. I took a deep breath, sighed, trembled, and entered the room. The parents spoke first. "We know Ralph is gone, Pastor. We put him on the altar of surrender and let him go in peace. Now we have peace." Having young children of my own, I was gripped by the experience of letting go, admitting loss, and dealing with grief. It works.

Second, we must take hold of those sources of support and nurture that help us make it through the darkest times and deepest valleys. For me, with a year of compiled losses, I found nurture in reading Psalms 100 to 150 and praising God for the positive things in life. In doing this, God's presence brought the security of love that I needed to fill the terrible empti-

ness. In the valleys of grief, when I felt so alone and destroyed, God's presence filled my empty void. The healing goes from soul, to mind, to body, to external activities, to the joy of life. Restoration includes remembering the way it was, and finding ways to rebuild what was destroyed. Life has to have meaning once again, in spite of loss.

Third, we must discover potential. Choosing to move ahead in living can be the hardest part. Giving up the comfort and support for my grief meant saying good-bye, finishing business, going on empty-handed. Living fully after significant losses means we have access to the integrated resources of spirit, mind, and body. We must alter the ways we have looked at our world because it will be different. The strength to go on comes from the Holy Spirit of God. He identifies with us.

A good friend of mine died, leaving behind a wife who was his constant companion for 34 years. They were working, traveling, spiritual companions. Now, she is all alone. She will need to alter the way she looks at life. She must know that things are definitely going to be different. Not very many things will remain the same. She will need to resist feeling that she is all alone in the world.

God knows loss—the loss of Adam and Eve, the loss of paradise, the loss of Israel, the loss of faithful people, the loss of His Son. The prophet Hosea sits weeping because of the loss of his wife, Gomer. God identifies with Hosea because the people He loves have left Him. God goes on, century after century, loving and giving. God keeps coming with His love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, comforting presence, miracles, and covenants, all to His glory.

Loss and grief help shift us from viewing ourselves as the center of the universe. Grief helps us reach beyond our hurts to find healing, growing, and spiritual maturing. The joy of life stimulates exploration of new opportunities. Transforming loss allows us to discover new ways to relate, understand, and commit ourselves to the ongoing process of renewal and discovery of joy. We begin to celebrate life. God's Spirit remains with us in the difficult times as well as the good times.*

*Thoughts of loss and transformation came from *The Transformation Power of Grief*, by John Schneider.

The Bible says:

"We have . . . an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19, KJV).

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.

When our eyes behold through the gathering night,
The city of gold, our harbor bright,
We shall anchor fast by the heavenly shore,
With the storms all past forevermore.

—Priscilla J. Owens

The Slippery Slopes of the Success Syndrome

by John A. Owston

Minister,
Kingsport, Tenn.

There is a tremendous amount of pressure to succeed in the world in which we find ourselves. A walk through the local bookstore reveals the following titles: *Five Steps to Successful Selling*, *Success in Marriage*, and *Successful Parenting*. But it is not only the secular world that is enamored with the desire to succeed. We find it in the church as well, especially among church leaders. Let us take another walk, this time through the aisles of the local religious bookstore. There we find the following titles: *Successful Sunday School Teaching*, *How to Succeed in the Christian Life*, and *Successful Parishes*. In religious journals it is quite common to find articles that have an implied answer to the question, "How can our church succeed?"

Now, of course, there's nothing wrong with success. However, there are a number of slippery slopes on which church leaders will find themselves if they make success their goal—or perhaps their god. This is especially true among younger ministers. When we first begin our ministries, we are often very idealistic and hope to win the world to Christ. In college or seminary we have heard chapel speakers who have come from large, growing churches to tell us how they did it. We attend church growth seminars and are told that these principles will work anywhere. We sit in ministerial association meetings and listen to older pastors tell about some newly initiated program that is succeeding in their congregations. We drive past churches that are constructing new buildings or acquiring new property.

Already unsure of ourselves, we view the above as a validation that we are unsuccessful, i.e., failures. Add to

this the fact that most younger and/or inexperienced ministers often serve smaller churches that may be so because of years of infighting and are well known as "preacher killers." It is unlikely that these churches are growing. Consequently, it is quite understandable that statistics indicate that fully half of those trained for vocational ministry drop out, usually within the first seven years.¹

Slippery Slopes of the Success Syndrome

What often happens is that a pastor or other church leader finds himself or herself on the slippery slopes of the success syndrome. Of course, it can happen to older ministers who begin to wonder at age 50 why they have never served a large, growing church. They may begin to question their call to the ministry and may consider spending their remaining days in some kind of secular employment. This is even more regrettable than the younger minister finding other employment. The older minister has both education *and* experience that will be wasted, should he decide to find employment elsewhere instead of preaching the gospel. Lay church officers may also find themselves on these slippery slopes as they, like their ministers, begin to compare the congregation of which they are members with other congregations in their city or those they read about in journals or view on television. Consider the following slippery slopes of the success syndrome:

Believing Numbers Tell the Story

The first slippery slope is believing that numbers tell the whole story, but they don't. Of course, numbers *are* important. Each number in atten-

dance represents a person for whom Christ died. Each dollar represents that which can be used to spread the gospel and help others. Numbers, however, don't tell us everything. Spiritual growth is difficult to measure simply by looking at the attendance and offering figures. The number baptized doesn't always tell us the number converted. The construction of a new building may only tell us that a congregation is very self-centered. The size of the church budget reveals little about the average member's concept of the stewardship of all of one's resources.

Church leaders often fail to consider the demographics of the area where their church is located. For instance, it is usually more difficult for a church to grow in a rural area where people are moving out, than in a suburban area where people are moving in. Of course, there is no area in our world where there remain no unconverted people. However, it is unrealistic to expect a church in a county or city with a decreasing population to have the same opportunities for growth that might be realized in a county or city where factories are opening up. Before you get on this slippery slope, examine the demographics of your area. Find out whether it is proper to compare your church with a larger church in one of our growing cities.²

Accepting Prevailing Definitions of Success

A second slippery slope is accepting the prevailing definitions of church success. If we take the view that attendance, offering figures, and construction of new facilities—bodies, bucks, and bricks—are the only criteria by which we measure suc-

cess, we are probably in for the inevitable rude awakening. Even the pastor who has served a large, growing church will probably one day retire and begin serving a smaller, rural congregation. He may have lived his whole ministerial life in the center of visible success. Now he discovers that the church of his retirement years is very unlike the big city churches he served for the past 40 years. Is he now a failure after years of "success"?

Should not success in the local church also be measured by such things as faithfulness in preaching the gospel, caring for the sick and elderly, being active in addressing the needs of the community, and helping long-time Christians mature in the faith? These things may not always result in immediate increases in church attendance. But, in time, these things have tremendous impact upon individuals and communities. As far as long-term growth is concerned, such endeavors will pay off in increased visible results.

Failure to Understand Reasons

A third slippery slope is failing to understand that there are many reasons why a church grows or fails to do so. Already mentioned above were demographics. More than likely there are a number of internal factors that either enhance or diminish growth prospects. For example, a very ingrown church where nearly everyone is either related or very close friends often becomes clannish. Churches such as these perceive themselves as very warm and friendly, and they are—to one another! Such churches make it difficult not only for newcomers but even for the new minister, who may be perceived as an outsider for the first 10 years he's there.

Sometimes a church may have a bad reputation in the community because of internal problems or because of a past church split. It may take years to overcome a poor image in the community. For church leaders to expect this to happen overnight—or simply because a new pastor has arrived—is like expecting the Jews to forget the Holocaust!

Unfortunately, many local church leaders believe that if they could find

the right preacher, then their church would grow. Ministers and other staff members are often made the scapegoats for nongrowth in a church. Statistics from the Institute for American Church Growth indicate that only about 10 percent of all church members become such because of the ministerial staff. As many as 80 percent of current church members came because they were invited by either friends or relatives.¹

If your church is not growing as it should, perhaps more needs to be done regarding the relationship your members have toward their friends and relatives, instead of simply seeking a new minister. This, of course, is not to say that members of the ministerial staff are not critical to church growth. While some pastors have destroyed some churches, it is very unlikely that any single minister is going to be the only reason a church grows or fails to grow.

Also, churches often go through cycles of growth and nongrowth. At the beginning of a congregation there is usually a considerable amount of growth in numbers during the first 20 years. After that, a congregation will often have some steady growth for about the next 20 years, after which it reaches a plateau. Though it doesn't always happen in this pattern, this is fairly common. Consequently, a newer church might expect to grow at a faster rate than an older, established church.

Sometimes an older church will have a growth spurt for a period of time, but this is usually the exception rather than the rule.² Indeed, not all churches grow at the same rate or in the same ways. Comparing the church in which we now find ourselves with a church in another city would be like Paul trying to compare the response to the gospel in Athens, where there were few converts, with Corinth, where there were many converts. Each situation was different. Paul was successful in both places because in both places he faithfully preached the Word of God.

Adopting the World's Standards

A fourth slippery slope is that we have often adopted the world's standards for success instead of Kingdom

standards. If we would look at the ministry of Jesus and compare it with most of our churches, we would discover that many of the things on which we place a very high priority were not even on Jesus' list. The very things on which we expend our energies and monies are often uncharacteristic of our Lord. The kind of people Jesus sought to reach during His ministry have a low priority on our prospect list. Instead of preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, we market the church. Instead of helping the poor, we justify political and economic systems that contribute to poverty. Instead of promoting racial harmony, we practice de facto segregation. Instead of promoting the unity for which Jesus prayed, we isolate ourselves from fellow Christians.

It is quite possible for a local congregation to put into practice certain principles that have been learned from the world of business that stimulate growth. Church growth theory is primarily borrowed from the social sciences. We should not simply discard something because it comes from another discipline besides theology. As Jesus said, "The sons of this world are more shrewd . . . than the sons of light" (Luke 16:8, RSV). But there are dangers. As William J. Abraham says, "It is rather obvious that competing and even conflicting doctrinal traditions have been able to embrace church growth theory without shedding any theological tears."³

We all want to succeed in life. As Christians, we want to see success in the local churches of which we are leaders and members. Success may not be a bad goal, but it is a terrible god. Let us seriously examine both our understanding and definitions of success, lest we find ourselves on a slippery slope from which there is no return.

1. Paul Benjamin, ed., "The Safety Net" at a Glance," Newsletter of the National Church Growth Research Center, Washington, D.C., March 1992.

2. See *Churches and Church Membership in the U.S. 1980* (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1982).

3. Donald McGavran and George Hunter, *Church Growth: Strategies That Work* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), 34.

4. See Robert D. Dale, *To Dream Again* (Nashville, Broadman, 1981). Dale charts the growth cycle of most churches and shows how it is possible to turn a church around that is on the decline.

5. William J. Abraham, *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 80.

Cable TV—Window of Opportunity for Your Church

What kind of television ministry does your church have? Before you push this article aside as out of your church's league, consider these questions. Do you want to reach your community in new ways? How do you build awareness of your church for those who won't visit? Do you believe in finding creative ways to spread the gospel? If your response to these questions is positive, here is a radical thought: Television may be the most cost-effective outreach tool you have ever used.

For years, television in Christian ministry has been limited to the superchurch or parachurch organization with the big budget and fund-raising mechanism to buy airtime. Recent scandals involving television evangelists have caused some critics to question the value of presenting the gospel message through television. Nevertheless, this electronic box remains one of the most pervasive influences in our culture, commanding hours of at-



by Randall King

*Instructor in communication,
Eastern Nazarene College,
Quincy, Mass.*

tention each day in American homes. The church cannot simply write off this tool that provides such a window of opportunity for the gospel.

Amazingly, you may find television more accessible in your community than big-city pastors or denominational leaders do in their venues. The secret is local cable access. As cable television gained penetration in the last decade, communities demanded more local programming capability from the companies seeking contracts. The result has been truly local television: governmental meetings, school programs, senior citizen activities, local parades, and other community events. This is low-budget television, designed not for the masses but for the small, strategic audience. If you are fortunate enough to have such a service in your community, you should know it exists to serve local organizations, including your church, and in most cases the cost is nominal if not free.

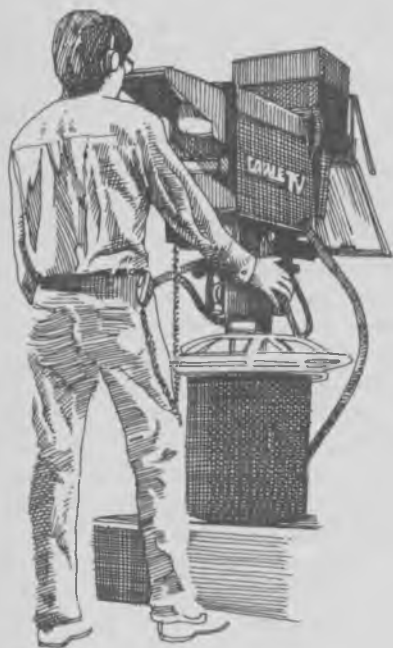
Consider our situation at Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Mass. Because we are near Boston, there is no chance of getting a program on commercial television. The quality demands and the costs are far beyond our means and beyond the mission of the school. But in the first six months

of 1992, we aired over 30 hours of programming on Quincy's community cable channel. For all of these efforts, we used the company's studio, field cameras, or remote production truck at absolutely no cost.

While a college might be better prepared to produce television programs than your church, we really share the same resource that is most valuable to these efforts: an eager volunteer labor pool. This is one thing your cable company cannot provide. With a little vision and a lot of hard work, a local television program can be an excellent vehicle to build awareness for your church and to open a window to the gospel. Here are some major guidelines for launching a cable television ministry.

1. Make Your Cable Operator Your Friend

You won't be the first pastor or church leader to suggest a program to your cable operator. There are hundreds of churches out there trying to "reach the city" through television. Unfortunately, most of their programs look like they were taped on Brother Bob's camcorder in a poorly lit Sunday School room. Rather than trying to sell your cable operator on an idea, seek first to build a relationship with him or her based on your interest in producing a program that will help the church and the cable channel. Some systems have set aside religious access channels as a way to appease local churches requesting airtime. Your best opportunity to reach people will not be on these channels, which are usually shabby television that few watch. By building a relationship, you can convince the operator that you want to do good work that will serve the community and bring more viewers to the community channel.



2. Get Training

Most community-access facilities have some type of training program for volunteers wishing to use the equipment. If this does not exist, you can learn the basics informally by participating in productions of other organizations. Television production is not easy, but the primary skills can be learned rather quickly. It is important to know what the equipment can do technically before you create ideas for your program.

3. Make Your Program Unique

As noted earlier, you are not the first church to do television. Most congregations want to air their worship services because "it's what we do." The problem is that worship services usually make lousy television. If you really want to attract viewers and the attention of your cable operator, consider other types of creative programming.

At Eastern Nazarene College, we produce a monthly newsmagazine featuring stories of students and faculty who live out their faith in the Quincy community. The gospel message is implicit, stemming from the personalities of those interviewed rather than a direct evangelistic appeal. Other churches have found children's programming, complete with puppets and songs, to be an exciting vehicle. Drama, music, and interviews are all familiar tools to your audience. Watch programming on other channels and adapt the best ideas to fit your needs. These types of programs take more work but are more effective in the long run.

4. Recognize the Limitations of the Medium

Proponents of religious broadcasting sometimes overstate the evangelistic value of the medium. While sincere conversions do occur because of media ministry, research suggests television and radio most often build an awareness of the gospel, then other factors of background and relationships converge when a spiritual decision is made. The local church is the ideal entity to use television because it has an immediate, personal follow-up mechanism to its media appeal.

You should view your television program as a tool to build awareness for your church and for the gospel message. Encourage viewers to visit the church or write to the program.

Follow up each response just as you would any church prospect. Just be-

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ing on TV alone won't save souls. Your program is like a testimony, one more voice for the gospel that the Holy Spirit can use to bring conviction in the heart of an unbeliever.

5. Integrate Your Media Outreach into the Whole Church Program

Inevitably, when you launch your cable program, many in the church will not understand and will view it as the pastor's new thing, a passing fad. It is very important that you move quickly to show that this is part of the whole ministry of the church. Enthusiasm will wane quickly unless the majority of your congregation sees the value of the program. Involve

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different facets of the membership in the program, both behind and in

front of the camera. Report contacts made through the program during church announcements and in newsletters. Be careful that the program does not become one group's thing, such as youth, women, or seniors, but reflects the diversity of your congregation. If your first venture is a success, let the groups launch new programs, dealing with their special interests. You should also seek lay leadership to handle most of the production and, in some cases, even keep yourself off camera to let others host the program. There are people in your congregation who are gifted to do this kind of work and will find it to be an exciting ministry. Without their leadership, you will quickly find that your time is taken up with the creative demands of television, detracting from your primary work as pastor.

If you do not have any opportunities for cable television, consider other nonbroadcast alternatives. Many churches are producing short videotapes to introduce the church to visitors. Others are using video to record Sunday School classes for shut-ins and other teaching opportunities. As technology changes, simple editing equipment will become more affordable, allowing any church member with a camcorder to produce quality video. Opportunities for use in the ministry of the church are endless.

We are in the midst of a technological revolution that is changing the face of media as we know it. Rather than having the message in the hands of a powerful few, cable television, VCRs, and camcorders are democratizing the medium. Today, more people have access to the media than ever before. Political interest groups, cults, and commercial interests are using these open windows to spread their messages. We have the greatest message of all time resonating down the aisles of our churches. It's time to break down the walls and proclaim that message with the powerful tools of this age.

Suggested Resources:

Baehr, Theodore. *Getting the Word Out*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986.

Somervill, Charles, and Townson, Kerry. *Media Handbook for Churches*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988.

Communicating in a Crisis

A church bus carrying teenagers home from a summer church camp is swept away by floodwaters. The fate of most of the occupants is unknown.

A church is heavily damaged by fire. Arson is suspected.

The parents of a teenager bring charges against a youth minister for seducing their daughter.

The chairman of the church board is indicted for embezzling a large sum of money from his company.

How would you handle it if one of those situations happened in your church?

Most of us think, That couldn't happen here, not in my congregation. Yet things like that do happen. With the news media's accelerated focus on what's wrong in religious circles, certainly it pays to be prepared.

Being prepared means knowing what to expect from the media and how to respond in a way that will be the most advantageous to you and to your church in an emergency situation. Once a crisis occurs, the news media will be close on its heels. They will not be put off. The reporter has been given an assignment. His job depends on getting in a story by deadline. Saying "No comment" or "I'll meet with you when I have more information" won't work. If you won't talk, he will get information from someone who will—someone who may give opinion rather than fact, or someone who has an ax to grind.

Hassling the reporter, claiming no knowledge, or minimizing the situation will make the reporter suspect that you are hiding something. Refusing to return his or her calls irritates the reporter and usually results in a more damaging story.

As the official spokesperson, it is to your advantage to give the facts as you know them. Then state that you are looking into the situation and will hold a news conference at a certain time later that day. The reporter knows an incident did occur; the situ-



by Wanda Vassallo

Freelance writer, Dallas

ation is under control; you are not attempting to cover it up; you know the importance of an immediate response; and more information will be given at a specific time. This gives the reporter something to report and gives you time to plan for the news conference.

At the news conference, give the information as you know it. Details that have not been completely verified should be prefaced with "As we have been able to ascertain so far" or "At this point, we believe . . ."

Give the steps that your church or ministry plans to take to rectify the problem or to keep the public ap-

prised of the situation. For example, if the church has been destroyed by fire, try to give the location where Sunday services will be held. Make it a point to work in as many positive elements as possible—such as the quick-thinking and heroic efforts of workers in evacuating the young children from the building.

Donald W. Blohowiak, author of *No Comment! An Executive's Essential Guide to the News Media*, advises: "Reveal bad news in total. The slow drip, drip, drip of damaging facts piques public interest and surrounds the story in an air of a drama unfolding . . . revealing all there is to tell right off the bat allows the media to tell everything in one shot. The resulting bang may be deafening for a brief moment, but then it's in one ear, out the other, and quickly forgotten in the face of noise from other news events."

In brief, when a crisis does occur:

Respond quickly.

Don't deny what happened or be evasive.

Have the highest official possible respond.

Explain openly that information is being gathered and will be available at a specific time.

Use media time to present your side of the story, positive facts that cast a more favorable light on your group.



Prompt positive follow-up stories. If the emergency is a major incident for your town, the media will not let it be over in one day's news cycle. It will, in all likelihood, produce numerous features and side stories for readers, listeners, and viewers.

Being prepared also means developing a crisis communications plan before the crisis occurs. The plan should be in writing and should be shared with all personnel.

Points to be considered in drawing up a plan are:

Select a spokesperson. Usually this should be the senior pastor or, in the case of a ministry, the group's president. Also, designate a second person in case the first choice is not available. Another possibility might be the director of communications. At any rate, that person should be capable of speaking at ease under the pressures of cameras, lights, heavy interrogation, and microphones. Having a single spokesperson will insure that the message and stance of the church will be consistent.

Prepare and periodically update a fact sheet about your church or ministry. This will ensure that the media receive accurate and current information. This sheet should contain the official name and address of the church, office hours, a schedule of services and other major events, names and phone numbers of staff members, the number of members, major programs within the church, special ministries, basic area it serves, and a brief history of the church.

Agree on a location away from the church or crisis scene where staff members can meet to assess the situation and decide on a course of action.

Assign specific duties to staff members. The plan should make it clear who is responsible for what. Alternative people also should be named in case someone is on vacation or out of town.

Plan for an on-site newsroom for the media. In the event of a continuing emergency at a site, often the

media become "based" at the location for updating or waiting on further developments. Such a situation means telephones should be available for reporters. They may require a typewriter or computer, a facsimile machine, a copy machine, worktables or desks, and even an area for news conferences. Withholding assistance or making it difficult for the newspeople to work will be reflected in their reports. The more assistance the staff can give members of the media, the more understanding most will be of an organization's situation.

Designate a staff member to keep detailed notes on the chain of events, recording the developments and announcements whenever possible. While this initially may seem trivial and a waste of needed manpower, you will find it to your advantage to document the happenings and related comments. This not only serves as a backup to the media itself but also may provide insight for responses and reactions to future emergencies.

Appoint someone to track news media stories and public reaction to the event.

Develop a plan for making key people available to reporters. Although a single top-level spokesperson is essential, the media will want to talk to the individual closest to the action—the driver of a church bus involved in a serious accident, the sponsors of a singles group whose member has disappeared and was last seen at a fellowship in the couple's home, a minister in charge of a youth camp where a child drowned. These key players should be briefed about what to expect before they face the media.

Plan a strategy for keeping reporters informed on the progress of a developing story. For example, briefings could be scheduled at 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. with information promised immediately when something important happens. Such a schedule allows reporters to work on stories they expect to file with their news outlets from interviews or photos taken. Then they can plan to be on hand for the briefings as scheduled.

Identify all the critical groups with which you need to communicate. For instance, in the example of the church bus being swept away by floodwaters, there would be family members, church members, friends, and the immediate community to keep informed of the search, in addition to the news media and the general public.

Decide who might be credible supporters and third-party sources for information and resources.

Plan how to assume a leadership position in seeking to solve a crisis and ways to communicate from a position of strength.

Keep media and contact lists up-to-date on a regular basis.

Update the plan frequently. People and situations change. A communications plan will do you little good unless it meets your current needs.

Periodically review your procedures and mode of operation to ferret out potential problems that could take on crisis proportions.

Once the plan is developed, test it. Periodically try it out on a fictional crisis. Role-play with staff members asking the kinds of questions a reporter might pose in that particular situation. This type of simulation may reveal weaknesses in the plan, which can then be improved.

Ken Fairchild, a Dallas-based media consultant specializing in crisis management, says about the need for an emergency plan, "It's only a crisis if you're unprepared. A good crisis plan won't tell you what to do. A good crisis plan tells you how to decide what to do."

There probably never will be a perfect emergency plan to take care of every possible situation. However, without a plan, a crisis is sure to produce confusion and only make a bad scenario even worse. A well-thought-out and rehearsed plan can lessen the negative impact of a tragedy and help your church to emerge with a more positive image and future. †

Holiness and Identification: A Look at What Role Holiness Plays in the Missions Concept

Paul G. Hiebert, professor of anthropology at Fuller Theological Seminary's School of World Missions, in speaking on the topic of identification in cross-cultural communications, succinctly states in his book *Crucial Dimensions in World Evangelism*,

A sense of oneness with the people creates in us an interest in learning more about them, and in sharing in their culture. Our example is Christ who, because of His love, became incarnate among us in order to bring us God's good news.¹

Whether in a cross-cultural setting or in one's own culture, the concept of identification and how Christian holiness relates to the spreading of the gospel is a monumental subject. For, without proper identification between the Christian sowing the seed and the person receiving it, the whole process breaks down and becomes itself a stumbling block to salvation (cf. Gal. 2:11-14). Therefore, we take a brief look at the concept of identification, specifically looking at what relationship, if any, holiness plays in the entire process.

The Model Established for Future Purposes

A. The Preliminaries

When Jesus called His disciples, "Come, follow me . . . and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19), there is little doubt that those men had barely any idea what the implications of that statement would be. At that point, the scenario of a hymnodic passage such as Phil. 2:5-8 would have been foreign to them. Yet, that is precisely what Jesus advocated. In



by C. Kevin Thompson

Minister,
Jackson, Miss.

Luke 9, Jesus instructed that if any of His disciples wanted to come after Him, "He must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (v. 23). What was Jesus talking about? Come after Him to where? To what? To whom? How?

A careful reading of the context shows that Peter has just given his paramount confession of Jesus as the Christ of God. This is followed by Jesus' warning of the coming situations the Messiah must face at the hands of the Jewish leaders and the subsequent results, "He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (v. 22). The implication is that if anyone wants to reap the same results as Jesus did ("raised to life," i.e., eternal life), then he must follow in Jesus' footsteps all the way to the place of "the skull." In other words, eternal life is the promise by which we may "come after Jesus" and partake of God's eternal plan for mankind. However, the prerequisite of the promise is denying oneself and following Christ, even if it means living out in experience one's own personal Golgotha. In essence, Jesus was saying,

"If you want what I have, do as I do. There is no other way."²

B. Exemplification of the Model

1. In the Epistles

In his exhortation to the assembly of believers at Philippi, Paul states that they are to have a certain behavior about them that is befitting Christianity (2:1-4). The attributes mentioned are: like-mindedness, like love, unity in spirit and purpose, selflessness, humility, and servanthood-type attitudes. Not surprisingly, Paul then says in effect, "Here's an example you can follow and model your lives after" ("Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" [v. 5]). In other words, they were to adopt Jesus' manner of life as the primary paradigm for a vibrant, necessary Christian lifestyle.

However, why did Jesus leave this example for us to follow as He did? Obviously, redeeming mankind and reconciling them to God was the major impetus of Calvary. But why the complications of the Virgin Birth, life on earth, raising up disciples, teaching, preaching, traveling the countryside, healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, and ultimately being condemned for something He did not do, which led to His death on a cross like a criminal? The answer can be summed up in one word: Identification. Jesus wanted to identify with mankind.³ In light of Phil. 2:5-8, this is summed up by G. B. Caird:

This disposition, in which concern for others leaves no room for self-concern, must be characteristic of the common life of the church, because that life is lived in Christ,

and this was Christ's own disposition (v. 5). He might have insisted on the honours and dignities proper to His divine nature, but for man's sake He chose to forego them. Unlike Adam, who aimed at equality with God and was humbled, He surrendered the status which was His by right and brought Himself down to the level of man. He accepted all that manhood entailed, including man's bondage to the powers which dominated man's dark world. He carried His identification with sinful man consistently through to the end, accepting not merely the death which is the wages of sin, but death by criminal execution (Phil. 2:6-8).⁴

2. In the Gospels

In John 10:14-18, Jesus sees himself as the Good Shepherd who looks after His sheep. This passage emphasizes the attitude of identification in the fact that Jesus claimed to *know* His sheep. The Greek word used in verse 14 for "know" is *ginōskō*, which can be translated "have knowledge of, find out, learn, understand." In verse 14, *ginōskō* is in the present tense, indicating a continuous action. Therefore, John states that Jesus did not merely know of the "sheep" like some animal lover with fleeting interest who has done some reading up on the subject of sheep. Nor does John imply that Jesus knew them as mere acquaintances. Instead, He knew them intimately with the specific purpose of getting to know them better and better in the future by learning more about them through understanding how they live, work, think, etc.



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Interestingly, the same word and tense is used for the sheep as well in verse 14. Consequently, their relationship with their Good Shepherd was also intended to grow in intimacy in the same fashion as Jesus' was with them.⁵ Needless to say, this process took time and effort on the part of Jesus, evidenced by His life. By the time of His public baptism at the hands of John the Baptist, roughly 30 years had transpired in which Jesus poured His life into a people who needed reconciliation before He ever called His first disciple (Matt. 4:19) or preached His Sermon on the Mount (cf. 5-7).

In John 15:13, Jesus states that a person cannot show any higher level of love for another human being (specifically, "friends") than by dying in the other's place (cf. Rom. 5:6-8). Of course, this too was exemplified by Jesus when He "became obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (Phil. 2:8). He himself said that He came in order to offer His life for others,⁶ thereby fulfilling and showing the greatest love anyone could ever achieve and express. When coupled with Jesus' emphasis upon calling the disciples His friends (vv. 14, 15), it adds to this concept of identification. In order for His disciples to be considered His friends, there had to have been a relationship of some depth acquired over time.

The Model Examined in Light of Holiness

If there is to be a connection made between Jesus' model and our present culture, then how are we to appropriate it? It is obvious from the previous sections that Scripture is emphatic about the Christian adopting this model as a way of life. This holds true for us in the 20th century. If the Christians of the 1st century were to follow after Christ in specific ways, then the admonishment to do the same should still be held in front of us as well. But where does holiness fit into the scheme of identification?

A. Holiness Required

God and holiness go together. The Old Testament passages, such as Lev. 11:44,⁷ tell us that holiness is God's very nature. Therefore, this fact implies that all His other attributes flow from the fountainhead of holiness.

The fact that holiness is the fountain from which all other attributes of God flow is implied in Gal. 5:19-23,



Why did Jesus
leave this
example for us to
follow as He did?



where Paul lists two categories of actions: (1) those of the sinful nature (vv. 19-21); and (2) those of the Spirit (vv. 22-23). The first list are actions that find their roots drinking deeply of the stagnant, putrid waters of the cesspool of sin. The second list are actions that find their roots drinking deeply of the living water of the Spirit (viz., the Holy Spirit). The implication here is that those actions that come from the sinful nature find their origin in sin itself. The other list of actions finds their origin is the Spirit, who is holy.⁸ Therefore, the "fruits" of the Spirit are, in essence, fruits befitting holiness. Holiness guides and directs the actions of the Holy Spirit, who in turn directs the believer. The Holy Spirit is sent from God (cf. John 14:16, 17), because He is God's Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10-11). Therefore, holiness, the main thrust of this passage, is the object that cements God, the Holy Spirit, and the believer together.

This idea is further expressed when Paul warned the believers that any man who despised God's call to live a holy life "does not reject man but God" (1 Thess. 4:8). To Paul, the two are inextricably linked together.⁹ In other words, the apostle makes it clear that holiness is not an option but a requirement for the wholehearted believer who wants, with all his being, to become more and more like Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).¹⁰

B. Holiness Exemplified

In keeping with holiness, God does not ask us to do something that He himself would not do first. For God to ask His people to live holy lives without being holy within the same context would be contrary to His holy character. Therefore, God set forth a plan to accomplish just that (cf. Gal.

4:4). God became incarnate so that we might have a model for the type of living He intended from the beginning, holy living.¹¹



Jesus wanted to identify with mankind.



In Phil. 2:6-8, Paul seems to state that Jesus' life of holiness can be summed up in a few, short verses, yet capture the magnitude of the moment. The text says that Jesus "emptied Himself" (NASB). When taken properly, this is the essence of holy living. Vincent states that the phrase *alla eauton ekenosen* is

not used or intended here in a metaphysical sense to define the limitation of Christ's incarnate state, but as a strong and graphic expression of the completeness of His self-renunciation.¹²

Ernest Scott reminds us that Jesus laid aside His divine rank and took upon Himself the "form of a servant" (v. 7, RSV):

Paul uses the word "form" which implies a form corresponding with the substance. Christ did not merely disguise Himself as a servant but *became* one, expressing in His action and appearance what He had become in fact.¹³

In this, Jesus gave the answer to what holy living was all about: submission to God and obedience to His commands. Jesus denied himself and did so at the command of His Father. Therefore, by His actions, Jesus showed that in order to become exalted, you must first submit yourself to the depths of humility and allow God to have complete control of your will, ambitions, and desires (cf. Matt. 26:39, 42).

The Model Exhorted for Contemporary Christianity

A. The Image of Christ

We have already seen how Christ

exemplified both identification and holiness for future generations of followers. Jesus modeled both. Granted, the identification displayed was under the auspices of holiness as any other action or attribute. However, that does not negate its extreme relevance to the task of spreading the gospel. Jesus identified with mankind in order to build His kingdom. Now, the same concept lies before us. William Reburn says, "The central point is that identification is not an end in itself. It is the road to the task of gospel presentation."¹⁴ However, in order for this to come to pass, we first must have the same mind as Christ:

If we are conformed to the image of Christ in this sense, then we no longer desire chiefly to be served, but to serve. We no longer are stubbornly determined to have our own way, and to protect our rights at all costs. Rather, we desire to let God have His way in us and through us, even though it means that our natural desires, and even life itself, be expendable.¹⁵



Jesus accepted all that manhood entailed.



However, as Paul exhorted the Philippian assembly to live out their lives in ways reminiscent of Christ's life, we too must take the knowledge we have and put it into practice.

B. The Identification of Christ

In many ways, identification and holiness are inextricably linked together. In order for a person to identify with another person or culture properly, he must first have the humility to deny himself of his rights, privileges, wants, and desires, and to commit himself to learn the ways of his target audience. This is no easy task, however, as Craig Storti reminds us: "We take so much for granted about the places we live, we forget that we once had to learn

all we know."¹⁶ In other words, having the desire to identify is one thing; doing it is still quite another. Because we are so ingrained with *our* way of living, we will have a tough time of it trying to "empty ourselves" of all our cultural hang-ups.¹⁷ However, it is not impossible. Paul states that we have to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2) concerning spiritual living. Therefore, when our minds become renewed, then our old patterns of living can be erased and replaced. This is essential if one is to identify properly with a target culture. Hiebert clearly states that "identification takes place only when 'they' become part of the circle of people we think of as 'our kind of people.'"¹⁸ He continues:

The basic issue in identification is not formal equivalence—living in the same houses, eating the same food and wearing the same dress. We can do so and still communicate to people the mental distinction we make between them and us. The issue is one of mental maps and basic feelings. If we, indeed, see and feel ourselves to be one of them, this message will come through, even if we have different lifestyles.¹⁹


This is precisely what Jesus did with those with whom He came to identify. He did not live in houses as they did. He did not even have one (cf. Luke 9:58). He ate much the same food but also ate things the Jews did not (cf. Matt. 12:1 ff.). The only possessions He had besides the clothes on His back were His heavenly kingdom and the gift of the Holy Spirit, both of which He graciously makes available to the penitent person (cf. Acts 2:38).



Jesus poured His life into a people who needed reconciliation.



Conclusion



Everything has its pros and cons. The concept of identification is no exception. There are drawbacks to the ideal that must be taken into consideration. Cultural gaps arise that we will have to bridge. Each situation, whether cross-cultural or homogeneous culture, will help to dictate how one approaches identification with a target audience. However, if holiness reigns as the driving force of the person's life, then many so-called gulfs will amazingly become stepping-stones to someone's salvation as God guides our steps and directs our paths (Prov. 3:5-6). 

1. Paul G. Hiebert, "Social Structure and Church Growth," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. (Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey, 1981), 384.

2. Ralph P. Martin, "Philippians," in *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 100, states that he does not believe Paul's exhortation was "to follow in Jesus' steps by taking the pattern of these verses as example." Instead, he believes the apostle's purpose of this passage is a hortatory call "to respond to life 'in Christ' as those who have entered the community of salvation by obedience to the incarnate, obedient and now exalted Lord." The difference Martin intends to make seems unclear. It seems that if Paul was exhorting the Philippians to "respond to life 'in Christ,'" there would be no other alternative but to live LIKE HIM! Jacobus J. Muller seems to agree with

this assessment: "The highest example of such a self-forgetful regard for the interests of others is portrayed, viz. the condescension of Christ in His incarnation. In Him believers have the perfect example of how they should behave, an example of humility and self-renunciation with a view to the welfare of others" (from "The Epistles of Paul to the Philippians and to Philemon," in *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, F. F. Bruce, ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955], 77). See also F. F. Bruce, "Philippians," in *A Good News Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 48.



3. Obviously, covering all the reasons for Jesus' identification would be too much for such a short paper. I suppose the world would not be able to hold all those books either! We will suffice it to say that our main objective here is not to look at every jot and tittle of the identification of Jesus, but instead, to take our time looking at the overall concept of identification and see how it applies to our contemporary scenario from a holiness viewpoint.


Holiness is the
fountain from
which all other
attributes of God
flow.


4. G. B. Caird, "Paul's Letters from Prison," in *New Clarendon Bible*, H. F. D. Sparks, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 118. We will not take the time to examine the area of a Kenotic theology of the Incarnation, as it is not the topic. However, it must be understood that this author does not believe in the Kenotic theory proposed by post-Reformation Lutheranism.

5. W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, Va. MacDonald, n.d.), 638, states that "in the New Testament, *ginoskō* frequently indicates a relation between the person knowing and the object known; in this respect, what is known is of value and importance to the one who knows, and hence the establishment of the relationship" (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:19; John 10:27).

6. See Matt. 20:28; 26:28; Mark 10:45; 14:24; John 10:11, 15, 17-18; 1 Cor. 11:24.


Holiness is not an
option but a
requirement for
the wholehearted
believer.


7. See also Lev. 11:45; 19:2; 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:16.

8. Richard S. Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, vol. 3 (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1985), 38, 90, 98. It is here that the idea of original holiness and original sin being counterparts comes into view. To Paul, it was either one or the other. Either God reigned and the fruits of the Spirit were the product, or self reigned and the acts of the sinful nature were the result. The implication being that if the acts of the sinful nature were present, the Holy Spirit was not (v. 21). Hence, holiness was not (cf. James 4:1-5).

9. Richard S. Taylor, *Life in the Spirit* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1966), 14.

10. *Ibid.*, 13-16.

11. Taylor, *Exploring Christian Holiness*, 3:104-5: "Obviously sin is not endemic to the body, for Jesus possessed a body. Jesus assumed true human nature, thereby demonstrating that human nature is not sinful per se; instead, humanity without sin is more truly human than humanity defiled and defaced by sin."

12. Marvin Vincent, "The Epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon," in *The International Critical Commentary*, C. A. Briggs, S. R. Driver, and Alfred Plummer, eds. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897), 49.

13. Ernest F. Scott, "The Epistle to the Philippians," vol. 11 in *The Interpreter's Bible*, G. A. Buttrick, ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1955), 49.

14. William D. Reyburn, "Identification in the Missionary Task," in *Perspectives on the World*, 467.



15. Taylor, *Life in the Spirit*, 73.

16. Craig Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, 1990), 3.

17. See Reyburn, *Perspectives on the World*, 469-75, for a discussion on this topic.

18. Paul G. Hiebert, "Culture and Cross-cultural Differences," in *Perspectives on the World*, 374.

19. *Ibid.*, 384. Hiebert illustrates this concept in this way: "A National gives us his best food, lets us sleep in his guest room and use his oxcart, and we share with him our best food, guest room and car. The principle is not formal equality but true love and mutual reciprocity."


Where does
holiness fit into
the scheme of
identification?


Five Keys for Scriptural Retirement Planning

by Don Walter

Director,
Pensions and Benefits USA,
Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City



Does Scripture have any guidance for retirement planning? Yes! In fact, five keys or key concepts appear from Scripture that apply to our planning for retirement.

1. Plan ahead by saving.

The Book of Proverbs is rich with admonitions to seek wisdom. This wisdom leads us to plan for our future needs and not to consume all of today's resources without thought for future uncertainties (6:6-8; 10:5; 20:4; 21:20). Saving some of our current earnings for use in the future when our ability to earn becomes limited or nonexistent is wise.

In the New Testament, Jesus used the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins to teach an important spiritual truth (Matt. 25:1-13). However, don't overlook the obvious—the wise ones planned ahead and saved their resources.

2. Be persistent in saving.

The book of wisdom tells us, "The plans of the diligent lead to profit" (Prov. 21:5). Current investment wisdom builds on this concept when it recommends using the method of "dollar cost averaging," the purchase of investments over time. This is a very prudent investment strategy, especially when putting money into investments that vary in value. Putting funds regularly and persistently into a plan like a Tax-sheltered Annuity will yield profound results over the long term.

3. Diversify.

In Matt. 25:14-15, Jesus tells us the parable of a man who gave his riches to others to manage. The wise man gave varying amounts to three man-

agers. Eccles. 11:2 also advises us to diversify. Typically, in a retirement plan like a Tax-sheltered Annuity plan, you will have various investment options, perhaps some with fixed-return guarantees and some with variable returns. You may want to see that your funds are managed over a wide range of investments.

A little discipline
today will save
you from poverty
tomorrow.

4. Discipline against early distribution.

Prov. 13:18 tells us, "He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame." If you are saving for retirement and you find yourself tempted to use your funds for something

else, you should question yourself regarding the nature of the need. Would a little discipline today save you from poverty tomorrow?

5. Be cautious of "get rich quick" temptations.

Prov. 28:20 reminds us, "One eager to get rich will not go unpunished." Those who always take the short-term view with their retirement funds will be tempted to chase the latest, highest-yielding investment. Unfortunately, in doing so, they frequently leave steady yields in favor of those that have almost topped out. After management and/or transfer fees are assessed, the ones who make money on the deal are the salesmen or brokers, *not* the retirement investor. Current wisdom reminds us, "It is not timing the markets, but time in the markets" that yields long-term results.

Scripture always has words of honor for those who exemplify wisdom. You can be wise by using your retirement income plan and its investment vehicles as they were intended and designed. Your earthly future, and that of your family, will be improved by doing so.

John Wesley and Liberation Theology

by Sheila Hudson

Olathe, Kans.

In 1977 the 6th Annual Oxford Institute on Methodist Theological Studies inquired into the subject of liberation theology. Most of the scholars involved attempted to fit Wesley's theology into this topic that is so crucial in third world countries today. Much comparing and contrasting took place.

In like manner, the purpose of this article is to look at an overview of liberation theology and compare and contrast it with Wesley's own theology and practice. The writer has discovered striking similarities as well as marked differences between third world liberation theology and Wesley's thought.

I. LIBERATION THEOLOGY—AN OVERVIEW

Liberation theology has been a growing influence, especially in the third world, during the last several years. It gained impetus after the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference in Medellín, Colombia (CELAM), in 1968. Its prominence has been advancing ever since.

Basically, CELAM declared that poverty and oppression were major pastoral concerns, that the concept of liberation is based on the Bible, and that there must be commitment to and solidarity with the poor. The conference found that the root causes of poverty in Latin America are foreign imperialism and economic dependency. The need was expressed to denounce and fight against oppression and injustice.¹

These declarations grew out of the work of Roman Catholic theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez. Gutierrez says that it is "the business of theology to

reflect critically on what is happening in history." He feels that Christians must abandon pietism and unworldliness and enter the "arena of political and social conflict."²

It should be noted that liberation theology uses Marxist economic and social analysis as its base. As a result, one hears from Gutierrez and others such phrases as "a profound transformation of the private property system," "the power of the exploited class," "a social revolution," and "a socialist society."³

Gutierrez says in his book *We Drink from Our Own Wells*, "Liberation is an all-embracing process that leaves no dimension of human life untouched, because when all is said and done, it expresses the saving action of God in history."⁴ For the liberation theologian, God's primary salvific work has to do with liberty and justice within the social system. Gutierrez states it plainly when he says, "The goal is not only better living conditions, a radical change of structures, a social revolution; it is much more: the continuous creation, never ending, of a new way to be a man, a *permanent cultural revolution*."⁵

Social and political liberation are crucial. Indeed, it has been said, "These theologians have a litmus test that they apply to any claim to theological truth: Does it advance the cause of human freedom?"⁶

In liberation theology, one's salvation is found in participation in this type of social change. Jon Sobrino states, "One corresponds to the Kingdom of God by doing justice, by eliminating crass social discrepancies, by using power in a new manner, to the advantage of the poor."⁷ In the same

vein, Gutierrez says, "It is emphasized that man transforms himself by conquering his liberty through his existence and his history."⁸

One may conclude, then, that liberation theology rests in a certain type of "works righteousness." Living out this theology is "a process in which human efforts count for something and in which God enlists those efforts and brings them to fulfillment through their incorporation into the divine enterprise."⁹

Within liberation theology there is a definite element of universalism. Gutierrez says, "Not only is the Christian a temple of God; every man is."¹⁰ He states, "Man is saved if he opens himself to God and others, even if he is not clearly aware that he is doing so."¹¹

By far, the primary focus of liberation theology is social change and freedom from oppression. Much is being done by its advocates to change the situation of the poor and tyrannized of this world. Viewed from this perspective, it has been said that there are some definite correlations between this primarily third world theology and the work and theology of John Wesley.

II. WESLEY AND LIBERATION THEOLOGY—SIMILARITIES

There are a number of areas of agreement between Wesley's theology and practice and that of liberation theology. For example, Wesley "would have found congenial the liberationist's insistence that *orthopraxis* is a more reliable clue to faith than is orthodoxy." In other words, how one lives out his faith is really "the indication of adequacy of belief."¹²

However, first and foremost among

similarities that might be found between Wesley and liberation theology is their mutual deep concern for the poor and oppressed of this world. Incidentally, both would attribute these problems in society to fallen humanity.¹³

There must be commitment to the poor.

There can be no doubt that, from the beginning days of Wesley and his Methodists, social concerns went hand in hand with spiritual concerns.¹⁴ Traditionally, Wesleyanism has "ministered primarily to the classes of people who were disenfranchised politically, economically, and religiously."¹⁵

Wesley led the way in this involvement with the poor in a day when leaders of the social order really did not seem to care. Maldwyn Edwards says, "It is almost true to say that Wesley discovered the poor. . . . He was the first great friend of the poor."¹⁶ This was in sharp contrast with the political and religious leaders of his day.

Christians must abandon pietism and unworldliness and enter the "arena of political and social conflict."

Wesley's primary work was done with the poor working class, the underpaid and disadvantaged workers. In addition, he was deeply concerned about the unemployed and totally poverty-stricken. The idea of some that the poor were responsible for their plight was "wickedly, devilishly

false" as far as Wesley was concerned.¹⁷

Personal involvement with the poor began for Wesley in the early years of his participation in the Holy Club. During that period he was living on some £30 a year and giving away the remainder of his income to the poor and needy.¹⁸

It has been estimated that during his lifetime Wesley gave away about £30,000. That would mean that he lived on 1/47th of his earnings and gave away almost 98%. When he died, his inheritance consisted of a few personal effects, books, his clergyman's gown, and Methodism. He had literally given away everything else.¹⁹

As an aging gentleman, Wesley begged for money in the streets of London in order to help clothe the poor. He thus obtained some £200. It was his custom in January of each year to help provide coals and bread for poor society members.²⁰

Wesley often preached on helping the poor. In his sermon "On Working Out Our Own Salvation," he said, "As ye have time, do good unto all men; to their souls and to their bodies."²¹ In "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion," he urged his followers "to do all possible good, from a principle of love to God and man."²² Recognizing that all would not be able to give in abundance, he wrote in his Journal in June 1747, "If you cannot relieve, do not grieve, the poor . . . Put yourself in the place of every poor man; and deal with him as you would God should deal with you."²³

According to Wesley's instructions, the Methodist societies had an obligation to care for the needs of the poor in their midst. Wesley felt that if it had been possible for the Early Church in Jerusalem to care for the needs of their poor, it would surely be possible for his societies to do so.²⁴

To this end, for a brief period of time, the select societies were instructed to bring all that they could every week "toward a common stock."²⁵ This community of good was to make possible the "distribution according to need" to all members.²⁶ Though this concept did not flourish, and indeed disappeared after 1744, it indicates "the depth of his [Wesley's] determination to deal with what he considered to be the social implications of the gospel."²⁷

Wesley advised his followers "frequently, nay, constantly, to visit the poor, the widow, the sick, the fatherless, in their affliction."²⁸ He felt the more privileged had an obligation to teach the poor "industry and cleanliness."²⁹

However, Wesley went even further than this. He "was a promoter of co-operative industry among the poor."³⁰ He encouraged cottage industries and formed credit unions and medical clinics.³¹ His interest in literacy led him to found schools, including the Sunday School, and to publish books. Prison relief and the visitation of prisoners was important to him and his followers. He even started a home for widows.³²

Wesley helped provide major employment opportunities. He was instrumental in the establishment of a foundry and also of a weaving workshop near his prayer house in London.³³

Many of the labor leaders in the growing industry of England were Methodists and received their leadership training in Methodist meetings. Their influence spread over the trade unions. Thus, Wesley had indirect influence over other sources of employment.³⁴

The inclusive love that John Wesley preached and lived and that led him to reach out to all social classes led him also into "social and political criticism."³⁵ He severely critiqued what he felt were the causes of poverty: the enclosure laws, slavery, and the laissez-faire economic policies.³⁶

Not only did Wesley critique the glaring faults that he saw in the sociopolitical structure, but also he sought "legal remedies for social ills."³⁷ He called for government intervention in the economic crisis that occurred in the 1770s. He proposed land reform. He supported the abolition efforts being led by Sharp-Wilberforce. He also urged parliamentary restrictions on distilling liquor, which to him was an unscrupulous source of poverty.³⁸

The social concerns of John Wesley are also reflected in his writings. *A Word to a Smuggler*, which is a pamphlet written in 1767; the tract written in 1772 called *Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions*; and *Thoughts upon Slavery*, written in 1774, are representative. They con-

vey Wesley's concern for personal morality, economic justice, and human rights.³⁹

So strong were a number of Wesley's positions on such issues that some considered him to be almost revolutionary. His followers were sometimes classed the same way. The Bishop of Gloucester said that through "their private conferences, their local classes, their extensive connections, their general assemblies," the Methodists were cooperating throughout the kingdom "for the purpose of concerting measures to undermine our civil and religious Constitution."⁴⁰

It has been said of Wesley that "there is not a period in which he was not actively pursuing social justice."⁴¹ This, undoubtedly, helped lead to what J. Wesley Brady called "the new humanity created by the Revival."⁴²

**Liberation
theology rests in
a certain type
of "works
righteousness."**

The work of Wesley and the results of the evangelical revival have produced what has been called the "Halevy thesis." This thesis states that a bloody revolution such as France experienced did not occur in England due to "the stabilizing influence of evangelical religion, particularly Methodism."⁴³ Some would claim that Wesley's vision of economic justice was a "striking anticipation of Marxist formula," though it was based on a different source.⁴⁴

Though many would not agree with the Halevy thesis, there can be little disagreement that Wesley was concerned about the plight of the poor and oppressed. He obviously tried to relieve their plight. It is at this point where the similarities between Wesley and liberation theology are most obvious.

III. WESLEY CRITIQUED BY LIBERATION THEOLOGY

After this brief view of the similarities between Wesley's theology and

practice and that of liberation theology, it is important to look at the differences. It is especially helpful to consider the ways in which Wesley is critiqued by liberation theologians.

Wesley is accused, somewhat justly, of being much more concerned about the inward man than the outward man. John Kent states that for Wesley, "As long as men were politically free to become sanctified, further change hardly mattered."⁴⁵ Jose Miguez Bonino says that Wesley taught a religion that "operates on the individual inward life, without meddling with the corporate political, and economic relations of the outward and social self."⁴⁶

It has been said of Wesley that he preached a gospel that is "an otherworldly soporific, lulling the poor into acceptance of their meager lot."⁴⁷ Liberation theologians would reject the Halevy thesis, saying that Wesley simply indoctrinated the working classes into his own conservative Toryism and "prevented the kind of radical critique of economic and class structures that could have brought about a new and more just social order."⁴⁸

Wesley is accused of doing England "a social and political disservice." "His ventures into social betterment are condemned as a palliative, having the effect of taking the edge off the inevitable class struggle by conditioning the masses to accept their economic lot."⁴⁹

There can be little doubt that Wesley was a politically conservative monarchist who thought it was possible to reform the existing system and, thus, remove the oppression that was resulting from the corruption of the system.⁵⁰ Liberation theologians would say that gradual reforms of this type are "intentionally or unintentionally, always the ally of the present system," because they relieve the pressure and uplift the poor with a little, making it possible for exploitation to continue.⁵¹

Liberation theologians take issue with the rules that Wesley lays out in the sermon "The Mammon of Unrighteousness." Here, and in a number of his other writings, Wesley urges: (1) Gain all you can; (2) Save all you can; (3) Give all you can.⁵² Though Wesley's intention was to make all possible resources available for doing good, those following Marxist economic analysis call it a "divine endorsement of the capitalist system."⁵³

Wesley has even been called "the patron saint of capitalism."⁵⁴

**Wesley led the
way in this
involvement
with the poor.**

Some do admit, however, that Wesley's was at least a "morally enlightened capitalism" that would not permit one to gain wealth at the expense of another's well-being. It has also been called a "communitarian capitalism" because, at one point, Wesley called for "a Methodist community of goods."⁵⁵

Jose Miguez Bonino says that Wesley's anthropology is entirely too individualistic. He says that for Wesley, society is "a convenient arrangement for the growth of the individual."⁵⁶ He also says that Wesley stresses the priestly office and passive obedience of Christ at the expense of His humanity.⁵⁷

Though Wesley described and denounced the oppressive social conditions of his day, Bonino feels that he "was unable to see the structural nature of the social problems with which he was trying to grapple."⁵⁸ Thomas Maddon agrees with Bonino at this point, saying that Wesley's social thought concerning economics "represented an ethical critique of problems rather than a theory of economic relations."⁵⁹

**Wesley reached
out to all
social classes.**

For the liberation theologians, Wesley's position on social ills simply did not go far enough. To them, it remains unconvincing "in a world . . . sensitized by the Marxist critique of liberalism."⁶⁰

Wesley's theology differs from liberation theology at a number of other crucial points. Rupert Davies says that in Wesley, salvation is attributed entirely to "the grace of God operative in Christ." On the other hand, in liberation theology, though God is ac-

tive in history, man brings salvation (liberation) into effect by his own deeds and sacrifices.⁶¹

Some would claim that Wesley's vision of economic justice was a "striking anticipation of Marxist formula."

Davies also says that salvation for Wesley is at the level of one's personal life and involves his relationships with others. In liberation theology, it is at the level of society, or races and nations, classes and sexes.⁶²

In addition, there is the matter of the source of theology. Wesley's theological source is the Bible, backed by experience. The source of theology in liberation theology is the nature and history of people and the "dynamism of events." The Bible is important, but these other factors play a major role.⁶³

Though one can find similarities between Wesley and liberation theology, it is apparent that there are also very crucial differences. Those involved in the liberationist movement severely critique Wesley for these differences.

IV. WESLEY'S THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

If Wesley were alive today, he would not retreat before those who would critique him from the ranks of liberation theology. Instead, he would probably remind them that true liberation is an intrinsic part of his message. He would contend that the liberation that he lived and preached is much more foundational than that which is being taught in certain circles in the third world today.

The liberation that is so intrinsic in Wesley is liberation from sin. In his sermon "The Marks of the New Birth," Wesley makes it clear that the

"true, living, Christian faith" is characterized by "power over [both] outward . . . and . . . inward sin."⁶⁴ This living faith includes both justification, which is restoration to God's favor, and sanctification, which is restoration to His image.⁶⁵ This occurs through "the submitting to the 'righteousness which is of faith,' the believing in the only-begotten Son of God."⁶⁶

In this true liberation, one is saved from the guilt, power, and consequently wages of sin, according to Wesley's sermon titled "The Righteousness of Faith."⁶⁷ This is not just "deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fulness of God" as well.⁶⁸ The one who experiences this is a child of God, has peace with God, rejoices in God, loves his brother, works no evil to others, and has a soul that is "athirst to do good."⁶⁹

Wesley is accused of doing England "a social and political disservice."

While Wesley would say that true liberation begins with this type of personal relationship with God, he would fully agree that sanctification is not just the absence of sin, but "the active presence of love expressed not only in word but in deed: From God to humanity, from humanity to God; from God through human beings, to their fellow human beings."⁷⁰ Sanctification would include "the enlisting of the individual in God's own work—the redemption of his creation."⁷¹

Rather than being a palliative or an escape, as some say, the religion that Wesley taught is "participation in God's own redemptive enterprise, transforming alienated servants into liberated sons and daughters."⁷² The poor that Wesley and his followers reached not only were accepted by God but also were made new creatures and "given an intrinsic, measurable, effective worth and power." Because of this, they could actively go

about making their world better.⁷³

Thus, the early Methodists' "conception of social reform started with the purging of their own motives and the moral reformation of their own lives."⁷⁴ People who have been thus changed "are destined to change society."⁷⁵ Therefore, Wesley taught his followers that when Christianity genuinely prevails, there "is no oppression to 'make' even 'the wise man mad,' no extortion to 'grind the face of the poor,' no robbery or wrong; no repine or injustice; for all are 'content with such things as they possess.'"⁷⁶

Wesley states unequivocally in the preface to *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, published in 1738, that in the gospel, "Solitary religion is not to be found." He says, "The gospel of Christ knows of no religion, but social; no holiness but social holiness." If one loves God, he must love people as well.⁷⁷

Thus, the Christian must not separate himself from the sinners. He is the salt of the earth and must allow the Christ nature to spread to all around him. Wesley's followers were taught to mingle with sinners so as to spread God's grace. "By this means a check will, in some measure, be given to the corruption which is in the world; and a small part, at least, saved from the general infection, and rendered holy and pure before God."⁷⁸ Wesley's remedy for corruption, then, is the genuine Christian transformation of the individual.

The spreading of God's grace is done through good works. According to Wesley, these good works are the

Liberation theologians would say that gradual reforms are "intentionally or unintentionally, always the ally of the present system."

expression of the committed person. His position is that "we are not accepted for our works; and we are not saved apart from our works."⁷⁹ Put another way, "Good works . . . cannot be the condition of justification. . . . And yet, notwithstanding, good works may and are conditions of final salvation."⁸⁰ In 1743 Wesley said that members of the societies should "evidence their desire of salvation . . . by doing good of every possible sort."⁸¹

Wesley's "theology of liberation" is a theology of liberation from the power of sin. For him, this would be the starting point, the foundation for all the good that one would do to help the poor and oppressed of the world.

V. CONCLUSION

In spite of a number of crucial differences between the two theologies, it may still be said that "there is a peculiar affinity between Wesleyan theology—especially Wesley's doctrine of sanctification—and movements for social change."⁸² This affinity occurs because in a very real sense, Wesley's doctrine of sanctification is "a revolutionizing practice" which . . . understands divine salvation to be working itself out in the relationships of this world."⁸³

In liberation theology, though God acts in history, man brings salvation (liberation) into effect by his own deeds and sacrifices.

It appears that sanctification, or Christian perfection, produces "a holy dissatisfaction" with present conditions. This "holy dissatisfaction" that keeps "the process of individual transformation moving . . . is readily transferable from the realm of the individual to that of society—as was evident in Wesley's own time—where it pro-

vides a persistent motivation for reform in the light of 'a more perfect way' that transcends any status quo."⁸⁴

Thomas Madron goes so far as to say, "In Wesley's thought, if the social ethic of love as developed in his doctrine of sanctification, were systematically applied, then the social order itself might be perfectible."⁸⁵ In other words, if Wesley's theology were actually lived out, the present endeavors of liberation theology would be rendered unnecessary, for the problem of the poor and oppressed would be resolved as God intended—through love.

1. Arthur F. McGovern, *Marxism: An American Christian Perspective* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981), 177.
2. Theodore Runyon, ed., *Sanctification and Liberation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1981), 72.
3. Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1973), 26-27.
4. Gustavo Gutierrez, *We Drink from Our Own Wells* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 2.
5. Gutierrez, *A Theology*, 32.
6. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 9.
7. Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1984), 92.
8. Gutierrez, *A Theology*, x.
9. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 22.
10. Gutierrez, *A Theology*, 193.

The liberation so intrinsic in Wesley is liberation from sin.

11. *Ibid.*, 151.
12. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 45.
13. *Ibid.*, 81.
14. Robert Edwin Block, *The Social Dimensions of John Wesley's Ministry as Related to His Personal Piety* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Dissertation Information Service, 1984), 85.
15. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 163.
16. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 94.
17. *Ibid.*, 94-95.
18. *Ibid.*, 96.
19. *Ibid.*
20. John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978-79), 4:295.
21. *Ibid.*, 6:511.
22. *Ibid.*, 8:68.
23. *Ibid.*, 2:59.
24. *Ibid.*, 7:286.
25. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 91.
26. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 108.
27. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 92.
28. Wesley, *Works*, 12:302.
29. *Ibid.*, 7:123.
30. J. Wesley Bready, *England: Before and After Wesley* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), 270.
31. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 11.
32. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 100-109.
33. Elie Halevy, *The Birth of Methodism in England*

(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 70.

34. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 15-16.
35. *Ibid.*, 106.
36. *Ibid.*, 11-12, 17.

The early Methodists' "conception of social reform started with the purging of their own motives and the moral reformation of their own lives."

37. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 165.
38. *Ibid.*, 164.
39. *Ibid.*, 136-44.
40. Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, Publishers, 1973), 126.
41. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 164.
42. Bready, *England*, 272.
43. Halevy, *Birth*, 1.
44. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 46.
45. *Ibid.*, 89.
46. *Ibid.*, 57-58.
47. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 158.
48. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 17.
49. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 159.
50. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 17.
51. *Ibid.*, 18.
52. Wesley, *Works*, 7:285-86.
53. Block, *Social Dimensions*, 97.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, 98.
56. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 55.
57. *Ibid.*, 56-57.
58. *Ibid.*, 58-59.
59. *Ibid.*, 102.
60. *Ibid.*, 19.
61. *Ibid.*, 77.
62. *Ibid.*, 78-79.
63. *Ibid.*, 81.
64. Wesley, *Works*, 5:213-14.
65. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 10.
66. Wesley, *Works*, 5:74.
67. *Ibid.*, 66.
68. *Ibid.*, 6:276.
69. *Ibid.*, 5:39-41.
70. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 34.
71. *Ibid.*
72. *Ibid.*, 46.
73. *Ibid.*, 53.
74. Bready, *England*, 274.
75. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 82.
76. Wesley, *Works*, 5:46.
77. *Ibid.*, 14:321.
78. *Ibid.*, 5:299.
79. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 213.
80. *Ibid.*, 23.
81. Wesley, *Works*, 8:270-71.
82. Runyon, *Sanctification*, 10.
83. *Ibid.*, 44.
84. *Ibid.*, 10.
85. *Ibid.*, 115.

Picture Windows for Preaching

COMMITMENT

F. B. Meyer tells the story that the soldiers of the army of Napoleon were content to die in the ditch if he only rode over them to victory. Meyer writes:

With their last breath they cried, "Long live the emperor!" It seemed as though they had lost all thought and care of their own interests, so long as glory was given to his name. So should it be of us. Higher than our own comfort, or success, or popularity, should be the one thought of the glory of our God. Let Christ be honored, loved, exalted, at whatever cost to us. . . .

Live to please God, and He will breathe on you His peace. Seek His glory, and He will make your heart His home. Do His will, and thereby good shall come to you.

Time with God, New Century Version (Dallas: Word Bibles, 1991), 73.

LIGHTS

In London during the reign of Queen Anne in the eighteenth century, there were few or no street lights. A law was passed requiring everyone whose property fronted on a street or alley to hang out a light from six to eleven in the evening during the months from September until March. It was declared that everyone was responsible for the safety of his neighbors from the dangers of the night. A man with a lantern went about the streets crying: "Hang out your lights. Hang out your lights." That's Christ's call to us today.

Dynamic Preaching Magazine (Nashville: Seven Worlds Publishing), 5, no. 1 (January 1990): 19.

LOVING JESUS

Walking down the street one day, a lady noticed a little girl leaving the church by herself. When the child passed her, the lady inquired



Compiled by Derl Keefer

Pastor,
Three Rivers, Mich.

where she had been.

"In there," replied the little girl pointing to the church.

"And what were you doing in there?" the woman asked.

"Praying," was the prompt reply.

Thinking the child was probably bothered with some problem, the lady inquired, "What were you praying for, dear?"

"Nothing," the child replied. "I was just loving Jesus."

Eleanor Doan, *The Speaker's Sourcebook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 155.

FRIEND

Thousands of appeals for pardon came to Lincoln from soldiers involved in military discipline. Each appeal was as a rule supported by letters from influential people. One day a single sheet came before him, an appeal from a soldier without any supporting documents.

"What!" exclaimed the President.

"Has this man no friends?"

"No, sir, not one," said the adjutant.

"Then," said Lincoln, "I will be his friend."

Jacob Bradude, *Speaker's Encyclopedia* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957), 157.

WORSHIP

In a message to pastors and worship leaders, Jack Hayford wrote

about an article titled "Preserving the Purity of Worship." His opening paragraph grabs our attention when he pens:

We were created to worship God—to worship Him for who He is and for what He has done for us. We were first redeemed, then trained to worship Him—in our personal lives and in the church body, as we congregate together to come into His presence. We were given "equipment" for our worship of God: a mighty organ (our voice), and our whole body. Singing, lifting our hands, bowing our head—all of these physical acts have a logic and coherence and dynamic to them. We were physically constructed to worship our Creator. With worship comes the authority and responsibility to keep our hearts pure before Him.

Worship Leader Magazine (Nashville: CCM Communications), 2, no. 1 (February/March 1993).

LETTING GO

In her book *Pills for Parents in Pain*, Lee Ezell quotes an unknown author writing about letting go and letting God have His way:

As children bring their broken toys

with tears for us to mend,

I brought my broken dreams to God

because He was my friend.

But then, instead of leaving Him in peace to work alone,

I hung around and tried to help with ways that were my own.

At last, I snatched them back and cried,

"How can You be so slow?"

"My child," He said, "what could I do?"

You never did let go."

Lee Ezell, *Pills for Parents in Pain* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1992), 129.

Dwight L. Moody and His Evangelical Innovations

Dwight Lyman Moody was born in Northfield, Mass., on February 5, 1837. His father, who was lazy and addicted to whiskey, died bankrupt in May of 1841. He left his widow with nine children, two of which were twins born directly following his death.¹ The family was so poor that when the children went to Sunday School, they would carry their shoes and socks until they were in sight of the church to avoid excessive wear. Then they would slip them on their feet.

In 1854 Dwight left home at 17 to work in his uncle Samuel S. Holton's Boston shoe store. His place of residence, the first YMCA opened in the United States, became his new home.

While in Boston, Moody was led to the Lord by his Sunday School teacher, Edward Kimball, in the back of Holton's shoe store on April 21, 1855. Ironically, the leaders of his local church membership committee "deferred recommending him for admission to the church" due to his initial lack of Bible knowledge.² In September of 1856, he went to Chicago, still pursuing a successful career in the shoe business.

In early 1857, Moody rented four pews at the Plymouth Congregational Church. The renting of a pew was a common practice in those days. He would fill them each week with 15 to 18 boys or young men. Moody was not confident of his teaching abilities, however, and asked the Sunday School superintendent if he might have some use for him. "The Superintendent, unaware whence his remark



by William K. Westafer
*Pastor,
San Dimas Wesleyan Church,
San Dimas, Calif.*

would lead, casually told Moody he might go into the alleys and streets and bring in what boys he could."³

He started reaching boys in the slums of the North Side. He had no confidence to teach well-bred or knowledgeable children, so he thought he would try poor children. He started in an old saloon in the rough part of town and filled it. Looking for more room to reach children, he used a dance

hall over the North Market and filled it with 1,000 boys.

An event that would forever change the course of church history occurred when a dying Sunday School teacher asked Moody to accompany him to witness to his class of teenage girls and to make sure they were Christians.

Moody was astounded. "I had never heard anyone talk like that before." His whole concentration in the school had been on numbers. . . . He had not supposed that any of the little savages could undergo deep personal experience like a grown-up. . . . As Moody heard these genuine . . . earnest petitions, the hundred thousand gold dollars of his dreams turned to tinsel. . . . Better to spend his years as this dying teacher had spent ten days. As a result, he left a successful career in the shoe business in 1860 to evangelize full-time.⁴

Even though Moody's ministry began with street urchins in the slums of Chicago, his life touched the lives of



influential men like John Wanamaker, the department store magnate; Cyrus McCormick, inventor of the combine harvester; George Armour, the meat king; and scientist Lord Kelvin. Even more astounding was the fact that President-elect Lincoln visited his North Market Sunday School in Chicago. The Princess of Wales came to a Bible reading in London. President Ulysses S. Grant and his cabinet and the judges of the Supreme Court all attended his meetings, as did James A. Garfield.

He was a contemporary of such religious luminaries as R. A. Torrey, C. H. Spurgeon, William Booth, C. T. Studd, John R. Mott, F. B. Meyer, George Muller, and G. Campbell Morgan. Yet, when he died on December 22, 1899, none had changed the course of modern church history as had D. L. Moody.

Moody, an uneducated, consecrated layman, was best characterized as practical. One man described him in the following terms: "Theorizing has no place in his energetic mind, but his whole heart was bent to secure the best results from the means at hand, and when means were lacking, to find them."⁵ His methods were unorthodox and innovative, but effective; and they shaped evangelistic methods in both the 19th and 20th centuries. Moody's influence is still felt today.

**Moody started
in an old saloon
in the rough
part of town
and filled it.**

The altar call and inquiry room were two of his early twists in evangelism. If he did not invent the altar call, he certainly refined it by having people make a public statement of their intentions.

After a sermon Mr. Moody "drew the net," expecting immediate decisions for Christ. He would ask those who decided there and then to receive Jesus Christ as personal Saviour to say out loud "I will," or to raise a hand or rise to their feet,

actions that publicly clinched and confessed their inner decision of heart and will.⁶

The inquiry room was used to deal with an individual's spiritual state and answer questions of seekers following the invitation. Moody knew that one could not deal with masses of people and their individual needs. A large room was used with many side rooms available. The workers came in first and were addressed by Moody. Inquirers were then permitted to enter. "The gospel appeal made a man ready to take salvation; the gospel clinic showed him how to do it—and made sure that he did!"⁷ Moody felt that "the inquiry room after-meeting was the very hinge of the campaign."⁸

"The first class that we meet in the inquiry room are those who have lost assurance. . . . The next class are backsliders . . . to show how ready God is . . . for their return. The third class are those who have not been convicted of sin."⁹ In each case, specific Bible passages were to be used for instruction.

Obviously, the altar call is an integral part of the church program today. In large part, a pastor's success can hinge on his effectiveness in giving altar calls. Dr. Fred Price of Crenshaw Center uses an inquiry room following his messages and invitations. Thus, it can be used on the local church level. Billy Graham is widely recognized as using an inquiry room method similar to Moody's in his crusades. The purpose of these opportunities following the crusade service is to deal with specific questions that the seeker might possess.

Without realizing it, Moody may have set a precedent in Christian work by having a "wedge." His success in shoe sales probably influenced him in this regard. He had sold shoes and was extremely proficient. He did not attempt to branch into men's clothes or fishing gear. He sold shoes and did so quite effectively. He learned early in life to become expert in a discipline and concentrate on it. Obviously, reaching and winning the lost to Christ became his one passion.

Moody revealed his heart in a sermon in San Francisco. "The two elements of success in Christian work are consecration and concentration. Do one thing, do it well, and keep doing it. Many fail because they try to do too many things."¹⁰

"His one object in life was to awaken men to their standing before God and win them to Him."¹¹ Moody stated himself, "I live for souls and for eternity. I want to win some soul to Christ."¹²

**Though his
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Many of today's aggressive and growing churches and parachurch organizations employ wedges. Young Life pursues only teenagers with the claims of the gospel. Dr. Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church is known for his seeker services that are geared for the unchurched. Dr. Jack Hyles in Hammond, Ind., still emphasizes the Sunday School as his mode of outreach. Dr. Gale Galloway in Oregon is known for his Home Groups. Moody exhibited the necessity of concentrating in one area and becoming proficient. Today's church leaders are still following his example.

Moody was a master communicator. In a day and age when the high church format and liturgy were in vogue, Moody opted to be creative, compelling, and exciting. There were contemporaries of his time that abhorred anecdotes. In Scotland, observers begged their clergy to "learn a lesson" from Moody, who had come to "sing and recite the declaration of God's goodness and forgiveness. . . . Throw aside that complex system.' Moody's addresses seemed brief to an age of sermons an hour or more long."¹³

A meeting never got out of hand, not even a few times when a serious accident happened; he usually turned such occurrences to account. His eye caught everything in that place. . . . If the air became oppressive . . . he would have the windows opened during the singing of a hymn, or if he noticed people were getting restless because of a draught he would have the windows closed. He knew the importance of having his audience at ease while he preached, free from physical discomfort, hence his attention to such details.¹⁴

Moody had a convenient filing system for his message material that allowed him flexibility for his variety of audiences and to constantly update his material.

He would take a large blue linen envelope . . . measuring about 9 by 6 inches, and write on it the title or the Scripture reference. . . . In these envelopes he stored his own thoughts, outlines and anecdotes, cuttings from papers, extracts copied from other men's sermons and from commentaries and other writings, newspaper reports of a sermon whenever it got into print, anything that had bearing upon the subject of the envelope. When he wished to preach on a subject he would go through the contents of the envelope . . . and organise [sic] his address. Then he would take double sheets of writing paper, write on these in his large script catchwords or phrases that would recall his prepared material, and slip these sheets in his Bible under elastic bands. He never memorised [sic] a sermon verbatim, and was of course free to improvise on his feet.¹⁵

**Moody's
influence is still
felt today.**

"On the envelope he listed the place and date of each delivery. As Jane Mackinnon wrote in Britain, 'the peculiarity of his preaching was that although one heard the same address several times it always came quite

fresh home to the heart and conscience.'¹⁶

He preached "Sowing and Reaping" to four different types of audiences within a couple of weeks: at a men's meeting in Denver, in a Western penitentiary, at Yale University, and in one of the leading churches in New York."¹⁷

**A pastor's
success can
hinge on his
effectiveness
in giving
altar calls.**

"He was adept in the faculty of seeing illustrative material all along the way. . . . His liberal use of telling, unhackneyed illustrations made his sermons most popular, understandable and persuasive."¹⁸ A tremendous example of this involves an incident while he was speaking during the World's Fair campaign in Chicago.

A small child became separated from her parents in the thronging crowds. Toward the close of Moody's address the little girl was passed up to the platform. The evangelist immediately held her up so that her parents might see her. When the anxious father reached the platform Moody placed the child in his arms, and, with the tears coursing down his cheeks, exclaimed, "That is what Jesus Christ came to do: to seek and to save lost sinners, and restore them to their Heavenly Father's embrace."¹⁹

Although Moody was adept at telling a story to keep an audience's attention, Harry Moorhouse taught Moody how to treat the Bible as an "entity, to trace the unfolding themes of Scripture, made him see that 'it is God's Word, not our comment upon it, that saves souls,' warned him he should take time to receive more than he gave out."²⁰ To that end, Moody had an "annual summer practice of reading the Bible through 'to tune the instrument.'²¹ Mr. Moody felt that an anointed speaker was a

mighty tool in the hands of God. He was once asked how he would heal a cold church: "Build a big fire in the pulpit."²²

Late in his career, Moody was still powerful as a speaker. Charles Gross in Detroit wrote of Moody's pulpit prowess in regard to his sermon on Elijah.

It appeared to me that supernatural things were actually occurring in the room. . . . In the final outburst we actually beheld the chariot swoop down from heaven, the old man ascend, the blazing car borne through the still air; and when the impassioned orator uttered that piercing cry, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" the excitement was almost unendurable.²³

His preaching always had a distinct and definite object. He was after something always, and with his whole heart. His purpose was unmistakable. Whether his audience was laughing or crying, he never allowed a diversion from his object. He never let go the grip by which he would bring a soul to do, or be something, or die!²⁴

**He learned
early in life to
become expert
in a discipline
and concentrate
on it.**

Down through the years, powerful speakers have followed Moody's lead and have used their pulpit talents to build great churches and ministries. This trend was renewed in the 1980s as pastors such as Charles Swindoll, John Maxwell, Charles Stanley, Lloyd John Ogilvie, and Jack Hayford were featured through radio, television, and tape ministries. Ministers in local churches sensed that the importance of strong communication skills could not be underestimated. Pastors have rediscovered that to draw people into church in this entertainment-conscious age takes creativity and imagination.

Moody's organizational and entrepreneurial skills were legendary. "In the parlance of today, he transferred his ability as a shoe salesman to selling the gospel."²⁵ He was a man of organization, inspiring confidence with remarkable "business-like skill and tact to the management of religious services"²⁶ and worked easily with associates. "He always insisted that what the church needs is 'men who can think on their heels.'"²⁷

In a day and age when the high church format and liturgy were in vogue, Moody opted to be creative, compelling, and exciting.

One man wrote of Moody that "his plans were simple, and modified only by local conditions." Dr. Frank Crane stated: Moody was "concerned about results, not methods."²⁸

In the Indianapolis campaign of 1870, Moody met Ira D. Sankey. The preaching evangelist realized the power of song and invented the song evangelist by asking Sankey to join him. Moody, Sankey, and the organization amazed people with "their power to reach and bless multitudes of men not reached or blessed by the ordinary ministration of the gospel."²⁹

During a single week nearly 20,000 tickets were given out for the afternoon meetings half for women only and for evening Sunday services for men—all these people stating that they were not Christians. So perfect were the arrangements for handling the crowds that the audience was seated at the rate of a thousand a minute."³⁰

One of the most amazing feats

Moody ever accomplished was when he wanted to exploit the evangelistic opportunities that the World's Fair provided in Chicago from May 28, 1893, to October 31, 1893. He started the first Sunday in May, using four of the largest churches in various parts of the city, then included two theaters, strategically located around the city. Five tents were pitched in non-churched districts, and then half a dozen more. Two gospel wagons were used for open-air meetings. Eventually, he employed Tattersall's hall near the stockyards, which seated 10,000. He used Forepaugh's circus tent for two Sundays, which seated 10,000, with standing room for 10,000 more. Forepaugh would only rent to Moody in the morning so that he could use it for the circus in the afternoon and evening. The circus soon had to quit for Moody because the campaigns were drawing bigger crowds.³¹

The total attendance for Moody during the Fair was 1,933,240. He did not criticize the Fair for being open on Sunday. By August, the Fair stopped opening on Sundays, because Moody's crowds of 40,000 to 62,000 were bigger than theirs.³² The World's Fair taught him the value of the coordinated efforts of churches of all denominations.

Moody was the first to develop a work-study program for students in his Northfield Schools. Every student had to do domestic or manual labor under supervision. As a result, the students paid for half of their schooling, and Moody raised the other half.³³

"It is God's Word, not our comment upon it, that saves souls."

Many of the organizations he built are still functioning today: Moody Memorial Church, Chicago, founded in November 1863; Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, founded in 1886; and the Bible Institute Colportage Association, founded in Chicago in 1894, otherwise known as Moody Press.³⁴

Examine the origin of the organizations [sic] he founded, and it will be seen that he never duplicated or rivalled existing organisations [sic]. . . . When he died there was a man or woman in every key position who loved him and had worked long enough under him to be familiar with his wishes and convictions, and who was imbued with his spirit of reliance on God. The trustees in every case were solid in sympathy and support. The working staffs all knew him, and were loyal and faithful in their respective positions.³⁵

Pastors have rediscovered that to draw people into church in this entertainment-conscious age takes creativity and imagination.

Moody knew the value of mentoring people in order to perpetuate his ideals and fulfill his vision. "As in Great Britain the value of a campaign could not be gauged by numbers who professed conversion but by skills imparted to lay people, encouragements to ministers."³⁶

There are several testimonies across the nation to men that have followed the example of Moody. He created organizations or ministries to meet the needs of the redeemed and the unredeemed.

The Christian music industry has evolved into a billion-dollar business. There are professional sacred artists that can fill auditoriums that rival the crowds of Moody and Sankey.

Many churches have realized the value of being efficient in the handling of crowds. Ushering and greet-

ing are now looked upon as ministries. As churches attempt to be visitor-friendly, they have become increasingly adept at employing information booths, parking lot greeters, and registering guests for follow-up.

Colleges and universities across the nation still employ some form of work-study program for needy students. This is used not only by Christian institutions but by secular schools as well.

Leaders that have emulated Moody today have often lived by the credo: "Find a need and fill it. Find a hurt and heal it." As the Thomas Road Baptist Church grew in Lynchburg, Va., Pastor Jerry Falwell saw the need for a home for alcoholics. He has followed that with a home for unwed mothers, a Christian school, university, and seminary.

Mr. Moody set the standard to be driven. "Moody was wrapped in the one ambition 'that every soul be saved.'"³⁷

In Dublin in July 1872, Moody heard Henry Varley say, "The world has yet to see what God will do with a man wholly consecrated to Him."³⁸ "He said 'a man,'" Moody reflected; "he did not say a great man, nor a learned man, but simply 'a man.' I am a man, and it lies with the man himself whether he will, or will not make that entire and full consecration. I will try my utmost to be that man."³⁹

**Moody was
"concerned
about results,
not methods."**

Moody was tireless in his efforts to fulfill that commitment. In the fall of 1891, he and Sankey went to Scotland and visited 99 towns in 90 days, usually holding three or four meetings a day. "It must have been on some such mission as this that someone says he heard Mr. Sankey rise in a brief prayer before going onto the platform and say: 'O God, do tire Moody, or give the rest of us superhuman strength!'"⁴⁰

"During 300 days in each of seven

years he spoke to audiences of 5,000 each afternoon and evening."⁴¹

Moody, as pastor of Union Church on Illinois Street, which later became known as Moody Memorial, once made 200 visits on New Year's Day. This event was described by Mr. Hitchcock, one of the men along for the experience.

**Many of the
organizations
Moody built are
still functioning
today.**

As our omnibus reached a family belonging to his congregation, he would spring out of it to the ground and leap up the stairs three or four steps at a time, rush into the room after a rapid and hurried knock and pay his respects in these words: "You know me, I am Moody; this is Deacon de Golyer, this is Deacon Thane, this is Brother Hitchcock. Are you all well? Do you all come to church? and Sunday School? Have you all the coal you need for the winter? Let us pray;" and down we would all go upon our knees, while Mr. Moody offered from fifteen to twenty words of tender, sympathizing supplication. . . . Before long the horses were tired out. . . . One after another his companions became exhausted.⁴²

Moody finished the rounds by himself. This was but a single example of his boundless energy and determination.

One has often heard of modern pastors making 100 calls a day on foot as they attempt to reach their community. With the infiltration of cults and the continuing isolation of American society, this may be a dying trend. For many years, it was common for pastors and parishioners to personally and regularly entice those in the neighborhoods to attend their respective church. Apparently, cults such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons still see bombarding communities with constant and systematic door-to-door visitation as effective. Many churches

have sensed a rejection of the value of neighborhood visitation as a direct result of cult influences, particularly in metropolitan areas.

However, the modern church has looked at other ways to be a hub of the community and evangelize the unsaved through ports of entry. Ministries such as Alcoholics Anonymous now meet in churches. Co-dependent groups are accommodated as well. The Boy Scouts commonly use church facilities for meetings. Aerobic and karate classes are used to draw the community to the church on days other than Sunday. Athletic teams and children's ministries are all used as a means to expose unbelievers to the claims of Christ through lifestyle evangelism and direct appeals. These kinds of efforts take the commitment of a dedicated pastor and laity that are driven to reaching the lost by any means available.

Moody was the first to realize the acres of diamonds in metropolitan areas. While America was undergoing industrialization, he believed urban areas held masses that could be reached with the gospel. He held campaigns in such cities as Baltimore, Kansas City, Philadelphia, New York, Brooklyn, Chicago, Boston, St. Louis, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, San Francisco, and Cleveland.

**Moody knew the
value of
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fulfill his vision.**

Denominations have begun to target the cities once more. Only 39 population centers across the United States have a population of 1 million or more. Yet, half of all Americans live in these cities.

The rural areas have been less threatening in the past. The Baptists as well as other denominations were eager to grow as the country experi-

enced westward expansion in the 19th century. The requirements to become a member of the clergy were increasingly relaxed, and congregations were born in multiple villages and towns.

Mr. Moody set the standard to be driven.

Today, America is becoming increasingly urban. One hundred years after Moody emphasized the masses in the cities, denominations that farm these opportunities will hold the promise of growth for the 21st century.

His greatest achievement was evangelism. "We ought to be winning souls 365 days a year."⁴³ Dr. R. W. Dale said that Moody "could never speak of a lost soul without tears in his eyes."⁴⁴ Mr. Moody said, "Oh, the luxury of leading someone out of darkness of this world into the glorious light and liberty of the gospel!"⁴⁵

Moody was the first to give tickets to the unsaved for gospel meetings. In fact, regarding the Brooklyn revival: "To many of the meetings in the Rink, church-goers were not invited; indeed they were asked to stay away, and admission was procurable only on the statement that a ticket was to be used by some unconverted person."⁴⁶

"He never waited for people to come to him."⁴⁷ He forsook the idea of renting pews. He disdained denominational demarkation.

"We don't make our services interesting enough to get unconverted people to come. . . . Don't get in a rut."⁴⁸ No one could ever accuse Moody of not following his own edict.

"He saw too that singing created a mood of worship and response, especially among the semi-illiterate poor, and whereas, like others cradled in Puritanism, he suspected oratorio and counted opera devilish, he wielded hymn singing as a weapon."⁴⁹ When in the Indianapolis campaign of 1870 he met Ira D. Sankey, Moody saw the power of song. Their hymns became more evangelistic than those in existence.

In revival meetings in England, Mr.

Moody felt new songs would fan revival flames. "He consulted with Mr. Sankey, gathered together half a hundred of their most popular and effective songs, and decided to have them printed in a small book, to use at their meetings." Moody had to put the money up to publish it himself, since no one else saw the benefit.⁵⁰ They were successful in using this, among other methods, to attract and reach the lost. "Thus between the dates of June 17, 1873, when he landed in Liverpool, and August 4, 1875, when he sailed for home from the same port, Dwight L. Moody of Chicago had become the world's first evangelist."⁵¹

"Dr. A. T. Pierson calculated that Moody, by voice and pen, brought the claims of Christ to the attention of one hundred million people in the aggregate."⁵² He traveled over 1 million miles, addressed 100 million people, and dealt personally with 750,000 individuals.⁵³ In spite of the vast numbers of people that came to Christ as a result of his ministry, Moody detested the statistical assessment of conversions.

One hundred years after Moody emphasized the masses in the cities, denominations that farm these opportunities will hold the promise of growth for the 21st century.

Still another method he used was the media of his day. "He showed how the Press may be made an inval-

able medium. . . . Moody gave to the Church a new understanding of the importance of personal witness by every Christian believer."⁵⁴

Mr. Moody felt new songs would fan revival flames.

Moody accomplished all that he did without the aid of television or radio. However, since those inventions, the media has been exploited for the cause of the gospel with the prominence of not only television shows but networks as well.

Tommy Barnett of Phoenix First Assembly of God gives away tickets for his illustrated sermons and special events to reach the unchurched, as does Skyline Wesleyan in Lemon Grove, Calif. This has been a popular ploy for youth groups as well.

Bus, clown, mime, puppets, drama, and ethnic ministries have all been used creatively for evangelism. Pastors and churches have realized just as Moody that the method is not sacred, only the message. Groups such as Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ, and churches under the leadership of pastors like D. James Kennedy have carried on Moody's mandate that every believer have a personal witness.

Mr. Moody also developed Bible conferences for believers. In 1881 he started annual Bible conferences. These were meetings for the study of the Bible twice daily.⁵⁵ The churches were revitalized through Moody's influence, and much of this was an antidote for the materialism and doubt and repudiation of the Bible and theism and supernaturalism that followed the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. He stayed the wavering faith of multitudes.

The Northfield conference was established in 1880. Another was begun in Winona Lake, Ind. Still another was started in Keswick, England.⁵⁶ These were instrumental then and still function today. There is no lack of church growth conferences today. In fact, there are conferences available for

nearly every kind of ministry. There are youth conferences, pastors' conferences, intensive Bible study conferences for the laity, and family conferences, to name a few.

Finally, Mr. Moody was responsible for starting the modern wave of religious literature. In Wisconsin in 1894, he wanted to give religious literature at a crusade, but a local bookstore had nothing but fiction. Bookstores outside of large cities hardly carried religious literature. Religious books were too expensive. Moody organized the Colportage Library in 1895. He printed one of his sermons, "The Way to God, and How to Find It." He cut the retail price to 10 cents in order to compete with dime novels. He had also published the first book of hymns by Mr. Sankey. Interestingly, his brother-in-law was Fleming H. Revell, who developed a publishing empire that is still in existence.⁵⁷ In spite of his success as a publisher, Moody never wrote a book. All of the things published of him were from the spoken word.

Moody, by voice
and pen,
brought the
claims of Christ
to the attention
of one hundred
million people.

The Bible Institute Colportage Association grew into the present Moody Press. "Early in 1895 he launched with Revell's help an edition of 100,000 copies of *The Way to God*, Moody's equivalent of Billy Graham's *Peace With God*."⁵⁸

Moody felt a burden for the prisons across the nation. He started a "prison fund." A total of 316,331 books were distributed in penal institutions.⁵⁹ "Moody began to flood testaments and colportage books into

every cell of every county jail and state penitentiary."⁶⁰

Moody gave to
the Church a
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believer.

The influence of Christian publishing today reaches literally around the world. The business shows healthy signs with no indication of slumping. There is large demand for very practical topics such as marriage enhancement, raising children, commentaries, teaching resources, fiction and non-fiction, as well as magazines and Sunday School curriculum.

Dwight L. Moody left an incredible spiritual legacy for generations to come. "Toward the close of his life he uttered this prophetic statement: 'Some day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! . . . I shall be more alive than ever.'"⁶¹ Indeed, Moody still lives.

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2. J. Wilbur Chapman, *The Life and Work of Dwight L. Moody* (Philadelphia: Gillespie and Metzger, 1900), 78.
3. Pollock, *Moody*, 22.
4. *Ibid.*, 34-35.
5. Chapman, *Life and Work*, 91.
6. Arthur Percy Fitt, *Moody Still Lives* (New York: Revell, 1936), 60.
7. Richard Ellsworth Day, *Bush Aglow: The Life Story of Dwight L. Moody, Commoner of Northfield* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1936), 242.
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9. D. L. Moody, *Bible Readings Delivered in San Francisco and Oakland* (San Francisco: Bacon and Company, Book and Job Printers, 1881), 34-35.
10. *Ibid.*, 46.
11. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 12.

12. Rev. E. J. Goodspeed, *A Full History of the Wonderful Career of Moody and Sankey in Great Britain and America* (Chicago: M. A. Parker and Co., 1877 [?]), 604.
13. Pollock, *Moody*, 116.
14. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 12.
15. *Ibid.*, 48.
16. Pollock, *Moody*, 187.
17. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 121.
18. *Ibid.*, 47.
19. Will H. Houghton and Charles T. Cook, *Tell Me About Moody* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1937), 96-97.
20. Pollock, *Moody*, 74.
21. Day, *Bush Aglow*, 191.
22. George T. B. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody: The Man and His Mission* (K. T. Boland, 1900), 291.
23. Pollock, *Moody*, 290.
24. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody*, 293.
25. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 47.
26. Goodspeed, *A Full History*, 41.
27. William Revell Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody* (Chicago: Revell, 1900), 443.
28. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody*, 245.
29. Goodspeed, *A Full History*, 373.
30. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody*, 116.
31. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 104-6.
32. Pollock, *Moody*, 284.
33. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 84-85.
34. *Ibid.*, 79.
35. *Ibid.*, 150.
36. Pollock, *Moody*, 185.
37. *Ibid.*, 63.
38. Houghton and Cook, *Tell Me*, 91.
39. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 56.
40. *Ibid.*, 40.
41. *Ibid.*, 67.

Dwight L.
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42. Houghton and Cook, *Tell Me*, 101.
43. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody*, 77-78.
44. William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 164.
45. D. L. Moody, *Bible Readings Delivered*, 30.
46. Chapman, *The Life and Work*, 159.
47. Houghton and Cook, *Tell Me*, 88.
48. William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 113.
49. Pollock, *Moody*, 76-77.
50. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody*, 109.
51. Houghton and Cook, *Tell Me*, 33.
52. *Ibid.*, 117.
53. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody*, 119.
54. Houghton and Cook, *Tell Me*, 126.
55. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 90.
56. Chapman, *The Life and Work*, 215-16.
57. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 115-17.
58. Pollock, *Moody*, 287.
59. Davis, *Dwight L. Moody*, 157.
60. Pollock, *Moody*, 287.
61. Fitt, *Moody Still Lives*, 159.

Today's Books for Today's Preachers



PSEUDO-MACARIUS: THE FIFTY SPIRITUAL HOMILIES AND THE GREAT LETTER

trans. and ed. by George A. Maloney, S.J.
(New York: Paulist Press, 1992)
PA080-913-3121, \$17.95

In his diary entry for July 30, 1736, John Wesley wrote: "I read Macarius and sang." One assumes he sang because he found in this ancient father a message of life and light, an explanation of the gracious spiritual transformation available to us sinners through the workings of a gracious God. According to Macarius, "Whoever approaches God and truly desires to be a partner of Christ must approach with a view to this goal, namely to be changed and transformed from his former state and attitude and become a good and new person, harboring nothing of 'the old man' (2 Cor. 5:17)" (p. 223; H. 44).

Unlike Wesley, however, few of us have the facility with Greek to read Macarius in the original, so we're blessed to have a new translation, *Pseudo-Macarius: The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*. Historians despair when trying to decide exactly which Macarius wrote the homilies (several candidates by that name have been located) or precisely when he lived. So we just call him "pseudo-Macarius" and know he lived sometime around A.D. 400.

Wesley's affinity for Macarius becomes understandable when you discover the ancient saint's concern for the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit *imparts* grace and brings about entire sanctification, holiness of heart, in obedient believers whose souls may be irradiated, Macarius said, "with the unspeakable beauty of the glory of the light of the face of Christ" and fully share in the life of His Spirit (p. 38; H. 1).

Still more: those who are sanctified by "the Spirit, which is a thing that lies beyond natural power, are completely bound with their whole love to the Lord" (p. 52; H. 4). Unlike many of the Western fathers who at times overemphasized the purifying role of good works, Eastern Orthodox theologians such as Macarius singularly attributed sanctification to the cleansing presence of the Holy Spirit.

George Maloney writes: "Macarius is one of the first witnesses of what modern Christians would call the baptism in the Holy Spirit. He conceives this to be an ongoing process of surrendering to the indwelling guidance of the Holy Spirit to the degree that the individual cries out for the Spirit to heal the roots of sinfulness that lie deeply within the soul" (p. 19).

Cleansing from sin comes about as one partakes of the life of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Being holy is not so much a matter of external performance as of inner attitude and commitment. "Perfection" is not flawless behavior but sustained surrender to God's perfect will.

Surrender is our free response to God's gracious invitation and working. Macarius insists that we retain freedom of the will throughout the sanctifying process. "You can trust me," said he, "that grace did not prevent the Apostles, who were brought to perfection by grace, from doing whatever they wished to do, even if they preferred occasionally to do something that was not in keeping with grace. For, indeed, our human nature tends toward both good and evil and the opposing force acts by enticement, not by necessity. You

possess free choice to move in the direction that you wish" (p. 178; H. 27).

Yet our free choice, our role in the process, never diminishes the fact that we are saved by grace. Here Wesley and Macarius agree. Maloney insists: "Macarius gives a solidly orthodox teaching on the interrelationships between God's unmerited grace and man's free will to cooperate with grace and thus actively work for his salvation. Macarius always insists that the Christian could not even begin to make a move toward the Good, toward God, without God's graceful help" (p. 15).

In the preface to this volume, a contemporary Eastern Orthodox scholar, Kallistos Ware, summarizes Macarius' theology: "Christianity, as Macarius understands it, involves much more than assent to reasoned arguments or outer obedience to a moral code. It consists above all in the awakening of our spiritual senses, so that we attain a direct, palpable awareness of God's Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts" (p. xiv).

Since it's a lived experience, a process whereby God fully saves sinners, the prescribed spiritual process transforms a soul born into sin that needs to be (and may in fact be) delivered from its bondage. This involves a successful struggle with evil whereby the believer, the disciple, cooperates with the divine initiative, culminating, Ware says, in "the stage when sin is cast out from the heart by the Holy Spirit, working in cooperation with our human will. Cleansed from evil, the soul is then united to Christ the heavenly Bridegroom and is 'mixed' or 'mingled' with the divine Spirit, in this way attaining a state higher than that enjoyed by Adam before the fall" (p. xiii).

In Macarius' words: "Sin is uprooted

and man receives again the first creation of the pure Adam. By the power of the Spirit and the spiritual regeneration, man not only comes to the measure of the first Adam, but also reaches a greater state than he possessed. For man is divinized" (p. 164; H. 26).

Westerners, Wesleyans included, rarely go so far as Macarius in claiming so much for the sin-cleansing work of God in man. Wesley himself refused to even allow the possibility of regaining "Adamic perfection" while here on earth. Yet Macarius shares with the Orthodox the conviction, espoused by first-rate thinkers such as Irenaeus and Athanasius, that "God became man that man might become God."

I've extensively cited the preface and introduction to this volume because they admirably sum up and evaluate Macarius' thought. The "fifty homilies" and "great sermon" are, as the title suggests, simply collected sermons. Macarius treated various texts and developed appropriate themes. Any systematic understanding of his works is considerably helped by the scholarly assessments found in this volume.

The sermons themselves, however, are refreshing to read, delighting both devotional and theological appetites, illustrating one of the Early Church fathers' central concerns in the quest for and attainability of holiness.

—Gerard Reed

Chaplain/Professor of History,
Philosophy and Religion
Point Loma Nazarene College

**BREAKING DOWN WALLS:
A MODEL FOR RECONCILIATION
IN AN AGE OF RACIAL STRIFE**

by Raleigh Washington
and Glen Kehrein

(Chicago: Moody Press, 1993)
241 pages, paperback, \$9.99
PA080-242-6433

Can a black pastor serve a predominantly white church? Can a white pastor minister effectively in a predominantly black church? Good questions! Pastors Washington and Kehrein an-

swer yes! I was drawn to this book because my first church was an all-black church, and I am Caucasian. I worked in the inner-city slums of Baltimore from 1975 to 1978. Since no one told me that it could not be done, I did it.

Authors Washington and Kehrein reveal eight principles that progressively unfold into a practical, step-by-step working model. If every church made these points part of their policies, *racism* could become an obscure word. Words like *integration* and *segregation* could become distant memories of problems from antiquity. Society would be significantly different.

This book is not written as a novel. It is a how-to manual. It deals with the problems of the streets. Each chapter

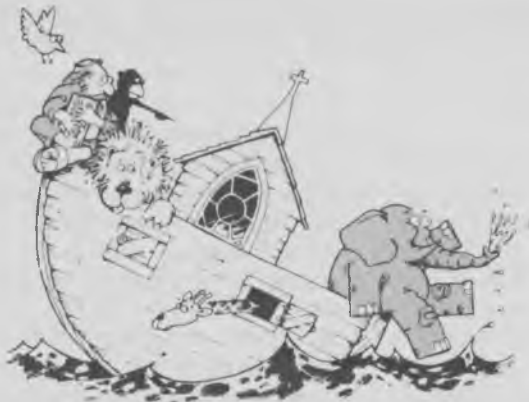
ends with seasoned suggestions for sensible applications. It ends with chapters titled "For Black Christians Only" and "For White Christians Only."

With the Rodney King case and the California riots fresh in many people's minds, this book could help facilitate healing. It provides practical steps for church leaders in order to ensure genuine bridge building among us. The authors exposed their hearts when they say, "Our prayer is simple: that each person who reads this book will learn from the authors' mistakes and some successes and commit himself or herself toward 'breaking down the walls' that divide us."

—Craig A. Debinski

Pastor-Teacher
Temple Baptist Church
Perth Amboy, N.J.





Catching Code

Smerdley finally surfaced again! He'd "burnt out" in his last pastorate and "dropped out of the ministry," as they say. But he phoned me the other night. Said he did miss being called "Reverend" and the tax breaks on his 1040. Finishing a post-sec degree in Creative Spiritual Chatting in May, he said; and an old pal, now the Super-Poob at Sectarian College Number Six, wanted him to come serve on staff.

"But I really called," said he, "to get the story" on why Bill Blaggers has "tossed in the towel" and gone to work selling real estate for the Rhode Island Alps Development Corp. (Same old Smerdley. Wants the sordid details for every move in the concourse of denominational political atoms.) Blaggers, pastor of Metro First, held lots of Important Posts and also had the Ears of Important People at the Center for the Structuring of Things.

All I had heard, I told Smerdley, was the occasional rumor that Blaggers was "in trouble" and that changes "would have to be made." And now it had happened. The Official Reason was "stress." The implication was that it was Blaggers' stress, but it could be read differently.

As luck would have it, next day after Smerdley's call, I was at lunch in a nearby restaurant when I walked our regional ecclesiastical Deepthroat. He volunteered, in his own melodramatic way, "the straight stuff" under the spoken headline, "Byzantium Boots Blaggers." I ordered sugar and caffeine—though I was sure that I would need neither—and settled in.

"Blaggers has been in trouble for

years," said Deepthroat. And the details sounded serious enough—mostly verbal abuse of folks, manipulative ways, and (to use Burke's famous euphemism) being "economical with the truth."

"Well," said I, as an edgewise word, "I wouldn't tolerate such stuff in, say, a board member. And I certainly expect better of folks important enough to have the Ears. But then, what do I know about decision making in the Higher Levels? Life is very complicated up there, I'm told. Still, did any of the poobs responsible for his behavior, those who do have perspective and experience, know these things about Blaggers?"

"Oh, of course. They've talked about them with their buddies all along," said an irritated Deepthroat. (I was implying incompetence, he said.)

I ignored his annoyance and pressed on: "And did they speak to *him* about them?"

"Oh, no," said Deepthroat, oozing satisfaction with his own political savvy and patronizing me for my lack of it, "they didn't say anything directly to *him*. Things just aren't done that way. They have been sending him signals for the last five years at least."

"Signals?" said I.

"Yep. Recommended him highly, promoted him vigorously, for four other IPs in the last several years. Actually managed to get him invited to take three of them—a stronger congregation, a large conference presidency, and even a place in the Ethereal Realms. But he turned 'em all down. Just wasn't smart enough to read the signals!"

Bright enough to lead an even

stronger congregation or a large conference, or to work at a high level with lots of visibility among our people, but too dumb to read the signals, eh? I thought. Wonder and admiration began to flood my soul. Revelation must be at work up there, I thought. For this is beyond logic.

This greatly comforted me. It conjured a new strategy for dealing with some of my tough pastoral problems: First, send signals; confrontation means failure.

So, about our organist. Marvelously growing sense of loyalty and satisfaction with "being of service through music." But in inverse proportion to her ability to hit the right notes at the right time. How about a campaign to get a new 5-manual Naveblaster with the Interior Carillon? Surely she'll catch on that it's out of her league and take to the pew. But if that fails, I'll boost her to the pastor at Nearby Naz. They need someone.

And then there's Youth Pastor. Sure, I hired him. Who knew that the three-legged stool and the electric guitar were congenital? And his previous senior pastor said that his habitual "Huh?" indicated an inquiring mind. The kids love him because he lets them alone once they've had "devotions." Gotta get rid of the cluck.

Surely he'll get the signal when the board of some mega-church hears this: "Recommendation: Charismatic, deeply loved, experienced youth leader and musical genius needs larger opportunity."

You know, the seminary really should offer an extension course: "Sending and Receiving Signals: An Alternative Communications Ethic." ♪

WORSHIP

&

PREACHING

HELPS





Daniel R. Gales



Laura Burk

September/October/November 1994

Prepared by Daniel R. Gales
Pastor,
Fort Garry Church of the Nazarene,
Winnipeg

INTRODUCTION

This period of time in the church calendar is very important. Our people are returning from vacation. It is time for stewardship emphasis. It also includes Reformation Sunday, Thanksgiving Day, and usually a Sunday School promotional time. Along with these emphases, our thoughts turn to the family as we prepare for Christmas. I have tried to keep all of these aspects in mind as I prepared. You will also notice that I used the Canadian calendar! We celebrate our Thanksgiving in October. You might want to switch the sermons around to match your calendar.

This quarter of sermons contains four mini-series including holiness, stewardship, faith, and the family. I trust and pray you find them helpful and stimulating for your preaching program. You may use them as they are or in part to supplement your own sermons.

The worship services were prepared by a very gifted layperson, Mrs. Laura Burk. Laura and her husband are students at Canadian Nazarene College. She leads our worship services. Although our church is a medium-size church, we tried to make the worship plan applicable for the smaller-size church. Hopefully we achieved that goal. "Moments of Praise" is a time of chorus singing. All of the special music and choruses can be found in two books: *The Master Chorus Book* and *Contemporary Low Voice*, both compiled by Ken Bible. Both can be purchased from your denominational publishing house. All hymns are found in the Nazarene *Worship in Song* hymnal.

You will notice a section called "Planning Ahead." These are "Creative Worship" ideas for future Sundays. Each needs to be acted upon on the particular Sunday listed in the "Planning Ahead" section. I hope that by recruiting the people you need and making announcements on that day, the event itself will be more successful.

God bless us all as we bring the Good News to our people each Sunday.

LIVING TO PLEASE GOD

by Daniel R. Gales

1 Thess. 4:1-11

September 4, 1994

INTRO:

Most people want to be pleasing to God. Fortunately, God clearly tells us how to please Him. It is found in our text, 1 Thess. 4:1-11.

In this passage of Scripture, God clearly announces that pleasing Him means living a holy life.

Dr. Arnold E. Airhart, past president of Canadian Nazarene College, and author of the *Beacon Bible Commentary* on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, made this comment: "Part of our problem as a denomination (Nazarene) is we have confused the substance of holiness with the structure of holiness."

Let's leave all preconceived ideas about holiness and move into an evaluation of the quality of holiness in our lives.

Before I begin, please understand, I am a committed holiness preacher. I believe the doctrine of entire sanctification is a proper biblical description of entering the Spirit-filled life. I have personally experienced the "second definite work of grace," by which Christ has transformed the carnal nature and filled my life with His Holy Spirit.

I also believe this: the important fact in holiness is not the number of experiences you have had, but that the Spirit of Christ is living in you and that you are living in Him. In God's sight, it is more important to be holy than know about holiness.

God wills that everyone would be "holyfied," through and through, living a holy life with holy behavior and holy attitudes (see 1 Thess. 5:23). Here are some directions that will assist us in living the life of holiness.

I. Separate the Structure of Holiness from the Substance of Holiness

A. Structure is important but only as a guide that brings us the substance.

1. The structure is the container or delivery system. In holiness, the structure is our doctrine. Doctrine guides us in understanding the nature of holiness. Doctrine also guides us in experiencing God's grace. The doctrine or structure is the delivery system for the experience of the substance.

ILLUS. Structure is like this milk carton I have in my hand. The container is the structure—what the milk comes in—but it's not the milk. Just as this milk container is not the substance of milk, neither is doctrine the substance of holiness.

2. The structure is crucial for bringing us the substance. Without some kind of container or structure, it would be virtually impossible to have fresh milk in our homes. But the container is not the milk.
3. The structure is temporary while the substance is continuous. Its only use is to deliver the substance.

ILLUS. This morning when you received your worship folder, a peanut was taped to it. How many of you ate it?

You can! Go ahead! How many of you ate the shell? The shell is the structure; the nut inside is the substance. The shell is not the "meat" of the peanut. The meat is the nut inside the shell.

The structures or doctrines in holiness churches are our strengths because they are so clear and accurate. Yet they can become a great weakness when we think that they are the permanent experience to live in. Imagine trying to drink a milk carton! Or eating only the shell of the peanut! With structure alone, our Christian experience is as unsatisfying as trying to quench our thirst with only cardboard or to enjoy eating only the shell of a peanut.

While structures are guides to be stripped away, they are very important and will be dealt with in a subsequent sermon.

B. The substance is what the structure is filled with. The substance is the milk in the carton and the nut in the shell. In holiness, the substance is an enjoyable, deep relationship with Jesus Christ.

C. The common tragic error in our spiritual lives is to confuse structure with substance. When that happens, it is like neglecting the nut and trying to enjoy the shell.

II. Understand What It Means to Be Holy

A. Holiness is living in the environment of Jesus (v. 1). When we live in Him, the following takes place:

1. The love of Christ melts our rigidity and re-forms us into His loving image.

ILLUS. Parents of a teenager came to their pastor and asked him to pray that God would give them more love for their child. The pastor said, "No, I won't pray for you to receive more love. But I will pray for you to receive Christ in a deeper way. He is the Source of all love."

2. The compassion of Christ motivates us. This compassion will be seen in our relationships as we reach out in love to those who are lost and in need.
3. The forgiveness and acceptance of Christ moves us to create that environment. Rather than aggression, anger, and revenge, the person living with Jesus forgives and accepts.
4. The strength of Christ enables us to overcome temptations and behaviors that separate us from God.

B. Holiness is living with interpersonal relationships that model Jesus.

1. This passage of Scripture labels unholy behavior as "passionate lust" (v. 5). The first reference is to inappropriate sexual conduct (v. 3). In this day of looser sexual behavior, it is vital that we who live in holiness model the biblical pattern. Basically, wrong sexual behavior is any physical or sexual contact outside the marriage relationship with a member of the

opposite sex or of the same sex, either actual or imagined. According to this verse, God grants strength so that we can "avoid sexual immorality."

2. This scripture includes other lustful behaviors to avoid. They include taking advantage of other people in any way! This is neither the kind of behavior God calls "holy," nor is it the substance of holiness (v. 6).

ILLUS. A senior high son asked for permission to grow his hair long. The father was enraged! "No way! What would the church think if my son had long hair!" The son obeyed his father but vowed to leave home the day he graduated. And he did.

Five years later, at his sister's wedding, the parents had contact with him next. When his father saw him with his bald head and white robe, he knew he had lost his son to Buddhism forever.

In another home, a son finally found the courage to confide in his parents that he was a homosexual. What would you do if your child told you he was a homosexual? This family wrapped arms of love around their boy and said, "Son, we hate the sin and what it does, but we love you. We'll work with you and help you with this."

Which home is the holy home? Too often we focus on the legalistic structure and miss the substance. Only the substance enables us to love unconditionally and build others up like Jesus did.

C. What is a test of holiness? J. Oswald Sanders, the former director of China Inland Mission, now Overseas Missionary Fellowship, suggests this procedure, based on Gal. 5:22-23, as a measurement of continuing growth in holiness. He asks a series of questions. They are the behaviors of holy people.

Ask yourself the questions with me. They are listed in your Worship Folder.

In what ways have I been demonstrating the love of the Holy Spirit?

How have I been more joyful this week?

Have I experienced the peace of God in a new way?

How have I demonstrated patience?

Where have I shown the kindness of Christ this week?

How has the goodness of Christ been demonstrated through my life?

Where am I being faithful?

How has the gentleness of Christ been shown?

In what ways am I being self-controlled?

CONCLUSION:

The question for us this morning is this: Do you live in

the atmosphere of Christ? I'm not asking if you have ever experienced the "second blessing" or even if you believe you are sanctified wholly. I'm asking, "Do you actually possess the substance of holiness?"

My prayer is that we will be holy people, not simply in doctrine but truly people of holy substance.

If you need time to focus in a fresh way on your holiness, do it now. Let us not allow anything to keep us from knowing Christ in that way.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Open Our Eyes, Lord"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 25:4-15
Hymn	"Jesus, Thine All-victorious Love"
Prayer Chorus	"This Is My Prayer"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	Greet One Another
Moments of Praise	"O Magnify the Lord"
	"His Name Is Wonderful"
	"Jesus, Lord to Me"

Pastoral Prayer and Open Altar

God's Word

1 Thess. 4:1-11

Congregation News and Notes

Ministry in Giving

Ministry in Music

"Seekers of Your Heart"

Sermon

"LIVING TO PLEASE GOD"

Hymn

"O to Be like Thee"

Benediction

Pastoral Prayer

Focus on God guiding each person to a practical holiness where we not only know the doctrine but also exhibit holy behavior.

Creative Worship Ideas

Object Lessons for Sermon

1. Display empty milk carton.
2. Give a peanut to each person.
3. Place a copy of J. Oswald Sanders' TESTS OF HOLINESS (from sermon) in bulletin.

Planning Ahead

1. Announce infant baptism (or dedication) service for November 27.
2. Announce a Membership Sunday for November 13.
3. Ask one of your laypersons to share a five-minute testimony on "Why I serve Christ through the local church."

THE HOLY HEART

by Daniel R. Gales

Deut. 5:23-33; 6:5

September 11, 1994

INTRO:

Have you ever tried to say something to someone and been totally misunderstood? In our scripture, Deut. 5:23-33 and 6:5, God is telling His people what it means to be His child and to walk perfectly with Him. They miss the point and think it's keeping the law. God is saying something deeper. Read it with me.

The major clue is found in verse 29, "Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands . . . !" The call here is not so much to keep the commandments as it is to become "masters" in the pursuit of holiness.

ILLUS. In our Western cultures, we tend to focus concretely on goals and objectives and shoot for them. In the Asian cultures, where they think more abstractly, the great good is to become a master.

In Shogun, the Asian idea of the "master" is vividly portrayed. The master archer is shown as he develops his skill, bringing his action and being together. Action and being become so intertwined there is no separation between the two.

In one scene, the archer demonstrates his mastery. With great precision, he launches the arrow at an unseen target on the other side of the rice-paper-walled hut. He relies entirely on being at one with his instrument. The arrow sinks into a tree on the other side of the hut.

But that's not the end of the story. He launches a second arrow. It swishes through the same hole and splits the first arrow down the middle. He is able to do this because he concentrates on being a master rather than shooting at a target.

That's what God is trying to get across to His people in this passage of Scripture.

Holiness is not so much a matter of **doing or not doing things**. Rather it is a matter of **being**; it's a matter of the heart.

The people to whom this passage was originally addressed missed God's point. They tried to please Him simply by keeping the law. They confused structure with substance.

Last week's sermon examined confusing the structure with the substance of holiness. The error is believing that going through the steps of sanctification is holiness. God is not as interested in the steps to holiness as He is that you ARE holy.

In this passage of Scripture, God is saying that hitting the target of obedience is a result. This statement of God in Deut. 5:29 provides a deep understanding of the meaning and essence of holiness.

I. Holiness Is an Inner Compulsion of Moving Toward God Always

A. The opposite of holiness is toward personal protection.

ILLUS. A man was hiking on a mountain trail when he slipped over the edge of a cliff. On the way over, he grabbed a small tree growing out of the side of the cliff.

Realizing he couldn't hold on forever, he called out, "Is anyone out there?"

The answer came back, "Yes."

The man asked, "Who?"

Again the answer came, "The Lord. Do you trust Me?"

The man responded, "Yes."

The Lord instructed, "Then let go of the branch."

Complete silence followed. Then the call was heard, "Is anyone else out there?"

Our natural compulsion is to protect ourselves. The compulsion of holiness moves us to seek God and His will.

B. This inner compulsion, implanted in the heart by radical surgery of God, prevents living in legalism. Following God's laws with the mind and will leads toward legalism and frustration; following God's laws from the heart leads toward love and holiness.

II. Holiness Is an Inner Condition of the Heart That Determines Behavior Consistent with God's Commands

A. Holy behavior locks on to Jesus.

ILLUS. I was amazed at the astounding accuracy of the missiles used by the Coalition in the Persian Gulf War. What a contrast between the older technology of the Scud missile and the newer Patriot missile. The Scud is a well-aimed, elaborate projectile. Years ago, it was a very sophisticated instrument. My understanding is it has one electronic aiming device and is accurate within 3/10 of a kilometer.

On the other hand, the Patriot is guided by three aiming devices. One locks on the coordinates, or location, of the target through a computer. The second is a heat-seeking device. It seeks for the heat of a target such as a jet, or a Scud, and follows the heat until it hits the target. The third is the ability to adjust and change the preset coordinates while the missile is in flight.

The missile is locked on to the target, and it simply doesn't quit until the target is reached. Because it locks on to that target, it can go nowhere other than toward the target. It doesn't take short-cuts or deviate from the path but follows the shortest path to that target.

That's what holiness is like. It is locking on to God and Jesus through hearts that are tuned to God's heart. Holiness follows the shortest, most direct route to Jesus and stays locked on to Him.

B. Observe the church and its ethical standards.

You cannot understand holiness denominations apart from holiness. Some holiness denominations have general and special rules as guidelines and helps to holy living. Keeping them is not holiness. They are

the tuning coordinates so that we can lock on to Jesus. The "heat-seeking" device is our heart transformed to the image of Jesus.

Sometimes we question these rules. Here's a key to understanding them. The call of God on the church is to ensure holy development among its members. It is to assist each person to enjoy the full blessings of Christ. The Bible teaches each Christian to take the most direct route to Christ, to avoid the side trips, and lock on to Him.

A person can become lost on the back streets of life and in the indirect route of finding Christ. Our message urges the discipline to take the sure routes, to focus on the main highways, and to leave questionable directions alone.

C. What is the pathway to holiness?

1. Focus your heart on God. The heart focused on God's nature draws a person along God's way. Deut. 5:32-33 can only be fulfilled this way. To "not turn aside to the right or to the left" cannot be accomplished without the inner motive and motivation tuned to Jesus.

To "walk in all the way" begins with a heart conformed to Christ's image. That includes a motivational center in tune with God, a primary control center totally given over to His hands and heart.

2. Focus through consecration. Rom. 12:1-2 gives instruction. We are transformed by an act of God. As a believer, we come to God in total consecration. We voluntarily give Him our lives. By faith we accept the infilling of His Holy Spirit. This is "tuning" our hearts in to His image.

CONCLUSION:

You can find some direction in tuning up your behavior. But that's not the answer for holiness development. Certainly, our behavior must be consistent with the teaching of God's Word, but behavioral adjustment is only external. Holiness is change from the inside out. Behavior then follows the guidance of the inner change.

The question to ask ourselves today deals with what we love. "What do you love?" "What, in your heart, are you 'locked on to'?"

Your inner nature will never achieve the desire of locking on to Jesus through discipline and habit. Your heart

will never lock on to Jesus because you will it to happen. Holiness is a gift of God.

Invite Jesus to radically transform your heart from the inside out. He will. God will fill you with His presence. The self-centered, personally protective nature will be radically swallowed up by the presence of Jesus. He will orient you toward himself and His love—so completely, that your conscious and unconscious joy will be to seek Him, to do His will, and to give yourself sacrificially so that others may know the Lord.

Being the master Christian is holiness. "What do you love?"

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"The Greatest Thing"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 135:1-7
Hymn	"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty"
Prayer Chorus	(vv. 1-3) "Holy, Holy"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	Greet One Another
Moments of Praise	"Sweeter as the Years Go By"
	"The Longer I Serve Him"
	"I Will Serve Thee"
Ministry in Music	"Thank You"
Pastoral Prayer	"Jesus, I Love You"
God's Word	Deut. 5:22-33; 6:5
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	"THE HOLY HEART"
Hymn	"Savior, While My Heart Is Tender"
Benediction	

Pastoral Prayer

Worker Appreciation. Have everyone who ministers come to the altar for a prayer of thanksgiving and commissioning. You might want to call them according to areas of ministry, i.e., Sunday School teachers, ushers, music, board members, etc. Prior to and as they come, sing "Jesus, I Love You."

Creative Worship Ideas

Offertory Prayer

Thank You, Father, for blessing us with abundance in our land. We count it joy to bring You our tithes and offerings. May You enrich each of us as we give together.

THE NEXT STEP

by Daniel R. Gales
September 18, 1994

INTRO:

In God's sight, it is more important to **be** holy than to **know about** holiness. The two previous sermons focused on the substance or the nature of holiness. We call this the doctrine of entire sanctification. This sermon deals with the structure or form of holiness. How can a person seeking holiness enter the experience?

Form is vital because it guides us into the substance. The structural side of entire sanctification resembles a doorway. Walking through it leads to an experience on the other side.

Let us look at steps into the experience of entire sanctification or holiness.

I. Realize the Need

A. The Bible represents man as a sinner.

1. There are two kinds of sin, sins of action and sin of the nature. Rom. 3:23 describes sins of action. The sin of the nature is described throughout the whole Bible (see Gen. 6:5 and Jer. 17:9).

Our sinful nature causes us to scheme and to find ways to get around God's directives instead of leaping with joy to follow them.

2. Sin separates man from God, and He must punish sin (Ps. 89:32).

3. The sinful nature remains in the born-again Christian until cleansed by the Holy Spirit. The most convincing evidence comes in the New Testament Epistles, urging us to be cleansed. The Epistles were written to Christians (see 1 Thess. 5:23).

4. The sinful nature produces sinful behavior (see Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34-35).

B. Sin of the nature is dealt with differently than sins of action.

As we treat physical illness differently from psychological illness, so we must deal with the sin of the nature differently from sins of action. Sins of action need forgiveness; sin of the nature needs cleansing of the heart.

C. The Bible describes sins of the nature.

Gal. 5:19-21 identifies sins of the carnal nature. As you read this passage, ask yourself, "Does this describe how I behave?" If you see in yourself one of these behaviors, it may indicate that you need heart cleansing by the power and Spirit of God.

1. Review these carnal behaviors. Most Christians are not involved in sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery, or idolatry and witchcraft. But what about hatred and discord? How do you get along with other people? Discord is behaving in such a way that barriers are built between ourselves and other persons, or promoting barriers between two other people.

What about "fits of rage"? Sometimes people say,

"I can't help it. I'm just that kind of person." True, if your heart is carnal or sinful. Fits of rage belong to the carnal nature.

2. Carnal behaviors can be cleansed. You can't discipline rage out of your nature. However, discord, hatred, and fits of rage can be *cleansed* from your nature! These kinds of behavior do not fit in God's description of the sanctified, holy person.

We notice some unacceptable behaviors, so we discipline ourselves to overcome them. But, true to Prov. 4:23, and much to our disappointment, other kinds of carnal behaviors emerge from our heart. The only way to deal with carnal behavior is for God to cleanse your carnal heart so that you will become Christ-centered.

Noticing any unholy behavior is one way God lets us know that we need His heartcleansing.

II. Apply the Remedy

God's remedy to move from the carnal life to the Spirit-filled life is a heart change. You cannot discipline yourself to have that kind of change. Only God changes you through the cleansing work of the Holy Spirit.

Here are the directions for dealing with the carnal heart:

A. Crucify selfishness.

Gal. 2:20 gives us guidance in this step. A two-way action takes place in your life.

1. Choose to totally identify with Jesus and His will for your life. "I have been crucified." This expresses total commitment. Strong and complete is this identification; "you," as you know yourself, ceases to exist. You are totally transformed. Not by discipline, not through meditation, but by the indwelling presence of Jesus through the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5:17)!

2. Give up your rights, even your right to have a right. "I no longer live." Unless there is total abandonment of yourself in favor of Jesus and His will and call on your life, you will never know the sanctified life.

3. Choose to totally accept Christ's will for your life. "Christ lives in me." These choices are so complete and thorough that it is as if you no longer live. The center of living, or your driving force, is no longer yourself, but Christ.

ILLUS. A businessman was selling an empty warehouse. Vandals had damaged the doors, smashed the windows, and strewn trash all over. The owner promised to replace the broken windows, correct any structural damage, and clean out the garbage. The buyer said, "Forget about the repairs. I'm going to build something completely different. I don't want the building; I want the site."

That's God's message to us! Compared with the renovation God has in mind, our efforts to improve our own

lives are as trivial as sweeping a warehouse slated for the wrecker's ball. All God wants is the site and the permission to build.'

B. Exercise faith.

1. Have faith in the Word of God. Many scriptures give both guidance and strength to the one who is seeking God. Apply a strong scripture to your prayer and seeking, like Col. 2:20 and Gal. 5:17-24.
2. Have faith in the person of Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews tells us Jesus has made your sanctification a possibility (13:12). He will not let you down. If ever Christ will guide a person, He will guide him when he is seeking salvation and entire sanctification (see 1 Thess. 5:24).
3. Continually trust in Jesus and the Word of God. Wrap your whole life around the guidance of the Word of God.

ILLUS. Sanctification requires both crisis and continuous commitment. It is like tuning a guitar. The crisis work is done when the guitar is first tuned, yet the stress of playing the music stretches the strings out of tune. We must give the guitar continuous periodical tune-ups.

4. Invite the Holy Spirit into your life.

III. Realize the Result

Though much more can be said, here is a quick overview of the results of entire sanctification in your life.

A. You are cleansed.

Following cleansing, the behavior described in Gal. 5:22-23 becomes most natural for the Christian. You are cleansed from a self that must be at the center of everything that happens. No longer do you grasp for your rights. No longer must you live in the "passions and desires" of a life without Christ (v. 24). But you can lean on Jesus and allow His Spirit to nurture you through difficulties by His strength.

B. You are not completely mature.

The sanctified Christian finds many areas of spiritual development. You are still in process and still have a lot of growing to do.

C. You are enabled, not to jump tall buildings, but to choose to do the will of God in all situations.

"Tall buildings" refers to the erroneous idea that a sanctified person is freed from his humanity. That's not so. Holiness brings you closer to your humanity. You still hurt and are disappointed. God's blessing is that you can heal and will heal faster. You do not have to live in your hurts and disappointments.

D. You face new kinds of temptations.

As a born-again Christian you are tempted by Satan to sin. In the life of holiness, you are tempted by Satan

to become self-centered, to grasp your rights, and to direct your own life. When this happens, ask for the Holy Spirit to cleanse you. He will give you guidance.

CONCLUSION:

Most of us are very well informed about holiness. God is more interested in us being holy than knowing about the doctrine of holiness. Today, I believe God desires to guide many of us into the next step of Christian experience. Were you able to identify with the behaviors of the sinful nature? Does your heart hunger for behavior that is consistent with the fruit of the Spirit? Jesus will give you guidance and a heart remade to be like His.

I invite you to come to Him today.

Following a musical selection for meditation, we will sing together a closing hymn. During the singing of the hymn, if you sense God drawing you to take the step of entire sanctification, move from where you will be standing and kneel at the altar to pray. The Spirit of God will meet you and guide you.

1. James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1988), 51.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"I Love You, Lord"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Psalms 11
Hymn	"Amazing Grace"
Prayer Chorus	"I Love You, Lord"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	Greet One Another
Ministry in Music	"Let There Be Praise"
Moments of Praise	"I Will Enter His Gates"
	"Great and Wonderful"
	"We Worship and Adore You"
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	"THE NEXT STEP"
Ministry in Music	"Breath of the Father"
Hymn	"Breathe on Me"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Opening Chorus

Have instrumentalists begin playing it 5 minutes before service starts. If you have an overhead, display the words on it, or have it printed in the bulletin.

Friendship and Worship

Have the instrumentalists plan an appropriate song at this time.

Planning Ahead

Plan for Communion on October 9 for Thanksgiving Sunday. (Use this service/sermon on appropriate date for your country.)

A SECOND LOOK AT STEWARDSHIP

by Daniel R. Gales

Luke 9:23-26

September 25, 1994

INTRO:

Looking twice is a good habit to develop. Often on the second look, you find qualities that either convince or dissuade you. Either way, the second look is a good look.

For the next two Sundays, I want to take a second look at stewardship. At first glance, stewardship can look like simply teaching Sunday School and giving money to the church! Those are involved, but there's much more. Stewardship stands out as one of the most exciting and inspirational subjects. Personal stewardship includes the development and management of all your personal resources or abilities. Christian stewardship specializes in the development and management of the resources of God. What an awesome subject!

Taking a second look at stewardship helps us use our resources to their greatest potential.

Today, I want to reach way back and build on the foundation of stewardship. The foundation of ownership undergirds the practice of Christian stewardship. "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The Christian steward is owned by the Master and possessed by the Master's project. Without that, it is virtually impossible for a person to be faithful in stewardship.

ILLUS. John Wanamaker said: "A man is not doing much until the cause he works for possesses all there is of him."

Jesus spoke about what being His steward meant in Luke 9:23-26.

In this scripture, God gives a description of the Christian steward. From it, we can learn how to develop the principles, commitment, and perseverance in our pursuit of Christian stewardship.

I. A Steward Possesses the Master's Project

"If anyone would come after me" (v. 23).

A. Understanding the project is the beginning step of possessing the project.

ILLUS. "Helen Keller was asked one time what would be worse than being born blind. She quickly replied, 'To have sight and no vision.'"¹ That is possessing the project.

1. God's project is not ours to choose, but ours in which to be involved.

2. Jesus describes His project in Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; and 2 Pet. 3:9.

Jesus has a purpose for the Christian steward, privately and publicly. Stewards present themselves as workmen who are thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:17). They also carry out Jesus' mission to others, seeking the lost and bringing them to Christ. Jesus told us His project: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

B. The process of possessing the project is important. Possessing is preliminary to success in any endeavor.

ILLUS. John Maxwell talks of the four stages of vision de-

velopment: I thought it, I caught it, I bought it, I sought it. The "I bought it" stage is the crucial stage. He says that this stage moves us to become what we can be for God.²

An analogy for possessing the Master's project is the steps used in taking a trip on a bus.

1. Know your destination. Nothing can happen without knowing your destination or goal. You cannot even purchase a bus ticket without knowing your goal.

2. Pay the price. Every project has a price the steward must be willing to pay. This is part of being owned by the Master.

3. Get on the bus. This is saying yes to God's project by active identification. It is taking steps to get involved with the project. Those beginning steps of faith bring a strength that enables one to complete the project. Emerson said: "Do the thing and you will have the power."

Getting on the bus, or beginning the project, is the initial step in possessing the Master's project.

4. Pray. Christian stewardship has one more element in possessing the project. Bathe the process in prayer (Prov. 3:5-6).

A person will be effective to the degree that he is committed to and possessed by his Master's project.

II. A Steward Gives Priority to the Master's Project

"Deny himself" and "take up his cross" (v. 23).

A. The steward surrenders himself to God's desires and becomes obsessed with God's goal for his life.

Surrender means to place yourself in a lesser position to something. God's life and Spirit has primary place in the steward. He says, "I choose this day to allow Jesus Christ to be Ruler and Controller of my life."

Begin by making time to do what needs to be done. Schedule adjustment and time management are important in giving priority to the Master's project.

B. The steward takes action in carrying out the plan.

"Take up his cross" means to actively identify with the cause of Christ. Too often we wait to begin until all the details are worked out. Most often that never happens. Take one step at a time.

ILLUS. Joseph Cotter overcame his fear and procrastination by watching a train prepare to pull out of a station. Cotter looked down the tracks. An amber light was showing. Then, the amber light turned green, the bell began clanging, and the train started down the track.

Suddenly, it dawned upon him. The train started out on its journey with only one green signal to go by. He said, "I felt that if I had been the engineer, I wouldn't have moved out of the station before all the signals turned green." He conquered his hesitancy by learning to take it one green light at a time.

The faithful steward trusts God so much he can begin with only one green light.

III. A Steward Continuously Pursues the Master's Project

"Take up his cross daily and follow me" (v. 23).

A. The steward keeps on. He continuously carries out God's plan and purpose.

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9).

ILLUS. I am amazed at the persistence of farmers. A few years ago, the country was very dry. As they tilled the field, great clouds of dust billowed like smoke from a huge fire into the air. Wind and dust was so bad that year that the topsoil dust blew and piled up in the ditches and alongside the buildings. It looked like the field would blow into the next neighbor's yard.

I asked a farmer, "Why do you bother working when it's so dry that you might not get a crop this year?"

He explained to me with one of the simplest statements I have ever heard: "If you never plant the seed, you can never have a harvest."

I watched them that year. The farmers did all the right things at the right time. It was dry, but they worked as if the conditions were right for a great harvest. Guess what! Conditions changed.

Persistent little needle-nosed spikes of green cracked their ways through the wind-wasted earth, and a giant, luscious crop invaded the barren land! The farmers that kept on reaped a harvest! So will the church if we continuously carry out God's plan and purpose.

B. The steward is convinced.

"Because the Sovereign Lord helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame" (Isa. 50:7).

Stewardship, as friendship with God, takes a persistent person who continually pursues God's plan.

CONCLUSION:

Let's review our principles of stewardship. A steward is one owned by the Master. Therefore, he possesses the Master's project, gives priority to the Master's project, and continuously pursues the Master's project.

What kind of steward are you?

Are you owned by God?

Are you willing to use what you own for His glory?

Do you love the Lord enough to willingly be possessed by His project?

God has a specific role for each of us in His work. He can use you, and you need Him. Affirm your decision today to take an active part in His plan.

When a person is possessed by his Master's project, he becomes intimate friends with that Master. Being intimate friends with Jesus is life's greatest experience.

1. John C. Maxwell, *Be All You Can Be* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1987), 51.

2. *Ibid.*, 52.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Jesus, Lord to Me"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 24:1-6
Hymn	"All Creatures of Our God and King"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	Greet One Another
God's Word	Luke 9:23-26
Moments of Praise	"His Praise Fills the Temple"
	"He Is Our Peace"
	"Cares Chorus"
Pastoral Prayer and Open Altar	
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Ministry in Music	"Blessed to Be a Blessing"
Sermon	"A SECOND LOOK AT STEWARDSHIP"
Hymn	"Living for Jesus"
Benediction	

Pastoral Prayer

Make this prayer an act of pastoral care. Pray for the families in your church, for health, love, and appreciation of each other. During the prayer, ask each person to pray for the one on his or her left that God will give that one strength through this prayer time. Then have each person pray the same prayer for the person on his right. Finish the pastoral prayer by repeating the Lord's Prayer together.

Creative Worship Ideas

Bible Reading

Print out the Bible reading and read responsively, or use one on stewardship.

THE TITHE

by Daniel R. Gales
Mal. 3:6-12 and 2 Cor. 9:6-15
October 2, 1994

INTRO:

Stewardship begins in the heart as a love response to God's call. It extends through us in acts of obedience to God's mandate for the Church. We call this mandate the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20). Stewardship involves the faithful investment of our time, talent, and treasure in the Great Commission work. This sermon focuses on the investment of our treasure in the Great Commission.

A very serious stewardship question is asked in Mal. 3:8. You would think the answer to the question, "Will a man rob God?" would be "no." But the opposite is true. People do rob God by not giving their tithes and offerings (v. 8).

The tithe is giving 10% of your increase to God through the local church you attend. Offerings are that which is given more than the 10%, or tithe.

Often a person robs God because he doesn't know he is doing so. Therefore today I want to present some biblical teaching on tithe.

Let's begin with an overview of some of the major scriptures. First, we'll look at God's principles.

I. What Are God's Principles of Tithing?

A. *Lev. 27:30-33*

God is serious and clear about the responsibility to give the tithe.

1. One-tenth of all material gain belongs to God. This is not ours to keep (v. 30).
2. If we neglect to give our tithe, $\frac{1}{5}$ or 20% more also belongs to God (v. 31).
3. The tithe is to be given first, as it comes in. We are not to change it or hold it (v. 33).

ILLUS. A boy came to his pastor and handed him a fish. "Pastor," he said, "you taught us what tithing is. So, I've brought you my tithe."

The pastor asked, "Where are the other nine?"

"Oh," said the lad, "they're still back in the river. I'm going to catch them now."¹

4. If we use the tithe for something else, both the tithe and the item we purchased with it belong to God.

B. *Mal. 3:7-12*

1. God views withholding the tithe and withholding offering beyond the tithe as serious sins (v. 8).
2. Financing the church occurs through tithing (v. 10).
3. The tithe is given to the place where we receive our food and fellowship, the local church.

C. *Matt. 23:23*

1. The tithe as a basis for giving is still in effect in the New Testament.
2. The tithe is not the limit of our stewardship.

II. What Are Common Reasons for Not Tithing and Some Answers in Response?

A. *"I cannot afford to tithe."*

ILLUS. Sometimes we act like the church member who told his pastor that he couldn't give because he owed everyone else.

The pastor asked: "Don't you feel that you owe the Lord something?"

The church member responded: "Yes, of course I do. But He isn't pushing me like the others."²

Here are some thoughts to help build your faith.

1. The main issue in tithing is not financial. It is obedience and faith in God's promises such as Phil. 4:19.
2. God uses the tithe as an opportunity to bless you financially.

ILLUS. Like the seed a farmer plants in the ground, not the seed he keeps, is the seed that grows the new crop. So our tithe is God's seed for future blessing.

3. Often not adequately controlling your spending is the reason you feel that you cannot afford to tithe.

B. *"I place my tithe in a special bank account and give it to churches or people as I feel I should."*

The bank account approach to giving is an excellent way of being ready to give offerings. However, that is not the scriptural method of storehouse tithing. The tithe is not to be stored in a bank, but in the church where you attend (Mal. 3:10). It is to be given as you receive it (Lev. 27:33).

C. *"The church isn't meeting my needs, so I don't tithe."*

The basis of tithing is not that your needs are being met, but in being obedient to God's commands. God promises that *when* you tithe, your needs *will* be met.

D. *"I give my tithe to several missionary organizations and other ministries."*

It is right to give, but the biblical instruction is to take the tithe to the church. Giving to missionary organizations should come from offerings beyond the tithe.

E. *"I save my tithe, collect interest, and in that way I can give the church more money."*

Giving more is a commendable idea. But there are two misunderstandings here:

1. The tithe is to be given as it comes.
2. The main point in tithing is not the *amount* of money; it is obedience to the Scriptures.

F. *"I don't like the way the church spends its money."*

A variation of this is, "I don't like the way the budget developed, or the way the church is financed, or some of the goals the church or pastor has."

Here are some thoughts to help you think through this issue. Each member should be aware of and responsive to the way the church spends its income. The church is ministry-oriented and develops a budget geared to meet the needs of the ministry to which God has called us. However, not all of us will always agree with 100% of budget disbursements.

The church usually does its best to manage our funds in an excellent way. The principle of tithing remains—that we give in obedience to the Scripture. The tithe is not really ours to withhold. It belongs to God. Our leaders are responsible before God for the administration of the tithe. We are responsible before God to give the tithe.

III. What Are God's Promises to Tithers (2 Cor. 9:6-15)?

The main lesson of this scripture is that God is a giver, not a taker. He asks for the tithe as a way to bless us.

A. *There will be enough in the storehouse* (Malachi 3). There will be sufficient income to finance all the needs and ministries of the church. Take time to calculate what the income of the church would be if everyone who attends would tithe. The income would be more than enough to support the church, its ministries, pay budgets, and still have money left over to invest in other ministry projects.

B. *There will be enough for you when you tithe.* A quick reading of 2 Cor. 9:6-15 yields these conclusions. The giver will have enough for his needs and ministry (v. 8). He will be abounding in abundance and have enough to be generous on every occasion.

Along with that, people will praise God or be drawn into God's kingdom because of this ministry of giving (v. 13). Close fellowship will be one of the results (v. 14).

C. *God prospers and grows that which you give, not that which you keep.* That does not mean that God will make the 90% go farther. God's principle in tithing is that He gives the harvest on the 10% you give to Him through the local church.

CONCLUSION:

I don't want anyone to leave today saying that all the pastor and this church are interested in is money. That isn't true. My major interest is in fulfilling God's call upon us as a congregation and as individuals. That includes the desire that you experience the fullness of His blessings. Some of that blessing comes through the act of tithing. Obedience in tithing opens the door to many blessings that will not come in any other way.

I desire for this church to carry on an adequate and credible ministry in and to this community. Our city is filled with men, women, boys, and girls who need Christ. Their only hope is Jesus. Their only hope of knowing Jesus is someone reaching out to tell them in a way they can understand—just as someone reached out to you. The church is limited or enhanced in ministry to some degree by our financial obedience.

Stewardship begins in the heart as love and an obedient response to God's call. It extends through our acts of obedience.

Tithing doesn't begin with money. It begins with giving yourself to God and His will. Let me encourage you to

do that today. Step out, give yourself to God, and He will come quickly to you.

ILLUS. The custodian of a church told his story to some visitors. Prior to the 1930s depression, he and his family donated the \$40,000 pipe organ to the church. Then the depression swept him into bankruptcy. Fortunately, the church hired him as the custodian.

Someone asked, "Aren't you sorry you gave so much for the organ?"

The custodian replied, "As you can see, what I gave, I still have; what I kept, I lost."

That's one of God's great miracles of giving: "What we give, we keep. What we keep, we lose."

1. James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1988), 458.

2. *Ibid.*, 463.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Holy Ground"
Ministry in Music	"Holy Ground"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 67:1-7
Hymn	"Come, Thou Fount"
Prayer Chorus	"Into Thy Presence"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	
Moments of Praise	"Clap Your Hands"
	"We Bow Down"
	"Jesus, I Love You"

Pastoral Prayer and Open Altar

Congregation News and Notes

Ministry in Giving

God's Word

Mai. 3:6-12 and 2 Cor. 9:6-15

Sermon

"THE TITHE"

Ministry in Music

"Yes, Lord, Yes"

Hymn

"All for Jesus"

Benediction

Creative Worship Ideas

During the pastoral prayer, invite people to kneel with you at the altar. Ask those who have something to praise God about, or who feel it would help them pray, to kneel with you, to meet you at the altar for prayer.

Planning Ahead

Through November the sermons will be on Family Life. Begin to announce it early. Invite a Christian (if possible) Family Counselor for a 10-minute interview. The purpose of this interview is to inform the congregation, break down inhibitions about using counselors, and endorse a counselor for those in your congregation who may need help.

Here are some suggested interview questions:

What are some of the common family problems today?

How would someone go about getting help for family problems?

If you could say one helpful thing to families, what would you say?

THE STRENGTH OF THANKSGIVING

by Daniel R. Gales

Rom. 1:21-28; Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6-8

October 9, 1994

INTRO:

God places an amazing emphasis on the attitude of thanksgiving. Listen to these scriptures: Rom. 1:21-28; Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6. Thanksgiving is a pivot on which a person's life can turn either to a deep sense of peace or a deep sense of estrangement and despair.

ILLUS. A 10-year-old boy learned a fundamental lesson about thanksgiving while on his way to church. The church stood in a small town a few miles from home. Gerald Trickett, a student home from Bible college, rode with the family that day. As the car rounded a sharp corner at the top of a hill, the rear tire on the car went flat.

There they sat, trying to get the tire changed. To a 10-year-old, it seemed like a "life-threatening disaster." Finally, the spare was on the car. Off they went to church.

The lesson came as they were standing in front of the coatrack at church. Gerald, with deep dimples in his smiling cheeks, looked at the ceiling and whispered, "Praise the Lord."

How can he say that after we were almost killed? Doesn't he care? Where are his feelings? What does he mean? thought the 10-year-old.

There is the secret of Thanksgiving.

Gerald found his joy, not in the events of the morning—that was obvious. Nor even in the events of everyday life. Gerald found his joy in God's presence. God's presence meant more to him than persistent problems.

Here is the principle: **If, in any situation, a person can be thankful, strength surges forth. Even if the thought is as tiny as a grain of mustard seed, strength comes. Through that tiny decision to say "Thank You," God sends giant waves of strength. Those waves of strength have the power to wash away the pressures and bring you peace.**

How does a person give thanks in everything? We have been in situations when we felt it was impossible to open our eyes, let alone give heartfelt thanks to God.

If it is true that giving thanks draws you to God, it's important to learn to give thanks always. Here are some directions that will help us.

Let's begin by answering this question: Why is Thanksgiving such a powerful attitude?

I. Thanksgiving Is a Source of God's Strength

A. Thanksgiving expresses confidence in God's ability.

It is one thing to say "Thank you" for something you perceive as being good. It is quite another thing to say "Thank you" for something when it is difficult to see the good in it all. You cannot give thanks without being confident in the person to whom you are saying "Thank you."

B. Thanksgiving, which is a faith expression, creates an environment in which God can work.

Faith is the only environment in which God can

work. The Bible tells us, "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). The Bible instructs us that we will receive nothing from God without faith (James 1:7).

Faith is the ignition and the gas. The only way to get through some experiences in life is to keep your hope in Christ turned on and your prayer throttle open wide.

C. Thanksgiving results in inner contentment.

"Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart" (Ps. 27:14, KJV; see Phil. 4:6, 9, 11).

Even though you might not see the answer right away, a sense of contentment overtakes your spirit when you give thanks to God. That sense of contentment is the result of the presence of Christ in your situation.

How do you go about developing this thankful attitude?

II. Thanksgiving Is a Process

Phil. 4:6-8 gives us the direction.

1. Begin with prayer.

When we pray, we are acknowledging God and giving Him His rightful place. Through prayer we find our greatest Friend. The old song "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" points out so much truth:

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!*

—Joseph M. Scriven

2. Find something for which to be thankful.

ILLUS. A young pastor learned a great lesson in counseling. Early in his ministry a young mother came to him, torn by the stress of a crumbling marriage and five young children. Not knowing what to do or say, he prescribed better than he knew. He showed her Phil. 4:6-7 and instructed her to read the verses each morning and evening for one week. He asked her to find something for which to be thankful about her wayward husband.

The next week she returned. She seemed very peaceful. Not quite understanding it, the pastor asked, "You don't seem to have a problem. Has your husband come home?"

She said, "Oh, no. I was faithful with the scriptural prescription, and God has given me peace." Then she added: "I thought and thought about what I could be thankful for. Finally, it came. He's a good truck driver."

That tiny thought of thanksgiving released enough power to bring her strength through one of the most stressful periods of her life.

3. Think about the right things (Phil. 4:8).

"Finally, brothers, whatever is *true*, whatever is

noble, whatever is *right*, whatever is *pure*, whatever is *lovely*, whatever is *admirable*—if anything is *excellent* or *praiseworthy*—think about such things” (emphases added).

This verse is really a prayer guide. God’s Word instructs that, when anxious moments seize us, use these thoughts for the basis of your prayer.

When you place these seed thoughts in your mind, God begins growing a garden of goodness within you. From that garden, good, peaceful events begin to take place within your life.

4. Be yourself rather than trying to be positive.

Sometimes positiveness is no more than covering up a damaged and worried spirit. Relax with Jesus. Tell Him how you really feel. Tell Him what your needs are and how you need His help. Then exercise faith in God. Ask Him for the grace to think about your situation from His perspective by faith. He desires strong faith more than positive words. True positiveness flows from a heart filled with faith in Christ.

Being yourself means that you are trusting in Christ and have confidence in Him and His strength for every situation. You don’t have to prove anything. Simply trust and believe in Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Our ability to be thankful, or our choice to not be, either draws us to God or alienates us from Him.

Are you carrying a heavy load today? Let’s take a moment to be thankful to Christ. Perhaps your life has been very blessed, but you really haven’t taken the time to be

thankful. Let’s do it now. “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8, NASB).

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	“Jesus, We Just Want to Thank You”
Pastoral Meditation	Ps. 100:1-5
Hymn	“We Gather Together”
Prayer Chorus	“Thank You, Lord”
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	Greet One Another
Moments of Praise	“This Is the Day”
	“I Live!”
	“We Are So Blessed”
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	“THE STRENGTH OF THANKSGIVING”
Ministry in Music	“I’m Forever Grateful Medley”
The Lord’s Supper	
Hymn	“Our Great Savior”
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Communion

Have a soloist sing while you serve Communion. You might try: “Lamb of Glory,” “My Savior’s Love,” “Only Jesus/Calvary’s Love,” “How Long, How Wide?”

Planning Ahead

November 6 is Remembrance/Veterans Sunday. Ask someone with military background to read a poem or share some thoughts on the value of freedom.



THE HEART OF A MAN IN CHRIST

By Daniel R. Gales

Acts 27:21-25

October 16, 1994

INTRO:

How is a man able to stand on the deck of a sinking ship, gather a crowd of fearful men, and calmly say, "Don't be afraid, men; everything is going to be all right"? It's difficult enough to sometimes stand in your own kitchen, with both feet firmly planted on the floor, and say, "Everything is going to be fine."

Yet that's exactly what the apostle Paul did.

Acts 27 reveals the mind-set of the apostle Paul that enabled him to face life with strength, courage, and an attitude of overcoming. How did he do it?

Contained in Acts 27 are principles that, when incorporated into Paul's life, made him a great man. They're found in his three self-descriptive statements. They will do the same for us if we will embrace them as he did.

Read Acts 27:21-25.

Did you catch the statements?

1. "The God whose I am and whom I serve" (v. 23).
2. "I have faith in God" (v. 25).

I have divided these principles into two messages. Here is the first principle, as Paul spoke it:

"The God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me" (v. 23).

The apostle Paul was owned by and operated for God!

Let's begin by understanding the meaning and effect of ownership.

I. Ownership Is a Legal Contract Between God and Man

A. God has committed himself to a relationship.

In 1 John 5:10-12, God inspires the writer to use a word with a special meaning, the word "testimony" (or "witness" or "record" in KJV).

ILLUS. "Testimony" is similar to the word a lawyer today would use in a will as he writes "last will and testament." Testimony means a legally established fact that creates a binding contract. In this case, the parties are God and mankind. It refers to the covenant made between God and man. In 1 John 5:10-12, John describes the conditions in which God guarantees eternal life.

It describes a reciprocal relationship. Man gives God his trust in Jesus, and God grants man eternal life. A new relationship is built.

B. Our relationship has been bought and paid for (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The basis of this relationship—eternal life—is the work of Christ and becomes ours through faith in Him and God's promise. God has legally committed himself to this relationship with us.

This relationship has been bought and paid for by God himself. The price is the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:20).

C. Our relationship has mutual promises (2 Cor. 6:16—7:1).

Paul describes some of the benefits of being owned by God. God guarantees to be our Father and we His children. The Fatherhood of God has the quality of care for His children. In our part of the relationship, we are to commit and submit ourselves to Him and identify ourselves as His children. Ownership means the Christian no longer does as he likes, but as Jesus likes.

ILLUS. Sometimes we act toward God like the child with a broken toy. A little boy took a toy to his dad to fix. When the father took longer than the boy thought he should, the boy snatched it away from his father, saying, "I didn't think you could fix it anyway." Frequently we act that way toward God. To experience God's exclusive care as our Father requires our exclusive commitment to Him.

Ownership by God is not a dead, legalistic relationship.

II. Ownership Is a Living Relationship

A. We are a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

As a temple of the Holy Spirit, not only do we live for God, but also He lives within us. The hymn writer described that intimate relationship:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own;
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

—C. Austin Miles

If we feel only duty, discipline, and drudgery, we have not yet come to God's blessing as we experience His ownership. For sure, we are set aside for God's use. Our lives should speak to our world for Jesus. That witness comes as an overflow of the presence of Christ.

B. We have the presence of Jesus in us.

Often we forget Jesus' presence within. We are alive spiritually, not only because of what Jesus did but also because of where Jesus resides.

"He who has the Son has life" (1 John 5:12).

ILLUS. There are two images that remind us of the joy of ownership. One is to think of ourselves in this relationship as a lamp is related to the bulb. The light that shines from the lamp is because of the bulb. So the light that shines from us is due to the presence of Jesus. The second image is to think of ourselves as a speck of wood immersed in a huge reservoir of water. There is a gigantic supply of God's grace, continually overflowing and lifting us up. God's grace is much greater than we can comprehend and contain. That illustrates our living relationship with Jesus.

III. Ownership Produces Lovely Results

A. We have a renewed inner self (2 Cor. 5:17).

First, we have a dimension of life that comes from a

source beyond ourselves. Think again of yourself as a reservoir of God's love and grace. He brings us a strength that constantly renews us.

Second, we are a new creation. Paul tells us that the power of Christ within is so strong and dynamic that we literally become new creations. This happens, not through mental and emotional discipline on our part, but by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

B. We have a new source to draw on (Gal. 2:20).

Jesus resides in us. As water buoys us up when we swim, so does Jesus as we live. Draw from His presence. Rest in Him.

ILLUS. Charles, a young Irish immigrant, came to North America by boat. By sacrificially saving every penny, he finally had enough to purchase his ticket. The only food he could buy for the trip was one box of soda crackers and a small block of cheese.

After a few short days on the boat, the saltwater air made his crackers useless. The cheese did very little to satisfy his hunger. Each day he grew weaker and weaker until by the 11th day, he found himself without the energy to get out of bed.

On the 12th day, the steward of the ship happened to check his cabin and found Charles lying in bed, a very sick and very hungry young man. Charles explained his situation—that he had no money to buy food.

After listening to his story, the steward looked at him and asked, "How did you get on this boat?"

Charles replied, "I spent my last money to purchase this ticket." He showed it to the steward.

The steward replied, "My good man! Do you not realize this ticket includes free access to all the food in the galley?"

We have similar resources as Charles had. All of the resources of God are available to us and waiting for us to claim.

CONCLUSION:

The basic question for victorious living asks, "To whom do I belong?"

When you belong to Jesus, He infuses you with joyful courage. His courage enables you to live with God-filled expectation: That is what God said in His Word; He meant it for me. When you know God owns you, then you will believe that God will honor His work.

You too can say, "Keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God" (Acts 27:25)!

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Gentle Shepherd"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 23:1-4
Hymn	"It Is Well with My Soul"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	Greet One Another
Ministry in Music	"Shepherd of My Heart"
Moments of Praise	"Not by Might"
	"I Will Call upon the Lord"
	"I Exalt Thee"

Pastoral Prayer and Open Altar

Congregation News and Notes

Ministry in Giving

Sermon "THE HEART OF A MAN IN CHRIST"

Hymn "Trusting Jesus"

Benediction

Pastoral Prayer

The theme of this service is faith. Pray for specific experiences in which we need faith to trust God. Many of our families are struggling financially; most parents need wisdom and understanding in raising their children. Some of your people could even need healing. Throughout the prayer pray Scripture into their lives. For example, using Jer. 33:3, you could pray like this: "Lord, You have instructed us to call upon You, and You would tell us what we don't know. Each of us have areas in our lives where we need Your wisdom." Now pause and instruct the people to silently tell God one or two areas where they need His guidance. Follow up by praying this: "Father, I pray each of us will learn how to know Your instruction when it comes."

Creative Worship Ideas

Looking Ahead

Advertise November's theme: "Happiness Is Homemade." The series focuses on strengthening families. Encourage people to invite a new family. Ask a youth or young adult to pray the invocational prayer next week. By asking them ahead of time, they will have time to write their prayer if that will make them feel more comfortable.

STRONG FAITH

by Daniel R. Gales

Acts 27:21-25

October 23, 1994

INTRO:

"Keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me" (Acts 27:25).

These words were spoken by the apostle Paul on the deck of a sinking ship moments before the raging sea splattered it into splinters on a rock.

In Paul's words we discover the cornerstone of his faith. We read two of Paul's self-descriptive statements. The second statement is the focus of this sermon today. (Read Acts 27:21-25).

Did you catch the statements? Here they are again:

1. "The God whose I am and whom I serve" (v. 23).
2. "I have faith in God" (v. 25).

Today, we ask the questions, "What does it mean to have faith?" "What is faith?" "How do I get faith?"

Here are some insights to help us with these questions.

A. "Faith" is referred to in the Bible several ways:

1. You can have a lot of faith or a little faith (Matt. 6:30; 15:28).
2. Your faith can grow (Luke 17:5).
3. You can lose your faith (Mark 4:40).
4. You can see faith in actions (James 2:18).
5. You can place faith in things other than God.

B. The meaning of faith falls into three major groups:

1. Faith is a body of **principles**.

Principles refer to statements describing our beliefs. You can memorize and repeat principles such as 2 Tim. 4:7.

2. Faith is an **ability** or a **capacity** a person possesses.

Luke describes Stephen as a man full of faith (Acts 6:5).

3. Faith is an **avenue** through which God works. When speaking to the woman who had been bleeding for many years, Jesus used faith in this sense. He said, "Your faith has made you well" (Mark 5:34, RSV).

II. What Is Paul's Meaning of Faith?

A. Paul makes two statements that help us understand his faith. First, he says, "I have faith in God." That is a capacity he possesses. Second, his faith is an avenue through which God will work. "It will happen just as he told me."

B. Abraham had similar faith.

Paul describes Abraham as "being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised" (Rom. 4:21). Paul spoke of this kind of faith to the sailors on the ship. God was able to do what He said.

Both men had full confidence in God and His ability.

III. What Is the Meaning of Faith for Us?

A. Often we use Heb. 11:1 to define faith:

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

The two key phrases, "Sure of what we hope for" and "Certain of what we do not see," both describe a belief of which we are convinced.

ILLUS. For faith to be real, it must produce action. In the series of daredevil tales gathered around Niagara Falls, the story is told of a tightrope walker. A cable was stretched from one bank to the other, right over the precipice of the falls.

Before walking the cable, he asked the crowd that had gathered, "Who thinks I am able to walk on the cable from this bank to the other?" A great applause arose from the crowd.

Carefully he stepped foot over foot and walked through the air with only a cable between him and death on the rocks below. The crowd applauded enthusiastically.

Taking a wheelbarrow, again he asked, "Who thinks I am able to walk the wheelbarrow on the cable from this bank to the other?" The applause was deafening. He asked again, "Do you really believe I can do it?" The crowd applauded again. Then he asked, "If you really believe I can, who will ride in it with me?" There wasn't a peep from the crowd. Finally, one brave man took up the challenge. They made it.

Only one person really believed in the ability of the tightrope walker—the man who rode in the wheelbarrow. Here's the point:

Faith always produces action consistent with what you believe.

B. Faith connects belief with action.

Faith is neither the belief nor the action. It connects the two. Paul believed God had the ability to keep His word and to rescue them. Therefore faith enabled him to stand firm on the deck of the sinking ship. He was rescued!

C. Faith is a human capacity.

Everyone has the capacity for faith and uses it all of the time.

ILLUS. Following this worship service, most of us will walk to our cars, place the key in the ignition, and, without much thought, turn it on. We believe the battery is good, the fuel is adequate, and the car is capable of starting. So faith connects our belief with the action of starting the car.

Faith is like the pipeline that connects the hot-water tank to the bathtub.

D. Faith is constant in all persons.

Our actions are always consistent with what we believe. Faith automatically transfers our belief into action. Belief is the only variable in the process. Action is always automatic.

ILLUS. When someone says his faith is weak, it's really a misstatement. Faith is always transferring his belief into action. What he should say is this: "My belief is weak."

Because I believe in electricity and the switch, I turn on the light.

Because I believe in my battery and my gasoline, I turn the ignition switch of my car.

Because Paul believed in the power of God, he stood on the deck.

Because Abraham believed in the ability of God, he started a nation.

Because Noah believed in a delivering Lord, he built an ark.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we believed in God as strongly as we believe in electricity, and gasoline, and cars, and gravity?

E. How do we strengthen belief?

When we ask God to strengthen our faith, we actually ask Him for convinced belief. This kind of belief comes by getting to know Him better. Think about the great promises of the Bible. How do they appear in your actions? Discuss your thoughts with other Christians, and apply God's promises to your life.

CONCLUSION:

Paul knew God so well that he had complete confidence in Him. Because of his convinced belief, he could say, "I know God. I know He'll rescue us."

Every one of you has a sinking ship. Each of you has a place in your life where God calls you to experiment. God promises, "I'll not let you down." "I'll see you through." Often you're busy fighting the waves instead of standing on the deck with confidence. The question is not, how strong is your faith, but, do you believe God? The cornerstone of your faith is your convinced belief.

Start where you are. Take a verse of Scripture that describes how God is able. Your faith will develop your action of trust. You will enjoy a new level of victorious living with Jesus.

"Keep up your courage . . . for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me."

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Be Still and Know"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 25:1-5
Hymn	"How Firm a Foundation"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	Greet One Another
Moments of Praise	"I Just Keep Trusting My Lord"
	"My Faith Still Holds"
	"He's All I Need"
Pastoral Prayer and Open Altar	
Ministry in Music	"That's What Faith Must Be"
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	"STRONG FAITH"
Hymn	"He Never Has Failed Me Yet"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Invocation Prayer

Have a teen or young adult pray. Ask them ahead of time. They might feel more comfortable writing the prayer beforehand.

Moments of Praise

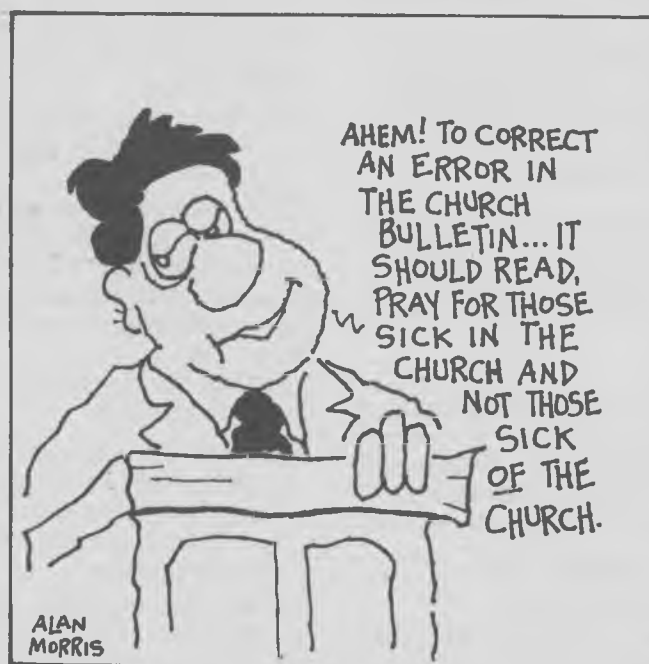
During the Moments of Praise have a time of testimony where one or two share about God's faithfulness in their lives.

Planning Ahead

Ask someone to prepare a "family tree" for next Sunday. On the tree place a card with the name of each family in the church. See next week for details.

Offertory Preparation

It is a wonderful opportunity to give our tithe and offering to the Lord. As we do, He makes the promise to us that He will meet the needs of the church and us as persons. As you give today, give with thanksgiving.



HERE I STAND

by Daniel R. Gales

Rom. 1:17

October 30, 1994

INTRO:

Most Protestants are rejoicing today. And so we should. We celebrate Reformation Sunday! This day has vital significance for those of us who call ourselves Christians.

The Reformation refers to a period of time between 1517 and 1563 when churchmen attempted to return to the early purity of New Testament Christianity. The man's name most associated with the Reformation is **Martin Luther**.

Luther, a priest and one of the great university professors of his day, taught the Bible. The more he learned what God said in His Word, the more discrepancies he saw within the church he loved. He became convinced that **only in the Bible could true authority be found**.

That's not very startling for you and me. But in Luther's day, to think or say such a thing was heresy worthy of death! The statement implied a rejection of the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

While studying to teach a course on Romans, Luther discovered Rom. 1:17:

"For in the gospel 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.'"

From that time on, Luther lived by two main principles:

1. **Justification before God is by faith alone.**
2. **The Scriptures are the only authority for sinful men seeking salvation.**

These two beliefs launched Luther on a collision course with the Roman Catholic Church.

On October 31, 1517, Luther challenged all persons to debate by posting his famous 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

Later, in 1521 at Worms, Germany, it became clear that Luther's propositions attacked:

1. The position of the pope
2. The sacraments, and
3. The theology of the Roman Catholic Church

Luther refused to withdraw his beliefs unless he could be convinced of his fault by the testimony of the Scriptures. Again, he affirmed his belief in salvation **by faith alone** and that **the Scriptures are the only authority for faith**.

While faced with death, Luther gave an impassioned speech that ended with a statement that has rung like a cannon blast through the halls of history:

"Here I stand."

The point of this historical review is this:

Luther took his stand firmly upon the testimony of God's Word, even to the point of death!

Through the ages, many Christians have taken the same stand:

staking the whole of their existence upon the fact that God is with them and in them!

On this Reformation Sunday, the question God has for us is this:

"Can we Christians of the 20th century also firmly and clearly take our stand for Christ and the truth of His Word?"

We are called upon to be clearly decisive in our Christian commitment. There can be no **halfway** commitment, no **conditional** commitment. If we are Christian, and if we really believe what the Bible has to say to us, then we have committed ourselves to stand firmly for Christ. We must say to our world, with Luther and the men and women of the ages,

"Here I stand." With Christ and His Word!

Our basic belief demands: "We stand for Jesus and the truth of His Word, the Bible." **That makes a profound impact on our attitudes and lifestyle** in the following ways:

I. Jesus Is Our Sole Sustenance for Life and Living

A. Jesus sustains our spiritual life.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is the only way to the Father and eternal life (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). Along with salvation, only Jesus provides victory over the sin and habits that enslave men (1 John 3:2-10).

B. Jesus sustains our physical life.

God promised to supply all of our needs (Phil. 4:19; Matt. 6:28-34).

C. Jesus sustains our emotional life.

Jesus promised us peace: a unified calm at the center (Phil. 4:5-7; also Isa. 26:3; 40:31; Matt. 11:28; John 16:33).

ILLUS. Paul used a military picture to describe how "the peace of God . . . will *guard* your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7, emphasis added). The picture is of an army camped behind enemy lines. At night, the guard walks back and forth around the camp, protecting those within from enemy attack. Like that guard, God's peace keeps our emotions and minds from breakdown as we trust Him.

II. Jesus Is the Greatest Security for Life and Living

The very best illustration of this truth is found in Rom. 8:31-39.

CONCLUSION:

As Christians, we must be concerned about what we are saying by the way we live and act.

I am talking about giving ourselves to Jesus so completely that our living demonstrates to the world the difference He makes. Our world desperately needs to see authentic followers of Christ.

ILLUS. Psychologist Carl Jung has been consulted by people from all the civilized countries of the earth. He said:

"Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over 35—there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook."

God needs 20th-century reformers—people who are tuned into the redemption of Christ, people eager to demonstrate the strength of Christ, people who are convinced that Christ meets every need of life, people who eagerly share their lives with those who have unmet needs.

God needs 20th-century reformers who have a vital, personal experience with the Lord and are eager to share Him with others.

In order to be a reformer, you must first be sure of your own spiritual experience, convinced that every need of yours will be met through Christ. That conviction must be lived out clearly.

Here are questions for 20th-century reformers:

On what are you standing this moment for your spiritual and personal strength?

On what do you stand through the week for your spiritual and personal strength?

Is Jesus Christ your firm Foundation for all of life?

Is that foundation of Christ clearly demonstrated by your attitudes and lifestyle both publicly and privately?

Can you say the following with assurance?

"Yes, I know that Christ is in every part of my life. I'm willing to stake my future upon Him.

He is my greatest security for life and living."

Where do you stand?

How firmly are you standing upon Christ?

Are your feet firmly planted upon the Lord so that He has become your Guarantee for life?

It will be the greatest experience of your life to look away from the temporary things of life upon which you used to trust to look toward the only true foundation, Jesus Christ. With open eyes and firm assurance say with Luther:

"Here I stand."

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Into Thy Presence"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 71:1-6
Hymn	"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"
Invocation	
Friendship in Worship	
Ministry in Music	"I Call You to Praise"
Moments of Praise	"Sing Praise to the King"
	"King of Kings"
	"Jesus, Lord to Me"
Pastoral Prayer and Open Altar	
God's Word	Rom. 1:8-17
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	"HERE I STAND"
Hymn	"The Solid Rock"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Planning Ahead

Advertise next week as your first Family Life Series. The series consists of four sermons designed to give help and ideas to overcome family issues. This will be a time the congregation will want to invite friends and family.

Creative Planning

Develop a *Family Tree*. Put the names of each family in your church on a "tree" in the foyer. Encourage everyone to take one or two names and pray for them during the next month.



**"I'VE TAKEN ANOTHER CLOSE LOOK AT THE BUDGET,
AND I'M SORRY I'M GOING TO HAVE TO
LET TWO OF YOU GO."**

HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE—LOVE

by Daniel R. Gales

Eph. 6:1-4; Gal. 5:6

November 6, 1994

INTRO:

Everyone has a different understanding of the word *family*. For singles, family means yourself and your friends; for single-parent families, it means the people in your home. The next four sermons focus on strengthening family life. For this series, “family” refers to the group of people with whom you live and spend your time. Whatever your understanding of family, you will find strength in these principles.

Four scriptures form the foundation: Eph. 6:1-4, specifically verse 4; Prov. 22:6; Deut. 4:9; and Gal. 5:6.

Today, we begin with the background for the series. “In Christ . . . the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” (Gal. 5:6).

ILLUS. An uncle advised his nephew: “Above all, love your children. Harsh lessons upset them. But they value love given during their difficulties.” Most of all, your children need love. When they look up to you with their big, trusting eyes, they need love.

The major lesson is this: learn to express love.

ILLUS. We’ve all heard the story of the wife who asked her husband if he loved her. He replied: “I told you I loved you 20 years ago. It still stands today.” That kind of love expression is not adequate for building strong people.

Expressing love begins with this understanding:

I. Love Is the Most Important Ingredient of Life and Family Living

There are more damaged persons in the world simply because they have not been loved than for any other reason.

ILLUS. James Gardner, in his book *Self-Renewal*, says: “Love and friendship dissolve the rigidities of the isolated self, force new perspectives, alter judgments, and keep in working order the emotional substratum on which all profound comprehension of human affairs must rest” (p. 16).

People need to know they are loved. Needing to be loved motivates many persons.

1. Ghandi of India. In his book *Leadership*, James S. Burns indicates that a driving force behind Ghandi was an inner compulsion to find his father’s approval.

2. Carl Lewis. After the 100-meter sprint at the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, Carl Lewis was interviewed. They were discussing his second-place finish. Lewis said he ran for his diseased father. “Last night,” he said, “my mother had a dream of my father. He said I was ‘OK,’ so everything is all right.”

These two men chased their craving for love in ways we applaud, but there are hundreds who don’t. Some express their need for love in unacceptable ways. They may be the criminals, prostitutes, and other social misfits.

Love is most important because it reaches in and melts the rigidity of a person who feels lost.

Expressing love builds on this fact:

II. It Is More Important to Give Love than to Receive Love

A. There is a relationship between maturity and giving love.

1. The responsibility to love is given to the mature. Paul’s instruction in Gal. 5:9 and the uncle’s advice to the young father focus on this responsibility. Infants need to receive love rather than be expected to give love.

2. Receiving love is necessary in the developmental process of children. The child and the emerging youth need the love of significant persons.

ILLUS. Hemfelt and Warren, in *Kids Who Carry Our Pain*, say the lack of receiving love drains identity away from the child. It forces the child into false guilt over family problems. He takes on the responsibility to “fix up” family unhappiness. Often he seeks false identity through negative relationships outside the home.

3. In adulthood, giving love and having maturity go together. The relationship between giving love and receiving love moves on a continuum. At one end is the infant who is totally self-centered and needing love. At the other end is the adult needing to give love. The adult provides the security needed by the child and youth.

B. Real love is not a matter of finding the right person to love, but being the right person to give love.

ILLUS. A porter on the train walked the aisles saying: “I’m looking for someone to love.” Then he would quietly pick up shoes and polish them, press clothes for people, and leave apples and oranges. He was an inspiration. He loved giving love.

1. There is the principle of giving. A principle written into the universe says, “A man reaps what he sows” (Gal. 6:7). It is true in the spiritual world. When we sow “Give me,” we plant the seed of “I am a taker” and reap “being taken.” That means the people who become attracted to you are unable to give. Loving others plants seeds that will bring a harvest of being loved.

2. Withdrawing love causes rigidity. Sometimes we get caught giving love and then withdrawing love. Whether we give love or not does not depend upon the behavior of the other person. It depends upon the quality of the one giving love. Withdrawing love can cause the other person to stumble and fall (1 John 2:10).

There never is a time to withdraw love. Even discipline must be done out of a heart of love.

3. We love based on who we are, not based on the worth of the person being loved.

ILLUS. Have you ever walked the floor at night, dead

tired, with a screaming infant in your arms? The infant was totally unlovable and incapable of loving. You carried the child, not because you love screaming babies. You did it because you loved and cared. I love because of "me," not because of "you" (1 John 2:11).

C. Jesus is our Model. He loved us "while we were still sinners" (Rom. 5:8). We were not only unrighteous but aggressive enemies—going against God. Yet Jesus still gave His life for us.

For these reasons it is more important to give love than to receive love.

There is a third issue. What if you don't feel you can love? Write this third point on the screen of your mind.

III. Anyone Who Sees His Own Need for Love Can Be Enabled to Love

A. What if you feel like you cannot give love?

You may think: Pastor, loving others sounds good. But you don't know what's going on inside of me. I feel so lost and empty within myself. Sometimes it's all I can do to get myself up in the morning. I have no example from my childhood. My parents didn't love. How can I learn to love? I feel like I've missed out myself. Is there any hope for me?

Here's the good news: The issue is not receiving love but giving love! All of us can learn to give love.

B. Jesus brings the gift of love with Him. He plants the seed of love in your heart.

1. The most damaged psyche in the world can be healed by the love of Jesus. The deep love of Jesus Christ can wash away the hurts and rigidities of the isolated self. Jesus *never* withdraws His love.

If you get nothing else from this sermon today, I want you to know that the presence of Jesus Christ will melt away that rigidity.

2. Begin by practicing the habits of love. Hemfelt and Warren give these steps which anyone can take: Give time, attention, affection, and affirmation.

ILLUS. A mother was dealing with an angry daughter. Part of the problem came from the time given to their puppy. The daughter felt she was of lower value than the dog. Her mother gave more time and consideration to the pet than to her. By giving time and attention, the process of loving begins.

3. Repair of love takes time. Repair does not happen in a moment. If you're 30 and feel isolated or empty of love, give God 2 or 3 years to rebuild your inner self.

CONCLUSION:

The greatest thing you can do for your family is to receive Christ's gift of love. Jesus invites: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me . . . and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30, RSV).

Anyone who wants to love can receive the gift of love through Jesus Christ. Let me urge you to start on your journey of strengthening your family by receiving the gift of love from Jesus.

That gift begins with receiving eternal life. Like a very gentle shepherd, Jesus will lead and guide you into a new way of living.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Jesus, We Just Want to Thank You"	
Reading or Thoughts on Freedom		Layperson
Moment of Silence		
Prayer of Thanksgiving		Pastor
Hymn	"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"	
Friendship in Worship		
Moments of Praise	"His Banner over Me Is Love"	
	"Behold, What Manner of Love"	
	"O How I Love Jesus"	
	"Amazing Love"	
Ministry in Music		
Congregation News and Notes		
Ministry in Giving		
Sermon	"HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE—LOVE"	
Closing Chorus		"Gentle Shepherd"
Benediction		

Creative Worship Ideas

Moment of Silence

After asking the congregation to observe a moment of silence in memory of those who fought for our freedom, pray a short prayer. The theme of the prayer can be thanksgiving for those persons and for the freedoms we enjoy.

Closing Chorus

Ask families to come and pray together at the altar during the closing chorus. Sing the chorus through once, then invite them to prayer *with you* at the altar. Arrange ahead of time to have your wife and/or family meet you at the altar as well. Make this time a pastoral prayer.

HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE—TIME

by Daniel R. Gales

Eph. 6:1-4

November 13, 1994

INTRO:

Margaret Mead said, "All attempts in human history to eradicate the family have failed. The family will change in form and lifestyle, but it is here to stay."

This sermon is the second in a four-part series on the family. "Family" refers to the group of people with whom you live and spend your time. Single persons and teenagers will also find principles for application to their lives through this series.

The scriptural foundation is built on Eph. 6:1-4; Prov. 22:6; Deut. 4:9; and Gal. 5:6. Today's message from Eph. 6:4 deals with providing an alternative to exasperation in our children.

To "exasperate" means to "cause intense irritation" or anger. If ever there was a day in which children are experiencing anger, this is it. The Scriptures indicate that fathers are to provide an alternative.

The big question is "How?" How can you prevent children from becoming angry? According to this scripture, the solution is to teach them the way of the Lord.

Perhaps you feel like saying, "It's too late for me and my children; they're already adults."

Let me encourage you: It is never too late to begin. The only time you have with your family is now. Begin where you are. God will honor the loving, sensitive, prayerful efforts of a sincere parent.

Inferred in this verse are some very simple steps.

I. Provide Time

That's simple! Our children, more than anything else, need to know that their parents love them. We can tell them, but if we don't spend adequate time with them, they will never believe us. In this verse, God is saying: "Commit yourself to make your family strong, loving, beautiful, and faithful to the Lord."

The first step in providing time requires you to:

A. Adjust your schedule. Include time to be with the family.

1. Be available. Take a day off each week, and invest part of that day with your spouse and children.
2. Eat together. At least one meal a day, two if at all possible. Turn the meal-time into a discussion time about fun ideas, projects, and plans. Not much of the time should be spent in correction and criticism.
3. Take a vacation, even if you don't go away.

B. Invest your value in your family. Rather than making your occupation the primary place for investing value, make your primary investment in your family.

1. You are unique. Each person is unique, and only that person can give his value to the family.
2. Satisfaction comes through the family. Satisfaction will not ultimately come from your work or profession, your money or material gain.

ILLUS. Lee Iacocca is quoted as saying, "I have never heard

a dying man say, 'I wish I had spent more time at the office.'" Satisfaction comes through family relationships.

3. The family is our only eternal possession.

They are the only earthly assets we can take to heaven with us. The way we spend our time should reflect that value.

II. Invest Your Time in Developing Relationships

A. Understand how relationships develop.

1. Relationships develop through process. That means your relationships are a result of continuously repeating similar events over a period of time. That is also the way relationships change.

2. Relationships develop on purpose. It requires choice and discipline to develop the proper kind of relationship. Simply being the "father" or "mother" or "adult" does not automatically ensure a place in another person's life. That comes through deciding how we will gain that confidence.

3. Relationships develop over time. Since relationships are a process involving give-and-take, they develop over a period of time. Changing the quality of life within the home cannot be done through one or two events. If the last 5 or 15 years has left an unsatisfactory quality of relationship, it could take 2 or 3 years to make the change.

ILLUS. One father decided to enrich family intimacy by staying home for breakfast. Usually he began work before his family was awake. The next morning, he presented himself at the breakfast table.

He reported, "They acted as if I wasn't there. Each person had little jobs to do and enjoyed jokes that I knew nothing about. Obviously I was outside the family group."

At first he was hurt. But he realized that he was responsible. He said, "If I wanted into the family, I knew what it would take. I would have to practice new patterns and give them time to open and create a place for me. It took time, but now they say, 'Good morning,' when I come to the table."

Give your family time and space to respond to you and your new overtures, and they will. God planned it that way.

III. Provide Time to Train Your Family

A. Prior to equipping anyone else, you must first bring yourself together.

B. Bring your relationship with your spouse into harmony. If you are single, bring your relationship with parents or other significant figures together.

1. The greatest gift parents can give a family is to love.
2. Learn to communicate. The two greatest communication problems are, first, not listening and under-

standing others and, second, not saying clearly what you mean.

3. Build up each other so that each of you can perform at your peak potential.

4. Pray together.

ILLUS. One Canadian pastor says it took him and his wife 10 years to learn to pray together. Part of the reason was his schedule and an unrealistic expectation. He said, "I wanted to have a Bible study, prayer lists, and things like that. With my schedule, we simply never did it. Now," he says, "we keep it simple. While lying in bed and prior to falling asleep, we pray for each family member and each concern before the Lord in prayer. We seldom miss a night."

Where you pray and how you pray is not as much of an issue as actually making prayer together a priority in your life.

Ruth Graham said, "I am convinced that prayer is one of the strongest weapons for the development of character in our children."

C. Develop family patterns through which your values will be transferred.

1. Develop a church attendance pattern.
2. Develop a home devotional pattern.
3. Have a regular family day or evening.
4. Go shopping together or take walks.
5. Spend time alone with each other.

D. Teach life values through informal activities.

ILLUS. Life values are "caught" through unguarded moments. Have you ever watched a family in a campground on their first night of vacation?

The frustration that sets in when Dad is trying to back the trailer into a camping spot is incredible. It's in those kinds of unplanned moments that true values are taught to the family. How unplanned actions and reactions relate to Christian faith teaches more to the family than days of devotions and Bible lessons. Those actions will either reinforce or undo everything said in the formal teaching times.

Informal responses in normal life situations transfer values more clearly than formal teaching times. Formal teaching is important, too, but actually demonstrating values is more important (Luke 6:40).

CONCLUSION:

The family is more than a psychological or sociological

unit. It is a spiritual kingdom. The family is a trust given to parents by God. It is God's will for the head of each home to build the family. In order to accomplish this mission, it takes an investment of time. The head of the home, fathers or single-parent moms, are responsible to initiate spiritual leadership.

How is your home? Are you leading your family to safe ground and overcoming other pressures in the world?

God will grant any willing person the creativity to know where and how to begin ministering to the family. Ask the Lord; He will guide you.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Jesus, I Love You"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 89:1-4
Hymn	"Heavenly Father, King Eternal"
Prayer Chorus	"Your Love Compels Me"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	
Membership	
Moments of Praise	"The Family of God"
	"I Will Sing of the Mercies of the Lord"
	"Lord, Be Glorified"
Testimony	Board Member
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	"HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE—TIME"
Ministry in Music	"Find Us Faithful"
Hymn	"A Christian Home"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Testimony

During the testimony, have the board member share "Why I serve Christ through the local church."

Invocation

Ask a senior person who has raised his or her family to pray the invocation prayer this morning. Ask him to especially pray that God will give wisdom to young parents as they raise their family.

Planning Ahead

Let the people know that next week you will be interviewing a family counselor.

HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE—BE PROPER

by Daniel R. Gales

November 20, 1994

INTRO:

In his book *The Power of Your Attitudes*, Dr. Les Parrott comments on "What makes for a happy marriage." At the end of some statistics, he boils it down to one simple concept: establishing the habit of happiness. "Happy, contented single people," he says, "make happy, contented married people."

How does a person become happy and contented? The primary place is in his home. The more I think about family and personal needs, the more I am convinced that happiness is homemade. God intended for the home to be the primary place for developing happy, contented people.

This series of sermons is based on four scriptural foundations: Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 4:9; Prov. 22:6; and Gal. 5:6. Embedded in these scriptures are principles that teach us how to build strong Christian families.

The theme of the first sermon taught that love is the basic gift that builds and develops people. The second sermon urged you to provide time to invest in the people who live in your home.

The next lesson can be summarized by the words: "Be proper."

A very significant implication in this scripture comes through the word "exasperate."

I. What Is the Meaning of "Exasperate"?

A. The dictionary meaning of "exasperation" is defined as "intense irritation." The NASB translates "not exasperate" as "not provoke your children to anger."

B. Parallel scripture illustrates: "Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged" (Col. 3:21). They will give up in their hearts and lose out spiritually.

C. The thrust of "exasperate" is seen by turning the sentence into a positive statement. We must find the major teaching because it is difficult to find direction from "do not's."

Paul instructs fathers to teach their children the way of the Lord. Proper teaching eliminates intense irritation, both psychologically and spiritually. Fathers are to be trainers who make the home a place of encouragement.

An even more simple way of saying the same thing is "be proper" in your approach to your children.

II. Develop Skill in Transferring Truth

A. Avoid the tarnishing of truth. William Barclay in his Daily Study Bible Series talks about tarnishing or devaluing truth. It is not enough to be correct. Parents must also be proper in the transfer of truth to the family. Truth is devalued when transferred by an improper teacher, at an improper time, in an improper place, with an improper motive, and an improper method.

When truth is tarnished, it is disbelieved.

B. Be an example of the truth you are teaching.

1. Children learn the truth with which they live. Teaching, at least in the spiritual sense, primarily transfers being. If you have resentment and hurt in your heart, your family will pick it up and model it. Children will ultimately behave as the parents *are* (Luke 6:40).

2. Measure your behavior by the Scriptures. Take responsibility for your own inner state. We are what we are because of ourselves, not because of a situation or because of someone else. Study the teaching in the Scriptures. Then bring your inner self and outer actions into line with what you know is right. Through intense consecration, allow Jesus to transform you into the person you need to become. In this way, you will transfer whole truth to your family.

C. Continue by pointing the way to Jesus.

1. The parents' responsibility is to be a pointer, not a chooser. Choosing develops dependency; pointing builds adequacy.

This is risky for the parent, but essential for the child. Point your children in a right direction, and encourage them to make strong right choices. Be their coach in developing life skills.

2. Teaching responsible choices requires much skill and practice.

a. Getting to know each person. How does he think? How does he respond? How is he challenged?

ILLUS. A four-year-old boy watched a large turtle slowly climb out of the water. Immediately the boy wanted to make friends. So he began sharing his half-eaten sandwich with the turtle.

Well, the turtle had never seen a little boy with a half-eaten sandwich. Fear gripped his heart, and he did what any red-blooded turtle would do. He retreated into his shell.

Our little friend looked for a better way. A stick! His puppy loved sticks! The turtle became more frightened—certain death must be approaching! But Mother came to the rescue.

The boy was heartbroken. The problem was clarified: You don't make friends with a turtle the same way you make friends with a puppy. Turtles and puppies are different.

Our families are like that too. Often parents try to treat everyone like themselves. All persons are unique and must be treated uniquely.

b. But what about the Golden Rule? "Do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12). When Jesus said those words, He was not suggesting that you do the same things to other people that you would like done. He meant for

you to treat others with the respect they need. Consider the ways they are helped or hurt, motivated or discouraged, inspired or brought into boredom. Isn't that how you would like people to treat you? With great consideration!

The first place to practice the Golden Rule is in our homes and with our children. The issue in family living is not trying to be great yourself, but trying to make your family great. That desire promotes greatness.

D. Make proper approaches.

1. Self-esteem and the ego of your family, while very flexible, will not withstand an approach that is ferocious.
2. It is not always proper to jump on a problem immediately. Dr. James D. Hamilton gives the following rules for problem talking. You must have:
 - a. The proper motive
 - b. The proper time
 - c. The proper manner
 - d. The proper words

All four, he maintains, must be present for satisfactory communication. Part of mature parenting is the ability to wait and hold your emotional responses for the proper time.

On the cover of *No Laughing Matter*, by Joan L. Oppenheimer, it says, "When you grow up, you find it's not what you get that counts. It's what you give." Waiting for the proper conditions before you speak is protecting and building the self-esteem of family members.

ILLUS. One pastor tells of planting grass seed in his new lawn. As the new lawn began sprouting shoots of green grass, he noticed weeds growing also. So, very carefully, he began removing as many of the weeds as possible. About two weeks later, everywhere he pulled the weeds was a large bald spot. The rest of the area was thick and green.

He asked a gardener what he should have done. The gardener said, "Weed pulling dislodges the grass seed. Fertilize the grass seed. It will come in so thickly that the weeds will be choked out."

That's a good lesson to learn in dealing with family problems. Don't pull weeds. Feed the positive and that will choke out the problems.

CONCLUSION:

The success of family living centers, not on having a lot of skill and great insights, but on being a person who is at peace with himself. The peaceful person passes that attitude on to the family.

Are you at peace with yourself?

I am not asking about the environment in which you find yourself. I'm asking about the "you" in whatever environment. Are you at peace within yourself?

One of the great promises of Jesus is that He brings you inner peace. Do you have His peace? You can have peace by allowing Jesus to make His home in your heart. That comes by giving your whole life over to the Lord.

First, realize the path you are walking on is a path that does not have Jesus central in your life.

Second, ask Jesus to come into the center of your life.

Third, commit your whole self to Jesus.

Fourth, exercise the faith that Jesus will come into your life when you ask Him.

Happiness begins as Jesus makes His home in your heart. Happiness is homemade.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"We Worship and Adore You"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 22:25-27
Hymn	"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"
Prayer Chorus	
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	
Family Counselor Interview	
Ministry in Music	"Household of Faith"
Moments of Praise	"It's Time to Praise the Lord"
	"Because of Who You Are"
	"His Name Is Life"
Pastoral Prayer and Open Altar	
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	"HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE—BE PROPER"
Hymn	"Wonderful Peace"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Looking Ahead

Next week is the last Sunday on Family Life. Encourage everyone to bring a friend. Plan a muffin and coffee fellowship prior to the service.

Closing Prayer

Since no pastoral prayer was scheduled, invite persons to join you at the altar for the closing benediction. Pray that God would grant strength and endurance to each parent as he or she cares for his family. Remember to pray specifically for single parents. Pray that God will grant understanding and patience to the children as their parents do their best for them.

HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE—COMMUNICATION

by Daniel R. Gales
November 27, 1994

INTRO:

Good communication is vital.

In his book *The Power of Your Attitudes*, Dr. Les Parrott develops the principle that happy people make happy homes. Happiness begins through patterns taught in the home.

For the last three Sundays, we have been examining the family. The texts come from Deut. 4:9; Prov. 22:6; Gal. 5:6; and Eph. 6:4.

The first message focused on love as the gift that builds and develops people. The next message talked about providing time to invest in the lives of people in your home. The third sermon, "Be Proper," emphasized that proper approaches must be used by the parents and the children, or great frustration and spiritual discouragement will develop in person's lives.

Today we look at the skill of communication. Many feel communication is the underlying problem in most family and marital disruption. The texts for today are James 1:19-27; 4:1-3; and Phil. 2:1-4.

These scriptures contain principles or seeds to plant in our hearts. They will bloom into beautiful Christian relationships when watered with God's Word and prayer.

"Share" is the key word for this sermon. The letters, S-H-A-R-E, form an acrostic for the sermon outline. The first "seed" comes from the letter S.

I. S—Stop Building Barriers (James 1:19)

This scripture highlights two communication barriers: speaking without listening, and anger.

A. Speaking without listening turns communication into a linear pattern of misunderstanding.

1. Linear communication moves in a straight line from one thought to another. Little understanding takes place because the thoughts and feelings of the other person are not considered. When you stop, listen, and then respond, the communication line becomes circular.

ILLUS. Suppose I say, "This is not a good book. I'm getting another one." You might think I mean, The content of this book is bad; I'm taking it back to get one I will enjoy. This is an example of linear communication.

2. Circular communication allows you to comment. You might ask, "You don't like the story?" Now, the conversation circles back, and I would clarify by saying, "Oh, I like the story, but the binding is falling apart. So I'm going back to the bookstore and getting it replaced." Now we understand!

B. Anger also blocks communication. There are two apparent inferences in this scripture about anger: Anger is controllable, and anger has a place. A closer look brings a different message. The word "slow" in this verse is used three times in the New Testament, twice in James 1:19 and once in Luke 24:25: "How

slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!" The meaning is that the slow heart did not grasp the message and does not believe. Therefore, "slow to anger" means "don't get angry!"

Here's a five-word formula for where anger is appropriate: "Somewhere else, some other time."

ILLUS. A brother met with his new brother-in-law for the first time. An argument erupted and the brother threw a glass of water in the face of the brother-in-law. Immediately the brother-in-law jumped up, grabbed his wife's brother by the lapels, shook him, and said, "If you ever do this again, I'll literally mop the street with you!" It never happened again.

People only get angry when they can dominate the other. The brother-in-law refused to be dominated. In James 1:19, we are being instructed that there is no place in relationships for anger. We are told not to respond in anger or to speak out hastily without understanding the message that is being sent.

That is the S message. The alternative comes from the next point.

II. H—Hold Your Response

"Be quick to listen, slow to speak."

A. We see the correction of barriers. Basically the Bible is instructing us to think and understand what is being said to us, and how we'll respond. "Slow down your response and replace talking with creative listening."

B. Creative listening requires the skills of both listening and speaking. When we listen, we listen for feelings as well as content.

1. Listening tools include paraphrasing and the use of perception checking. Paraphrasing is stating in your own way what the remark means to you. The statement, "This isn't a very good book," could be paraphrased by saying, "You find the story boring."

Perception check involves describing how you think the other person feels. You might say, "You're not enjoying the story." Both responses would clarify meaning in your conversation.

2. Speaking tools include behavior and feeling descriptions. Behavior descriptions set forth specific behavior actions, rather than stating a conclusion to which you have come. Instead of saying, "I think you don't like me," turn the responsibility to yourself and say, "I'm going to try harder to make our time together happy." Feeling descriptions identify your feelings rather than accusing the other or making demands. "I felt disappointed that you forgot" rather than "You don't care about me."

ILLUS. Before being elected to Congress, John Buchanan did evangelism. When holding meetings, he liked to go calling. Spotting a farmer plowing, he jumped out of his

car and ran across the field to the man. He said, "Hello, are you a member of the Christian family?"

The farmer answered, "No, I'm not. The Christian family lives two miles down the road."

Buchanan corrected, "No, I mean, are you lost?"

Again the farmer answered, "I don't think so. I been right here on this farm for 25 years."

Buchanan clarified, "I mean, are you ready for the Judgment Day?"

The farmer replied, "I don't know. When is it?"

Buchanan said, "Well, it could be today; it could be tomorrow!"

The farmer answered, "Well, when you do find out what day it's going to be, let me know, 'cause my wife'll likely want to go both days."

The use of speaking and listening tools will help all communication be clearer.

The next "seed" of understanding is found as A.

III. A—Accept the Other Person (Phil. 2:3-4)

These verses outline three distinct attitudes involved in acceptance: unity and cooperation, respect for the other person's values and differences, and respect for the complexity of the other person's set of problems and desires.

ILLUS. Each person's problem is as complex as another's. For the 2-year-old trying to tie a shoelace, it is as complex as the 18-year-old making a career decision and the 45-year-old corporate executive facing a million-dollar expansion project.

By looking at life from the other person's set of circumstances, we will discover a whole new world of meaning and relationship.

The R stands for:

IV. R—Renew Yourself (James 1:21; 4:1-3)

The first three principles are very lofty. They seem nice to talk about but difficult to achieve. It cannot be done without a heart correction by God. A person's heart determines the effectiveness of communication (Prov. 4:23).

A. A good Christian character results in good Christian attitudes. The attitude of the Christian is not self-centered, but Christ-centered. This gives the advantage of being open to the other person. If your attitude is wrong, there will be poor or impossible communication. If the attitude is right, there will be good or possible communication.

B. Solve the basic problem, which is a problem with the heart (James 4:1-3; Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34-35). The heart of a Christian is either self-centered (carnal) or Christ-centered. The heart of a person can be changed to a Christ-centered heart through an act of God that takes place after one's conversion experience.

Give your whole redeemed self to the Lord, and let Him cleanse you and change the focus of your heart.

Then communication will be clear because "out of the heart" we communicate (see Matt. 12:34). Without this change, we cannot communicate according to God's desires for us.

C. Focus on the other person. The thrust of this passage is not on "who is right" but on understanding the other person. This involves giving up your own personal rights in order to have clear communication. No one can authentically have this attitude without the presence of Jesus residing in him.

V. E—Express Yourself

After you have gone through the four previous steps, you are ready to express yourself.

CONCLUSION:

The place to begin developing better communication skills is in your heart.

The heart is altered through the presence of Jesus Christ in you. He will make the greatest change in you in the shortest amount of time. The wonderful thing about Jesus is that His presence in you not only insures heaven for you when you die but also enriches you while living in this world.

If today your life doesn't add up to all it should—perhaps you sense anger, resentments, unhealed hurts—give those feelings and yourself to Jesus. Trust Him. Jesus will change you now.

S—H—A—R—E your life with Jesus so that you can
S—H—A—R—E your life with others.

SUGGESTED WORSHIP ORDER

Opening Chorus	"Open Our Eyes, Lord"
Pastoral Greeting and Meditation	Ps. 95:1-7
Hymn	"Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us"
Invocation	Layperson
Friendship in Worship	
Ministry in Music	"Children Are a Treasure from the Lord"
Infant Baptism/Dedication	
Moments of Praise	"Bless His Holy Name"
	"His Name Is Wonderful"
	"Jesus, Name Above All Names"
Congregation News and Notes	
Ministry in Giving	
Sermon	"HAPPINESS IS HOMEMADE— COMMUNICATION"
Hymn	"Cleanse Me"
Benediction	

Creative Worship Ideas

Closing Hymn

During the closing hymn, encourage families to make a fresh commitment to each other and to the Lord. Open the altar for prayer.

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